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News Sourcing, Positioning and Thematic Focus:

Examining Newspaper Portrayal of Herdsmen-Farmers
Conflict in Nigeria

Odiegwu-Enwerem Chuks^{1,*}, Oso Lai², Amodu Lanre¹

¹Covenant University, Nigeria

²Lagos State University, Nigeria

*Correspondence to: Chuks Odiegwu-Enwerem,
Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social
Sciences, National Open University of Nigeria, University
Village, Cadastral Zone, Jabi Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined how Nigerian newspapers reported the herdsmen and farmers' conflict in Nigeria. It analyzed the contents of six newspapers to explore the primary sources, the prominence accorded the conflict reports, and the themes focused on their reportage. Findings show that out of the 159 stories considered for the study, newspapers relied mostly on their correspondents and herdsmen representatives as primary news sources. Public condemnation/protests and government/public intervention were the dominant thematic focus. The northsouth media

axis phenomenon in Nigeria resonated in the coverage as the frame of ‘herdsmen-against-farmers’ is indicated more in the southern-based newspapers consistent with the prevailing public notion. The study suggests that the media in Nigeria relied mainly on third party sources with the consequence their reports on the issue could be subject to source credibility deficiency. In addition to addressing the general theme of reportage of the herdsmen conflict, this study explicitly addresses how the newspapers covered the conflict in Benue and Enugu states.

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Keywords

Benue and Enugu states, representation, herdsmen and farmers, news sources, Nigerian newspaper.

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