



## Comparative Analysis of Newspaper Framing of the Genres on Human Trafficking

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**Abstract.** The study examines ways in which the Nigerian newspapers often frame their reports and editorials on human trafficking. The objective was to clarify the media's narrative role in shaping public understanding and influencing policy discourse. The paper uses framing and priming model as its conceptual framework. The researchers used a sample comprising 346 Issues published by the Nigerian Guardian, Punch, and Vanguard to evaluate the manner in which the Nigerian newspapers often frame their reports on human trafficking. The findings revealed that the stories on human trafficking accounted for over 60% of the straight news stories published on trafficking in the period under review. The study noted the genres journalists used to frame the stories on trafficking tend to suggest to readers how they should interpret the stories on trafficking and meaning (what) they should infer from the stories on human trafficking, to underscore the fact that newspapers serve as both communication channels and ideological instruments. Consequently, the study advises the media to diversify their narrative forms beyond straightforward reporting by incorporating more features, editorials, and opinion articles to enrich contextual framing with a view to providing justice for the victims of human trafficking.

**Keywords:** Human Trafficking, Media Framing, Policy Discourse, Advocacy, Nigerian Newspapers,

### 1. Introduction

Human trafficking is a widespread global incident that manifests itself in various socio-cultural settings and sometimes formed the basis of media representations across cultural boundaries. The United Nations (2001),

reported on the message given by the then Secretary-General Kofi Annan on human trafficking as the most egregious human rights violations of their time. He further said that human trafficking is rooted in social and economic conditions in the victim's country of origin which has grown lamentably widespread in recent years (UNDP, 2001). In Nigeria for example, the portrayal of human trafficking by newspapers often reflects the underlying journalistic ideologies and societal perceptions that influence much of political, economic, and institutional factors (Chukwuma, Uchenna, & Ibeh, 2021). The genre of news storytelling, whether narrative, expository, or sensationalist; plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding, discourse, and representation of the victims of human trafficking (Osisanwo, 2024). Journalistic news framing has been used in several ways by journalists, but media also reinforce the prevailing negative attitude of a section of the public towards the victims of human trafficking (Olley et al., 2023). Empirical evidence shows that thematic framing, as opposed to episodic reporting, enhances awareness of the structural causes of trafficking and encourages public engagement with the issues on human trafficking (Deckard, 2021).

The choice of the genres used by newspapers in writing their stories on human trafficking have significantly influenced the narratives and the different perspectives from which the public views the subject of human trafficking-whether they be on the need to criminalize the act, or they are on the prepositions to protect the victims, or they are rather on the argument on the need for advocacy-oriented reportage by the media to prosecute the stakeholders and beneficiaries of human trafficking (Akinwalere & Bello, 2021). In the Nigerian context, these

genres often fluctuate between advocacy journalism and sensational reporting, impacting policy framing and media-driven interventions (Kiss, Fotheringham, Kyegombe, McAlpine, Abilio, Kyamulabi, Walakira, Devries & Tanton, 2022). Understanding how Nigerian newspapers construct the narratives on human trafficking is important. Yet, it has been observed that journalists framed their stories on human trafficking using different genres. The usage of genres by journalists is essential for assessing media's influence of government's policy on human trafficking and the impact of the policy in society. Recent studies indicate that the way and manner the media write and present their stories on human trafficking tend to shape public perceptions and government's legislations on human trafficking (Amadasun, 2022). Upon these subsisting arguments on human trafficking, this paper conducts a comparative analysis of the genres often used by the Nigerian newspapers to influence public opinion and stance on human trafficking.

### 1.1 Earlier Studies of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a significant global incident. Arguably, Nigeria has been allegedly spotted as one of the major sources and transit routes for human trafficking. The way newspapers frame complex issues on trafficking play a crucial role in shaping public perception of human trafficking. However, existing empirical research has not sufficiently examined how Nigerian newspapers used various story genres, such as investigative reports, human interest angle, and straight news, to portray the incidences of human trafficking (Osisanwo, 2024; Ación, 2024). News framing has the potential to impact on citizens' understanding of human trafficking and elicits public empathy for the victims of human trafficking. Also, it facilitates state interventions in human trafficking. The research conducted by Olajimbiti & Osisanwo, (2024), show that media representations of trafficking often sensationalize or criminalize the victims of trafficking instead of humanizing or contextualizing their experiences. Similarly, the study carried out by Osisanwo (2024) found that the thematic framing of trafficking by the Nigerian print media tends to have undermined the root cause of human trafficking, which is partly attributed to poverty of the victims of human trafficking.

Despite the media's role as an agenda-setting institution, evidence however indicates elements of inconsistency and limited diversity of the usage of the appropriate genres by

journalists to mitigate the practices of human trafficking (Osisanwo, 2024). Beside Olley et al., (2023) providing an empirical insight into human trafficking, their study also revealed the existence of an underutilization of investigative storytelling to identify the perpetrators of human trafficking. The lack of comparative analysis of the specific genres used by the Nigerian newspapers seems to have limited the chances of society developing a comprehensive policy framework aimed at preventing the occurrences of human trafficking. Understanding how different genres contribute to shaping public perception of the anti-trafficking measures taken by governments and non-governmental organizations, is essential on the progress of development-oriented journalism on human trafficking. Therefore, a nuanced and comparative exploration of story genres in the Nigerian newspapers is urgently needed to promote responsible journalism and guide strategic policy-decisions on human trafficking.

In spite of the growing scholarship and research activities on human trafficking, media coverage of the incident still trails behind the new inventions and measures to protect the victims of human trafficking. For instance, Akinwalere & Bello (2021) examined thematic emphases in Nigerian dailies, and yet they did not differentiate in their submissions the impact of genres and framing in the effort to reduce the incidences of human trafficking. Osisanwo (2024) investigated the scope of awareness created by the media on human trafficking. They also overlooked ways in which distinctive genres shaped audience's perception of the issue. Cho and Lee, (2023) conducted a discourse analysis of online news stories on human trafficking, and yet they did not include in their study a comparative analysis of the genres used by journalists in framing stories on trafficking. Olajimbiti & Osisanwo (2024) highlighted sensationalist tones in human trafficking reporting, but they did not consider how reporting styles vary depending on the purposes of the particular genres in the news story. Recently, Okorie and Okeja (2024) evaluated journalistic framing techniques, but their study seemed to have ignored the need for a systematic analysis of the usage of genres in the newspapers. Adeyeye (2025) identifies some specific frames used by selected newspapers in reporting about human trafficking, but the researcher did not compare the genres/frames used in reporting the issue. This perceived gap in knowledge stresses the need for one to have an empirical insight into how the Nigerian newspapers often frame their

stories on human trafficking. In light of the foregoing arguments, the researchers considered having expanded objectives to assess how the Nigerian newspapers often frame their stories on human trafficking. The study specifically aimed at: (1) Analyzing ways newspapers used story genres for framing of stories on human trafficking; (2) identifying the dominant frames used by each of the newspapers; and (3) examining the implication of genre-specific framing for policy advocacy and anti-trafficking interventions.

## 2. Constructs

The study uses framing and priming models as intellectual constructs to explain ways and manner journalists could frame newspaper content of the various genres of press coverage on human trafficking. It is pertinent to note that while priming involves the decision by the media to use whatever criterion or element to evaluate or judge the success and failure of a government, an organization or individual, framing on the other hand, relies on the ability of journalists to use words and phrases to frame the content and direction of media stories to elicit the kind of response which they had intended that the public gives to the given issue, an event or a phenomenon. The impact of the media in society, in a sense, is not consequent upon the number of stories they write or broadcast, but the manner the stories were prepared and presented to the public. Framing is embedded in the intention of journalists regarding the purpose they desire to achieve through an item of a news report or feature. It is arguable, though, that, two journalists are likely to report on the same event from two different perspectives. The differences in their stories are embedded in the manner in which the stories were framed and presented to the public. Framing posits that media not only report about events, but also actively shape audience's perception of the event by emphasizing specific aspects of reality and falsehood about the event (Entman, 1993).

Consequently, media reports on human trafficking cannot in themselves stop the spread of trafficking, except for frame the stories were framed to alter the predisposition and view of the target audiences on human trafficking. Using framing and priming models allow the media to choose what to write about on human trafficking and ways in which they should write and present the stories on trafficking to the public. Hence, it has become necessary for one conduct a comparative analysis of the framing on the genres on human trafficking. By

comparing the different story genres used by journalists would enable the public to know some of the covert ways by which the media contribute to the reduction of the incidences of human trafficking in society. As earlier noted, much of the study that has been carried out by researchers on human trafficking seemed to have focused on the causes and remedies of trafficking; even a few the studies that examined media impact on trafficking, discussed some of the overt ways the media contribute to curtailing the spread of human trafficking. This study focuses on the framing of the genres of newspaper coverage of human trafficking. For instance, a feature story may humanize victims and elicit public empathy toward the victims, while a news story may focus on the statistics or the number of occurrences of human trafficking within a given period under review.

## 3. Literature

Part of the literature on human trafficking reveals a complex interplay of social, economic, and media dynamics that are essential for understanding how Nigerian newspapers portray human trafficking. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Human Trafficking in Nigeria (NAPTIP, 2003) has consistently confronted institutional barriers hindering the fight against human trafficking. Also, corrupt practices, such as bribery, impersonation, misuse of donations, and collusion with traffickers, were identified among several anti-human trafficking agencies (Agwu, 2025). It has been alleged that the body sometimes struggles validating eye-witness accounts on human trafficking (Okorie & Okeja, 2024; US State Department, 2024, Agwu, 2025). Studies on journalistic framing indicate that journalists write more of straight news when reporting on human trafficking (Adekoya, Okoro & Onyenakeya, 2022; Adeyeye, 2025). According to Adeyeye and Egbulefu (2022), the coverage of human trafficking has remain infrequently reported and even when reported about, the stories sometimes lack a considerable depth of evidence surrounding the incident, which perhaps impedes the public's knowledge and understanding of the causes and remedies of human trafficking. Also, Adeyeye (2025) examines specific frames used by selected newspapers in reporting on human trafficking, but their framing of the issue was somewhat too narrow a scope to bring about behavioral and attitudinal change of society towards the victims of human trafficking. These trends have significant policy implications: overly

simplified narratives on trafficking can hinder society from developing a comprehensive framework to prevent human trafficking, while on the other hand, weak institutional capacity and community barriers to anti-human trafficking measures, seems to have complicated the role of the media as advocates and enforcers of measures to curtail trafficking in society (Okorie & Okeja, 2024; Adeyeye & Egbulefu, 2022; Adeyeye, 2025).

International framing research emphasizes the importance of story genres in shaping public and policy discourse. Samuel (2014) demonstrates that media frames often depict victims as helpless, thereby creating dramatic dichotomies that influence societal response to trafficking. Sanford, Martínez, and Weitzer (2016) reviewed some of the US's newspapers and found that sensationalized framing often obscures the deeper socio-economic drivers of trafficking and reinforces gender related assumptions, and thereby limiting policy interventions on human trafficking. Gulati (2011) noted that society seems to reliance more on official sources for news and information on human trafficking, such as the Police and court reports, leaving little room to accommodate the privileged information from the grassroot or victims of child abuse. This official dependence syndrome on human trafficking has restricted the diversity of frames and marginalizes community voices on human trafficking. Osisanwo's (2024) corpus-assisted critical discourse study by Nairaland highlighted how online narratives utilize negative lexical framing to portray victims as defenseless and traffickers as exploitative, ritualistic, and criminal. This digital discourse has complemented the mainstream media analysis by illustrating how public sentiment and stigmatization are formed outside formal news channels, with significant implications for policy reception and community engagement. Building upon these findings, this study focuses on the story genres found in the Nigerian newspapers, making this research timely and significant. By examining how different genres, such as straight news, investigative reports, and feature stories, depict human trafficking, has enhances public understanding of ways in which journalists can support multisectoral policy responses. Diverse narratives used by journalists can foster greater empathy, policy awareness, and systemic solutions to human trafficking (Adeyeye & Egbulefu, 2022; Sanford et al., 2016). Consequent upon these findings, a more nuanced portrayal of human trafficking may help dismantle stereotypical

description of human trafficking in society, and subsequently reveal the major causes of human trafficking.

#### 4. Research Methodology

The study used the content analysis approach as its research design. The approach was particularly well-suited for analyzing the manifest content of the newspaper communications of the *Guardian*, *Punch* and *Vanguard* on human trafficking. The study population comprised of 3,288 Issues published by the newspapers between January 1, 2016, and December 31, 2018. A sample size of 346 Issues of three newspaper editions was considered appropriate drawing on Krejci and Morgan (1970)'s sample size model. The study used systematic sampling technique to select the newspaper Issues which constituted the units of analysis of the paper. The sampling interval for the study entails selecting every 12th Issue of each edition within the sample interval of the paper. Data collection involved the use of coding sheets and coding guides, which were designed to record numerical representations of various content categories. The coded data were drawn from different story genres, including straight news, features, editorials, opinion articles, and letters to the editor. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Holst's (1969) formula, which yielded a coefficient of 0.86, above the acceptable thresholds of 0.70 as recommended by Wimmer and Dominick (2011). Validity was established through face validation conducted using research Assistants.

#### 5. Data Presentation and Analysis

**Objective 1:** Analyzing story genres framing human trafficking narratives in Nigerian newspapers

The first objective of this study is to examine how Nigerian newspapers utilize various story genres to frame narratives about human trafficking in a comparative manner. This objective specifically investigates how *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* employ distinct story genres to frame human trafficking, revealing genre-specific patterns that affect public perception and policy discussions. By comparatively analyzing the data presented in Tables 1.1 and 1.2, this study uncovers narrative strategies that are crucial for informed and genre-sensitive interventions against trafficking in Nigeria.

**Table 1.1:** Story Genre Used in Reporting Human Trafficking in *The Guardian* Newspaper

Year	Editorial		Straight news		Opinion articles		Letters-to-editor		Features	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2016	3	8.8	21	61.8	6	17.6	0	0.0	4	11.8
2017	0	0.0	20	57.1	12	34.3	0	0.0	3	8.6
2018	0	0.0	19	52.8	10	27.8	6	16.7	1	2.8

*Source:* Content Analysis (2025)

The findings indicate that *The Guardian* newspaper predominantly frames human trafficking through the genre of straight news, which overshadows more interpretative formats such as features or letters to the editor. This preference for event-driven reporting over analytical discourse suggests a structural inclination towards episodic framing. As noted by Osisanwo (2024), such framing can limit public understanding of the systemic factors driving human trafficking. From 2016 to 2018, straight news articles dominated the coverage, while features and opinion articles were only marginally present. This pattern of framing aligns with the observations made by Adeyeye (2025), who argue that Nigerian media often simplify the complexities of human trafficking. Equally, Olley et. al., (2023) emphasize that this type of framing diminishes reader engagement with preventive policies. This critique resonates with the concerns raised by Adeyeye and Egbulefu (2022) regarding the oversimplification of narratives in media coverage.

**Table 1.2:** Story Genre Used in Reporting Human Trafficking in *Vanguard* Newspaper

Year	Editorial		Straight news		Opinion articles		Letters-to-editor		Features	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2016	0	0.0	23	71.9	1	3.1	0	0.0	8	25.0
2017	0	0.0	30	83.3	2	5.6	0	0.0	4	11.1
2018	0	0.0	23	76.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	23.3

*Source:* Content Analysis (2025)

The findings presented in Table 1.2 indicate that straight news consistently dominated the Vanguard’s coverage of human trafficking from 2016 to 2018, comprising over 70% of the content each year, with feature articles appearing at a much lower rate. This prevalence of straight news suggests a tendency towards episodic framing, which may limit public engagement with the broader structural aspects of trafficking. Empirical studies, such as those by Uzochukwu, Eze and Obioma (2023), demonstrate that the genre of news influences audience interpretation and policy responses (*Journal of African Media Studies*). Similarly, Olley et al., (2023) emphasize that the way Nigerian newspapers frame issues affects anti-trafficking strategies. In line with the findings of Osisanwo (2024), the underuse of editorials and opinion articles represents a missed opportunity for effective policy framing.

**Objective 2:** Dominant framing patterns across Nigerian newspaper genres on human trafficking.

This objective examines how Nigerian newspapers frame the issue of human trafficking by analyzing the dominant narrative structures employed. It guides the analysis of prevalent frames within different genres. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 highlight the variations in framing between *The Guardian* and *The Punch*, demonstrating the media’s role in shaping policy discourse and public perception regarding trafficking.

**Table 2.1:** Frames Used by *the Guardian* Newspaper in Reporting Human Trafficking

Year	Response frame		Human Interest frame		Economic frame		Attribution of responsibility frame		Conspiracy frame		Enforcement legal frame		Rescue frame		Support frame		Social frame			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
2016	5	14.7	1	2.9	1	2.9	2	5.9	1	2.9	7	20.6	5	14.7	2	5.9	8	23.5	2	5.9
2017	4	10.0	0	0.0	4	10.0	1	2.5	3	7.5	8	20.0	6	15.0	4	10.0	9	22.5	1	2.5
2018	8	22.2	0	0.0	1	2.8	2	5.6	2	5.6	5	13.9	3	8.3	4	11.1	10	27.8	1	2.8

*Source:* Content Analysis (2025)

The study indicates that *The Guardian* primarily used the support frame over the three years analyzed. This suggests a tendency to portray victims as needing aid rather than focusing solely on crime reporting. This finding aligns with observations by (Okorie & Okeja, 2024), who noted that Nigerian media often favors victim-centered narratives. In a similar vein, enforcement and legal frames were also prominent, indicating a secondary focus on state authority and judicial recourse, which is supported by Agwu, (2025). The decline of human interest and conspiracy frames suggests a deliberate avoidance of sensationalism, reflecting insights from Okorie and Okeja (2024). On the whole, *The Guardian*’s choice

of genre appears to be inclined toward policy and reform, reinforcing the argument by Olley et al., (2023) that frame selection is indicative of the institutional editorial philosophy.

**Table 2.2:** Frames Used by the Punch Newspaper in Reporting Human Trafficking

Year	Response frame		Human Interest frame		Economic frame		Attribution of responsibility frame		Conspiracy frame		Enforcement frame		Rescue legal frame		Support frame		Social frame			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
2016	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	14.0	0	0.0	3	7.0	20	46.5	7	16.3	4	9.3	3	7.0	0	0.0
2017	3	9.7	3	9.7	2	6.5	0	0.0	2	6.5	13	41.9	0	0.0	5	16.1	3	9.7	0	0.0
2018	3	7.3	1	2.4	3	7.3	0	0.0	4	9.8	11	26.8	6	14.6	8	19.5	5	12.2	0	0.0

*Source: Content Analysis (2025)*

The study also reveals that The Punch newspaper predominantly focused on legal and enforcement frames in its coverage of human trafficking, especially between 2016 and 2018. This indicates a strong emphasis on criminal justice issues. In 2016, legal frames were the most prominent, comprising 46.5% of the coverage, followed by 41.9% in 2017. This focus on legal aspects overshadowed human-interest or rescue frames, which were only marginally featured over the years. This trend marginalizes the human-centered dimension of trafficking and aligns with previous research indicating that media in conflict zones tend to emphasize punitive narratives over empathetic ones (Umechukwu et al., 2023; Adeyeye & Egbulefu, 2022). Although economic and support frames did appear occasionally, they were not dominant, indicating a limited range of framing diversity. These patterns reflect a systemic editorial focus in Nigeria’s press on institutional responses rather than on the socio-structural causes or the rehabilitation of victims.

**Objective 3:** Genre-specific framing implications for policy advocacy and anti-trafficking interventions in Nigeria.

This objective examines how genre-specific framing in Nigerian newspapers shapes public understanding of human trafficking. By analyzing narrative patterns in The Punch (2016) and The Vanguard (2017), it aims to uncover how different story genres influence policy discourse. The goal is to explore how framing can enhance advocacy efforts and drive targeted anti-trafficking interventions in Nigeria.

**Table 3.1:** Crosstabulation of Trafficking Frames across Punch Newspaper Sources, 2016

		The Punch, 2016								
		Government advocate		NGOs/Human trafficking	News agency/reporters	Court personnel	Nigerian Forces/Paramilitary	Armed Others	Total	
The Punch, 2016	Economic frame	Count	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	6
		% within	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	22.2%
	Conspiracy frame	Count	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
		% within	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.0%	3.7%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%
Total	Enforcement frame	Count	0	0	1	3	10	4	18	
		% within	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	16.7%	55.6%	22.2%	100.0%	
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	11.1%	37.0%	14.8%	66.7%	
	Count	3	4	3	3	10	4	27		
	% within	11.1%	14.8%	11.1%	11.1%	37.0%	14.8%	100.0%		
	% of Total	11.1%	14.8%	11.1%	11.1%	37.0%	14.8%	100.0%		

*Source: Content Analysis (2025)*

The findings indicate that the framing of human trafficking in The Punch (2016) exhibits a genre-specific emphasis with significant policy implications. The predominance of the enforcement frame (66.7%), particularly from Nigerian Armed Forces (37%) and court personnel (11.1%), reflects a punitive and reactive approach that marginalizes preventive advocacy. Government and NGO sources primarily used economic frames, suggesting a fragmented narrative landscape. This divergence in genre risks hindering

unified policy advocacy, as recent empirical studies emphasize the importance of coherent media framing in influencing anti-trafficking policy (Osisanwo, 2024). When reporting focuses on enforcement-heavy discourse while neglecting structural causes, it limits public engagement and institutional response. Therefore, framing strategies must be intentionally aligned across genres to enable effective, multi-sectoral interventions.

**Table 3.2:** Crosstabulation of Human Trafficking across Vanguard Newspaper of 2017

		Vanguard, 2017						
		Government	NGOs/Human trafficking advocate	News agency/ reporters	Court personnel	Nigerian Forces/Paramilitary	Armed Others	Total
Vanguard, Response frame	Count	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
2017	% within							
	Vanguard, 2017	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.7%
Economic frame	Count	1	4	0	0	0	0	5
	% within							
	Vanguard, 2017	20.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	2.9%	11.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%
attribution of responsibility frame	Count	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
	% within							
	Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	0.0%	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.7%
Conspiracy frame	Count	0	1	1	2	0	0	4
	% within							
	Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	0.0%	2.9%	2.9%	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%
Enforcement frame	Count	0	0	0	4	5	0	9
	% within							
	Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	44.4%	55.6%	0.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%	14.3%	0.0%	25.7%
legal frame	Count	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
	% within							
	Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%	0.0%	11.4%
Rescue frame	Count	0	0	0	0	4	1	5
	% within							
	Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%	2.9%	14.3%
Support frame	Count	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
	% within							
	Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%	11.4%
Total	Count	3	7	1	6	13	5	35
	% within							
	Vanguard, 2017	8.6%	20.0%	2.9%	17.1%	37.1%	14.3%	100.0%
	% of Total	8.6%	20.0%	2.9%	17.1%	37.1%	14.3%	100.0%

*Source: Content Analysis (2025)*

The findings from the study highlight how specific genres shape the framing of human trafficking and influence policy advocacy in Nigeria. In 2017, the Vanguard Newspaper prominently featured enforcement frames (25.7%) and rescue frames (14.3%), primarily sourced from the Nigerian Armed Forces. This indicates a state-centric, securitized narrative that may downplay victim-centered policy approaches. In contrast, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) emphasized economic factors and frameworks of responsibility

(17.1%), pointing to the systemic roots of trafficking. This divergence suggests a fragmented framing landscape that hinders the development of cohesive anti-trafficking policies. Empirical studies have also shown how dominant institutional frames can affect public and legislative attention (Olajimbati, 2024), highlighting the need for multi-stakeholder harmonization of framing to promote comprehensive interventions.

## 6. Discussion

The findings of this study emphasize the crucial role that story genres play in shaping the framing of human trafficking within Nigerian newspapers. A comparative analysis of *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* reveals that while both newspapers heavily rely on straightforward news reports, particularly the *Vanguard*, where over 70% of coverage consists of straight news, *The Guardian* employs editorials, features, and opinion articles more frequently. This difference in genre distribution illustrates contrasting editorial strategies: *The Guardian* tends to adopt a discursive and analytical approach through editorials and features, while the *Vanguard* focuses more on factual reporting. These editorial choices significantly influence how human trafficking is understood, demonstrating that genre serves as an essential tool for framing narratives for diverse audiences, including policymakers, advocates, and civil society actors.

The variation in genre also corresponds with the dominant narrative frames employed by these newspapers. In *The Guardian*, legal, rescue, and social support frames are prominent in editorials and features, indicating a focus on systemic reform and victim rehabilitation. In contrast, *The Punch*, analyzed in the second objective, leans towards enforcement and legal frames in its straight news reports, framing trafficking primarily as a criminal justice issue that necessitates punitive action from the state. These differences show that genre-specific frames not only reflect editorial philosophies but also shape the emphasis placed on institutional accountability, victim support, or deterrence of criminal behavior. For instance, *The Guardian*'s features and opinion articles often prioritize social and legal frames, encouraging long-term policy reflections. In contrast, *The Punch*'s reliance on the enforcement frame directs attention to immediate operational responses by security agencies.

The implications of genre and framing dynamics are significant for policy advocacy. As demonstrated in the cross tabulated data for *The Punch* (2016) and *Vanguard* (2017), the sources of information, such as government agencies, NGOs, courts, and security forces, interact differently with specific frames. For instance, in *The Punch*, enforcement frames are primarily driven by reports that cite paramilitary forces and court personnel, presenting trafficking as a law-and-order issue. In contrast, *Vanguard* emphasizes rescue and

support frames predominantly from military and civil society sources, indicating a collaborative yet uneven narrative focus. These patterns reveal that story genres are not neutral; they shape the visibility and legitimacy of anti-trafficking stakeholders. Therefore, enhancing media's strategic framing, particularly through diverse genres like feature articles and editorials, can highlight underrepresented policy areas such as victim reintegration, prevention, and international cooperation. Ultimately, this study shows that media storytelling is crucial in shaping the policy landscape surrounding human trafficking. When genre-sensitive framing is strategically applied, it can transform discourse from episodic reporting to comprehensive policy engagement. Thus, Nigerian newspapers should consciously utilize their genres to foster sustained, multi-stakeholder responses within national anti-trafficking frameworks.

## 7. Conclusion / Recommendation

This study posits that the genre-specific nature of human trafficking coverage in Nigerian newspapers, highlighting how different narrative forms influence public perception and policy awareness. *The Guardian* employs an editorial and opinion-driven approach that emphasizes institutional responsibility, whereas *Vanguard* primarily focuses on straightforward news reporting, reinforcing an enforcement-centric perspective. Both approaches reflect the socio-economic concerns of elites and contribute to reactive governance patterns. The genre of reporting functions as both a rhetorical tool and a lens for viewing policies, shaping not only how trafficking stories are presented but also how they are understood, acted upon, and legitimized within the national discourse. By examining these narrative structures, the research uncovers the intricate relationship between media format and policy development, demonstrating that framing plays a central rather than a peripheral role. Ultimately, the press emerges not merely as an observer but as a key player in Nigeria's anti-trafficking landscape, where various story genres delineate the parameters of state intervention, civic engagement, and the possibilities for justice.

In light of these findings, several recommendations emerge for enhancing anti-trafficking initiatives. Newspapers should intentionally diversify their narrative forms beyond straightforward reporting by incorporating more features, editorials, and opinion articles to enrich contextual framing (Objective 1). There should be a shift toward

frames that emphasize systemic issues and victim-centered narratives, particularly those relating to legal matters, rescue efforts, and support mechanisms, to humanize victims and highlight institutional responsibilities (Objective 2). Besides, policymakers and advocates should leverage insights from genre-specific framing to develop responsive, media-aligned campaigns, ensuring that messages resonate with both elite and middle-class audiences, who are particularly exposed to these narratives. This approach can improve policy effectiveness by aligning media framing with legal reforms, institutional accountability, and the reintegration of survivors (Objective 3).

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