# Media Framing And Public Perception Of The Explosion At Bodija, Ibadan

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**Abstract:** *Media framing goes a long way to determine how news outlets present information by highlighting certain aspects of an issue while downplaying or omitting others. This paper examines media framing and public perception of the explosion that took place on the 16th January, 2024 at Bodija, Ibadan. A cross section of newspapers that reported the incident were examined in this study. Three independent newspapers; Vanguard, Punch and Tribune newspapers were used in this study. Also, 120 respondents who were residents within Bodija area were purposively selected for this study. The study made use of both quantitative and qualitative research method. The information gathered was analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. Based on the report gathered, it was revealed that the explosion was a result of the activities of illegal miners occupying one of the houses in Bodija who stored explosive devices in it and this was consistent among all the various media channels analyzed in the study. Also, based on the report, it was perceived that keeping explosive gadgets within residential buildings was totally wrong and security network was too poor. The study recommends that it is crucial for media outlets to prioritize accuracy and credibility in their reporting.*

**Keywords:** Explosion, Media Framing, Public perception, Reporting and Social Media

## Introduction

Media framing relates to how news organizations or other types of media package and present information to their audience. It entails highlighting certain aspects of an issue or occurrence while minimizing or ignoring others. The framing of a narrative has a considerable impact on how the audience views the subject or event being reported. Media framing is an effective instrument for shaping public opinion, influencing policy decisions, and contributing to the creation of social reality. According to Dwoskin, Merrill, and De Vynck (2022), social media has heightened public engagement with news, including information, misinformation, and deception.

As a consequence, research has expanded the traditional media impacts paradigm to encompass the creation and dissemination of social media messages, as well as their influence on news coverage (Tong, 2017). According to Meraz and Papacharissi (2013), the role of social media as an alternative information source is becoming increasingly important in the face of social disputes and political turmoil. Social media has been used to disseminate fragmented combat information, strengthen internal resolve, attract external support, and contribute to historical narratives in wars and dangers (Egea, 2022). Social media users, on the other hand, collaborate to select and create frames that are distinct from mainstream media, underscoring the platform's unique significance in shaping narratives during crises. Ndlela (2005) noted that from the standpoint of global communication, the western media typically covers African nations sparingly, unless the event involves a calamity. Media scholars usually claim that coverage of Africa by western media has been "negligent and inadequate" (Danker-Dake, 2004, p. 1), portraying the continent as "the repository of our greatest fears" (Hawk, 1992, p. 13); a continent where diseases propagate like wildfire, war grows like mushrooms, and corruption thrives; a land characterized by "natural disasters, political turmoil, ethnic violence, disease and violence" and "a crocodile-infested dark continent where jungle life has continually eluded scenario." (Ebo, 1992, p. 15).

Pandemonium erupted in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State, on Tuesday night, January 16, 2024, following a loud explosion that rocked numerous homes and left damage in its wake. The incident took place in the city's suburb of Bodija. Social media users have said that the incident happened just before 7:30 p.m. and that thousands of locals heard and felt what seemed like a large explosion. Witnesses noted that numerous buildings around Adeyi Avenue in Bodija sustained damage, including windows in homes, a hotel, and a restaurant that were blown out. Reports state that the explosion's effects were heard in Apete, Ojoo, UI, Moniya, Awotan, Alaro/Poly Ibadan, and Jeje. Residents reported feeling their homes tremble, and others stated their windows had been damaged. The incident was covered by numerous media outlets, including television stations, radio stations, newspapers, and various social media platforms.

## Statement of the Problem

The explosion that occurred at Bodija, Ibadan, has captured significant media attention, shaping public perception of the event. Media framing plays a crucial role in how the incident is portrayed and understood by the public. The explosion at Bodija, Ibadan, represents a significant event that has garnered widespread media coverage. However, the diverse framing strategies employed by media outlets in reporting the incident may influence public perception in various ways. Media outlets often employ different frames or narratives when reporting on disasters or crises. This variability in framing techniques can lead to inconsistencies in how the incident is portrayed to the public. Media framing plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and attitudes toward events such as the Bodija explosion. The accuracy and objectivity of media coverage are paramount in informing the public about disasters and their implications. However, sensationalism, bias, and misinformation may distort the depiction of the Bodija explosion in the media.

**Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The primary aim of this study is to examine media framing and public perception of the explosion at Bodija, Ibadan. The secondary objectives are as follows:

i. To investigate news sources relied upon by the newspapers in reporting the explosion in Ibadan.
ii. To assess the impact of media framing on public perception and attitudes toward the incident
iii. To assess the role of media framing in promoting public safety awareness in response to the Bodija explosion

**Research Questions**

i. What was news sources relied upon by the newspapers in reporting the explosion in Ibadan?
ii. What is the impact of media framing on public perception and attitudes toward the incident?
iii. What role did media framing played in promoting public safety awareness in response to the Bodija explosion?

**The Agenda-setting theory**

The framework for this study is based on McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory. The agenda-setting theory investigates how the public and the media interact, as well as how they strive to bring important problems to light so that they can be discussed, deliberated, or debated. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), the frequency and prominence with which specific political, economic, and social concerns are portrayed in the media determines how important those issues are in society. To summarize, it is believed that the media shapes the public's perspective of specific topics. Because the media plays such an important role in how people see the conflict, each frame that is discovered can have a wide range of consequences for the public.

Additionally, the theory contends that the media greatly shapes the opinions of its viewers by promoting ideals rather than reality. Agenda-setting theory, according to Blanton & Kegley (2017), contends that the communications media, by identifying and promoting issues, have a crucial role in forming the issues that draw the interest of governments and international organizations and shape public opinion toward particular issues. The theory, which has been extensively researched and applied to a variety of media platforms, contends that the media can influence public opinion by selecting which subjects receive the greatest attention.

**Media Framing**

Framing, as defined by scholars such as Entman (2012) is the act of organizing communication via the use of frames (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). Framing is defined by Goffman (1974) as organizing the perception of events to make them meaningful through a cognitive framework (p. 21).In practice, a "media frame" is the precise angle, perspective, or narrative through which news or information is conveyed, altering audience perception and understanding of an issue (Entman, 2012).
Framing research is frequently associated with agenda formation and priming in the field of cognitive media effects (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Entman (2012) suggests that by combining media framing with agenda setting, priming, and bias, readers can better understand how and why framing occurs in the media. Agenda setting, the basic goal of framing is to identify the issues that deserve audience attention. Even if it is not blatantly biased, strategic actors utilize framing to accomplish the intended impact of priming. When agenda framing and priming combine, however, they can result in widespread bias. Entman (2012) defines bias as "consistent patterns in the framing of mediated communication that favor one side of conflicts over the use of government power" (Entman 2012).

The rise of "hybrid media" (Güran and Zarslan, 2022, p.3), indicates a symbiotic news system integrating social media news creation and traditional news media on the internet, represents a significant shift in framing studies. Despite its digital transformation, this hybrid media retains traditional duties such as agenda setting, gatekeeping, and public opinion molding.

The media's role in modern society involves adhering to the concepts of social responsibility through professional standards of truth, precision, and fair reporting. In this regard, Owolabi (2017) recommends that the media report in a way that reflects and appreciates

society's multiplicity and plurality, while avoiding activities that could lead to violence and chaos. Skorup (2017) found that media messages often contain inaccuracies and emotional content for economic objectives.

## Public Perception

Public perception refers to the collective view on a given topic or intention that is relevant to society. It represents people's perspectives on issues that concern them. In the twenty-first century, public opinion is widely believed to be strongly influenced by the media; numerous research have been conducted to investigate the various components that influence public opinion (Zeng, 2023). Politicians and others interested in public opinion frequently seek to influence it through advertising or speech. Opinion has an important part in determining some essential decisions.

Social perception refers to the methods by which we obtain information about our social environment. Humans are continually absorbing social information; this is how we are socialized and learn about and from others. Based on social views, we can engage with others in acceptable ways. Social perception is crucial since much of our behavior is influenced by information we get from others and our social environment. How we see individuals and our social surroundings has a significant impact on our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward them. Perceiving the social world is an arbitrary procedure influenced by an individual's inspiration, emotions, and cognition, as well as long-standing features like personalities, self-schemas, and accessible constructions.

## Ibadan Explosion

On the night of January 16, an explosion occurred on Aderinola Street in Ibadan's Bodija axis, killing five people and injuring 77 others. Eyewitnesses said the explosion occurred at 19:45 local time (18:45 GMT) in Bodija, the city's residential sector. It was heard throughout Ibadan, the capital of south-western Oyo state. A painter who had been working at one of the collapsed buildings was among those who witnessed the tragedy. He arrived at work in the morning and is unable to find his supervisor. The governor, Seyi Makinde, informed Channels Television's Politics Today on Thursday, January 18, 2024, that initial investigations by security agencies indicated that the blast was caused by illegal miners occupying one of the houses in Bodija, and that the explosion occurred on Adeyi Avenue in Bodija. Nevertheless, it was heard and felt throughout the city.

## Importance of Focusing on News Sources

The news media, via news sources, determines what information the media audience is entitled to and how that information influences people's views, feelings, and behavior toward others. The source of information is an important aspect in news trustworthiness, and this is especially relevant to the explosion in Bodija in terms of how readers perceive, understand, and interpret the incident.
Analysis of media material is crucial for understanding what is and is not conveyed to us.

However, the relationship between media content and audiences is not one-way, since newsmakers can feed information into the media funnel while also anticipating audience reactions to how policy is formed and disseminated. Kulaszewicz (2015) observed that politicians use both official and unofficial information sources to impact journalists at formal media-friendly activities. Incorrect information about an ongoing crisis, frequently provided by incorrect or uninformed sources, might undermine its capacity to influence public opinion and government policy in the wrong direction. inevitably, detrimental, sensational, or erroneous reporting, when excessively exaggerated or incorrect, reinforces misconceptions and preconceptions. When the media prioritizes sensational, high-profile crime cases over additional victims of the same conflict, they deprive the lower victims their natural right to be acknowledged or read.

## Methodology

This study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Descriptive and Content analysis were used in this study. The study populations are residents of Bodija, Ibadan where the explosion took place. The period from January 16, 2024 to February 7, 2024 was used in this study. This period is the period when the explosion incident occurred till the period when the cause of the explosion was reported and confirmed by reliable sources.

A sample size of 120 residents was selected for this study using purposive sampling. The Sampling Technique used in this study was the Purposive Sampling Method. The research instrument used was a questionnaire. Three independent newspapers; Vanguard, Punch and Tribune newspapers were used in this study. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 25 for quantitative study which involves frequency tables and percentages while reports of the newspapers were analyzed using content analysis.

## Data Analysis

**Research Question One:** What was news sources relied upon by the newspapers in reporting the explosion in Ibadan?

In response to the research question about the news sources used by the three newspapers in reporting on the Bodija explosion, the study found that the majority of news items came from newspaper reporters or correspondents, eyewitnesses, residents, social media platforms, police officers and government officials. The term "source" refers to individuals who have access to or provide knowledge about the explosion. It is learned from the study that sources of information to journalists were varied and unlimited – mostly the eyewitnesses, residents, police officers and government officials. Most of the reports can be said to be based on the eyewitnesses and residents of the environments where the explosion occurred.

The situation suggests that the sources of news in a situation like an explosion occurrence can be fairly unpredictable because the incidents that generated the news are not predetermined in terms of time and location. This means that because the explosions are not scheduled, journalists are usually not the first to learn about or observe the development. In contrast, the situation differs from ordinary news beats, when journalists are occasionally prepped for an event or asked to a press briefing/conference to publicize an upcoming event.

**Research Question Two:** What is the impact of media framing on public perception and attitudes toward the incident?

**Table 1: The impact of media framing on public perception and attitudes toward the incident**

| S/no | Statements | SA % | A% | N% | D% | SD% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | The media reports on the explosion in Bodija Ibadan was informative to the public | 43 (35.8) | 59 (49.2) | 13 (10.8) | 5(4.2) | - |
| 2. | The media reports indicates that the public perceived that keeping explosive gadgets within residential buildings was totally wrong and security network was too poor | 61 (50.8) | 48 (40.0) | 8 (6.7) | 3 (2.5) | - |
| 3. | Media coverage of the explosion incident at Bodija was objective and neutral | 54 (45) | 51 (42.5) | 11 (9.2) | 3 (2.5) | 1 (0.8) |
| 4 | The media framing made the public to realize the need of the public to always report suspected criminals to the appropriate authorities | 38 (31.7) | 67 (55.8) | 12 (10.0) | 3 (2.5) | - |
| 5 | The media framing made the public feel that the incident should not have taken place if residents had reported the activities of the illegal miners before the explosion | 68 (56.7) | 49 (40.8) | 3 (2.5) | - | - |

Table 1 shows that 43 (35.8%) of the respondents strongly agree, 59 (49.2%) agree, 13 (10.8%) were neutral while 5(4.2%) disagree that the media reports on the explosion in Bodija Ibadan was informative to the public, 61 (50.8%) of the respondents strongly agree, 48 (40.0%) agree, 8 (6.7%) were neutral while 3(2.5%) disagree that the media reports indicates that the public perceived that keeping explosive gadgets within residential buildings was totally wrong and security network was too poor, 54 (45.0%) of the respondents strongly agree, 51 (42.5%) agree, 11 (9.2%) were neutral, 3 (2.5%) disagree while 1 (0.8%) strongly disagree that the media coverage of the explosion incident at Bodija was objective and neutral, 38 (31.7%) of the respondents strongly agree, 67 (55.8%) agree, 12 (10.0%) were neutral while 3 (2.5%) disagree that the media framing made the public to realize the need of the public to always report suspected criminals to the appropriate authorities. Furthermore, 68 (56.7%) of the respondents strongly agree, 49 (40.8%) agree while 3 (2.5%) were neutral on the media framing made the public feel that the incident should not have taken place if residents had reported the activities of the illegal miners before the explosion.

**Research Question Three:** What role did media framing played in promoting public safety awareness in response to the Bodija explosion?

Media framing involve highlighting key aspects such as the severity of the explosion, the potential causes of the explosion and the impact of the explosion on the community. While reporting the explosion incidents, the three newspapers reported the severity of the explosion.

According to the Tribune Newspaper, the explosion that rocked Dejo Oyelese Street and Adeyi Avenue in Bodija and its neighborhood was truly earth-shattering. According to the newspaper, residents in the region reported hearing horrific sounds for an extended period of time, and the impact of the blasts were felt as far as Ologuneru, New Garage, Apata, Ring Road, Basorun, Ojo, Akobo, Sango, Eleyele, and Imalefalafia in the city. Thousands of residents were displaced, and more than 200 homes were fully or partially destroyed. As the street was covered in debris, about 77 people were swiftly conformed injured and taken to hospitals. As

first responders struggled to rescue people from the debris, ceilings collapsed in houses on other streets as well. Horrible screams filled the air.

In addition, the three newspapers all reported the causes of the explosion. The Punch newspaper reported that the explosion was caused by the activities of illegal miners. The blast was traced to the storage of explosives by illegal miners at a house on Dejo Oyelese Street. Based on the report gathered, it was revealed that the explosion was a result of the activities of illegal miners occupying one of the houses in Bodija who stored explosive devices in it and this was consistent among all the various media channels analyzed in the study.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study revealed that the sources of the news relied upon by the newspapers were eyewitnesses, residents, social media platforms, police officers and government officials. In addition, findings revealed that majority of the respondents agree that the media reports on the explosion in Bodija Ibadan was informative to the public, reports indicated that the public perceived that keeping explosive gadgets within residential buildings was totally wrong and security network was too poor while many of the respondents agree that media framing made the public to realize the need of the public to always report suspected criminals to the appropriate authorities. Also, majority of the respondents agree that the media framing made the public feel that the incident should not have taken place if residents had reported the activities of the illegal miners before the explosion.

Furthermore, the three newspapers reported the severity of the explosion and the cause of the explosion. According to the newspaper, the were reports that horrific sounds were heard for an extended period of time, and the impact of the blasts were felt in some many part of the city of Ibadan. Also, it was reported that the blast was traced to the storage of explosives by illegal miners at a house on Dejo Oyelese Street.

**Conclusion**

The paper examined media framing and public perception of the explosion that took place on the 16th January, 2024 at Bodija, Ibadan. Media framing involved highlighting key aspects such as the severity of the explosion, the potential causes, the impact on the community, and most importantly, the measures people could take to ensure their safety in similar situations. The findings revealed that the sources of the news relied upon by the newspapers were eyewitnesses, residents, social media platforms, police officers and government officials. It was also reported that the public perceived that keeping explosive gadgets within residential buildings was totally wrong and security network was too poor. The residents on their part had some blame since there was no record of their report to security agents about the activities of illegal miners living and keeping explosive gadgets within the residential areas. Security network is also part of the blame as there not adequate security to monitor and checkmate the activities of the illegal miners and how they were able to convey the explosive gadgets to residential areas without any security outfit intersecting them.

**Recommendations**

i.   It is crucial for media outlets to prioritize accuracy and credibility in their reporting.
ii.  The need for residents to always report any illegal activities in their residential areas to the appropriate authorities on time.

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