

## Pictorial Framing of Migrant Slavery in Libya by Daily Trust Newspaper Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Migration from African countries to especially European nations has in recent times gained more global attention and the media are awashed with disturbing reports, particularly on the migrant slavery in Libya. Therefore this paper examines pictorial framing of the migrant slavery issue in Libya by Daily Trust Newspaper. The objectives of the paper are to examine: whether the slavery issues are pictorially framed by Daily Trust newspaper as dehumanising ; whether the slavery issues are pictorially framed by Daily Trust newspaper showing physical Trauma among the migrants ; whether the slavery issues are framed showing chronic conditions of the victims as depicted by overwork, insufficient clothing or ill clothed; whether the slavery issues are framed depicting of deaths; and whether the 'migrants slaves' are framed as physically trapped; whether the migrants are framed as people for sale (commodities). The study developed a content analysis of pictorial representation of the slavery in one of the national newspaper in Nigeria: Daily Trust. The study found that the pictorial framing of the migrant slavery in Libya by Daily Trust Newspaper tilted predominantly as mild as resolved/rescued situation. The study concludes that in spite the horrifying reports and footages about the issue, Daily Trust newspaper framed it as mild and as a resolved/rescued situation, thus downplaying the horrifying the situation in picture.*

**Keywords:** Migrant, Slavery, Libya, Slave Market, Nigeria, African Union

### Introduction

Migration has been part of humanity for ages. According to Bae, Doka and Petraglia (2017); Kuo (2017) historically, migration of human population, being the movement by people from one place to another with the intention of settling temporarily or permanently in the new location, began with the movement of Homo erectus out of Africa across Eurasia about 1.75 million years ago. Human movement from one location

to another as a result of push and pull factors has been a common phenomenon for centuries. However, developments in recent times have placed human migration in the public sphere gaining more global attention and extensive media coverage especially due to populist political movements in western countries. The media in many countries in Europe and Africa are hitherto filled with images of migrants fleeing violent conflicts in Africa and some losing their lives during their journey through the Sahara desert and Mediterranean Sea (Chouliaraki, Georgious & Zoborowski, 2015).

From 2015 to date, this issue has generated enormous media coverage on what is today termed as one of the worse migration crises because of the massive influx of people (from the Middle East and Africa) into Europe. According to Chouliaraki, Georgious and Zoborowski (2015, p.2) “the arrival of almost a million refugees and migrants to Europe in 2015 became a top media topic and controversial issue in the continent’s public debate. In fact the European media played a critical role in framing the issue... of the migration crises”. African migrants from different countries at some points made global news headlines because of the disturbing deaths toll recorded in the Mediterranean Sea which hitherto serves as a major rout to Europe for African migrants.

A disturbing angle to the migration crises is the issue of the existence of migrants slave market in Libya. The release of the footage by CNN in November 2017 that appeared to show youths from sub-Saharan countries being sold to buyers at undisclosed locations in Libya drew global attention and condemnation as well as further media coverage in both Africa and Europe.

The Cable News Network (CNN) report on the existence of slave market in Libya did not only gain international attention but attracted expression of outrage by the African Union and lead to pronouncements and actions by affected nations. For example, Iroanusi (2017 Paragraph .1) reported that “Several videos as well as pictures of people allegedly being auctioned off as slaves in Libya has gone viral on the internet and has been met with outrage from citizens of different nations, prompting the UN Secretary-General to call on the international community to “unite in fighting this scourge.” Naija Parrot (2017. Paragraph 1) reported that “the Nigerian ministry of foreign affairs has reacted to reports of Nigerian migrants being sold as slaves in Libya.” Similarly, Premium Times (2017.Paragagraph 5) reported that “After the footage emerged, protests erupted in Paris and other cities, while Libyans expressed solidarity with the victims with the hashtag #LibyansAgainstSlavery.” (BBC News, 2017; Naija Parrot, 2017; Premium Times, 2017).

Ever since the emergence of the slavery issue, Nigeria has made effort with relevant local and international organizations to repatriate thousands of Nigerians trapped in slavery in Libya. When CNN started airing the migrants slavery in Libya videos, President Muhammadu Buhari finally spoke on the incident noting that it was appalling that “some Nigerians (in the footage) where being sold like goats for few dollars in Libya.” Former Vice President of the country, Atiku Abubakar noted that “It is sad and unbelievable that such horror scenes which belong in the darker pages of the history

books, could be re-enacted in this day and age” (Iroanusi, 2017). In December 2017, the Federal Government of Nigeria identified 2,778 Nigerians trapped in the Libyan detention camps (Ibuot & Okopi, 2017). Furthermore, Public Notice (2018 paragraph.1), in respect of this, reported that “The Federal Government says it is working with Libyan Authority to negotiate the release of all Nigerians in Libya slave camps and ensure their repatriation safely to the country”.

Media around the world have been reporting on the issue through its various platforms and content types (text, pictures, cartoons, video and audio). Besides the media coverage, the reports, as is always the case with the media, have been framed differently. For instance, Chouliaraki, Georgious and Zoborowski (2015, p.2) pointed out that:

European Press systematically framed the refugees and migrants arrival to European shores as a crises for Europe. While press coverage of the crises is characterised by significant diversity, the crises argument relied on views of newcomers as others: as vulnerable others or as dangerous other. P 2.

Several news reports at the international and local levels have represented the migrant slavery issue in different angles through headlines and other elements. Some of the headlines are: “Stopping the Mediterranean journey of death”; “Confronting human trafficking and modern slavery” “Smash Libya’s slave markets”; “The Libyan slave trade markets” etc. There are other forms of representation such as the use of visuals (videos and photographs) that are also used to frame migrant slavery in Libya.

Visuals, for example, as important media content type serve as framing elements for the media particularly newspapers that take photographs as accompanied elements to textual stories. Photographs are used by the print news media to frame events and issues. Hence, visuals as frames are by and large applied to narrate, illustrate and complement text in the print and indeed broadcast media. Trivundža (2015) pointed out that the increased investment into the use of photographic images in press – evident from the quantity of space given to photographs on front and other pages of daily newspapers or the number of photographs published in online news platforms, exhibit press photography’s role in the pictorial framing of news. While a news story’s textual content (most obviously, its headlines and captions) often informs the interpretation of photographs, visual elements may also generate autonomous framing effects (O’Donnell, 2013). Parry (2010, p.69) noted that “the highly selective use of press photographs, along with their brief captions, may present a strong, forceful idea about a distant conflict” Sabo and Salisu (2017 p.89) noted that “Pictures are very essential components of newspapers. This is because they add credibility to the news and take the readers to the scenes so reported. For pictures to make better meaning to the readers, they must be in sync with written words”.

Considering the horrifying graphic content of the CNN footage, which many described as dehumanising (Iroanusi, 2017) and further considering that Nigerians hitherto constitute a significant part of the African migrants in Libya (Ibuot & Okopi, 2017) in the midst of the migrants slavery issue, Nigerian media have obviously given coverage and framed the event based on their disposition to it. Therefore, it is of profound significance to ask what ways Nigerian media framed the issue? It is more insightful if the issue is viewed and examined from Daily Trust newspaper's pictorial framing, which is a paper that significantly covered the migrant slavery in Libya and its reportorial activity of the issue is yet to get substantial academic attention.

Daily Trust is a national newspaper that has, besides the usual news reports, has gone a step further to investigate in 2017 the Kano Transit Route used by Nigerian migrants heading for Europe through the Sahara Desert and another investigation that followed the movement of African migrants to Agadez, a town in Niger Republic bordering the Libyan Desert, on their journey to Europe (Aliyu et al, 2017, Ahmed, 2017). Considering this extra effort to report the migrants' slavery in Libya issue and the significant role of photograph as a news and framing element, this paper examines what ways Daily Trust newspaper used photographs to frame the migrant slavery in Libya. This paper has the following objectives:

- i. to examine whether the slavery issue is pictorially framed by Daily Trust newspaper as mild or grievous.
- ii. to examine whether the slavery issue is pictorially framed by Daily Trust newspaper as dehumanising manner.
- iii. to examine whether the migrants are pictorially framed by Daily Trust newspaper as physically Traumatized.
- iv. to examine whether the migrants are pictorially framed by Daily Trust newspaper in chronic conditions.
- v. to examine whether the migrants are pictorially framed by Daily Trust newspaper as incapacitated and prone to death.
- vi. to examine whether Daily Trust newspaper pictorially framed migrants in Libya as commodities.
- vii. to examine whether the slavery issue is framed by Daily Trust newspaper as a resolved/rescued effort.

### **Literature Review**

Framing issues or events by the media are usually showcased in different content types. Tankard et al, (1991) noted that framing is a vital element in organising media content through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and collaboration, so as to provide context and suggest what the central event or issue is. Entman, (1993); Nisbet,

(2009) have described media framing as an important media element that shapes the way media organizations and media practitioners shape the audience opinions and how audience perceive news content. It is primarily a process in which media organizations choose what part of media content to select and which part to leave out in the news reporting process, thus producing different angles or perspectives for audience selection once it is released as a final product. Framing enables the presentation of news content in various ways, producing different versions, different attributes for the purpose of emphasis or enhancing the salience of issues and events (Entman, 1993; Nisbet, 2009).

Furthermore, Framing is about methods through which the mass media organise and present news content. It is an approach of communicating images and simplifying complex issues for members of the audience to understand and form opinion about a reported event or issue. Since the media are situated in societal norms and culture and report stories in ways that are likely to resonate with the target audience, hence, media coverage is not simply a textual element, but a data source from which inferences are drawn about public discourse (Fleras, 2011; Tolley, 2016; Nasbitt-Laking, 2007) pointed out that. Through news frames the media impart provide information and impart knowledge to the public, which in most cases influence the opinion and decision of the public (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2005; Ofori-Birikorang ,2010). According to Chilisa (2012); Hallahan (1999); Shah (2002) framing depicts how issues are portrayed in the news media and how messages are encoded with meaning so that they can be easily interpreted in relationship to existing ideas. Frames provide boundaries around a news story and determine what is and is not newsworthy. Chime-Nganya et al (2017); Schmitz, Filipone, and Edelman (2003) posit that framing can mould and shape a public issue which can have significant consequences for how the public view and understand an issue and noting that the way a social issue is cast can have significant effect on how the public respond to it. For example, Andrea and Erin (2017, p.2 ) have noted that “media’s coverage of migration have demonstrated the relationship between media framing and public discourse across all types of migration, including economic, family reunification, and undocumented border crossing.”

The media in Nigeria are vital informing tools and a platform for influencing public knowledge and perception on various events and issues such as the migration to Europe through Libya, which referred to migrant slavery. The migration through routes that exposes Nigerians to dehumanizing situation has remained one of the prominent issues in the Nigerian media reportage especially in newspapers. Although, it is noticeable that the hype over the migrants’ slavery issue has become less intense, it is still reported by the media from time to time as events that relate to it unfold.

Nigerian media and those from other parts of the world rely on framing techniques consciously or otherwise to decide what to include in a news story and what to leave out to shape or influence the audience. Scheufele, and Iyengar (2011), Auerbach and Bloch-Elkon (2005) noted that framing is conscious, instinctive or culture-bound efforts that place specific stories to lend a different meaning to the news. It uses this

frame to either enhance or downplay the salience of issues which allows the public to recall and make decision on such issues. Framing “assumes subtle changes in the wording of the description of a situation and affects how audience members think about the situation.” (Auerbach & Bloch-Elkon, 2005, p.13).

On the other hand, visual framing of news is a practice where pictures, videos, graphics or illustrations are used as frames to influence public opinion. Photographs have become one of the fastest ways messages are conveyed, with or without text to support it. Trivundža (2015, p.11) noted that “photographs are not simply images or representations, they are also outcomes of various power-knowledge practices and material objects that not only circulate within society, but also significantly contribute to the circulation of other goods, knowledge and political power.” Photographs are perceived to be one of constitutive components of contemporary news reporting. It has increasingly become necessary for media presentations such that the news media technically cannot publish a news story without a photograph because they are seen to hold the visualization of events and help in the construction of meaning with a strong ability to sway or change public opinion (Trivundža, 2015).

Images are significant carriers of meanings, influencing public knowledge and feelings about a conflict. Ojala, Pantti and Kngas (2017) in examining how different political frames were visually reproduced in news images in *The Guardian*, *Die Welt*, *Dagens Nyheter*, and *Helsingin Sanomat* in respect of the Ukraine conflict as national power struggle, found that majority of the images in the selected papers were products of Western photo agencies, so the newspapers shared highly congruent imagery which contributed to the normalization of certain views of the conflict and its participants and that Western news platforms tend to legitimize the actions of Western leaders while assigning blame primarily to Russia and thus concluded that “We argue that the interplay between visual and textual devices is central to the production of hegemonic meanings, particularly when shaping public perceptions of key actors and their roles in international conflicts.”p.474.

Similarly, a study by Griffin (2004) on photographic depictions of US military action in Central America found evidence of the use of photographs which provided an ‘emblematic’ short-hand account of the written reports, selected on the basis of their perceived impact and what they symbolise. Hoskins and O’Loughlin (2010) noted that modern conflicts are characterized by the efforts of warring parties and their supporters to shape public perceptions of events in ways that legitimize their actions and positions. The media provide frames for these scenarios and mould public opinion purposefully or organically.

The question of how the media have represented and shaped the discourse of the migration in Europe and other associated events such as the migrants slavery in Libya are central to the media since it is an event that has gained global attention. Chouliaraki et al (2015 p.9) noted that the media play a significant role in symbolic construction of migrant

identity and “the press representation of migration perpetuate the ambivalence of migrant as either a sufferer or a threat.”

The media coverage of the Europe migrant crises, especially during times of mass arrivals that contributed to increased asylum seekers, tends to be episodic, with attention tilted to refugee policy such that migration was covered thematically with the focus predominantly on immigrants. The emphasis on particular episodes means that most media attention to refugee issues are reported during times of crisis and framed in such a way that the focus would be on issues of legitimacy and security concerns rather than the longer term contributions that migrants may make (Hier & Greenberg, 2002; Andrea & Erin, 2017). Similarly Andrea and Erin (2017) pointed out that framing influences the audience to conceive of migrants as takers rather than givers, drains on the economy, using terms as “flood of migrants” or “waves of migrants” that usually emphasise on their cost to the recipient nations. These frames point to what Esses, Medianu and Lawson (2013) noted as coverage that suggests dehumanization of migrants by highlighting potential threats to the host nations.

In Nigeria, the Nigerian media obviously frame of news stories and some are pictorial representation. For example Sabo and Salisu (2017) examined the pictorial framing of the Boko Haram insurgency by Daily Trust and The Nation newspapers and found that frames were mostly gory, and could not effectively communicate without words. Slavery, whether modern or as it was earlier practiced, have common characteristics which could be represented in photographs or text. Painter (2016) has noted that artists have depicted the physical torture of slavery in several images, such as “Slave Lynching” by Claude Clark (1915–2001), which illustrates the enslaved woman’s nakedness before a crowd of onlookers adds further humiliation to the physical pain of the beating. Similarly, 50forfreedom, (2015) identified some ways to recognize modern slavery, which could easily be captured by visual illustrations. Some of these characteristics or features of slavery are: Victims are threatened or intimidated, sometimes with weapons held against victims’ body (head, chest, neck); they’re physically trapped: keeping them locked up is a clear sign of forced labour; they are beaten regularly slapped, whipped and punched and have physical injuries. Dehumanization and slavery have gone hand in hand. It often depicted by the constant rape and physical abuse of, especially female slaves (Edublog, 2014).

**Figure 1 Dehumanizing migrant situation (Photo used by Daily Trust in one of its reports)**



Source: Daily Trust, 2018

Media could frame these features to as influence audience or public opinion towards slavery, as is the case with the CNN footage that was used to bring to the fore the migrant slavery issue. On the footage released by Cable News Network (CNN), youths from Sub-Saharan African countries were seen being auctioned to buyers and immediately the African Union Chairman, President Alpha Conde of Guinea demanded prosecutions over a "despicable" trade "from another era". Thus a simple but deliberately framed picture could bring forth the salience of an issue and simultaneously spur action or shape opinion. Just as pointed out by O'Donnell (2013) that Framing may be organically and purposefully motivated.

**Figure 2 Dehumanizing migrants situation (Photo used by Daily Trust in one of its reports before the November 14 release of CNN Footage. It was captioned: Nigerians, others sold as 'slaves' in Libya**



Source: Daily Trust, 2017

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopts Framing Theory as a framework. Druckman (2001) pointed out that framing theory states that the volume of coverage devoted to a particular issue is not as important as the frame the media adopt and the public makes sense of its experience using interpretational packages called frames. According to McQuail (2015) framing theory is a philosophical postulation that provides explanation on which news content is typically shaped and contextualised by a media organization. That is to say media organizations deliberately create, select and shape news stories in particular frames to reflect the reality they wish to create. Boykoff and Laschever (2011) noted that the mass media through their journalists place figurative photograph frames around issues, events and actions, thus focusing audience attention on particular issues, ideas and individuals while obscuring what lies outside the frame.

Mato (2012); Gyong (2013) pointed out that the news media generally use two main kinds of frames: episodic and thematic. Episodic news frames are the predominant frames on news media that depicts public issues in terms of concrete instances, focusing on discrete events that involve individuals located at specific places and at specific times and widely used about 80 percent of the time in newscasts. However, the thematic news

frames, are news frames that place public issues in a broader context by focusing on general conditions or outcomes such as reports on poverty trends (Mato, 2012). Consequently, pictorial framing of the migrant slavery in Libya that made headlines in November and December, 2017 can be situated in the framing theory to elucidate the depiction of the migrants caught in the slave trade crises in Libya. Various frames can be adopted or modified to situate the features of slavery in either episodic or thematic light. In this regards, framing of the migrant slavery in Libya could take the form dehumanised victims; physically traumatised; chronic conditions depicted by overwork, insufficient clothing or ill clothed; incapacitated and prone to death; physically trapped and displayed and sold as commodities, threats to security and threat to health among others.

### Method

This study adopted content analysis as a method. *Daily Trust* Newspaper was purposively selected for its extra effort to further investigate in 2017 the Kano transit route used by Nigerian migrants heading for Europe through the Sahara Desert and another investigation that followed the movement of African migrants to Agadez, a town in Niger Republic bordering the Libyan desert, on their journey to Europe. The Universe of the study is all the pictures showing migrants (complementing textual stories or independent pictures) that relate to the migrant slavery issue and have been used by *Daily Trust* from November 14, 2017 (when CNN released the footage of young African being sold to buyers in a slave market in Libya (CNN, n.d)) to July 2018. A census method was used. Thus a google search and websites search of Daily Trust Newspaper were searched for available pictures used by the newspaper during the period under study. Keywords of Migrant Slavery in Libya + Daily Trust and Daily Trust pictures on the migrant slavery in Libya were used to guide the search. A total of 36 pictures were found from the searches for the study period. There were few migrant pictures that preceded the study period (November 14, 2017) were found but were not used because they did not fall within the scope of this study.

**Content Categories:** using the thematic and episodic frame approaches, the content categories for the study are as follows:

1. Mild (not severe, serious, or harsh. Victims looking indifferent, fairly neat looks badly dressed, no injuries).
2. Grievous (very severe or serious, horrifying, dead bodies of victims, torture, physical injuries and scares).
3. Dehumanised: (horrifying, both hands tied with Chain or handcuffed, in a detention facility under the watch of armed men or women).
4. Physically traumatised (visible marks of injuries, looking starved and emaciated).

5. Chronic conditions (living or kept in a room with bars on the windows and an iron door, behind bars, kept in holes, trenches, dirty environment, half naked or dressed in dirty old dress).
6. Incapacitated and prone to death (physical injury caused by beating, dead bodies of victims, coffins and graves of dead victims).
7. Commodification (kept in queues to be sold to buyers).
8. Resolved/rescued effort (repatriated, with hand luggage boarding plane, in queue being led by relevant agencies, getting medical attention, world leaders' invention on the issue, street protest condemning the act and/or symbols in condemnation of the migrant slavery).

### Findings and Discussion

It was noticeable that *Daily Trust* used some particular photographs that supported news stories. In some incidences, some photographs were used for more than one story. For example a picture of female returnees from Libya was used for two different stories. Figure 3 (three) is an example of one of the pictures that were used at various points in time by *Daily Trust* to complement stories. It was also noticeable that some of the pictures that accompanied stories had no captions. *Daily Trust* also used the pictures of personalities to complement stories. For example pictures of President Buhari of Nigeria, President Donald Trump of the USA, President Macky Sall of Senegal and the National Women Leader of All Progressive Congress (APC), Hajjiya Ramatu Tijjani, to accompany some stories.

**Figure 3. Female Returnees from Libya**



Source: (Daily Trust, 2017)

**Table 1: Mild and Grievous Framing of the migrant slavery in Europe**

Frame Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Mild	26	72%
Grievous	10	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table one above shows the mild and grievous categories of pictorial framing of the migrant slavery in Libya. 72% of the photographs used by Daily Trust framed of the migrant slavery as and 28% as grievous. This shows although Daily Trust showed the framed the grievous angle of the horrifying event, it predominantly had more of mild pictures.

**Table 2: Frame Categories**

Frame Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Dehumanised	1	3%
Physically Traumatized	5	14%
Chronic conditions	2	5%
Incapacitated and prone to Death	1	3%
Commodification	1	3%
Resolved/Rescued situation	26	72%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table two above showed that the migrant slavery issue was predominantly framed as a resolved/rescued situation represented by 72%. Physically Traumatized frame is next with 14%. 5% for Chronic condition Frame and 3% each for Dehumanised Frame, Incapacitated and prone to Death and commodification.

### Discussion of Findings

Frame is an important element in news production process because it helps bringing out the salience of an event or issue. For an important but horrifying occurrence such as emergence slavery or slave trade, news media ordinarily capture key moments to help mould or shape people opinion. Photograph is an indispensable element in illustrating issues and providing visual evidence to support media textual and audio contents. The predominantly mild pictorial posture of Daily Trust in respect of the migrant slavery issue has not clearly captured the horrifying situation. It would not out of place to posit that the 72% mild pictorial framing by Daily Trust Newspaper of the slavery situation may not be considered to shape audience opinion about the issues mildly from the pictorial perspective. Looking this predominant mild framing and the position of Boykoff and Laschever (2011) which stated that the mass media through their journalists place figurative photograph frames around issues, events and actions, thus focusing audience attention on particular issues, ideas, and individuals while obscuring

what lies outside the frame, shows that Daily Trust pictorial framing has tilted more towards shaping public opinion towards the less serious angle of the horrifying Slavery issue.

The predominantly resolved and rescued situation of 72% is a reflection of the mild frame. Pictures used by Daily Trust predominantly tilted towards an issue that has been resolved with pictures showcasing returnees that have been rescued from the Libyan slavery situation. This finding relates slightly to the position of Hoskins and O’Loughlin (2010) that modern conflicts are characterized by the efforts of warring parties and their supporters to shape public perceptions of events in ways that legitimize their actions and positions. However, In this case it is about moulding public opinion towards effort been made to resolve the problem.

**Figure 4. Nigerian Returnees happy coming home from Libya**



Source: Daily Trust, 2018

**Figure 5. Photograph used by Daily Trust to accompany its story on slave market in Libya**



Source: Daily Trust, 2017

### **Conclusion**

This work concludes that in spite the horrifying picture pointed by the various media reports, Daily Trust has been able to present both the grievous and the mild sides of the migrant slavery issue but predominantly dwelt on the mid side of the occurrences and showcasing more of a situation that is at the verge of being resolved. Focusing only on the pictorial frames, audience are likely to form opinion that the situation is mild and resolved rather than perceiving it from the grievous perspective. In spite the horrifying reports and footages about the issue, Daily Trust newspaper pictorially framed it as mild and as a resolved/rescued situation, thus downplaying the horrifying the situation in pictures.

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