

Influence of Crime News on Residents of Selected Communities in Abuja Municipal Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja



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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of crime news on residents of selected communities in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (FCTA) Nigeria. The study was hinged on the framing theory and was guided by four research questions. Survey was the research design while a questionnaire served as research instrument. Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula produced a sample size of 400 respondents from four communities, while the subjects were selected by a combination of simple random sampling technique and qualified volunteer sampling technique. The study found that almost all respondents received news related to crime and the majority of them received such news often. Mass media channels, more so, television served as major sources of crime related news to respondents. Crime news influenced the majority of respondents in such a manner as to cause their suspicion of people around them; resorting to prayers to God (for safety); remaining indoors at night; spending larger sums of money on security; worry about the safety of family members; paying more attention to personal security; fear; and giving more attention to the news. This effort is in the social sciences, sitting astride the genres of development communication; media studies and also, criminology.

Keywords: Crime, Fear, Mass Media, News, Respondents

I. Introduction

Crime has always been a global issue and no country is spared its negative consequences. The rate at which crime occurs differs from one region, country or state to the other. And Nigeria being Africa's most populous nation has not been spared from the complex web of criminal activities both in the past and as at this present era. From kidnapping and banditry to armed robbery and cybercrime, just name them, they dominate headlines and create anxiety among the populace. Crime sometimes may be region, country or state specific. In other words, certain crimes may be dominant in certain regions, country or state. Kidnapping and banditry for instance have become dominant in the Northern part of Nigeria. The issue of crime has continued to attract the attention of scholars from diverse fields and professions. Crime has been defined as an act that is considered to be harmful or dangerous to society (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/crime-law>). This definition focuses on the impact of the act on the community, rather than just the fact that a crime has been committed.

Global crime witnessed an increase rate of 0.74% in 2020 with 5.61% as against 5.56% in 2019. Comparatively, previous years index shows a steady decline in 2018 with 3.65% from that of 2018; in 2017 data showed 5.91% which declined with 0.69% from that of 2016 (Macrotrends.net, n: d). Sub-Saharan Africa observed similar data in comparative to the global trend from 2021 with 13.90% as against 13.20% the previous 2020. In subsequent manner, the crime index declined from 13.50% in 2019 to 13.60 in 2018, showing a decline of 0.74%; while 2018 witnessed a decline of 1.45% from that of 2017 (Macrotrends.net, n:d).

As one of the largest nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria suffers from a high crime rate (Michael, 2023). According to the report by Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, Nigeria ranks 6th in the world, with a crime index of 7.28 and closely followed by South Africa in the 7th position with a crime index of 7.18. In the case of Nigeria, statistics show that more crimes were

committed in the Southwest region than the other regions with Lagos State having the highest percentage share of the total recorded with 50,975 (37.9%) cases and closely followed by Abia and Delta States with 12,408 (9.2%) and 7,150 (5.3%) cases recorded respectively. On the other hand, Kebbi State has the lowest percentage share of total cases reported with 205 (0.2%) (<https://statisticsofcrimereportedinnng.ng>).

Nigerians have become accustomed to reading or listening to news of kidnapping, banditry and other related crimes. Reports of crime by newspaper or the broadcast media is not a misplaced priority. As observed by Oso (2012, p.87) there is a tendency for news organisations to promote the negative, odd, dramatic and the sensational. He inferred that the news vendors see bad news as good news adding that news is more about the disruption of the status quo or normal running of issues that have obtruded themselves (Oso, 2012, p.87). News of crime wherever, whenever and however it occurs in Nigeria will definitely make headlines as long as the interest of the people will be drawn to it. Journalists are mandated to mirror the society and register anything, event or occurrence that threatens the normal fabric of the society. Part of this mandate set for journalists is to report news of crime in Nigeria. How well have journalists fulfilled this mandate in observing the effect of crime on the affected communities and residents? This study, therefore, investigated the influence of crime news on residents of selected communities in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (FCTA) Nigeria with the following research questions in view.

Research Questions

How often did respondents receive crime news?

What were respondents' sources of crime news?

What kind of crime news did respondents receive the most?

What influence did crime news have on respondents' daily activities?

II. Review of Literature

Over the years, in the bid to survive, humans have appreciated the need to look around their environment in search of opportunities and also, to take charge of their security, conducting the search, even though with limited capability. However, with the advent of formalised message packaging and distribution, professionals have been equipped to lay surveillance on the environment and disseminate information, as they deem useful. News refers to information about a recently changed situation or a recent event. Events that constitute news should be new, unusual, interesting, significant and about people (*Collings English Dictionary; The News Manual*, 2008). News relates to information about current events. Newspapers, television, radio, word of mouth, letters and various internet applications are channels of news dissemination. News ignites interest and curiosity in listeners, viewers and readers. Home of Mass Communication Research Topics in Nigeria (2024) offers functions of news as informing the public by keeping the people aware and updated of happenings in their local communities and even globally; providing education and explanation on complex topics; promoting transparency and accountability and ensuring that those in authority are answerable to the public; serving as a watchdog by exposing corruption and abuse of power; raising awareness about social, environmental, and humanitarian issues and encouraging individuals to take action. The majority of people, one way or another, can easily access news as people generally want to be informed and updated about happenings around them and around the world (Rusnaleli, 2021). People obtain information from news and the information they obtain influences their behaviour and decisions.

The way in which crime is reported in the media, has long been a source of fascination for academics. Numerous studies and scholarly works (Ferraro, 1995; Smolej & Kivi, 2006; Sparks, 2013; Velásquez, *et al*, 2020; Näsi, *et al*, 2020) have been produced that investigate the manner in which the media report crime and the impact of this on the audience. Fear is one effect produced by information about crime. Ferraro (1995) defined fear of crime as an emotional response of dread and anxiety to symbols associated with crime. Though fear has a protective and adaptive element, fear of crime can lead to many negative social responses including excessive spending on protective devices (car alarms, guns, gates), suspicion of other social groups, among others. Fear could have very negative impact on mental health (Velásquez *et al*, 2020). People's perception of crime could lead to an inefficient change of

lifestyle which could involve avoidance, protective behaviour, insurance behaviour, communicative behaviour and participation behaviour all of which involve money and time (Vel´asquez *et al*, 2020).

As different outlets of violence in the news have become so extensive, it raises the question: how does the modern crime news resonate with fear of violence in Nigeria? This is an interesting question, especially when taking into consideration that despite the fact that crime continues to play an important role in the media sphere, Nigeria, like many Western societies, has actually witnessed the so-called crime drop phenomenon in recent decades regarding many traditional forms of crime (Elonheimo, 2014; Farrell *et al.*, 2014). As in other countries, homicide rates, violent crime, rape, kidnapping, banditry, among others, occur in Nigeria.

It is not surprising that this has led to questions on how this may shape people’s perceptions of crime in general and their behaviour. Garland (2000) has suggested that the image the media paints about crime eventually becomes the perceived reality for many media consumers, thus indirectly influencing the criminal policies of many developed nations. Sparks (2013) however argues that even though many news stories are not attended to because audience members find them irrelevant, uninteresting and difficult to process well enough to comprehend the major points, stories about grave danger (such as shooting) would generate greater- than -average interest. Thanks to the rapid technologization of many societies, the media landscape has also undergone significant changes over the past few decades. The number of different information channels and tools to access information has become extensive (Näsi, 2013; Andrejevic, 2013). This means that the outlets for information regarding crime have also expanded. Besides traditional forms of crime, in many societies, societal threats such as terrorism have also become increasingly visible, thus further diversifying the modern-day influence of crime news in Nigeria.

Influence of Crime News and its threats in Nigeria

The media are platforms through which information is dispersed from one channel/source to another (Dwivedi *et al*, 2018). McCombs & Shaw (1972) stated that media are the means through which information is communicated which reaches many people instantly. The media can also be defined as a conventional and usual communication systems used for production of content through technology for pre- recorded or live human speech (Young, 2018). George (2011) sees traditional media as information dissemination conduit through which information is sent to an intended audience. Modern and conventional media have various functions and some of them include education, information, advertisement, setting agenda and entertainment. One influential tool of the media for achieving important tasks is setting agenda. With the muscle of setting agenda, they can easily organize and influence people. The media may also be used negatively for setting evil agenda which can destabilize the peace and unity of a nation (Adesaanya, 2015) due to the fact that they are gate keepers or watchers, by allowing what goes out to the public through the media channel and filtering other destructive information. People’s behaviours, habits and decisions are influenced by news, media channels (Rusnaleli, 2021) and manner of presentation. By this gate-keeping role, the mass media have huge power and influence in preventing acts of criminality.

Not only has crime been one of the major topics in the news media, crime serves as one of the major items deployed by various news media outlets to attract a wider audience (Nasi *et al*, 2020). Thus, the relationship between crime news and its threats in Nigeria has received notable research attention in the recent decades. Much of the existing research has focused on traditional media. The media are often considered the public’s primary frame of reference for issues of crime and control. As the media focuses on public attention on certain types of criminal events and offer interpretations for how to understand them, thus the rarity and severity of crimes drive media presentations such that the characteristics of crime, criminals, and victims represented in the media are frequently the opposite of the pattern demonstrated in official crime statistics in Nigeria. Consequently, the discourse that pervades the media promotes anxiety about violent crime, while encouraging public reliance on existing structures for formal social control.

Indeed, research has demonstrated that media consumption influences how people think about issues related to crime (Rusnaleli, 2021, Sahinoglu *et al*, 2024; Vel´asquez *et al*, 2020; Chiricos *et al*,

2000). Crime news influences the public, regardless of the source (Sahinoglu *et al*, 2024) and depending on the manner of presentation, news about crime could affect the psychological wellbeing of people as generally people's emotions, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours can be shaped by the media content they consume. Consumption of media content about crime could lead to fear of becoming a crime victim Vel'asquez *et al* (2020). Chiricos *et al* (2000) indicate that people who had been victims of crime previously, experienced fear upon watching crime-related news on television; and watching local news on crime had a strong effect on fear of crime among people who live in areas with higher crime rates.

Empirical Studies

Sahinoglu *et al* (2024) conducted a study on the implications of media reports of crime for public trust and social support, analysing individuals' wellbeing. Focusing on the effects of the media's approach towards crime in a small society, they conducted the study in a community in Northern Cyprus. By means of a content and discourse analysis, they examined 507 articles from various media outlets. Deploying a thematic network approach, they analysed semi-structured interviews in which 38 respondents provided in-depth data about their personal experiences and emotions regarding media publication. They found that unethical presentation of crime related reports by the media negatively affects the psychological wellbeing of the citizens. Vel'asquez *et al*, (2020) in their study of the effect of crime news coverage on crime perception in Peru, indicate that by year 2017, 30% of Peruvian urban dwellers reported that they had stopped nocturnal movements outside their homes because of their fear of crime; about 30% still would not use their cell phones on the streets due to safety concerns. Again, mobility became restricted as about 20% had stopped taking taxis in the street and about 15% avoided taking a walk in the streets. Their study which centred its attention on coverage by Peruvian written press between 2013 and 2017 found that an increase of negative crime news increased people's perception about the probability of being crime victims themselves; and the effect of positive news was the opposite. The effect of the written press was stronger for men and non-victims. Individuals reacted to a higher crime perception by changing their habits inefficiently, in ways that affected time and money allocations, restrictions on mobility and commitment to inefficient and irreversible investments.

In their study of the role of traditional media, social media and alternative information sources in relation with crime news consumption and fear of violence in Finland, Nasi *et al* (2020) found that traditional media sources served as the main sources of information on violent crime. Even though online versions of the mainstream media served as major sources of information of violent crime, one fifth of respondents obtained information about violent crime from social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (now known as X). Three per cent of respondents received information about crime from MV-lehti, an alternative source of information. They found that respondents who gave attention to social media and alternative information sources regarding violent crime were more likely to be in fear of crime than respondents who gave attention to mainstream media concerning crime. Their findings also showed that actively consuming all media types influenced fear of street violence and subjects who consumed social media and alternative information sources were more likely to live in fear of street violence.

Nasi *et al* (2020) indicated that respondents' pattern of media use was not associated with avoidance behaviour, which could be triggered by real life experience and local security circumstances; fear of terrorism was linked with self-selection and more active information seeking than passive consumption of news on mainstream media outlets; only a small percentage of adult respondents used alternative information sources to obtain news on crime. They were able to associate fear of terrorism with self-selection and more active information seeking than with passive information consumption through traditional media.

III. Theoretical Framework

The Framing Theory was propounded by Gregory Bateson in 1972. He stated that psychological frames are spatial and temporary bounding set of interactive messages; which operate as a kind of meta-communication (Hallahan, 2008). The framing theory explains the practice of thinking about news contents and stories within familiar context. The theory is of the view that how a matter or issue is presented to the audience influences the decisions people make regarding how to process that

information. According to Entman (1993), framing hinges on selection and salience. “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described”. Frames can be said to be abstractions that work to arrange or form message meaning. Most times, frames are used in expressing the information that the media convey.

Framing theory can be understood or used as psychological shortcuts to connect stories to the bigger image. While there is an apparent theoretical meeting point between theory of framing (Weaver, 2007). The main idea of framing is comparable to the second level of agenda setting which “studies the relative salience of attributes of issues, as Ghanem (2005) described in detail. These agenda, elements are called “the second level” which is actually, sort of different from the first, level that has usually focused, on issues (matters).

IV. Methodology

Survey served as research design and a questionnaire was the research instrument. The population of Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), is put at two million, by <https://www.city-facts.com/abuja-municipal>, out of which 1,059,265 (53.3%) are male and 928,065 (46.7%) are female. Deployment of Krejcie & Morgan’s (1970) sample size determination formula produced a sample size of 377, which was then approximated to 400. Two sampling techniques were adopted for the study, namely simple random sampling technique and qualified volunteer sampling technique. Obtaining counsel mainly from Wimmer & Dominic (2014), and Sobowale (2008), the simple random sampling technique was used to select four communities in AMAC, Abuja. Upon obtaining a sampling frame of the districts in AMAC from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_villages_in_the_Federal_Capital_Territory,_Nigeria, their names were written on slips of paper which were folded and placed in a bowl, from which two slips (representing two districts) were randomly selected by exclusion, giving each district the opportunity to be a part of the study. The selected districts are Gwarinpa and Orozo Districts/Areas. In Gwarimpa District, Kuchigoro and Karmajiji communities were selected, in Orozo District, Kpepegyi and Kurudu communities were selected, making four communities across the two districts. Being an adult resident and willingness to participate in the study qualified residents to be subjects of the study. A sample of four hundred qualified volunteers were drawn from every third street (or its equivalent) of each community, and copies of the questionnaire were administered on them, an effort which produced a return rate of 99.7%. Literate respondents were encouraged to fill in the responses while illiterate respondents and those who considered themselves insufficiently literate were interviewed and their responses ticked on the copies of the instrument.

Results and Discussion of Findings

RQ1: How often do respondents receive news about crime?

Table 1: Frequency with which Respondents Receive News about Crime

S/N	Variables	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a	Whether or not they receive news about crime	Yes	388	97.2
		No	11	2.8
		Total	399	100
b	Frequency with which they receive news about crime	Several times in a day	117	29.3
		About once in a day	7	1.8
		About once in two days	39	9.8

	About once in three days	25	6.3
	About once in four days	33	8.3
	Let's say once in five days	19	4.8
	Every week	70	17.5
	Every month	60	15.0
	Rarely	29	7.3
	Total	399	100
c	Whether or not they receive news about crime in their community	Yes	381
		No	18
		Total	399
d	Frequency with which they receive news about crime in their community	Very often	154
		Often	116
		Sometimes	103
		Rarely	26
		Total	399

Field Survey, (2024)

Almost all of the respondents (388 or 97.2%) responded in the positive that they received news of crime while 11 or 2.8% responded in the negative. In terms of how frequently respondents received news about crime, table 1 shows that more than a quarter, 117 or 29.3% received it “several times in a day”; 70 or 17.5% “every week”; 60 or 15% ‘every month’; 39 or 9.8% about “once in two days”; 33 or 8.3%, about “once in four days”; 25 or 6.3% about “once in three days”; while 19 or 4.8% receive it about “once in five days”. This shows that more than one quarter of the respondents, 123 or 30.8% receive news about crime between one to five days in a week. On whether the respondents received news about crime in their communities, table 1(c) shows that 381 or 95.5% responded in the positive while 18 or 4.5% responded in the negative. This shows that the majority of the residents of AMAC in FCTA communities received news about crime in their communities.

On how frequent respondents received news about crime in their communities, table 1 (d) shows that more than three quarter, 154 or 38.6% received news about crime that occurred in their communities “very often”; another more than a quarter, 116 or 29.1% received news of crime “often”; about one quarter, 103 or 25.8% “sometimes”, while the least respondents, 26 or 6.5% “rarely” received news about crime in their communities. This shows that the majority of the respondents received news about crime in their communities ‘very often’, ‘often’ and ‘sometimes’ in these extents.

RQ2: What are Respondents’ Sources of Crime News?

Table 2: Respondents’ Sources of Crime News

S/N	Variables	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Respondents’ sources of crime news	News papers	45	11.3
		Magazines	21	5.3
		Radio	52	13.0
		TV	138	34.6

The Internet	66	16.5
Neighbours	31	7.8
Friends	22	5.5
Family members	23	5.8
Community leaders	1	.3
Total	399	100

Field Survey, (2024)

On the issue of respondents’ sources of crime news, table 2 shows that the print media (newspapers and magazines) served as sources of news to 66 or 16.5% of respondents; followed by the broadcast media (radio and TV) from which 190 or 47.6% obtained crime news; the digital media (Internet) served as news sources to 66 or 16.5% while interpersonal sources (through neighbours, friends, family members and community leaders) accounted for sources of crime news to 77 or 19.3% of respondents. This shows that almost half of the respondents get their news from the broadcast media (radio and television). However, considering these channels severally, the television ranked the highest of sources of crime news to respondents, followed by the Internet and then radio.

RQ3: What Kind of Crime News do Respondents Receive Most often?

Table 3: Kinds of Crime News Most Often Received by Respondents

S/N	Variables	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	The kind of crime news most often received by respondents	Stealing	130	32.6
		Armed robbery	85	21.3
		Rape/sexual assault	13	3.3
		Burglary	3	.8
		Kidnapping/abduction	60	15.0
		Terrorism	33	8.3
		Cultism	7	1.8
		Murder	2	.5
		Violence/fights	13	3.3
		Arson/involving fire	14	3.5
		Selling spoilt food	2	.5
		Selling fake/substandard medicines	5	1.3
		Sale/use of hard drugs	9	2.3
		Fraud	4	1.0
		Cyber crimes	12	3.0
		Embezzlement	3	.8
	Selling what should be given free to members of the society	1	.3	
	Hoarding	1	.3	
	Tax evasion	1	.3	
	Jail break	1	.3	
	Total	399	100	

Field Survey, (2024)

On the kind of crime news most often received by respondents, table 3 shows that more than a quarter, 130 or 32.6% indicated that it was stealing; followed by armed robbery (which is an aggravated form of stealing and one that involves violence) with 85 or 21.3%; kidnapping/abduction, 60 or 15%; terrorism 33 or 8.3%; arson and violence/rape (sexual assault) with 14 and 13 representing 3.5% and

3.3% respectively; cybercrime with 12 respondents or 3%; sale or use of hard drugs and cultism with 9 and 7 frequencies representing 2.3% and 1.8% respectively, while various other kinds of crime amounted to 39 or 9.8%. This shows that news about stealing was the kind of crime news most often received by respondents.

RQ 4: What is the Influence of Crime News on Respondents' Daily Activities?

Table 4: Influence of Crime News on Respondents' Daily Activities

S/N	Variables	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a	News about crime has made you to become suspicious of people around you.	Strongly Disagree	53	13.3
		Disagree	99	24.8
		Neutral	16	4.0
		Agree	154	38.6
		Strongly Agree	77	19.3
		Total	399	100
b	You are more careful with your personal security.	Strongly Disagree	26	6.5
		Disagree	122	30.6
		Neutral	38	9.5
		Agree	121	30.3
		Strongly Agree	92	23.1
		Total	399	100
c	News of crime makes you afraid.	Strongly Disagree	28	7.0
		Disagree	105	26.3
		Neutral	62	15.5
		Agree	125	31.3
		Strongly Agree	79	19.8
		Total	399	100
d	You become anxious.	Strongly Disagree	27	6.8
		Disagree	137	34.4
		Neutral	68	17.0
		Agree	101	25.3
		Strongly Agree	66	16.5
		Total	399	100
e	It causes you to sleep less than you should.	Strongly Disagree	46	11.5
		Disagree	129	32.3
		Neutral	45	11.3
		Agree	86	21.6
		Strongly Agree	93	23.3
		Total	399	100
f	It makes you develop a sense of insecurity and danger.	Strongly Disagree	43	10.8
		Disagree	123	30.8
		Neutral	59	14.8
		Agree	94	23.6
		Strongly Agree	80	20.1
		Total	399	100
g	It makes you pay more attention to news generally.	Strongly Disagree	44	11.0

		Disagree	105	26.3
		Neutral	43	10.8
		Agree	113	28.3
		Strongly Agree	94	23.6
		Total	399	100
h	You take care to hide your financial and business transactions from people.	Strongly Disagree	50	12.5
		Disagree	158	39.6
		Neutral	39	9.8
		Agree	80	20.1
		Strongly Agree	72	18.0
		Total	399	100
i	Because of this, you do not relate with people as freely as you would have loved to.	Strongly Disagree	35	8.8
		Disagree	151	37.8
		Neutral	52	13.0
		Agree	92	23.1
		Strongly Agree	69	17.3
		Total	399	100
j	It has made you to be more prayerful.	Strongly Disagree	25	6.3
		Disagree	109	27.3
		Neutral	40	10.0
		Agree	99	24.8
		Strongly Agree	126	31.6
		Total	399	100
k	You wish to leave your community for another because of the high rate of crime around you.	Strongly Disagree	42	10.5
		Disagree	125	31.3
		Neutral	70	17.5
		Agree	91	22.8
		Strongly Agree	71	17.8
		Total	399	100
l	News about crime causes you to worry more about your family members.	Strongly Disagree	55	13.8
		Disagree	109	27.3
		Neutral	27	6.8
		Agree	84	21.1
		Strongly Agree	124	31.0
		Total	399	100
m	It makes you to spend more money on security.	Strongly Disagree	30	7.5
		Disagree	89	22.3
		Neutral	59	14.8
		Agree	119	29.8
		Strongly Agree	102	25.6
		Total	399	100
n	News about crime makes you stay indoors at night.	Strongly Disagree	35	8.8
		Disagree	107	26.8

Neutral	32	8.0
Agree	100	25.1
Strongly Agree	125	31.3
Total	399	100

Field Survey, (2024)

On whether news about crime made respondents to be suspicious of people around them, with more than a quarter, 154 or 38.6% agreed to this statement; 77 or 19.3% strongly agreed to it; less than one quarter, 99 or 24.8% disagreed and 53 or 13.3% strongly disagreed while 16 or 4% were neutral. This shows that more than half of the respondents agreed that news about crime has made them to be suspicious of people around them.

Almost 57.9% indicated that news about crime made them suspicious of people around them, 4% were neutral about this while the rest disagreed that crime news had such an effect on them; 53.4% cumulatively strongly agreed and agreed that crime news had made them more careful with their personal security

On the issue that news of crime made respondents become suspicious of people around them data shows that more than one quarter, 154 or 38.6% of the respondents agreed on this issue; less than one quarter, 99 or 24.8% disagreed; 77 or 19.3% strongly agreed; 53 or 13.3% strongly disagreed, while 16 or 4% were neutral on this issue. This shows that more than half 231 of the respondents representing 57.9% agreed that news of crime made respondents suspicious of people around them.

On the issue of respondents being more careful with their personal security data revealed that 122 or 30.6% disagreed that they are more careful with their personal security; followed closely with 121 or 30.3% of the respondents that agreed; 92 or 23.1% strongly agreed; 26 or 6.5% strongly agreed while 38 respondents representing 9.5% were neutral. This shows that more than half of the respondents agreed that they are more careful with their personal security.

On the issue of news of crime creating fear among respondents revealed that more than a quarter, 125 or 31.3% agreed; followed by 105 or 26.3% that disagreed; 79 and 28 representing 19.8% and 7% strongly agreed and strongly disagreed that news of crime creates fear among the respondents, while 62 respondents or 15.5% were neutral. This shows that more than half of the respondents agreed that news of crime results to fear among respondents.

In response to whether news of crime made respondents anxious showed that 137 or 34.4% disagreed; 101 or 25.3% agreed; 66 and 27 respondents representing 16.5% and 6.8% respectively while 68 respondents representing 17% were neutral. This shows that majority of the respondents agreed and disagreed in almost equal (41.8% and 41.1%) number.

On whether crime news results in causing respondents to sleep less than they should, revealed that 129 or 32.3% disagreed; 93 strongly or 23.3% agreed; 86 or 21.6% agreed; 46 representing 11.5% strongly disagreed, while 45 respondents representing 11.3% were neutral. This shows that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that crime news results in causing respondents to sleep less than they should.

On whether news of crime make respondents develop a sense of insecurity and danger data revealed that 123 or 30.8% disagreed; 94 or 23.6% agreed; 80 or 20.1% strongly agreed; 43 or 10.8% strongly disagreed, while 59 or 14.8% were neutral. This shows that majority of the respondents disagreed that news of crime make them develop a sense of insecurity and danger.

On the issue of whether respondents take care to hide their financial and business transactions from people revealed that 158 or 39.6% disagreed; 80 or 20.1% agreed; 72 or 18% strongly disagreed; and 50 or 12.5% strongly disagreed while 39 or 9.8 were neutral. This shows that majority of the respondents disagreed that they do not take care to hide their financial and business transactions from people.

On whether because of crime news respondents do not relate to people as freely as they would have loved to. The data showed that 151 or 37.8% disagreed; 92 or 23.1% agreed; 69 or 17.3% strongly agreed and 35 or 8.8% strongly agreed, while 52 or 13% were neutral.

On whether crime news made respondents to be more prayerful revealed that 126 or 31.6% of the

respondents strongly agreed; 109 or 27.3% disagreed; 99 or 24.8% agreed and 25 or 6.3% strongly disagreed, while 40 or 10% were neutral. This means that majority of the respondents agreed that crime news made respondents to be more prayerful.

On the question of whether respondents wished to leave their community for another because of the high rate of crime around them. Data revealed that 125 or 31.3% disagreed; 91 or 22.8% 71 or 17.8% strongly agreed; and 42 or 10.5% strongly disagreed, while 70 or 17.5% were neutral. This show that majority of the respondents agreed that respondents wished to leave their community for another because of the high rate of crime.

On whether respondents were of the opinion that news about crime caused them to worry more about their family members. Data revealed that 125 or 31.3% disagreed; 91 or 22.8% agreed; 71 or 17.8% strongly agreed and 42 or 10.5% strongly disagreed while 70 or 17.5% were neutral. This shows that majority of the respondents almost in same number agreed and disagreed on the issue.

On whether news of crime make respondents spend money on security data shows that 119 or 29.8% agreed that news about crime make respondents spend money on security; 102 or 25.6% strongly agreed; 89 or 22.3% disagreed and 30 or 7.5% strongly disagreed, while 59 or 14.8% were neutral. This showed that majority of the respondents agreed that news of crime can make respondents send money on security.

Lastly, respondent's opinions were sought on whether news about crime made them stay indoors at night. Data revealed that 125 or 31.3% strongly agreed; 107 or 26.8% disagreed; 100 or 25.1% agreed; and 35 or 8.8% strongly agreed, while 32 or 8% were neutral on the issue.

Discussion of Major Findings

The first issue of this study is to answer the question of how often the respondents received news about crime. Data show that respondents received news about crime, judging from the fact that 97% of them reported that they received news on crime generally and 95% reported that they received news of crimes that occurred in their communities. The majority of them received news about crime often, ranging from those who received it several times within one day (29.3%), every week (17.5%), to those who received it every month (15%). Apparently, news about crime is often through mass media channels. This is in consonance with the study conducted by Nasi *et al* (2000) which revealed that over 70% of news channels opened with stories related to crime, and with Sparks (2013) stating that stories on crime would generate interest in news stories and attract attention to them.

The second research question was about the source(s) of crime news. Mass media channels served as sources of news of criminality to 80% of respondents. However, examining the channels severally, television was the source of crime news to the majority (34.6%), followed by the internet from which 16.5% obtained the kind of news in focus, then radio, newspapers and then magazines. A paltry 19.4% received crime news from interpersonal sources such as neighbours, friends, family members and community leaders. This all the more buttresses the fact that media operators are performing their surveillance functions. Since Nigeria is said to have a high global ranking in crime rate (<https://statisticsofcrimereportedinnng.ng>), journalists are simply fulfilling their mandate to mirror the society and register occurrences that threaten the normal fabric of the society. This is notwithstanding the fact that scholars such as Oso (2012) infer that journalists perceive bad news as good news and promote it as such.

As to the types of crime which they most often hear or read about in the news, the majority respondents reported theft (32.6%) and armed robbery (21.3%) (which is an aggravated form of stealing, with violence or threat of violence against the victim in his presence) were the types of crimes most often relayed to them. This resonates with offerings of https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Pie-Chart-of-Percentage-of-the-Different-Crime-in-Abuja-Phase-I_fig4_334233572, showing robbery and theft as the most common crime types in Abuja. On causes of crime, *Encyclopedia.com* and https://www.myjobmag.com/square/article/128/7-reasons-why-people-steal#google_vignette mention "greed" (which is directly linked to stealing), as an important reason for crime.

Not only does news give members of the society information, it also influences their behaviour

and the manner in which they conduct their affairs. Data on the fourth research question which deals with the influence of crime news on respondents' lives revealed that more than half their number reported that crime related news caused their suspicion of people around them; resorting to prayers to God (for safety); remaining indoors at night; spending larger sums of money on security; worry about the safety of family members; paying more attention to personal security; fear; and giving more attention to the news. This resonates with the speculations of Smolej & Kivi (2006) that avoidance behaviour and restricted movement are expressions of fear of being crime victims, more so when people's perception of crime rate is shaped by the media. That is probably why Rusnaleli, (2021) warns that people ought to exercise self-control in their relationship with the media as news is strong enough to change people's behaviour (without their realising it) and even have negative influence on their future. Again, this all the more strengthens the underpinnings of the framing theory, that the manner in which issues are presented to the audience influences their decisions and the way in which they process the information.

Findings of this study are in consonance with the findings of Velásquez *et al.*, (2020) in their study of the effect of crime news coverage on crime perception in Peru. Residents of the Peruvian society investigated indicated that they had stopped movement outside their homes at night due to fear of becoming crime victims. Besides, they allocated more money and more time to personal security, albeit, inefficiently.

V. Recommendations

Mass media operators should keep reporting and exposing crime as often as it occurs. Such reporting should however be done objectively, not to promote fear, but to equip audience members to make informed decisions, to deter offenders and to assist authorities with the information required to provide adequate security to members of the society.

Considering that television served as the source of news to the majority of subjects, programmes that are produced with the aim of discouraging crime in the society should be aired on the medium constantly.

Owing to the fact that respondents reported that they received crime news related to stealing and armed robbery more than other types, issues of poverty, hunger, deprivation and greed in the society, should as a matter of urgency, be addressed by government.

Crime news influences social bonding negatively, therefore members of the society should be encouraged, especially through TV, to take social bonding seriously, while they pay attention to their personal security and keep themselves constantly updated with the news.

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