



ABSTRACT

The conflict between the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) that lasted for eight months (February 14–October 17, 2022), crippled academic activities in Nigeria. Peace journalism demands that the press serve as mediators and conciliators to conflicts, while contributing to national development. Whether the dailies' editorials employed the principles of peace journalism in reporting the FGN-ASUU faceoff was the focus of this study. Using the social responsibility media

UTILIZATION OF PEACE JOURNALISM TENETS IN NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS ON THE GOVERNMENT AND ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES FACEOFF OF 2022

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Introduction

The faceoff between the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the main body of lecturers in Nigeria public universities, was the 16th account since the country's return to democracy in 1999. The strike lasted for eight months (February 14–October 17, 2022), and in this period public universities in the country were totally shut down. ASUU demanded that the Federal Government of Nigeria improve its funding of universities for infrastructure and teaching facilities, grant university autonomy, review lecturers' salaries and Earned Academic Allowance (EAA), and the agreement re-negotiation (Editorial Board, 2022; Ezigbo, Tyessi & Olaitan, 2022). The strike disrupted academic process for many Nigerian students as well as created room for avertable crimes and social ills as the students were not engaged academically.

Peace is a phenomenon that is desired by every society but can be illusive, threatened or absent because of the existence of conflicts and controversial leanings among people of a community. Conflict occurs where there is a clash of oppositional elements, forces, processes or ideas, and can be identified in all kinds of human relations, but the precipitators to conflicts can be remote and often negligible. However, they sprout out stealthily till their roots cross different parts of human interactions and may peace become far-fetched (De Michelis, 2018; Lynch, 2014; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Shaw, Lynch & Hackett, 2011).



theory and qualitative content analysis with the van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, 1,156 editions of *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *Vanguard* newspapers were purposively selected and studied. There were 19 editorials on the FGN-ASUU faceoff. While most of the editorials applied the tenets of peace journalism, *Vanguard* took an exception, tilting more towards war journalism. It was recommended that newspapers should de-emphasize war journalism and focus more on the elements of peace journalism in editorials.

Keywords: ASUU; Editorial; Peace journalism; Social responsibility; Strike

Amidst a conflict environment, the kind of information that is made available to people impact its resolution. It then implies that biased and destructive communication can exacerbate a situation, whereas honest and open reports douse tension among warring parties. This is what peace journalism advocates. The opposite of peace journalism is war reporting. A pivotal element in conflict resolution is that the mass media should desist from war reporting. War reporting focuses more attention on the manifest burning phase of violent conflicts, instead of according space to latent issues and attitudes (Lynch, 2015; Moge kwu, 2011; Peleg, 2006). Peace journalism goes in line with a text from the Holy Bible, "*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall see God*" (Matthew 5:8 NKJV).

Journalism is believed to be influenced by the history and nature of the environment in which it is practiced, whether cultural, religious or sociological (Pintak, 2014; Skjerdal, 2012). Granted that the Nigerian society is one of mixed and multifaceted divides in languages, cultures, tribes, religions, economic backgrounds and political interests, the existence of conflict is a given. It therefore behooves journalists to understand the realities and ensure that peace journalism is enthroned. Peace journalism is a journalistic approach that challenges the traditional news values utilized in the coverage of conflict issues and events. It is a special approach of socially responsible media practice with the goal of contributing to peaceful resolution of conflicts (Arregui, Thomas & Kilby, 2020; Hanitzsch, 2010; Mitra, 2016; 2017).

In ... (*lets state the month and year*) by court injunction, ASUU was forced re-open academic activities in the universities, whereas the fundamental issues that lead to the faceoff were not addressed. The conflict between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the lecturers continued while academic activities resumed. The press owes the public the social responsibility to inform and educate about happenings in the society, including conflicts such as the faceoff between the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). It is expected that newspaper organisations in Nigeria, including *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *Vanguard*, would toe the path of peace journalism in their editorials, which represent the organisation's corporate opinion on issues. They are in their editorials expected to contribute to the amicable resolution of the matter and not to present any party as the victor or the vanquished as obtainable in war journalism. How this was displayed in editorials of the mentioned newspapers between February 14–October 17, 2022, was the focus of this study.



Statement of the Problem

The conflict between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Academic Staff Union of Universities is not a new phenomenon, given its nearly four decades of occurrence (Monogbe & Monogbe, 2019; Olusegun, 2014). The recent industrial action that lasted for eight months (February 14–October 17, 2022), affected socio-economic activities, disrupted the national development process and created room for avertable social ills by young people who were out of school.

Newspapers have a duty to the society: to inform them about daily occurrences; educate them about issues of public interest; and foster a sense of community. How they go about these, affect the overall peace of the nation (Omdahl, 2021). The key principle of peace journalism demands that the press serve as proponents of peace in reporting conflicts situations. One prominent newspaper content that can be utilized to accomplish this objective is editorials.

The editorial is the voice of a newspaper organisation over any subject of public interest. Because the audiences of newspapers are literate, the influence of editorials on the FGN and ASUU faceoff has enormous potential in educating the people about the issue. It has been found that journalists lack awareness of peace journalism, but utilize more of war journalism approaches (Arregui, Thomas & Kilby, 2020). Besides the fact that there is dearth of current researches on peace journalism in Nigeria, there is no study, based on available secondary data that has examined editorials on the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Academic Staff Union of Universities faceoff, between February and October 2022, through the lens of peace journalism. It is imperative to ascertain the extent to which the newspaper editorials of *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *Vanguard* addressed this. In other words, to what extent did newspaper editorials of February to November, 2022, employed peace journalism principle in their reportage of the FG and ASUU faceoff?

Study Objectives

The study sought to:

1. find out the extent to which the newspapers under study applied peace journalism in their editorials on the Federal Government of Nigeria and Academic Staff Union of Universities faceoff, between February and October, 2022.
2. identify the peace journalism approaches the newspapers studied adopted in their editorials on the Federal Government of Nigeria and Academic Staff Union of Universities faceoff, between February and October, 2022.

Literature Review

The study anchored its thrust on the social responsibility theory of the press. This theory was birthed by the 1942 Robert Maynard Hutchins Commission on inquiry on freedom of the press. It was a response to the dissatisfaction of the people on the Libertarian Theory that had been found to service the interest of the social dominant class. The social responsibility theory advocates that journalists should be responsible in executing their duties in order to foster productive and creative 'great communities', in as much as they enjoy the freedom to publish. McQuail (2010) simplified the principles of the theory thus: the press should be free and self-regulated; it owes the society



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an obligation and ownership of the media is a public trust; it should be guided by professional ethics including truth, accuracy, fairness, objectivity and balance; and the government can intervene on press matters under certain circumstances.

A conscientious effort by the press to follow the dictates of the theory would reflect to a large extent, the practice of democracy, where a free press is the norm. This is not to forget that self-serving interests, which are informed by certain sociopolitical considerations as well as other factors, have stripped off this basic obligation in some media organisations in Nigeria (Paul & Kabiru, 2019). Ideally, newspaper editorials on the FG and ASUU faceoff, from February to October, 2022, in *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *Vanguard*, ought to be written in accordance with principles of the social responsibility theory of the press.

In providing university education, Nigerian parents seem to be faced with a two-edged sword. They have the option of paying exorbitant fees to send their children to private universities or send their children to public universities with the attendant industrial actions by the different academic unions. The most biting one has been ASUU strikes. But a more bedeviling issue is government's poor attention to education. Following the body language of some political leaders and their attitudes towards the sector, observers are tempted to believe that the ruling elite tend to make public university education a preserve of the well-to-dos (Soweto, 2022). In budgetary terms, the UNESCO benchmark for education is expected to be 26 percent of the country's annual budget, but Nigeria's education allocation dropped from 13 to 5.4 percent in the 2022 budget (Tyessi, 2022). In a bid to attend to the development of university education in the country, the FGN entered into an agreement with ASUU in 2009 for the funding and revitalization of public universities, inconsistencies in the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), University Transparency Accountability Solution (UTAS), earned academic allowances, promotion arrears, etc. (Edema, 2022). However, the implementation of the terms of the agreement has not been realized, and this has resulted in long battles between the Union and the Government.

The 2022 ASUU strike is accounted to be the 16th industrial action by the Union since the return of democracy in 1999 and the second longest strike of 245 days, after the 2020 experience of 270 days. All these periods have witnessed conflicts, negotiations and agreements between ASUU and FGN. But the failure to implement agreements keeps the problems afloat. On the matter, Amadi (2022) and Leye (2022) aver that tertiary education system needs to be rejigged to meet up with the global best practices because a ramshackle kind of education would not bring about the desired change. While the industrial strike action by ASUU was called off by the law court, the issues remain unresolved.

Peace is beyond the absence of conflict or violence because there can be negative or positive peace. The absence of conflict is seen as negative peace; while the conditions for equity, justice and harmony, implies positive peace. Galtung (1964) believes that peace should be perceived in both perspectives rather than the narrow traditional view. It is the positive peace that is seen as "particularly applicable" (Youngblood, 2017). The concept of peace journalism can be traced to Galtung who used the term in the 1970s after conceptualising two contrasting reporting styles as "peace or conflict journalism" and "war or violence journalism". However, it gained recognition and use in the field of mass communication in the 1990s (Matos, 2006).



Peace journalism is the process, frame and practice of journalistic news reportage that contributes to the course of peace making and peace keeping for the harmonious settlement of conflicts. It is put in practice when news reporters and editors make decisions of what and how reports are to be packaged to propel and provide avenues for the society to give attention as well as value non-violent responses to conflict (Hanitzsch, 2004; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Peace journalism can be identified with specific features such as being proactive (anticipates, starts reporting), reporting the invisible (trauma), people-oriented, reporting on agreement reached, focusing on causes and consequences, keeping off the “good guy” narrative, neutrality and non-partisanship, multi-party oriented, avoiding victimisation, keeping off emotive and demonizing words, and reporting on many goals–win-win approach (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Peace journalism draws on journalism principles of accuracy, fairness and balance for conflict analysis and transformation.

As a precursor to the need for peace journalism, conflict has been described as a phenomenon that is informed by the triad situation of attitude-behaviour or attitude, behaviour and contradiction (Galtung, 1969 in Peleg, 2006; Mitchel, 1981). The import is that the event that take place, its history and facets; the perceptions, feelings and emotions of those involved in the issue; and the form of actions surrounding the issue are key components in appreciating a matter. The press is expected to fall into these contexts in conflict situations otherwise it would not foster peace.

More of what is obtainable in the media space is war journalism. Contrasting between “war journalism” and “peace journalism”, Galtung (2002, 2006) identified the two approaches as: violence-oriented, propaganda-oriented, elite-oriented, and victory-oriented as against nonviolence-oriented, truth-oriented, people-oriented, and solution-oriented. This is owned to the fact that journalists have the choice to decide on what they actually want to achieve. War journalism seems to attract more audience viewership, whereas peace journalism seeks to bring about the desired social change, because it focuses on the people to communicate development (Ottosen, 2010). According to Peleg (2006), peace journalism can be undertaken through three dimensions that can influence the situation. First, situation – it is expected that the issues, contexts and interests involved be disclosed. No party is presented as the victor, but all as seen as multiple players with options. Second, attitude – efforts are made to lay bare the feelings and conditions of the parties involved. It raises attention to the palpable fears, ignorance, miscommunication, and insecurities within the polarized parties involved. Third, behaviour – peace journalism elucidates that conflict is not just violence but also aggression and fighting; vanquish and subjugation. Therefore, the call would be for negotiation and reconciliation.

The editorial is one of the salient parts of a newspaper through which a newspaper organization expresses its views and judgments on sociopolitical, economic, religious developments through the process of analysis and interpretation, shedding light on trending issues. It is believed to be the highest form of press journalism punditry in political matters. This is why what a newspaper stands for can be deciphered from the kind of editorial it publishes (Afolabi, 2012; Ashipu, 2013; Buller, 2015; Jegede, 2019). Newspaper editorial is produced by the Editorial Board, not just the editors. They are responsible for stating clearly the opinion of the organisation on specific societal issues. The editorial the instrument through which a newspaper organization acts as a crusader, opinion maker and balancer, and playing the role of reconciliation. As an opinion maker, the editorial analyses events critically from various perspectives with a view to strike a balance. The



ideas and facts are to be presented in logical manner as a scientific exercise and not fiction. While it is not a populist venture, it must be contemporary (Singh & Singh, 2006). The editorial creates balance between conflicting and controversial issues among political positions, scholars, interest groups and the general public (Oladayo & Hafsat, 2019).

Editorials play significant roles in the affairs of the society given that they enable the public to understand and discuss issues with informed opinions and background data. This makes it possible for social reality to be created, negotiated and transformed as espoused by Gnanaseelan (2015) and Gronemeyer and Porath (2015). The depth of knowledge contained in the editorials of the selected newspaper on the FGN and ASUU faceoff can only help to educate the parties involved and contribute to a win-win experience.

Method and Materials

This study adopted the qualitative research method of content analysis and critical discourse analysis. This method was deemed appropriate because of the need to interpret newspaper editorials utilization of peace journalism principles in the reportage of the FGN and ASUU faceoff, from February to October, 2022. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model was used to appreciate the ideological submissions in the editorials without any recourse to quantification, and uncovering the language adopted as a means of social practice. The study followed deductive approach of analysis. Four national dailies (*Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *Vanguard*) were purposively selected on grounds of national spread, interest and their mission statements. The period of study covered 10 months (289 days), February 14 to November 30, 2022, which was one month after ASUU called off their industrial strike. Thus, 1,156 editions of the three dailies were studied.

Results and Discussions

Of the 1,156 editions of the three dailies, there were only 19 editorials on the FG and ASUU faceoff: *Vanguard* had ten; *The Guardian* had five; while *Daily Trust* published only four.

Extent to which newspapers applied peace journalism principles in their editorials on the Federal Government of Nigeria and Academic Staff Union of Universities faceoff, between February and October, 2022.

One of the key indices for peace journalism is that journalists encourage people to adopt non-violent response to conflicts. Excerpts from the selected newspapers are presented in this regard.

As things stand, it would have better served public interest if the cessation of the strike had been matched with specific remediation initiatives by the government. For whatever took ASUU to strike for eight months out of the academic season of nine months needs to be seen from a more committal position by the government. (*Beyond the ASUU strike...Chika Unigwe*, *Daily Trust*, Oct. 20, para.9).

It remains imperative for government to conduct itself responsibly in handling labour matters. In particular, government must sheath its devious manner, and learn to honour agreements. On their part, ASUU and other unions must



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necessarily devise other potent means of driving their affairs and disputes with government. (*Counting the cost of ASUU strike, The Guardian, Oct. 28, para.9*). ASUU should continue to exercise its new-found restraint: Gbajbiamila and the National Assembly leadership should step up their mediation efforts. Buhari should sweep aside the ministerial failures and meet ASUU's demands (*Averting a resumption of ASUU strike, The Punch, Nov. 14, para.18*).

In the editorial titled, "Beyond the ASUU strike... Chika Unigwe", the *Daily Trust* observed that the cause of the strike came from the Federal Government of Nigeria who ought to have forestalled it. This implied that the Government should be proactive and do the needful, among which was the call for the modification of lecturers' salary payment system, IPPIS. On its part, *The Guardian's* "Counting the cost of ASUU strike", advocated for a more transparent relationship between the Government and the labour union, instead of playing mind games and arm-twisting the lecturers, which would exacerbate the conflict. In similar vein, *The Punch's* editorial, "Averting a resumption of ASUU strike", beckoned on the government to cease from its brinksmanship in attempting to pay a new pro-government union its full pay but deny ASUU lecturers their salaries.

In other publications, the press said:

Indeed, ASUU is the last bastion against the destruction of the educational sector, and tertiary education in particular. Yet, it must tread with caution as it canvasses structural cum infrastructural revitalization of the university system. (*FG, ASUU and assaults on tertiary education, The Guardian, Feb. 28, paras. 14-15*).

The Federal Government's unwillingness over the decades to solve the ASUU imbroglio once and for all after signing a series of undertakings to do so, is enough to frustrate even the most patriotic and humane worker. (*Kudos to MDCAN over ASUU strikes, Vanguard, Nov. 15, para.5*).

The approach adopted by *Vanguard* seems to be blunt and more of war journalism. This indicates that not all the selected newspapers followed the peace journalism approach as can be seen in this *Vanguard* editorial. Perhaps, owing to certain factors, some newspapers may decide to tilt towards war journalism, being biased towards a political party, rather than peace journalism. This war journalism approach seems to dominate the *Vanguard* editorials on this issue. Another example is here presented:

Adamu's reported withdrawal for Ngige is a gross display of immaturity and dereliction of duty. He should be considered unfit to remain in office. In any case, what were his credentials as an educationist that warranted his appointment as Education Minister? What achievements can Adamu show to justify his full two terms of seven years and counting? The cold attitude of Minister Adamu might be because his children are schooling in universities abroad. (*Buhari's ultimatum on ASUU strike, Vanguard, July 25, paras. 7-9,12*).



Rather than employ the tenets of peace journalism, *Vanguard* attacked the government and its agents on the issue. Mazhir (2013) believes that journalists played biased roles on conflict stories to serve the propaganda wishes of the state by manipulating the findings of civilian damage and hoarding facts from war front. But the social responsibility theory of the press emphasizes that the mass media owe the society responsible reportage. Issues concerning university education are priority and the demands of the lecturers are legitimate. In response to the research objective, it can be seen that while most of the editorials followed peace journalism, there was an exception; *Vanguard* was more of war journalism.

Identify the peace journalism approaches the newspapers studied adopted in their editorials on the Federal Government of Nigeria and Academic Staff Union of Universities faceoff, between February and October, 2022.

In the lines of some of the editorials were:

Since Buhari assumed office, failure is regularly met with reinforcement. This regime is incapable of feeling embarrassed by failure. Presidential orders mean nothing. We still demand that the President settles with ASUU to enable our children return to class. That is a job he was elected to do. He must end this impasse. (*Buhari's failed ultimatum on ASUU strike, Vanguard, Aug. 8, paras.7-8*). What is at stake here cannot be left to the negotiating teams of ASUU and the federal government alone. And on compromise is too much to make for this. (*ASUU, FG should put Nigerian students first, Daily Trust, Aug 29, para.9*). If the President had taken on the responsibility of leading this effort, Adamu would not have had the temerity to display his arrogant incompetence in handling such a hot-coal issue. (*Jonathan on how to end ASUU strike, Vanguard, Sept. 7, para.7*).

The *Punch* maintains its long-held position that the government bears the major responsibility for the rot in the education sector and the restiveness it birthed by its riotous mishandling of the sector. (*ASUU-FG face-off: It's time for a truce, The Punch, Sept. 9, para.2*).

ASUU should be innovative about expressing its position. Notwithstanding its elitist nature, it should deploy popular public relations techniques (*Save higher education, end ASUU strike, The Guardian, Sept. 13, para.7*).

Daily Trust and *The Guardian* adopted the solution-oriented aspect of peace journalism, while *The Punch* used the truth-oriented style to indicate that the problem is government-oriented because it bears “the major responsibility”. But *Vanguard* was adversarial and followed adopted war journalism techniques. It attacked the government by describing the minister as “incompetent”. Even in the second editorial, it highlighted that “this regime is incapable of feeling embarrassed by failure” and that ending the ASUU strike, “is a job” Buhari “was elected to do”. The newspaper seems to judge the government and not even glossing over it. True as it, it is imperative to underscore that the conceptualisation of peace journalism demands that editors and reporters



make concerted efforts on the content and presentation of stories that would influence the society towards adopting non-violent approaches to conflict (Youngblood, 2017). There were also specific elements in these approaches adopted by the editorials.

Reporting the Trauma

The parents are angry, the students are despondent, and admission seekers are bewildered about what the future holds for them in the unending cycle of disruption to the academic calendar (*ASUU strike: FG, dons spare Nigerians this agony*, The Punch, Feb. 20, para.7).

Youths are losing it on the streets with social tension brewing. Their lecturers too are tired of protesting to an intransigent government that does not care a hoot about education quality. (*ASUU, ASUP strike and looming restiveness*, The Guardian, May 24, para.1).

The Muhammadu Buhari government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU, have turned the five-month stay at home by our public university students to a game of hide and seek. Hope has further dimmed on the possibility of the reopening of universities for academic activities. (*Playing games with ASUU strike*, Vanguard, July 14, para.1).

People-Oriented

We, therefore, urge ASUU to call off its ongoing strike in the interest of students and use other methods to pressurize the government (*ASUU: Strike is not the answer*, Daily Trust, Mar. 21, para.4).

Nigerian students that gained admission into private and foreign schools in 2019 are graduating this summer. Their counterparts in Nigerian public schools are stuck in year-two and uncertain of when they will finish. (*ASUU, ASUP strike and looming restiveness*, The Guardian, May 24, para.3).

Those who bear the brunt of these frequent crises [ASUU strike] are not privileged to seek alternatives (*ASUU strike and NLC's solidarity protest*, The Guardian, July 26, para.1).

Reporting Agreement

The crisis has lingered for too long; defeating four presidents in succession. The main bone of contention is the government's refusal to fulfill the terms of an agreement with ASUU. (*FG, resolve the lingering ASUU strike*, The Punch, May 15, para.3).

Grievance of ASUU with the government is very well known... It includes mainly the Federal Government's failure to fully implement the Memorandum of Action (MoA) it signed with ASUU on December 23, 2020, even when the draft report of the renegotiated 2009 FGN/ASUU agreement had been submitted..." (*ASUU strike and NLC's solidarity protest*, The Guardian, July 26, para.2).



Cause and Consequence

The crux of government's failure to improve the tertiary educational system is their superficial understanding of what education entails (*ASUU and honouring agreements*, Daily Trust, May 17, para.6).

While Nigerians sympathise with ASUU over government's insincerity and ignoble disposition towards an agreement entered into with the academic union, there is need for ASUU to reconsider the damning consequences which negative publicity of their incessant strike actions might have cost university education and adequate manpower development. It should also consider the grisly metamorphosis that is turning Nigerian universities into a haven of mediocre professionals" (*ASUU strike and NLC's solidarity protest*, The Guardian, July 26, para.5).

In the features so identified, it can be seen that the editorials highlighted the trauma, people-oriented and agreement reached between the Government and ASUU. Parents and students seem frustrated as the issue was more like a "hide and seek" game; students who are in public universities seem to be victims without alternatives; whereas the Government acted adamant to her agreements. Perhaps, the sad reality, the editorial of *The Guardian* of July 26, identified is that Nigerian universities are becoming "haven of mediocre professionals".

No 'Good Guy' Narrative

With a labour minister who lacks finesse leading an arrogant team devoid of negotiation decorum, it is evident that any negotiation with the Federal Government was tantamount to a conversation with the deaf. However, the greater folly lies in ASUU believes a civil, respectable agreement could be arrived through such conversation. (*FG, ASUU and assaults on tertiary education*, The Guardian, Feb 28, para.10).

Truly, government has lost goodwill and unions no longer trust that they have good intentions (*ASUU and honouring agreements*, Daily Trust, May 17, para.9).

That the strike has lingered for so long, resulting in the loss of a semester and possibly an entire academic year, demonstrates the cavalier attitude of the Buhari regime towards education (*FG's mishandling of lingering ASUU strike*, The Punch, June 28, para.2)

The president's 'marching orders' are now seen as wands that produce no magic (*Buhari's ultimatum on ASUU strike*, Vanguard, July 25. Para.2).

Neutrality and Multiparty

By pursuing this all too familiar style of relating with the government, both ASUU and its principal have undermined tertiary education in a most insensitive and misguided manner that has made a mockery of the educational sector (*FG, ASUU and assaults on tertiary education*, Guardian, Feb 28, para.3).



We support diverse and multiple measures in dealing with the problems facing tertiary education in Nigeria, but we are opposed to strikes, which only demoralize students and the society at large (*ASUU: Strike is not the answer*, Daily Trust, Mar. 21, para.7).

Avoiding Victimization

Criticized for so long, ASUU has now won support for its cause from students, parents/guardians, and the public. Its position has merit. (*FG's mishandling of lingering ASUU strike*, The Punch, June 28, para.6).

We are of the view that the task of working out plans to end the strike of ASUU or that of any other workers union under the Federal Ministry of Education is strictly the responsibility of the Minister, Adadmu (*Buhari's ultimatum on ASUU strike*, Vanguard, July 25, para.5).

Win-Win Presentation

The Federal Government should therefore fund the universities appropriately and pay commensurate wages to the lecturers. Offered a concrete plan of phased funds release, ASUU should in the interest of the students, the system and the country, suspend its action and return to the classroom. (*FG, resolve the lingering ASUU strike*, The Punch, May 15, paras. 15,16).

ASUU and its sister unions should begin to weigh the strike options carefully, and not push their luck too far. The Buhari-administration and handlers of education have clearly shown insincerity to the all-important currency of sustainable development. Yet, the onus is on the general public to keep demanding a better deal for education and Nigeria youths before it is too late. (*ASUU, ASUP strike and looming restiveness*, The Guardian, May 24, para.10).

In as much as peace is to be promoted, it is not ethical to play sycophancy at the expense of public good. The editorials did not spare words in describing the Government and its officials in the matter. Phrases and statements indicating this from the editorials include that the Minister of Education “lacks finesse”; the “government has lost goodwill”; and “the cavalier attitude of the Buhari regime towards education”. There were elements of neutrality in placing blames on the desk of both ASUU and the Government. It is for this same reason that both parties were called upon to do something meaningful in resolving the problem. While the Government is expected to increase the funding of education, ASUU was advised not to push the strike too far that they lose public sympathy. This is a recipe for a win-win experience in line with peace journalism.

Arregui, Thomas and Kilby (2020) focused their attention on peace journalism in theory and practice from the angle of Kenyan and foreign correspondents, and submitted that peace journalism is not a one-size-fits-all model, because of the need for it to be approached through the cooperation of media practitioners and scholars before it can make the desired impact. The public sympathy is a plus for ASUU's struggle. In spite of the above, it is the belief of Hanitzch (2010) that the role of peace journalism in resolving conflict is limited because it falls more under the purview



of politics and the military. Journalism would only contribute to peaceful resolutions. Be that as it may, in doing this, the press is seen to be socially responsible when it is instrumental to the peace in the society that would foster development.

Conclusion

Most times, in reporting conflicts, newspapers tend to lean towards war journalism. However, in this study, apart from *Vanguard*, the other dailies' editorials employed peace journalism tenets; they also advocated for the FGN and ASUU to adopt non-violent approaches to resolve the issue. The editorials utilized peace journalism principles such as reporting trauma, people-oriented, reporting agreement, causes and consequences, neutrality and multiparty, no victimization, and recommendation for win-win approach. The statement from White (1877) reinforces the need for adopting peace journalism principles in editorials. It reads thus: "Those who are partakers of the divine nature will love peace and contentment; they will cultivate the virtues that insure those results. They will seek to allay wrath, to quiet resentment and fault finding, and all the evil passions that foster quarrels and dissensions" (p.209).

Recommendations

Given the findings of the study, the following recommendations are important: Media organisations should accord more attention to peace journalism principles and less of war journalism in reporting conflicts. This will ensure that they play more of the social responsibility role of peace makers in the society. There is the need for more emphasis on truth-oriented and solution-oriented peace journalism approaches in media report of conflicts. This is why propaganda cannot be an option in building stories arising from conflicts. Nevertheless, editorials should not be adversarial at all times. Furthermore, emphasis should be made on the cause and consequences of Government refusal to address the demands of ASUU. Perhaps, with the press priming, framing and agenda-setting of the issue, more attention could be given to the education sector.

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