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Evaluating the Public's Perception of Newspaper
Coverage of Human Killings for Money Rituals in Nigeria

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to ascertain if the coverage of human killings for money rituals in Nigerian newspapers contributes to the increase in human killings for money ritual purposes. The study employed a survey design to investigate the subject matter among a sample of 400 respondents. Findings revealed that the audience's perception of newspaper coverage of human killings for money rituals is high and does not contribute to an increase in human killings for money rituals. On the contrary, the tested hypothesis revealed that newspaper coverage of human killing for money rituals contributes to this menace. Also, audiences are of the view that the Nigerian newspapers' coverage of human killings for money rituals contributes little or nothing to the government curbing the menace in society. The recommendation was for Nigerian newspapers to intensify their coverage of human killings for money rituals. The goal is to provoke the government into creating policies that would help end the problem and promote national growth.

Keywords: *Media Audience, Human Killing, Money Rituals, Public Perception, Evaluation*

Introduction

Ritualism is a concept that has deep roots in religious activities throughout the world, and because religion is embedded in every social and cultural life of human beings, it is, therefore, tenable to argue that ritual activities, religion, and culture are inseparable phenomena in our universe today.

Nugroho (2022) argues that religious rituals are an amalgamation of material culture that emerges as signs or symbolic activities among people who share the same views, culture or even opinions.

In religious and cultural practices, one thing that has continued to stimulate the practice of rituals is faith or beliefs in a perceived supreme being believed to have supernatural powers to give or take whatever has been (Sibani & Ibouya, 2020). Consequently, the faith of people in this perceived Supreme Being has continued to trigger various activities around ritual practices around the world. Religion plays a crucial role in the world by influencing how individuals or groups relate to the world around them. Several problems facing the world today have their roots in religion because society cannot live without it. Hence, the argument that religion is the opium of the people (Marx & Engels, 1975). Nonetheless, despite the world's many problems, religion has continued to put the world on the right path, especially by fostering peace and tranquillity in our society.

Furthermore, existing religious literature - the Holy Bible and the Qur'an - establishes that ritual practices are a good part of every religion. However, the killing of human beings for sacrificial purposes is fast becoming a practice and has become a serious global subject matter considering its negative implications on the social, political, and religious development of our society today (Isiaka, Ibrahim, & Nasirudeen, 2023).

The use of human beings or parts of human bodies as a sacrifice in exchange for power, health, and most especially wealth has become a pandemic (Aghawenu, 2020). Moreover, many human killings relating to sacrifice or ritual have been linked to occult practices, which in themselves are religious actions involving Satanism, voodooism, cannibalism, etc. Human killing for ritual purposes takes on a different colouration in developing nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and China compared with those of African nations like South Africa, Ghana, and Nigeria.

Moreover, human killings for ritual purposes have become the focus of the media throughout the world (Badiora et al, 2025; Talabi et al, 2025). For instance, many African media industries have continued to report the incidence of human ritual killings, especially as it relates to wealth creation, power, and fame (Africanews.com, 2022; Bayewu, 2022). Consequently, the Global Peace Index in 2022 rated Nigeria as one of the least peaceful nations in the world (Statista, 2022). However, this rating definitely impacts negatively on the economic and political growth of the country.

Nevertheless, existing literature about human killings for money rituals revealed that the Nigerian media is doing its very best in reporting events around ritual killings (Obadare, 2022). On one hand, despite the media's

continuous reportage, police arrests, and punishment meted out to perpetrators, human killings for money rituals have continued to grow in Nigerian society (Obadare, 2022). On the other hand, the government and some scholars have argued that the continuous coverage of human killings for money rituals in the Nigerian media space is contributing to the increase in human killings for money rituals (Obadare, 2022; Aniukwu and Ojelibechukwu, 2023). Therefore, the study's objective is to investigate how the public perceives Nigerian newspapers and to determine if their coverage of human killings for money rituals contributes to an increase in these killings in Nigerian society.

Research Hypothesis

H₀: Newspaper coverage of human killing for money rituals has no significant contribution to the increase of human killings for money rituals in Nigeria.

Literature Review

The Political Economy of Human Killings and Social Responsibility of Nigerian Newspapers

The Nigerian society is characterised by different criminal activities ranging from kidnapping, insurgency, robbery, cultism, prostitution, drug abuse, and drug dealing, many of which often lead to human death. For instance, the Nigerian Ministry of Police Affairs Report (2022) revealed that of all criminal activities in Nigeria, murder cases were the highest, being 27%, thereby becoming the second most committed crime in the country. However, within the period of the report, the southwest states witnessed a total of 317 murder cases, excluding other criminal activities such as kidnapping, armed robbery, etc. Oyo State had 122 murder cases, while Ogun had 120 cases, respectively.

The act of human killings has become the order of the day in Nigeria. Unfortunately, some political elites in their quest for power, fame, and wealth also engage in this dastardly act (Oluyemo, 2022). This is because many political officeholders are members of secret societies where human sacrifices are needed to gain or retain political, social, and/or economic power. In the context of ritual and politics, Kustermans, Svensson, López, Blasenheim, & Hoffmann (2022) empirically established the correlation between ritual and ritualisation by establishing the strong relationship

existing between human-related ritualistic killings and political activities around the world.

To distinguish these two concepts, one must have a clearer understanding of the words 'ritual' and 'ritualisation'. Ritual implies an activity or a series of activities that are done consistently. Ritualisation is reflected in the consistency that is involved in the ritual process, thereby making it a spiritual act in the context of practice. From the preceding arguments, it can be concluded that ritual killings are a religious and cultural activity (Olukeyo, 2022). This statement cannot be jettisoned owing to the connection between both concepts, particularly as it concerns the African religious nature in all ramifications. Hence, the reason one cannot rule out the socio-economic and socio-political dimensions of human killings for ritual purposes. The issues of kidnapping, organ harvesting, cultism, drug trafficking, etc., are areas that speak of the economic background of human killings in Nigerian society.

Human killings for money rituals have become pandemic in Nigeria and many other African nations to the extent that those dealing in human parts regulate the amount they sell them for in the market (Vanguard, 2014). Aside from the fact that people are being killed for money rituals daily, the selling of human flesh, bones, hands, heads, etc., also serves as a business for those dealing in human parts.

The Nigerian media is an exceptional industry whose focus on reporting events should be applauded. The coverage of socio-cultural problems hindering national progress in all ramifications is often put on the front burner of the Nigerian media. Nigerian newspapers are focused on developmental reporting vis-à-vis politics, economy, science, technology, education, health, poverty alleviation, corruption, governance, and other environmental concerns (Diepreye, 2025; Ladi, Daniel & Umar, 2025). 'Developmental reporting' in the context of Nigerian newspapers refers to news and stories that revolve around development and national growth. Newspapers such as The Guardian, The Punch, ThisDay, Vanguard, and Daily Trust often engage in developmental reporting by educating, informing, and setting agendas on issues concerning national advancement.

The newspaper is traditionally considered an important information source for special audiences, hence the reason it is referred to as the medium for the elites. Its nature, language, and style of reporting events are classy and strict. Therefore, it appeals only to the elite demography due to its great capacity for in-depth analysis and clear interpretation of events. In every society, both the rich and poor, the powerful and weak, often pay serious attention to crime-related issues due to their negative implications

on lives and properties. Though some scholars are of the notion that newspapers' reports on crime-related issues are ethnically biased (Onwuemene and Obasi, 2024). Nevertheless, one cannot rule out the media's social responsibility function of exposing criminal activities through educative and informative reporting.

Many Nigerian newspapers reported in 2014 that some Nigerian political elites had visited the Okija shrine in Anambra state, and that corpses and human remains were discovered there (Ellis, 2014). This reflects the relationship that exists between politics and all forms of religion in many African nations. Human killing for ritual is not restricted to politicians alone; it is also an act that many clerics partake in. For instance, The Punch newspaper on the 22nd November 2022 reported the murder of one Adekunle Muiyiwa by a pastor and two others for ritual purposes (Olatunji, 2022). However, Omotunde (2023) argues that due to the limitation of resources, the prioritisation of certain events in society, and the perceived interest of the media and those of the public, the Nigerian newspapers may not give much attention to covering crime-related stories.

The social responsibility media theory is a modification of the libertarian theory that requires the press to assume responsibility for morality in society, particularly when the media speaks about their calling with such phrases as "the public's right to know" and "public responsibility to the media" (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1974). The assumptions of this theory are premised on the fact that since the media is inseparable from the society where it operates, the need to accept and fulfil certain obligations to this same society is therefore expedient (Anaeto, Onabanjo, and Osifeso, 2012). These obligations include the dissemination of information that both entertains and educates the public on matters of interest and the surveillance of society. This also involves the monitoring of government activities and the people's behaviours in line with the expected societal norms.

Aside from these functions, the press is also involved in persuading the public by consistently reporting issues that influence the notions or public ideals (Hasan, 2014). The argument that the media is inseparable from its existing environment, and its services in bridging the gaps between the government and the people, is further buttressed in the social responsibility media theory. Based on this position, it will serve a great deal to accept the notion that the press is the fourth estate of the realm in reality. That is, the fourth arm of government whose duty is to serve as the link between and among the various existing interest groups in the society.

Crime reporting is an essential responsibility of the media because a society where insecurity is prevalent will continue to struggle for local and international development (Daniel, Priyadharsan, Kulkarni, & Nisitha, 2025). The application of this theory is evident in many Nigerian newspapers' reporting on human killings for money rituals in the country (George, 2025; Alaka, 2025). To this end, the Nigerian newspapers are duty-bound to ensure the consistent reportage of issues around human killings for money rituals by continually educating the public and informing the government on ritual-related killings. It is further expected that the media reflect its society's plurality by creating an atmosphere that gives access to different ideas, notions and perspectives vis-a-vis contending national matters like human killings for money rituals, and to provide the ground for public feedback, which in turn forms government policies and laws. As a result of these functions, Nigerians expect high standards of performance from the media, which is geared towards securing public good, where the media is accountable to the general public.

Materials and Methods

This study is a quantitative one that applies a survey as the design for investigation. The study's population was drawn from three states in the southwest, Nigeria: Lagos with a total of 9,013,534 residents; Oyo, 5,580,894 residents; and Ondo, 3,460,877 residents, to make a total of 18,055,305 populations for this study. The justification for selecting these three states was based on their economic and political history (Southwest Nigeria Economic Outlook, 2022). The study adopted a multistage sampling technique. Judgmental sampling was used to select Lagos, Oyo, and Ondo states because of their economic and political weight amongst the six states in the southwest of Nigeria. Quota sampling was also used to select samples for each of the states, where Lagos got 200, Oyo got 124, and Ondo got 75, to make a total sample of 400 (see Table 1 below). Taro Yahmane's formula was used to scientifically determine this sample size. An online questionnaire was structured through Google Forms in a five-point Likert scale and administered to respondents through WhatsApp and Facebook. In administering the questionnaire, the researcher identified friends and families residing in the three states who then volunteered to share the questionnaire link with other friends and families. As a result of this process, the snowball sampling technique took its course in further reaching respondents. The choice to use the snowball was to avoid potential biases that could arise from the study's nature. The researchers

may not get accurate information by having physical contact with the participants.

Table 1: *Showing Study Population, Sample Size and Quota*

State	Population	Percentage	Quota Sample
Lagos	9,013,534 (https://lagosstate.gov.ng/about-lagos/)	50	200
Oyo	5,580,894 (https://oyostate.gov.ng/about-oyo-state/)	31	124
Ondo	3,460,877 (https://www.mepbondostate.org/meet-us/ondo-state-profile/)	19	76
Total	18,055,305	100	400

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey, 2024*

Results

Of the 400 questionnaires administered to respondents who are residents of Lagos, Oyo, and Ondo States for this study, seven (7) were not filled out appropriately, thereby leaving 393 of the questionnaires valid for the research.

Table 2: *Demographic Data of Respondents*

Respondents		Frequency (393)	Percentages (100%)
Sex	Male	239	61.0%
	Female	154	39.0%
Marital Status	Married	249	63.4%
	Single	121	20.8%
Age	Divorced	23	5.9%
	18-22	27	6.9%
	23-27	57	14.5%
	28-32	76	19.3%
	33 Above	233	59.3%
Religion	Christianity	248	63.1%
	Islam	110	28.0%
	Traditional	24	6.1%
	Other	11	2.8%
Educational Status	ND/NCE	52	13.2%
	HND/BSc	191	48.6%
	PGD/MSc	110	28.0%
	PhD	20	5.1%
	Other	20	5.1%
Employment Status	Employed	182	46.3%
	Self-employed	163	41.5%
	Underemployed	24	6.0%
	Unemployed	24	6.0%

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey, 2024*

Table 2 provides demographic data on the respondents, including sex, marital status, age, religion, education and employment status. To this end, the Table shows that the majority of the respondents are male (61%), married (63.4%), and above 33 years of age (59.3%), most of whom are Christians (63.1%) having an HND/BSc degree (48.6%) and are mostly employed (46.3%) individuals. This implies that most of the respondents have the required experience and capability to understand the problem this study is investigating, as it relates to the newspaper.

Psychographic Data:

Table 3: *Responses on whether the coverage of human killings for money rituals in Nigerian newspapers contributes to an increase in human killings for money rituals in the society*

S N	ITEMS	SA %	A %	N %	SD %	D %	MEA N	S.DE V	DECISIO N
1	I am aware that people are involved in human killings for money rituals in Nigeria.	273 69.5 %	109 27.7 %	7 1.8%	3 0.8%	1 0.3%	4.55	.582	High Perception
2	Nigeria newspaper s report incidents of human killings for money rituals in Nigeria.	170 43.3 %	186 47.3 %	11 2.8%	11 2.8%	15 3.8%	4.23	.929	High Perception
3	The Nigerian broadcast media report incidents of human killings for money rituals in Nigeria.	156 39.7 %	189 48.1 %	12 3.1%	17 4.3%	19 4.8%	4.13	1.010	High Perception
4	The manner in which newspaper	60 15.3 %	105 26.7 %	27 6.9%	108 27.5 %	93 23.7 %	2.82	1.440	Low Perception

	s report human killings for money rituals in Nigeria discourages the act in society.								
5	The coverage of human killings for money rituals in Nigerian newspaper s contributes to an increase in human killings for money ritual purposes in society.	28 7.1%	69 17.6 %	28 7.1%	144 36.6 %	124 31.6 %	2.32	1.277	Low Perception
6	The newspaper' s focus on human killings for money rituals has contributed to an actual increase in crime.	88 22.4 %	82 20.9 %	28 7.1%	123 31.3 %	72 18.3 %	2.98	.468	Low Perception
7	The frequent reporting of human killings for money rituals in the newspaper s reflects a genuine rise in the incidents of human	152 38.7 %	68 17.3 %	72 18.3 %	51 13.0 %	50 12.7 %	3.56	1.431	High Perception

killings.

8	Public discussion about human killings for money rituals is heavily influenced by how newspapers present these incidents.	150 38.2 %	109 27.7 %	24 6.1%	49 12.5 %	61 15.5 %	3.61	1.479	High Perception
9	There has been an increase in human killings in recent times, despite a noticeable increase in newspaper coverage of the incidents.	178 45.3 %	96 23.4 %	20 5.1%	61 15.5 %	42 10.7 %	2.77	1.428	Low Perception
10	The increase in reported cases has significantly increased public awareness of the crime and is directly linked to an increase in human killings for money in Nigeria.	68 17.3 %	34 8.7%	47 12.0 %	148 37.7 %	96 24.4 %	2.57	1.396	Low Perception

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey, 2024*

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D)

Decision-Weighted Average: 33.54/10 = 3.35%

The table shows the responses to research question one, where ten items were raised to address this question. This reveals that 69.5% of the respondents were strongly aware that people are involved in human killings for money rituals in Nigeria. Also, 47.3% of them agreed that Nigerian newspapers report incidents of human killings for money rituals in Nigeria. Moreover, 48.1% of the respondents agreed that the style in which newspapers report human killings for money rituals in Nigeria discourages the act in society. Meanwhile, 27.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the view that how newspapers report human killings for money rituals in Nigeria discourages the act in society. Furthermore, 36.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the view that the coverage of human killings for money rituals in Nigerian newspapers contributes to an increase in human killings for money ritual purposes in society. Meanwhile, 31.3% of respondents strongly disagreed that the newspaper's focus on human killings for money rituals has contributed to an actual increase in crime. In addition, 38.7% of respondents strongly agreed that the frequent reporting of human killings for money rituals in the newspapers reflects a genuine rise in the incidents of human killings. On whether the public discussion about human killings for money rituals is heavily influenced by how newspapers present these incidents, 38.2% of the respondents strongly agreed with this notion. According to item 9, 45.3% of those surveyed strongly agreed that human killings have recently increased, even with the noticeable rise in newspaper coverage of these incidents. However, 37.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the increase in reported cases has significantly increased public awareness of the crime and is directly linked to the increase in human killings for money in Nigeria.

Discussion

Research Question 1: Does the coverage of human killings for money rituals in Nigerian newspapers contribute to the increase in human killings for money rituals in society?

The data presented in Table 2 shows the response to public perception on whether the coverage of human killings for money rituals in Nigerian

newspapers contributes to an increase in human killings for money rituals in society. With a weighted average of 3.35%, the investigation reveals that there is a high level of public awareness of people's involvement in human killings for money rituals in Nigeria. Consequently, this research aligns with the findings of Oluyemo (2022), who also confirmed in her study that a high level of awareness exists amongst the people about human killings for wealth creation in Nigeria. In the same light, the study also reveals that there exists a high level of public perception concerning Nigerian newspapers, and the broadcast media report incidents of human killings for money rituals in Nigeria, considering the means of 4.23 and 4.13, respectively, when compared with the weighted average of 3.46%. However, the question is whether the style in which the Nigerian newspapers report human killings for money rituals discourages the act in society.

The investigation shows the public's perception is low due to the 2.82 mean. This means that the way Nigerian newspapers report on human killings for money rituals does not stop the act of human killings for money rituals in the country. In other words, issues of human killings for money rituals go beyond discouraging media reports or content available to the public. In the same stance, with a mean of 2.32, research reveals that the public's perception is low on the view that the coverage of human killings for money rituals in Nigerian newspapers contributes to an increase in human killings for money ritual purposes in society. Furthermore, with a mean of 2.98 as against the weighted average of 3.46, the study reveals that the public's perception of whether newspapers focus on human killings for money rituals has contributed to an actual increase in crime is relatively low. This means that newspapers focusing on reporting issues about human killings for money rituals do not contribute to an increase in criminal activities in Nigeria. On another hand, investigation shows that the perception of the public is high on whether the frequency of reporting human killings for money rituals in the Nigerian newspapers reflects a genuine rise in the incidence of human killings, considering the mean of 3.56 to the weighted average of 3.46.

This implies that the public is of the view that the consistent and continuous reports on events concerning money ritual killings represent the true nature of the event in society. This means that the rising number of human killings for money rituals in society is what has led to increased newspaper coverage of the issue. Also, with a mean of 3.61 to a weighted average of 3.46, the study reveals that the public's perception of whether public discussion about human killings for money rituals is heavily influenced by how newspapers present these incidents is high. This means

that the public is of the view that the consistent discussion about human killings for money rituals among the people has a great influence on how the Nigerian newspapers report the issue. Consequently, the place of social responsibility theory is established in the study, as Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1974), while explaining the six principles of this theory, argued that one key thing with the press in discharging its responsibility is serving society through the dissemination of information stemming from public discussions and debates.

Moreover, a study relating to the public's perception regarding whether there has been an increase in human killing for money rituals in recent times, despite a noticeable increase in newspaper coverage of the incident, is low with a mean of 2.77, which is less than the 3.46 weighted average. Therefore, the finding depicts that the public is of the view that the increase in newspaper coverage of human killings for money rituals has nothing to do with the increase in human killings for money rituals in recent times. Also, on whether the increase in reported cases has significantly increased public awareness of the crime and if it is directly linked to an increase in human killings for money rituals in Nigeria. The study reveals that the public perception is low, with a mean of 2.57, as against the weighted average of 3.46. Therefore, These findings suggest that newspaper reports about human killings for money rituals do not contribute to the act, which goes against the perspective in **Obadare** (2022), where the media is considered one of the contributing factors to these killings. In this light, scholars such as Ojizele (2023) and Oluyemo (2022) have also argued that factors such as poverty, unemployment, greed, peer pressure, corruption among political and public officeholders, etc., are issues fuelling the incessant human killings for money rituals in Nigerian society. All of these factors, if put together, have further inspired greed and the get-rich-quick syndrome that has become endemic in Nigeria among all ages.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀: Newspaper coverage of human killing for money rituals has not significantly contributed to the increase in human killings for money rituals in Nigeria.

Table 4: Regression analysis of the contributions of media coverage on the increment of human killings for money ritual in Nigeria

Model Summary	ANOVA Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
R =0.539	Regression	4020.206	1	4020.206	160.496	0.000
R² = 0.291	Residual	9794.013	391	25.049		
Adj. R² = -0.289	Total	13814.219	392			
Std Error = 5.005						

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 8 shows that newspaper coverage of human killing for money rituals has a significant contribution to the increase of human killings for money rituals in Nigeria ($R=0.539$; $R^2=0.291$; $F_{(1,391)}=160.496$, $P=0.00<0.05$). The reported R^2 of 0.291 implies that media coverage of human killing for money rituals as a predictor variable accounted for only 29.1% of the increment in human killings for money rituals in Nigeria. This means that media coverage makes a significant contribution to the increase in human killings for money rituals in Nigeria. Hence, the hypothesis that media coverage of human killing for money rituals has no significant contribution to the increment of human killings for money rituals in Nigeria is rejected.

Conclusion

No doubt, human killings for money rituals in Nigeria have continued to surface in the Nigerian media space, thereby informing and educating the public on the various events around the nooks and crannies of the country, most especially within southwest Nigeria, as the focus of this study. Based on findings, this research revealed that the audience's perception of newspaper coverage of human killings for money rituals in Nigeria is high. This is premised on the fact that the public was able to give a general distinctive effort in the style and pattern of media coverage of human killings for ritual matters in the Nigerian press. Moreover, the study further revealed that the media, especially the Nigerian newspapers, are performing their social responsibility functions. On the contrary, its agenda-setting roles are not being felt in society despite creating awareness of various human killings for money rituals through its informative and educative reporting, considering audience perception on whether this report contributes to policy formation for curbing the menace in society.

Scholars such as Oluyemo (2022) have affirmed that Nigerian newspapers report human killings for money rituals, thereby creating the

needed education and awareness for the public and government at all levels. On the other hand, though the study was able to state that the perception of the public on newspapers' reports on human killings for money rituals does not constitute a serious reason for the government to take proactive measures in curbing the menace, one cannot rule out the place of the media in government policies and laws. Furthermore, this study, on the contrary, found that the Nigerian newspapers' reports do not contribute to the increase in human killings for money rituals in Nigeria, as opined by Obadare (2022).

Therefore, this finding suggests that the print media can be exempted from this assertion, even if social media is playing a key role in this terrible act, as Oyero (2022) stated. In the final analysis, it is generally accepted that the Nigerian media sets the agenda for society. Yet, findings concerning this study have shifted from this media effect theory to show that Nigerian newspapers are probably failing in their agenda-setting functions since the public believes that newspaper coverage of human killings for money rituals is in little or no way contributing to government policies in curbing the menace in the country. Therefore, it is recommended that the Nigerian newspaper should intensify efforts in the coverage of human killings for money rituals, such that reports can provoke compelling government policies that could help put a stop to this menace.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest among the authors

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