

Muslim Scholars Respond to Human Insecurity in Nigeria: A Thematic and Content Analysis Approach

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Abstract

Human insecurity has emerged as a critical challenge in Nigeria, encompassing issues such as banditry, *Boko Haram* extremists, farmer-herder conflicts, kidnappings, and political violence. While the government is the primary actor in combating these threats, Muslim scholars have played a significant role in promoting peace, social justice, and guiding communities on matters of insecurity through their Friday sermons and public lectures. This study explores the responses of Muslim scholars to human insecurity in Nigeria through a thematic and content analysis of online newspaper articles. It aims to uncover the key narratives, frame, and strategies adopted by these scholars to address insecurity in the country. Four major newspapers, Daily Trust and Leadership from Northern Nigeria and Sun and Vanguard from Southern Nigeria, were

selected due to their prominence. The findings reveal that *Leadership* and *Daily Trust* newspapers frame Muslim scholars' response to insecurity in a positive way, highlighting their calls for peace and encouraging government intervention, while *The Sun* and *Vanguard* provide a more critical lens, often highlighting the government's perceived inadequacies in addressing insecurity. The study recommends a balance of media reporting and collaborative engagement between Muslim scholars, the media, and government agencies in the fighting against insecurity menace.

Keywords: Content analysis; Framing theory; Human insecurity; Muslim scholars; Social influence theory

Introduction

Nigeria's insecurity challenges have increased rapidly over the past two decades, with the rise of extremist groups such as *Boko Haram* insurgents, banditry, herder-farmer crises, kidnappings, militancy, and other forms of violence (Muhammad et al., 2024; Nwagboso, 2018). The underlying causes of insecurity in Nigeria are complex, involving economic difficulties, political instability, ethnic tensions, and religious extremism (Zubairu, 2020). Despite the multifaceted nature of the problem, religious leaders, especially Muslim scholars, have played significant roles in advocating for peace and stability through delivering public lectures, sermons, and media briefings (Jatau & Maza, 2023). Muslim scholars, known as *Ulamas*, are respected figures in Nigerian society, particularly in the northern regions where Islam is the dominant religion. Historically, they have been involved in the socio-political life of their communities, offering guidance on matters of justice, governance, and social welfare. In the context of rising insecurity, these scholars have increasingly used their platforms to promote peace, denounce extremism, and call for dialogue between warring factions.

Given the media's influence on public perception, the portrayal of Muslim scholars in online news articles can either reinforce or challenge their role in addressing insecurity. Online newspapers serve as a platform where their messages are disseminated to a broader audience, allowing for a deeper understanding of their contributions to national peace efforts. This study, through content analysis of online newspaper articles, aims to investigate how Muslim scholars respond to fighting insecurity, the extent of their involvement, and the challenges they face in achieving lasting peace in Nigeria. In light of these considerations, this

research seeks to bridge the gap in academic literature concerning the role of religious scholars in security matters, providing a nuanced understanding of their contributions to peace building in Nigeria.

The concept of insecurity in the Nigerian context is broad and includes various forms of violence such as armed robbery, *Boko Haram* insurgency, banditry, farmer-herder conflict, kidnappings, and ethno-religious conflicts. Insecurity undermines development, threatens national stability, and disrupts the daily lives of citizens. No country can attain a greater level of both human and economic development with the numerous security challenges on the ground. The socioeconomic, political, and religious settings of any country are clearly jeopardised as a result of the prevalent violence and disorder in that particular country. This has created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity among the citizens. Many people are horrified by this dreaded and fearful experience as a result of their sense of insecurity and vulnerability, which can have disastrous effects on the stability of the country. Since the military took over power in 1966, Nigeria has experienced unprecedented levels of insecurity (Harkness, 2018). One could argue that Nigeria is currently struggling with numerous security challenges. The country's problems are most visible in the recent wave of armed violence and criminality that has swept through many regions of the country. For instance, in the south-eastern part of the country, there is frequent violence, uprising, and oil bunkering by the Niger Delta militants; *Boko Haram* insurgencies in the north-east; farmer-herder clashes, cattle rustling, and armed banditry spread across the north-west and north central (Igbini, 2020; Nkemdilim Ogbuehi, 2018; Ukoji et al., 2019).

However, the response of religious leaders, particularly Muslim scholars, in addressing these issues is rooted in the Islamic principle of peace building (Islah) (Sulaiman, 2021). Peace building from an Islamic perspective involves the proactive efforts of Islamic scholars to mediate conflicts, condemn violence, foster collaborations, and promote reconciliation based on the teachings of Islam (Esposito & Yilmaz, 2016). These efforts often include delivering sermons, issuing religious decrees (fatwas) condemning acts of violence and extremism, engaging in interfaith dialogue to promote understanding and tolerance, and providing guidance on how to resolve conflicts peacefully. The mass media; radio, television, and online newspapers remain crucial vehicles through which *Ulamas'* message could reach the audience.

Although there is a paucity of literature on Muslim scholars' responses to insecurity in Nigeria, the available studies related to Muslim scholars' responses to insecurity in Nigeria and beyond have highlighted the multifaceted contributions these scholars made to peace building. For instance, research conducted by Olojo (2017) emphasized the role of Islamic clerics in countering radical ideologies, especially in northern Nigeria, where groups like *Boko Haram* have propagated their extremist views. Olojo (2017) found that Muslim scholars play a vital role in educating the public, communal mobilisation, and resistance against the *Boko Haram* insurgency. The study suggested the need for a deeper integration of the community actor into the broader counterinsurgency struggle in the country.

Similarly, a study by Wani (2023) investigated the mechanism of Islam and the involvement of religious leaders in community mediation and conflict resolution in Nigeria. They found that

Muslim scholars often serve as intermediaries between conflicting parties, using their influence to facilitate dialogue and negotiate peace agreements. The study found that most conflict resolution approaches in modern societies, such as mediation, negotiation, and conciliation, are rooted in Islamic ideologies and teachings. The study further suggested sustaining the kinship of peaceful coexistence between various ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria as a panacea to a peaceful society. In a study focused on interfaith dialogue, Iweze (2022) examined the role of religious leaders in building interfaith dialogue in Kano, Nigeria. Iweze found that religious leaders have been framed by the media for mobilizing their followers towards collective violence in response to other faiths. The study equally acknowledged the efforts of religious leaders toward fostering the interfaith dialogue and transformed religious extremism into peace building in Kano State. However, the objective of this study is to examine the response of Muslim scholars in addressing insecurity in Nigeria, with a view to assessing the impact of their contributions on public opinion and policy discourse regarding security issues in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative content analysis approach as the primary method for collecting data to examine the responses of Muslim scholars toward insecurity in Nigerian online newspapers. Content analysis was employed due to its flexibility and ability to provide a researcher with specific media content and primary data to assist in supporting an argument (Mansor et al., 2024). Content analysis, as both qualitative and quantitative methodology, is recognized as a fact-based research method, unlike discourse analysis. Wimmer and Dominick (1987) identified content analysis as a

suitable method for studying recorded information like newspapers, books, historical documents, and audio-visual materials through a systematic procedure, especially for documenting trends over time. Content analysis is suitable for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the media's message (Harun et al., 2023). Similarly, the study uses Social Influence Theory (SIT) and framing theory (FT) to analyse how Islamic scholars in Nigeria respond to insecurity and how their social influence shape's public opinion and behaviour. SIT suggests that credible individuals or groups can significantly influence societal behaviours and attitudes (Flache et al., 2017; Gass & Seiter, 2022). Muslim scholars, particularly in the northern Nigeria, use their charismatic authority to advocate for peace, condemn violence, and promote security measures based on Islamic principles (Ostien, 2018). Framing theory, on the other hand, focuses on how media presents and constructs reality, affecting how the audience perceives and understands information, ultimately shaping their attitudes and behaviours (D'Angelo, 2017).

Sampling, Period of Coverage, and Variable Search

Four Nigerian newspapers, i.e., *Daily Trust*, *Leadership*, *Punch*, *the Sun*, and *Vanguard*, were purposefully selected for analysis. Purposive and convenience sampling are considered paramount in this study due to their flexibility and enable the selection of study samples based on their characteristics, availability, and easy to access (Golzar et al., 2022). These newspapers are among the top recognized and influential English-language newspapers in Nigeria (Guide, 2023). News articles concentrating on Muslim scholars' speech on insecurity were collected from the dedicated websites of the four selected newspapers between

January 2022 and August 2024. These periods correspond to a period when the highest profile insecurity events occurred in the country like the *Abuja-Kaduna* train attack, the *Kuje* prison break, and the recent kidnapping of more than 2800 students of Kuriga town (Abubakar, 2024; Ojiakor & Albert, 2023). For the effective data collection from four newspapers' websites as well as to ensure consistency and accuracy, the terms often used by journalists in news writing to report Islamic scholars related insecurity issues were used. Such terminologies or variable searches include "Islamic Cleric," "Muslim Scholars," "Islamic Scholars," and "Insecurity" were used to search for relevant news articles.

Results and Discussion

The study data was analyzed based on the 29 news article samples collected from the selected Nigerian newspapers that met the inclusion criteria and were considered relevant for analysis. The articles were coded into three frames, namely: positive framing, negative framing, and neutral framing. Any news article reporting a Muslim scholar criticizing, blaming, or challenging government or an individual on insecurity is coded as "negative," while a news article supporting government or an individual coded as "positive." Any news article out of these two categories was coded as "neutral." The findings regarding how the selected newspapers frame Muslim scholars' response to insecurity in Nigeria are presented below.

The Leadership Newspaper

The Leadership newspaper frequently presents a comprehensive viewpoint of the Muslim scholars' responses to insecurity problems in Nigeria. This newspaper portrayed Muslim scholars as an authority in the fight against insurgencies. For instance, news articles in *The Leadership*

with the heading "I Warned against the Dangerous Radicalization of Bandits— Sheikh Gumi" suggest the power and involvement of Islamic scholars toward responding to insecurity in the country.

Table 1 below presents the summary of news articles reported by the *Leadership* newspaper. The data presented shows that, positive frame is dominant in *the Leadership* newspaper. The majority of the news articles reported by this newspaper

subtly advised the government to tackle insecurity in the country. However, the *Leadership* newspaper coverage of Muslim scholars' response to insecurity did not give more emphasis on criticizing government and security agencies but rather focused on promoting peace and stability in the country. This approach highlights the newspaper's commitment to fostering harmony and understanding in a time of crisis.

Table 1: Summary of news articles from the *Leadership* Newspaper

Article No.	Date	Article	Article Summary	Type of Framing		
				Positive	Negative	Neutral
1.	January 19, 2024	Sharia Council Urges Tinubu to Address Economy, Insecurity	This news article expresses the view of the Sharia Council on insecurity in Nigeria, which is a recognized body of Muslim scholars in the country. The scholars under the Sharia council call on President Tinubu to immediately solve the insecurity in the country.	Positive		
2.	March 15 2024	Welcome Ramadan (2)	A Muslim scholar highlights the imperative need to strengthen cooperation and understanding among all <i>Hausa and Fulani</i> ethnic groups with view to addressing the socioeconomic and security challenges in the country. He further stated that Muslim community is currently facing a serious security problem in the northern region.			Neutral
3.	October 1, 2024	Cleric Condemns Efforts to Undermine Matawalle's Fight Against Insecurity	This article shows how an Islamic cleric supports the honourable minister of state defence effort for addressing insecurity. According to the article, Muslims were urged to pray for the minister of Defence and the chief of Defence Staff in their efforts to fight against insecurity challenges in the country.	Positive		
4.	March 26, 2024	Gumi, Terrorism and	This article portrayed renowned Islamic scholar Sheikh Ahmad		Negative	

		National Security	Gumi of Kaduna State as a principal advocate for bandits in the country. The article revealed that Sheik Gumi always drew the attention of the military to employ a non-kinetic approach in their war against banditry. The article shows that Gumi is more concerned about the impact of the military bombardment on the bandits than the military, which has lost many officers.	
5.	September 1, 2024	I Warned Against The Danger Of Bandits— Sheikh Gumi	In this news article, the view of a prominent Kaduna-based Islamic cleric, Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, was given a prominent. The article reported Gumi warning about the dangers of bandit groups. Sheikh Gumi noted that “in the beginning bandits were fighting an ethnicity that could be resolved, and now it is turning into ideologically motivated guerrilla warfare.	Negative
6.	March 12, 2024	I am Ready To Dialogue With Bandits- Sheik Gumi	This news article reported the position of an Islamic scholar on negotiation with bandits as the way forward to tackling insecurity in the country. This Islamic cleric shows his readiness and willingness to lead a dialogue between government and the bandits if contacted. He then condemned the government's decision not to have any peaceful dialogue with bandits.	Neutral
	June 14, 2023	Cleric Urges Inclusion Of Religious Leaders In Governance	In this article, an Islamic scholar called on the government to include religious leaders in decision-making amid insecurity. According to him, all immoralities, such as hooliganism and phone snatching, could ultimately make youths easy targets for recruitment into more sophisticated crimes like terrorism, banditry, and insurgency.	Positive
8.	July 25, 2024	Islamic Leaders Meet Tinubu, Caution Against Planned Hardship	This news article reported a visit of the Islamic scholars' delegation to the president of Nigeria. During the visit, the scholars reiterated their support for the government	Positive

Protests and warned the Nigerians planning to embark on a nationwide strike. According to these scholars, the current tension in Africa is a result of protests. They equally advised Nigerians to give priority to national stability and stop encouraging violence.

Daily Trust Newspaper

Although *Daily Trust* is a powerful mouthpiece of Northern Nigeria, where the prevalence of insecurity is higher, the newspaper did not relent effort in reporting Muslim scholars' voices on insecurity issues. The *Daily Trust* newspaper reported Islamic scholars' responses to the security challenges using different frames, shedding light on the diverse perspectives within the Muslim community. This comprehensive coverage helped provide a more nuanced understanding of the

complex issues surrounding insecurity in Northern Nigeria.

Table 2 presents the narrative patterns in the *Daily Trust* newspaper with regard to Islamic scholars' response to insecurity which is associated with a negative frame that either blames the government or an individual as responsible for insecurity in the country. This framing overlooks the complex factors contributing to insecurity, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education.

Table 2: Summary of news articles from the *Daily Trust* Newspaper

Article No.	Date	Article	Article Summary	Type of Framing		
				Positive	Negative	Neutral
9.	10 Aug 2022	Insecurity: Seek better strategies, Muslim women tell FG	In this article, Muslims women scholars advised the federal government to engage in a reorientation project with a view to encouraging the people to become responsible and take part in resolving the numerous problems in the country. According to a communiqué forwarded to the <i>Daily Trust</i> newspaper, the government and nongovernmental organizations should encourage people to take charge of some of the problems they currently face.	Positive		
10.	10 Aug 2022	A return to sin isn't repentance. 6 Aug 2022	This news article condemned the negative attitudes of some corrupt leaders in Nigeria that led the country to retrogression. The article acknowledged the efforts of Muslim scholars and preachers for		Negative	

encouraging people to return to their Lord Almighty through repentance from evil deeds to the path of righteousness. According to the article, only this righteous action could change the current circumstances of insecurity, poverty, unemployment, hardship, and underdevelopment to a positive one.

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| 11. | 25 Mar
2022 | Ramadan:
Sheikh Jingir admonishes scholars to preach truthfulness and kindness | This news article reported a renowned Islamic scholar's effort in calling other Muslims to preach kindness amid the current hardship caused by insecurity, high cost of living, and corruption. | Positive |
| 12. | 1
August
2022 | Insecurity:
Ulama forum writes US Secretary of States, counters American Senators over Christians' maltreatment | This news article discussed a petition written by Muslim scholars' forum (<i>Ulama</i> forum) to the United States Secretary of State on the unprecedented killings of majority Muslims faithful in the country. The <i>Ulama's</i> forum criticized the American Senators who said that the Christians are maltreated in the country. | Negative |
| 13. | Septem
ber 1,
2024 | Sallah: Help govt agencies to tackle insecurity, Sheik Jingir admonishes Muslims | In this article, a scholar called on people in their respective communities to assist security agencies with the essential information to trace a prevalent criminality in the country. A scholar lamented the situation, which he referred to as unimaginable. | Positive |
| 14. | March
12,
2024 | Poor parenting fuelling insecurity, other vices – Cleric | Poor parenting is responsible for all social vices facing Nigeria today. In this article, an Islamic scholar views bad parenting as a cause of <i>Boko Haram</i> , stealing, kidnapping, homosexuality, and other immoralities in the country. | Negative
Frame |
| 15. | 20
August
2024 | Why banditry is on the rise in Zamfara – Islamic cleric | An Islamic scholar expresses his prostration over hunger and the high cost of living that is currently forcing people to migrate and abandon their farmlands. The article reported the view of this | Negative
Frame |

scholar that using military power alone is not a solution to the current insecurity in the country.

The *Sun* Newspaper

The Sun newspaper presents Muslim scholars responses to insecurity in a critical way, focusing on the underlying factors responsible for insecurity, such as ignorance, poverty, and injustice. The scholars offer insightful perspectives on how these factors contribute to insecurity and suggest possible solutions to address them effectively.

Table 3 shows how *the Sun* newspaper's narrative frequently paid attention to bringing out the numerous security challenges using the voices of Islamic scholars. Most of the articles related to Islamic scholars' calls on insecurity are framed negatively with *Ulamas* criticizing government and security personnel for their inability to protect citizens and maintain peace in the country. These criticisms often highlight the need for improved strategies and collaboration between religious leaders and security forces to address the growing security concerns in the country.

Table 3: Summary of news articles from *the Sun* Newspaper

Article No.	Date	Article	Article Summary	Positive	Type of Framing	
					Negative	Neutral
16.	18th December 2022	3 things cause insecurity in Nigeria – Sheikh Gumi	In this article, an Islamic scholar identified three major factors as responsible for the current insecurity in Nigeria. These three factors include ignorance, poverty, and injustice. He lamented the behavior of the government for spending billions on building flyovers and abandoning education.		Negative	
17.	3 May 2024	Sheikh Gumi Disputes Government's Assertion of Boko Haram Defeat	The article reported the position of a popular and controversial Kaduna-based Islamic scholar, in which he refuted the federal government's assertions of victory over the <i>Boko Haram</i> militants. According to this scholar, the military force alone could not bring an end to the insecurity in the country.		Negative	
18.	15 September 2022	Inter-faith Movement calls for Gumi's investigation,	This news article primarily reported the call for the investigation of a renowned Muslim scholar for his		Negative	

		arrest and kindness	association with bandits. The interfaith movement requested the relevant government agency to investigate the scholar for his love of bandits.	
19.	12 April 2022	Ramadan lecture: Injustice cause of Nigeria's security challenges – <i>Ansar-ud-Deen Imam</i>	This article reported the advice given to the president of Nigeria by the <i>Ansar-ud-Deen</i> scholar in which he called on him to follow the teachings of the holy Prophet, who, when implementing the Islamic law of amputating thieves, said even if his daughter was found guilty of theft, she would be dealt with. The scholar attributed the insecurity in the country to injustices.	Negative
20.	4 January 2022	Banditry: Why Sheikh Gumi's peace move hit the rock – Media Aide	The media aid of a renowned Islamic scholar was reported by the Daily Trust newspaper, saying that the reasons why the peace talks between the government and bandits failed were as a result of the government's refusal to engage his boss. He reiterated the efforts of Sheik Gumi toward advocating dialogue between the bandits and government.	Negative
21.	7 March 2024	Ramadan: Opportunity to promote peace, unity-Shari'ah Council	This news article reported the Sharia Council's appeal to the government for corruption and wasteful spending of public funds. The council argued that Nigerians should not bear such security challenges considering the trillions of Naira being spent on the security agencies.	Negative Frame
22.	10th September 2024	Northern scholars declare support for Tinubu's renewed war against banditry	This news article centered on the Concerned Scholars for Peace and Development's (CSPD) categorical support for the Nigerian president's efforts to tackle banditry. The group warned saboteurs	Positive

to stop distracting the effort of the Minister of State for Defense and the military for their war against banditry.

Vanguard Newspaper

Vanguard's reporting style of Muslim scholars responding to insecurity often follows the style of *The Sun* newspaper, with dominant negative frames often blaming the government as responsible for the current insecurity in the country or blaming individuals for sabotaging government efforts in this direction. This framing can sometimes overlook the complex root causes of insecurity, such as poverty, corruption, and economic hardship.

Table 4 shows how *Vanguard* newspaper frequently, in their reporting of Muslim scholars responses to insecurity, pays attention to reporting scholars' voices

criticizing government and holding it responsible for insecurity challenges in the country. Although there are some occasions in which *Vanguard* editorial decisions are geared toward reported Muslim scholars supporting and encouraging government and security agencies in the fight against insecurity. This balanced approach to reporting provides a comprehensive view of the various perspectives within the Muslim community on issues of insecurity. Through highlighting both criticisms and support, *Vanguard* to some extent allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complex factors at play in addressing security challenges from Muslim scholars' perspective.

Table 4: Summary of news articles from *Vanguard* Newspaper

Article No.	Date	Article	Article Summary	Type of Framing		
				Positive	Negative	Neutral
23.	September 29, 2024	Cleric condemns efforts to undermine Matawalle's fight against insecurity	In this news article, an Islamic cleric stressed the challenges facing the minister of defense, urging the Muslim community in Nigeria to pray for his success in the fight against insecurity. He said that the minister of defense and the Chief of Defense Staff are facing pressure from groups benefiting from the insecurity.	Positive		
24.	August 23, 2024	Muslim women to Tackle poverty, rising insecurity	The Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria, FOMWAN, has associated poor implementation of policies in the education sector, poverty, and a lack of empowerment as contributing factors to the		Negative	

			current insecurity challenges in Nigeria.	
25.	March 06, 2024	Ramadan: Muslim-Muslim agenda alone can't fix Nigeria — Shari'ah Council	In this news article, an Islamic scholar who is a member of the Sharia Council lamented the unpredictable period associated with anxiety, poverty, distrust, corruption, and insecurity. The cleric solicits for Islamic teachings and justice as the keys that open the doors of prosperity in society.	Negative
26.	March 06, 2024	Nigerians shouldn't be hungry, insecure, Shariah Council tells FG Ibrahim Hassan-Wuyo	Muslim leaders across the country, under the umbrella of the Supreme Council for Shari'ah in Nigeria, SCSN, drew the attention of the federal government on insecurity and hunger.	Negative
27.	October 19, 2023	Christians can't be trusted with Nigeria's security — Gumi	This article reported the position of an Islamic scholar on handling responsibility associated with the security of the Muslim community. The scholar argued that it is dangerous to entrust Nigeria's security in the hands of Christians and Southerners.	Negative
28.	October 17, 2024	Islamic clerics laud Matawalle over killing of bandits' leader Sububu	This article reported that the Islamic scholars in Nigeria have commended the Minister of State Defense over the killing of a bandit's leader, Halilu Sububu, and other members of his team. They said that the current security measures contributed toward recording a lot of successes in the fight against banditry.	Positive
29.	10th September 2024	Northern scholars declare	This news article centered on the Concerned Scholars for Peace and	Negative Frame

support for Development's (CSPD) Tinubu's categorical support for the renewed war Nigerian president's efforts against banditry to tackle banditry. The group warned saboteurs to stop distracting the effort of the Minister of State for Defense and the military for their war against banditry.

Table 5 shows the summary of a pattern of frames among four newspapers. The Sun newspaper carries more negative frames, followed by the *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* newspapers, respectively. The data presented also shows that with the exception of the Sun newspaper, which has

only one positive frame, the remaining newspapers carried the same equal positive frames. It is evident that the Sun newspaper tends to focus more on negative news compared to the other newspapers in the study.

Table 5: Summary of frames in Four Newspapers

Newspapers	Type of Framing			
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	
Leadership	3	2	2	8
Daily Trust	3	4	0	7
The Sun	1	6	0	7
Vanguard	3	4	0	7
Total	10	16	3	29

The findings indicate that Nigerian online newspapers reflect a diverse spectrum of Muslim scholars' responses to insecurity, shaped largely by each publication's editorial stance. Leadership newspaper reports Muslim scholars' efforts with a predominantly positive frame, focusing on their calls for peace and urging the government to take action. This approach aligns with Leadership's apparent aim to promote stability and harmony by focusing on solutions rather than criticisms. The *Daily Trust* and the *Sun* newspapers, however, take a more critical stance, with narratives that frame the responses of Muslim scholars as highlighting government failures and inefficacy in addressing insecurity. The *Daily Trust*, for example, links the root of insecurity to governance issues while somewhat

downplaying the multidimensional causes, such as economic factors, social inequality, and education deficits. This reflects an editorial choice to frame the scholars' responses in a way that emphasizes accountability, potentially to pressure authorities into more effective action. *Vanguard* adopts a more balanced approach, presenting both the criticisms and support Muslim scholars have for the government's security initiatives. This balanced reporting captures the complexity of Muslim scholars' responses, showcasing the scholars' constructive support for government efforts while also acknowledging their calls for better strategies and accountability. This of course is the function of all Muslim believers as stated in the Hadith of the

prophet Muhammad peace and blessings of Allah be upon him that:

“Whosoever of you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then [let him change it] with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart — and that is the weakest of faith.” (Muslim, n. d.).

Similarly, the study found that the scholars’ discourse on insecurity is characterized by two main themes: peace promotion and calls for governmental accountability. Leadership newspaper’s coverage leans heavily on peace-oriented narratives, focusing on the role of Muslim scholars as peacemakers and their appeals for harmonious solutions to Nigeria’s insecurity challenges. This theme is essential, as it underscores the moral and ethical responsibilities that these scholars feel in reducing social tensions and fostering reconciliation within communities. The Daily Trust, the Sun, and Vanguard newspapers, while also featuring narratives around peace, focus more on themes of accountability, with Islamic scholars often vocalizing criticisms of the government’s role in the current security challenges in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study explored how Nigerian online newspapers frame Muslim scholars’ responses to insecurity, revealing diverse editorial approaches. Leadership and Daily Trust emphasize positive frames, presenting Muslim scholars as advocates for peace and stability. In contrast, The Sun and Vanguard adopt a critical stance, highlighting government failures as a root cause of insecurity. These varied framings

shape public perceptions and influence policy discourse, positioning Muslim scholars as key actors in addressing insecurity through peace promotion and calls for accountability. This viewpoint is in line with the Islamic principles of justice and individual responsibility, as echoed in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which encourages believers to address societal evils by various means. The findings underscore the role of media framing in amplifying or moderating the influence of Muslim scholars on public opinion and policy. The study contributes towards highlighting the potential for Muslim scholars to contribute meaningfully to insecurity discourse, leveraging their influence to foster social cohesion and reform. Based on the findings of this study, we recommend the collaborative engagement between Muslim scholars and government agencies in Nigeria. Future studies should investigate the framing of religious leaders’ roles in insecurity in different cultural and geopolitical contexts with a view to understanding how other countries’ mass media frame Islamic scholars’ responses to insecurity issues.

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