The War against *Boko Haram* in Nigeria covered in Press Releases: Dispersions and Deliberations

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Abstract: The war against Boko Haram has no doubt thrown Nigerians and the country into a chaotic state. Nigerians and indeed the international community have been perturbed by the seemingly security challenges ravaging the Nation's peaceful coexistence and her economy. Information on the war whether there are successes or otherwise is what the public wants to be abreast with consistently. This, therefore, is a qualitative study on the fight against Boko Haram and the application of press releases as a communication strategy. The study seeks to examine the Boko Haram insurgency in a nutshell, the content of the press releases as well as its effectiveness. Goal Attainment Theory was used as theoretical framework. In line with the methodology (Discourse Analysis), a total of 35 Press releases issued by the Nigerian Army, Directorate of State Security Services, Defence Headquarters and the Presidency from January 2015-December 2017 were purposefully identified and studied. The study found out that Nigerian Army and other security agencies have adopted the consistent use of press release as a public relations tool which appears to be safer. The press releases are distributed by the Directorate of the Army Public Relations to a significant number of national and international media outlets through a coordinated platform, the social media (Whatsapp and Facebook) and the electronic mail, with attached photographs and sometimes relevant footages (Video). Core Information found out by the study focused on Update on the war against Boko Haram, the successes recorded and highlights of the items recovered from the group members.

Keywords: Press release, conflict, terrorism, violent extremism, new media

Introduction

The concept of terrorism, violent extremism and conflict are most often interrelated basically for the fact that they all affect human life and breed casualties. Society is a configuration of people with diverse culture, varied ideologies and beliefs. This attribute makes society prone to conflict. According to Marxists, conflict in the form of class struggle is inevitable in every society.

Conflict has been in existence from time immemorial at local, national and international level. Although debatable, historical records have shown that conflict simultaneously increases with societal development (Olaniyi 2009). Conflict, therefore, may be apparent as a result of cheating, struggle for class and status and beneficial goals and interests. The concept of conflict can be better understood when looked upon from the viewpoint of inter-group relations whether, as individuals or groups (Olaniyi 2009).

Extreme violent acts, another concept not too distant from conflict itself has been perpetrated mostly under the guise of religion – whether Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism or other faith too numerous to be listed. A complex series of psychological, political, historical and theological factors combine to trigger such behaviour (Kressel, 2012 cited in Duruji, & Oviasogie, 2013). Security threats occasioned by inter- and intra-religious crises are not twenty-first century phenomena. For instance, the crusades of the middle ages were an almost continuous series of military-religious expeditions made by European Christians in the hope of wresting the Holy Land from non-Christian Turks. Between 1096 and nearly 1300, Crusaders, travelling in great armies, small bands or alone, journeyed into the Orient to wage war against the Moslems, who had become a serious threat to Christianity.

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Although some scholars have argued that the origins, causes and goals of the conflict were complex and varied, and cannot be tied down to a single factor. This implies the fact that several conflict such as Boko Haram which took forms of terrorism led to the lost of human lives, cities, empires and nation-states were devastated while national economies and stability were crippled in no small ways (Maurice, 2013).

The *Boko Haram* was founded by its pioneer leader Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in Maiduguri of Borno. 'Boko Haram' means 'Western Education is forbidden'. The sect operated in a quietist nature, conducting its operations more or less peacefully during the first seven years of its existence. In 2009, due to Boko Haram extremist motives and increasingly militant character of the sect, government directed the police and military to begin investigation into the affairs of the sect. This generated violent response from the sect which led to the death of their founder and leader, Mohammed Yusuf. His death marked the beginning of the worst era of terrorism ever to be recorded in Nigerian history (Classified Cable, US Embassy Abuja, 1999). The group is equipped with weaponry which includes bombs, arms and ammunitions of various degree of lethal capacity (Odounwa, 2013).

Media are major actors in the Boko Haram. Media over history have played a pivotal role in many aspect of the society. Because of the power it wields, it has engineered very crucial issues in the world. However, Popoola (2012) argued that insurgence and conflict is the bread and butter of journalism. It provides ready-made material for media men to exploit. Media audiences are usually excited to read detailed stories on how events unfolded. In the process, media houses increase their profit margins. It is commonly claimed that terrorists and the media both benefit from high levels of media attention to terrorism (Hoffman, 2006). The core responsibility of the media is the surveillance function. On their part Hamid and Baba, (2014) observed that the media are expected to bring to the consciousness of the public impending dangers. This function places a demand on the media to cover, analyze and report significant developments within and outside a given society. They also noted that the Nigerian media are yet to effectively play the surveillance function of the media in their reportage of insurgency and conflict this led to the unabated insurgent activities in Nigeria. The Nigerian media have not done well in discharging their surveillance role, particularly in the Boko Haram crisis. In reporting daily occurrences, including the outbreak of conflicts, the media irrespective of the ownership pattern are generally expected to display a real sense of objectivity.

The fight against Boko Haram was occasioned by the Federal Government of Nigeria using the military, police and other security infrastructure as well as the media (Odounwa, 2013). These agencies used multiplicity of media tools to communicate with the public about the development in the fight and how issues unfolded. Press release as a media tool was used heterogeneously which led to matters arising ranging from disagreement between public witness and military press release on number of victims to the allegation and denounce of abuse between public and the security agencies.

Rationale

This study seeks to explore the nexus between the concept of terrorism, fight against Boko Haram insurgency and media, highlighting the effectiveness of press release in the discourse. The study traced holistically, the nature of Boko Haram insurgency, media role and how press releases are being used by the security agencies to communicate. In contrast, the paper also viewed the matters arising from press releases.

Objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives;

1. To explain the nature of *Boko Haram* insurgency
2. To analyse the core information contained in the press releases emanating from the security apparatuses on *Boko Haram*
3. To examine the effectiveness of press release in fight against *Boko Haram*
4. And to figure out the impact of press release in the fight against *Boko Haram*.

Research Questions

The study will find answers to the following research questions;

1. What is the nature of *Boko Haram* Insurgency?
2. What is the core information that constitutes the Press releases on the fight against *Boko Haram*?
3. How effective are these press releases?
4. To what extent do these press releases impact on the fight against *Boko Haram* Insurgency?

Operational Definitions

- Boko Haram: a religiousgroup that is perpetrating violence in North-Eastern part of Nigeria with the aim of establishing an Islamic Caliphate.
- Terrorism: any act of violence and threat to human lives and property.
- Violent Extremism: an act of perpetrating violence in the name of religion.
- Conflict: an act of disagreement over social, economic, political or cultural issues.
- Mass Media: these are channels or vehicles through which pieces of information are disseminated. They include among others radio, television, newspapers and magazines.
- New Media: in the context of this paper, it refers to new channels and platforms used as means of sending messages to large dispersed audience.
- Press Release: this is a written or recorded official statement issued by an organization and disseminated to the public through the media.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted the use of Goal Attainment Theory. The Goal Attainment Theory is a public relations theory also considered as an approach by some perspectives. The central doctrinal kernel of the theory stated that an organization's effectiveness has been defined in terms of attaining goals Griffin (2008). The more efficiently and effectively an organization can achieve its goals, the more successful it is according to this approach. The theory was adopted to explain how Nigerian Army used press release as a tool to achieve its goal of disembarking and counter rumours as well as communicate reliable but 'verifiable' information to the public.

Methodology

Discourse analysis has been considered suitable for this study. This is to enable the study look at the content of the press release and the content of public response.

Islam and Kabir (2015) defined discourse analysis as a methodology for analysing social phenomena that is qualitative, interpretative and constructionist. It explores how the socially constructed ideas and objects are created and used in the media content.

A discourse is understood as the fixation of meaning within a particular domain. A discourse is established as a totality in which each concept is fixed as a moment through its relations to other signs. This is done by demean of all other possible meanings that the concept could have had: that is, all other possible ways in which the concept could have been related to one another.

Mogashoa (2014), critical discourse analysis deals with long term analysis of fundamental causes and consequences of issues. Therefore, it requires an account of detailed relationships between text, talk, society and culture. Discourse analysis is a qualitative method that has been adopted and developed by constructionists (Fulcher 2010:1). McGregor (2010:2) refers to discourse as expressing oneself using words. It requires interpretation and analysis of texts, through mostly reading, seeing and observations.

The overall idea of discourse theory is that social phenomena are never finished or total. Meaning can never be ultimately fixed and this opens up the way for constant social struggles about definitions of society and identity, with resulting social effects. The creation of meaning as a social process is about the fixation of meaning. We constantly strive to fix the meaning of concept by placing them in particular relations to other actions. It enables researcher look at content of a text, audio record and other forms for analysis.

Literature Review

The Boko Haram sect was founded by its pioneer leader Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital of the north-eastern state of Borno. It was formed as a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist group advocating strict Sharia law and opposing the westernizing of Nigerian society which accounts for the name 'Boko Haram' meaning 'Western Education is forbidden' (Ngozi Egbue, Nwankwo, Ignatius & Alichie, Bridget, 2015). They wrote that Yusuf used existing infrastructure in Borno of the Izala society, a popular conservative Islamic sect originally welcomed into government to recruit members before breaking away to form his own faction (Leach, 2016).

Ngozi Egbue, Nwankwo, Ignatius & Alichie, Bridget, (2015), stated that the sect had unleashed its operation in a quietist nature, conducting its operations more or less peacefully during the early years of its existence. This was acknowledged by Odounwa, (2013) when he wrote a research about the need to develop new strategies for fighting Boko Haram. The Sect then withdrew from society into remote north-eastern areas but later change into a Salafist-Jihadi group known for terrorist attacks since 2009 with political goal of creating an Islamic state. In 2009, due to Boko Haram extremist motives and increasingly militant character of the sect, government directed the police and military to begin investigation into the affairs of the sects in an assignment code-named 'Operation Flush'. On 26th July 2009, security forces arrested nine Boko Haram members, sequester weapons and bomb making devices (Leach, 2016).

This led to revenge attacks on police during a funeral procession and widespread riot which lasted till 30th July 2009 with more than 700 people, mostly Boko Haram members losing their lives. In addition, police stations, prisons, government offices, schools and churches were destroyed. Yusuf was arrested by the military and later died (suspiciously killed by the police) in custody while trying to escape (Ngozi Egbue, Nwankwo, Ignatius & Alichie, Bridget, 2015). He was succeeded by his second-in-command Abubukar Shekau (Leach, 2016).

The activities of Boko Haram sect took a new facet after the death of their founder and leader, Mohammed Yusuf. His death marked the beginning of the worst era of terrorism ever to be recorded in Nigerian history (Classified Cable, US Embassy Abuja, 1999). It was argued severally that Sect had ties with Al-Qaida in the Egyptian Maghreb (Ngozi Egbue, Nwankwo, Ignatius & Alichie, Bridget, 2015). Their growth, development and dread activities in the last half decade had qualify them to become the most precarious insurgent group that Nigerians have witnessed. They are known with indiscriminate and destructively attack churches, mosques, schools, police stations and government, international agencies, motor parks, market squares and other highly populated places, private and public owned facilities with a kind of guerrilla warfare tactics. (Sahara Reporter, April 21, 2014).

They also stated that the group is equipped with weaponry which includes bombs, arms and ammunitions of various degree of lethal capacity. The activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria have brought about insecurity, state of emergency, loss of lives and properties, etc. the greatest point of note here is the fact that it has created a big threat to national security. The signal posed by the group led to budgeting and spending much for security of the country (Nawaju, 2013).

Media as social institution has played a pivotal role in the discourse of conflict and terrorism ranging from coverage, moulding concepts of terrorism and extremism, name-calling and painting a picture of particular religion with colour of terrorism. Some scholars argued that the attention and coverage given to terrorism by the media had enabled the terrorist to exploit the mass media by selling their ideologies. In Nigeria the media cover terrorism and other criminal acts in a way that seems as promotion of the acts and ideologies. There are diverse media outfits in Nigeria ranging from international, national and local and each has interest and pattern of reporting issues. However, the conceptual ambiguity of terrorism is responsible for the failure of the media in fight against terrorism. Though the media cannot fight alone but it has played a role in determining terrorists, covering terror and reproduction of the meaning of terrorism.

Effective Press Release

Press release is one of the sources of news that media houses heavily rely on. It is sometimes referred to as news release or media statement. The language is usually descriptive, explaining an event that happened or about to happen. Press release is an official statement that is sent to the media so that it can be publicised (Wiki English Dictionary, 2017). Press release is the most common public relations communication tool today and it has grown in use and relevance of time. It is also an important promotional tool that keeps the audience up to date on the happenings in an organization. The press release was invented in the late 1800s. Usually written in the form of a conventional news story, a release, as it is sometimes called presents the point of view of the organisation that disseminates it (Olusegun, 2006; Treadwell and Treadwell, 2000).

Many public relations practitioners also disseminate their releases far beyond the media to key audiences such as employees and investors people who are as interested as the media in what the organisations they support are doing. Examples of press releases abound in daily newspapers, magazines as well as the online press rooms of most public companies (Olusegun, 2006; Treadwell and Treadwell, 2000). A press release should relate some genuine news. It should be brief, clear, factual, accurate, thoroughly proofread and neat. It should answer who, what, where, when and why in the first paragraph and include information in descending order of importance (Olusegun, 2006). In other words, a press release should not be more than one page depending on the nature and importance of the event.

An effective press release has six basic components as follows:

1. Heading: All press releases must carry the inscription at the top right hand side of the letter-headed paper PRESS RELEASE, CONTACT and DATE in bold letters. This will enable editors to contact the organization and seek additional information or clarify grey areas the release did not address.

2. Headline: The headline is the preceding item after the heading. It is expected that the headline will be short, precise and catchy and must be written in bold letters too.

3. Body: This is the main information the press release is passing across. The body is usually a couple of two, three or four sentences and paragraphs explaining the theme, ideas and key messages. Supporting pictures and videos if available must be attached.

4. The 5 Ws and H: A good press release must provide answers to *What, Who, Where, When, Why and How.* The reader and editor should be able craft meaning on what is happening, those involved, where it happened and how it happened.

5. Contact Information: The contact information should be repeated again.

6. End: A press release is ended with a # tag. Writers of press releases a times confused the end by saying In conclusion. This is wrong. Most importantly, before the end, the writer needs to show some courtesy.

Effectiveness of the Press Releases in Fight against Boko Haram

The Theatre Command of Operation Lafiya Dole fighting Boko Haram in the North East has taken on itself to issue press releases weekly on the war going on in the region—a new normal that so far, no one has come out to condemn and almost all media outlets appear to have been satisfied with (Yerwa Express News editorial, 2017).

The role of media in the fight against the Boko Haram has prompted the Military (Army, Navy and Air force), Police, Directorate of State Security Services (DSSS) and Theatre Command Operation Lafiya Dole to centralise the issuance of press releases informing the public about progress in terms of attacks, repels, tactics and strategies among others. Prior to this, a media centre was established in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, solely to promote timely dissemination of information as it regards *Boko Haram.* This is also aimed at ensuring adequate information is communicated to the public and averts misinformation by the media. The press releases were usually communicated to media organisations, social media and concerned agencies. To measure the effectiveness of the press releases, this paper considered the releases that were posted on social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp and website of the Nigerian Army as well as PR Nigeria (a website dedicated mainly for posting press releases). This is because they have features that allow quick response from the public. The public responses determine the effectiveness of the releases in terms of reach, trustworthiness, accuracy and fairness.

The paper used the official website of the Nigerian Army, Facebook Page of the Director Nigerian Army Public Relations, Brigadier General Sani KukaSheka Usman. 35 press releases (from January 2015-December 2017) that focused on crucial issues concerning the fight against insurgency were purposely selected. Significant number of responses from the public where also gathered, with which were used to measure the effectiveness of the press releases in communicating information to the public. There are numerous press releases disbursed by the Nigerian Army but the paper filtered and used only those that are related to the fight against *Boko Haram* insurgency.

Data Analysis and Findings

The Nigerian Army and other security agencies have adopted the consistent use of press release as a public relations tool. The press releases are communicated by the Directorate of the Army Public Relations and are distributed to a significant number of national and international media outlets through a coordinated platform through the social media as well as electronic mail. Out of the 35 Press releases selected, 31 were issued by the the Nigerian Army, 1 was jointly issued by Nigerian Army and Air Force, 1 came from the presidency due to the sensitivity of the event, One from Defence Headquarters and the other one was from the Directorate of State Security Services.

In the early 2015, information on the war against *Boko Haram* insurgency was very scanty. Information was hoarded as journalists had to rely on third parties. The press releases issued from the first quarter of 2015 contained a little information, with no pictures attached. Key issues in the Press releases centred on the recapture of territories earlier overtaken by the *Boko Haram* members. At that stage, Nigeria is about to conduct General elections which the continuous

The press releases used for the study are tabulated below:

Sl./NO	TITLE OF PRESS RELEASE	ORGANIZATION	DATE OF ISSUE
1.	No press release issued	-	January,2015
2.	Troops recaptured Baga town	Nigerian Army	February, 2015
3.	Nigerian Troops Recovered Two More Local Governments From Boko Haram Terrorist	Nigerian Army	March 2015
4.	Troops recapture more towns in Borno State	Nigerian Army	April 2015
5.	Another Set of 234 Women and Children freed	Nigerian Army	May 2015
6.	Establishment of Military Command and Control Centre for Operation Zaman Lafiya	Nigerian Army	June 2015
7.	More Roads Opened For Use By Troops	Nigerian Army	July 2015
8.	COAS Visits Troops In Mafa , Dikwa And Logomani	Nigerian Army	August 2015
9.	Chief of Army Staff visits troops in the field	Nigerian Army	September 2015
10.	Troops nabs Boko Haram collaborators	Nigerian Army	October 2015
11.	Nigerian Army Establishes Media Centre in Maiduguri	Nigerian Army	November 2015
12.	Troops apprehend potential child suicide bomber	Nigerian Army	December 2015
13.	Troops Arrest Boko Haram Terrorists Logistics Elements	Nigerian Army	January 2016
14.	Boko Haram Terrorists Now Hide In Fox Holes	Nigerian Army	February 2016
15.	Troops Intercept Another Boko Haram Terrorists Logistics Team Carrying Viagra, Arrests Terrorist	Nigerian Army	March 2016
16.	Troops Ambush Boko Haram Terrorists	Nigerian Army	April 10, 2016
17.	Rescued Chibok Girl Handed Over To Borno State Governor	Nigerian Army	May 18, 2016
18.	Boko Haram Terrorists Kill Vigilantes While Others Surrender To Military	Nigerian Army	June 15, 2016
19.	Boko Haram Terrorists Ambush Humanitarian Escort Convoy	Nigerian Army	July 28, 2016
20.	Troops Establish School In Bama Internally Displaced Persons Camp	Nigerian Army	August 29, 2016
21.	Troops Arrest Boko Terrorists At Cattle Market	Nigerian Army	September 29, 2016
22.	State House Statement On The Release Of 21 Chibok Girls	Presidency	October 13, 2016
23.	Troops Recover Another Chibok School Girl At Pulka, Borno State	Nigerian Army	November 5, 2016
24.	Update on Operation Rescue Finale	Nigerian Army	December 28, 2016
25.	Beware Of Suicide Bombers' New Tactics Of Evading Detection	Defence Headquarters	January 28, 2017
26.	Nigerian Army Gears Up For 2017 Weapons Championship Inside Sambisa Forest	Nigerian Army	February 8, 2017
27.	Troops Clear Boko Haram Terrorists Out of Gombole and Destroy IED Factory	Nigerian Army	March 23, 2017
28.	Troops Carry Out Clearance Operation and Ambush	Nigerian Army	April 17, 2017
29.	Troops Clear Boko Haram Terrorists Out Of Ndufu Rescues 998 Persons	Nigerian Army	May 19, 2017
30.	Update on Operation Lafiya Dole...	Nigerian Army	June 30, 2017
31.	Boko Haram Terrorists Surrender to Troops	Nigerian Army	July 3, 2017
32.	The Nigerian Army Artillery Bombardments and Nigerian Air Force Air Interdictions Neutralize Top Boko Haram Terrorists Commanders	Nigerian Army	August 31, 2017
33.	DSS Nabs Commander of West Africa Terror Group ... Foils Several Attacks on Sallah Day'.	Directorate of State Security Services	September 9, 2017
34.	Troops Intercept Boko Haram Suicide Bomb Squad.	Nigerian Army	October 2017
35.	COAS charges Army Chaplains to pray for troops	Nigerian Army	November 2017
36.	167 Insurgents captured as troops Intensify Operations in Lake Chad Islands	Nigerian Army	December 28, 2017

occupation of about 18 out of 27 local governments in Borno necessitated the postponement of the elections. This therefore, made efforts of military to focus on the recapture of the Nigerian territories under *Boko Haram* occupation. Local governments recaptured during this period as contained in the press releases include Baga, Gwoza and Mafa.

The second quarter of 2015 has witnessed an improvement and consolidation on the earlier gains recorded. This was necessitated by change in the leadership of the country and that of the Armed Forces. New service chiefs were appointed by the President to fight the insurgency squarely. Core information contained includes:

- ✓ Freeing women and children who were held as hostages by the group members, following clearance operations by the Nigerian military.

- ✓ More roads to the recaptured communities were re-opened for public use. All roads to the remote communities in Borno were at a point closed down because of the ongoing operations by the military. The roads were prone to attacks by *Boko Haram* members. Many commuters were killed and this necessitated the military to shut them down.

- ✓ The establishment of a Military Command and Control Centre in Maiduguri on the order of President Muhammadu Buhari. According to the presidential directive, the service chiefs are to relocate to the epicentre of the crisis and address the national threat once and for all.

- ✓ Also, the press releases issued in the second quarter of 2015 addressed the visit by the Chief of Army Staff to the frontline. According to the release, the visit was to assess the performance of the troops and serve as a morale booster.

In the third quarter of 2015, a media centre was established in Maiduguri. This paved way for 'embedded journalism'. After the inauguration of the centre by the then General Officer Commanding 7 Division Major General Lamidi Adeosun and the Pioneer Theatre Commander Operation Lafiya Dole, Major General Yushau Abubakar, a Whatsapp platform was created jointly managed by the two Deputy Directors Army Public Relations of the 7 Division and Theatre Command operation Lafiya Dole. This is to douse the upsurge of rumours and misinformation that is likely to reach the public via the media. The group has from inception to date, served as an avenue for the distribution of these press releases to the journalists for onward publication. Apart from distributing the press releases, relevant pictures that support the press releases are equally made available to the journalists. This is in addition to the posting of similar content on the Facebook page of the Director Army Public Relations Brigadier Genral Sani Usman Kukasheka.

In 2016, however, there appears to be a paradigm shift in the content information contained in the press releases emanating from the military. The information not only has supporting pictures but also have clarity and completeness in terms providing details. For the year under review, the press releases core information includes: arrest of *Boko Haram* kingpins, potential or would be suicide bombers, and the recovery of *Boko Haram* hideouts. Significant of the information revealed was the release of the first Chibok school girl abducted and another release of 21 school girls. Similarly, a school was re-opened in Bama, one of the strongholds of the group by military. This is to further tell the world that the military is now in control of the situations and also to buttress the civil military relations.

During the last quarter, troops intensified operations to take over the last *Boko Haram* terrorist's hideout in Sambisa forest called Camp Zairo. An operation was Launched tagged 'Operation Rescue Finale'. The Operation as depicted by the Press release was a huge success, as the flag and Qur'an of the runaway *Boko Haram* leader Abubakar Shekau were recovered and presented to the Chief of Army Staff as well as the President.

In 2017, the press releases issued highlights the following core information:

- ✓ Cautioning members of the public of new tactics employed by the fleeing group members.

- ✓ Nigerian Army weapon competition in Sambisa Forest.

- ✓ Clearance and mop up operations by troops and intensification of operations in the fringes of the Lake Chad.

- ✓ The surrender of *Boko Haram* terrorists.

- ✓ And finally the need to declare that the fighting against Boko Haram is in the name of Almighty God.

The use of press release by the Nigerian Army and other security agencies was not unprecedented because it has precedence in other operations such as the communal crisis, Niger Delta militancy, recruitment, management and administration, national and international collaborations. The success of the use of press release in those activities perhaps prompted the Nigerian Army to use it in the fight against Boko Haram. In addition, news releases have been identified as the fastest way of reaching the journalists. Initially, during the peak period, the militarycould hardly speak to the press due to many bureaucracies. An officer at that time could only speak to the press when there is permission or clearance from higher authorities. The press relied mostly on 'classified information' from reliable undisclosed insiders. To avoid unnecessary questions that may arise from journalists during interviews, which perhaps might expose the Army to ridicule and shame in the eyes of the public, the military prefers the option of issuing press release which appears to be safe and has a timely reach.

The number of press releases considered and the public response gathered indicated how Nigerians relied on press releases disbursed by the Nigerian Army to obtain information. The sole goal of a press release is it to send information across and its effectiveness is determined by the number of people it has reached at a particular time. This is further measured by number and nature of feedback generated. The positive comments and encomiums by Nigerians on the social pages indicate how the information is reaching them and as well how they follow the operation of the Nigerian Army with keen interest. When the fight against *Boko Haram* became intense coupled with eyewitnesses spreading rumours that are not in consonance with the information released by the military, the Nigerian Army was challenged and its trust was fiddled by the rumour mongers. Media has also contributed in creating distrust to the Nigerian Army. This is seen usually in their reportage of the fight.

The adoption of press release facilitated numerous things concerning the fight against *BokoHaram*. The major problem in the fight initially was lack of adequate information which has created fright among the populace propelled by rumours. Some other problems include disagreement in statistics between the security agencies in the fight. To this end, the use of press release has centralised the channel of communication, douse tension and rumours, improve communication reliability and build the trust of the military among the Nigerian populace. This study has found that the number of people who read, follow, like and comment on the social pages used by the Nigerian Army to send these press releases has increased significantly. In early 2015, followers and friends of the Nigerian Army Spokesman do not necessarily like or comment on the press releases issued. This is so because it was not an official Army Facebook account but his personal account. However, with the increase in the number of Facebook users, people now go to the extent of copying and pasting on their walls while others share it. An analysis on the Facebook page of the Army Spokesman shows that not less than 600 followers share these press releases part from those that copy and paste but give credit to the source. The rate of encomiums coming as comments from the users anytime a statement is issued justifies the fact that the people have trust and confidence in the military's ability to end the *Boko Haram* insurgency.

Below are some selected photographs attached with the press release:

Women and children rescued by troops from Boko Haram terrorist

Source: Nigerian Army

Herd of cattle seized from Boko Haram by troops of the Nigerian Army

Source: Nigerian Army

Troops celebrating the fall of Boko Haram terrorist's hideout

Source: Nigerian Army

Recommendations

Based on the issues raised in this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Nigerian Army should reconsider allowing public to post comments on their website with a regulatory consideration.

2. Press releases should be adopted by other governmental organisations, agencies and institutions because it has been considered an effective tool of communicating to the public.

3. This study recommended the use of press release should be posted on social media because it allows for public to respond to the content of the press release. In other words, posting press releases on social media allows for immediate feedback.

Conclusion

The practice of public relations is goal-oriented. The Nigerian Army Directorate of Public Relations has adopted the use of press release as public relations tool to create centralised information route and douse rumour. The use of the press release was effective enough to have created public trust and won public confidence. The current traffic on their page and number of people who follow and comment on their posts is an indication of the success recorded using the press release. However, the media ambiance that tries to prove Nigerian Army guilty of lying to the public about their operation and denying some information was also countered using the press release as a tool of communication. The frequency of the release cannot be overemphasized also in this direction.

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