

**NEGOTIATING THE LINE BETWEEN INFORMATION AND PANIC:  
A CASE STUDY OF *VANGUARD*'S COVERAGE OF THE EBOLA  
OUTBREAK IN NIGERIA**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a  
Master of Arts Degree in Journalism and Media Studies

Of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

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December 2016

## ABSTRACT

This study titled '*Negotiating the line between information and panic: A case study of Vanguard's coverage of the Ebola Outbreak in Nigeria*' investigates and evaluates *Vanguard's* coverage of the 2014 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in Nigeria. This study was conducted to understand how *Vanguard* negotiated the line between the dissemination of actual EVD information and the possibility of creating panic and fear during the coverage of the outbreak. Using qualitative content analysis and interview embedded within a qualitative research design, the study was carried out against the backdrop of relevant literature that asserts that the mass media is an important carrier, prime mover and producer of tensions, anxieties, fears and panics while the print media specifically is argued to have as part of its history the business of irrational fear mongering and the creation of panic about social problems. *Vanguard*, rated as one of the ten largest newspapers in Nigeria, was purposively selected for this study. *Vanguard* did substantial reporting and dissemination of the 2014 EVD outbreak and it was possible to draw on the availability and accessibility of the electronic archives of the EVD articles.

Using the theory of moral panic, the normative theories of the media and theories about essential constituents of journalism culture as a theoretical framework, the study reveals that *Vanguard's* coverage of the 2014 EVD outbreak was challenging and more demanding compared to coverage of previous outbreaks of viral diseases in Nigeria by the print medium. The study shows that lack of sufficient understanding of the science that underlies EVD, the initial exclusion of the media from the national response to contain the outbreak, and the lack of sufficient proactive measures by government and the print medium were powerful factors in how the epidemic was reported. The study also shows an interesting dimension in *Vanguard's* early and latter coverage of the EVD outbreak while it lasted in Nigeria. This dimension reveals a high number of EVD articles with the propensity to inspire fear and panic in the early days of the coverage compared to EVD articles with the propensity to douse fear and panic in the early and latter days of the outbreak. The study shows that while the challenges encountered stem from Ebola's mode of transmission, lack of scientific and medically proven cure and early coverage amidst uncertainties, the inherent tensions and anxieties that characterised the outbreak coupled with *Vanguard's* fire brigade approach led to the relatively high number of EVD articles with the propensity to inspire fear and panic.

The study recommends the mass media's inclusion in national responses to epidemics and on-going training for health journalists to update their knowledge base about emerging and infectious diseases. The study also recommends for further study a reception analysis to enhance the socio-cultural understanding of how the EVD articles were received.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the Almighty God for His infinite mercies and compassion and also to my Sister, Oluwagbemileke Akingbade, who in year 2000 left this world for a better place.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my supervisors, Professor Anthea Garman and Ms Gillian Rennie, I say a million thanks for the immeasurable assistance and well-rounded mentorship throughout the stages involved in this study.

To the National Research Foundation and my supervisor, Professor Anthea Garman, for the NRF Grant holder-Linked Student Bursary that enabled me to complete my dissertation.

To all my professors and other teaching and non-teaching staff at Rhodes University's school of Journalism and Media Studies, thank you!

To my parents, Joseph Adebisi Akingbade and Gloria Olutoyin Akingbade, thanks for the unquantifiable sacrifices over the years in all spheres and for believing in me despite all odds!

To *Vanguard's* health journalist who granted the interview sessions that provided the well-rounded insight and emic perspective needed for this dissertation, thanks so much!!

To Dr. Nelson Odume, thank you, thank you and thank you!

To Caleb Okpako-Uyeh, many thanks Bro.!

To Dr. Ephraim Ojo and My Big Sister, 'Seun Salami respectively for their very impactful and timely assistance.... E se pupo pupo!!!

To my friends, brothers and sisters in Grahamstown, in the Eastern Cape as whole, other provinces in the country and in Nigeria, you are highly appreciated!

To the leadership and entire membership of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, House of Praise parish in Grahamstown, thank you and God bless you all real good!

To my siblings: Oluwadamilare, Victor and Victoria, thanks a million for always being there! and to Olubunmi Banji, many thanks...

To Ms Bunmi Adegbola, thank you for your insightful comments and suggestions.

To the Triune, unfailing and everlasting God, I worship and deeply appreciate you for where I am coming from, where I am presently and where I am going....

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CDC	Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FG	Federal Government
GPEI	Global Polio Eradication Initiative
HBV	Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
LSD	Lysergic acid diethylamide
NAFDAC	National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control
NMA	Nigeria Medical Association
NOA	National Orientation Agency
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNICEF	United Nations Education Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

## PROLOGUE

*‘Hello friend! It’s been quite a while!’ I said and yawned as I ran into two friends on my way back from work. I was very tired and was eager to get home, eat and go to bed. ‘Oh, yeah! Long-time no see!’ Sam replied as we shook hands to greet and share pleasantries. I was then very surprised when he brought out from his pocket what I later understood to be a hand sanitizer and applied it on his palm and started rubbing his hands and fingers meticulously. ‘Jeez! You really take this thing serious o’ exclaimed Kunle in Nigerian pidgin as he watched our friend apply the hand sanitizer. I couldn’t imagine why on earth Sam would start applying hand sanitizer almost immediately after we shook hands. ‘Yeah! I must take it more than serious! This is a life and death situation and I must get used to applying this after every unavoidable handshake! I need to get this into my subconscious mind ASAP!’ Sam replied. ‘I’m sure Tobi understands that it’s not about him, no hard feelings Bro...’ he added smiling. ‘Hmmm...this Ebola issue is really eating deep into our social and cultural life o, so we must be wary of shaking hands with people now, God have mercy!’ Kunle said with a deep sigh.*

*Ebola??! I asked myself, yes I did hear about it yesterday in passing but I didn’t know it was something so serious, I had been preoccupied with other personal issues and casually dismissed Ebola as one of those illnesses like HIV/AIDS which occur as a clear consequence of conscious actions. The emergence of Ebola in Lagos State, Nigeria on 20 July 2014 came at a time when I was quite indifferent to news and not watching television partly as a result of negotiating the hustle and bustle of Lagos and more because of the pressure at my place of work. I leave home quite early and come back very late at night and particularly, the month of July had been a very tiring and stressful month. Little wonder I was indifferent to many happenings around me. As I walked on, I suddenly felt a strange sense of urgency to get home and digest every possible detail about the Ebola epidemic. Alas! Here I was in my apartment no longer hungry, and sleep and weariness had suddenly disappeared as I immersed myself into the scary details about Ebola from the television and the print media almost simultaneously.*

*I discovered that the mode of transmission of Ebola is through direct contact with the secretion of blood, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people and with contaminated surfaces and materials. I was afraid and panicked wondering what a horrible way to die, this*

*was if one got unlucky and contracted this deadly disease. Out of curiosity, I read up detailed accounts of the outbreak in other West African countries. The more I followed the news updates about the outbreak in Nigeria, the more I panicked. I suddenly became more conscious of news reports and started following updates about the outbreak religiously through all available media (social media, print media, broadcast media and online news apps for mobile phones). Needless to say that the more people around me heard or read about the devastating effects of Ebola, the more they also got scared and panicked. I naturally joined the category of angry Nigerians that castigated Patrick Sawyer, the American-Liberian who flew into Lagos as a symptomatic patient and is considered to have started the outbreak. ‘What a wicked and inhumane act,’ I thought. News had it that Sawyer knew he had been exposed to the virus but insisted on travelling knowing fully well the resultant effect if he developed symptoms while aboard the plane.*

*This personal experience coupled with my interest in health journalism and communication led to me embarking on this dissertation using social and media theories to investigate and evaluate how the reporting was constructed and disseminated by the media during the Ebola outbreak in a time of high fear and panic in Lagos. To explore this, I seek to specifically understand how Vanguard, a print media organisation in Nigeria, fared while negotiating the line between the dissemination of crucial information about Ebola and the natural tendency to use scoops and sensationalised reporting which could heighten anxiety, panic and fear during the epidemic.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

### **1. Introduction**

This thesis identifies, investigates and evaluates the nuances that underlie the coverage of the 2014 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in Nigeria by *Vanguard*, a print media organisation in the country. The study seeks to establish and understand the place of actual EVD information, anxieties, fears and panics in the coverage with the aim to bring to the fore how *Vanguard* negotiated the line between the dissemination of actual EVD information, and the tendency to disseminate sensationalised articles laden with panics and fears during the outbreak. This first chapter serves as the general introductory chapter: it gives a broad outline of the early years of the outbreak of EVD, the research goals/objectives, the significance of the study and the structure of the thesis.

### **1.1 Historical Background of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)**

A review of the first recorded set of outbreaks of EVD, a virus named after the Ebola river in Zaire where it was first detected (Joffe & Haarhoff, 2002), indicate an occurrence almost simultaneously in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire) between June and November 1976 (Chowell et al., 2014; Pourrut et al., 2005; Feldmann et al., 2004; Takada & Yoshihiro, 2001) with respective mortality rates of 53% (150 of 284 victims) and 89% (284 of 318 victims). There were resurgences of the outbreak again in DRC in 1977 and 1995 and in Ivory Coast and north east of Gabon between 1994 and 1997 (Pourrut et al., 2005). While the etiological agent<sup>1</sup> causing the outbreaks was then discovered to be a new highly lethal virus, several animal species were put forward as responsible for the natural maintenance cycle and for the emergence of the EVD among humans (Leroy, Gonzalez & Pourrut, 2007).

However, available literature reveals that the evolutionary history of EVD which includes the reservoir of the zoonotic pathogens<sup>2</sup> causing the virus and its routes of primary transmission to humans and nonhumans remains a continuing subject of research and study. While scientists continually carry out studies and come up with discoveries about EVD, Pourrut et

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<sup>1</sup> Etiological agents, also referred to as infectious agents, are microorganisms whose toxins cause death in humans (centres for disease control and prevention, [http://deadlydeceit.com/Etiologic\\_agents.html](http://deadlydeceit.com/Etiologic_agents.html)).

<sup>2</sup> Zoonotic pathogens are bacterium, virus or other microorganisms that cause diseases and can be transmitted from animals to humans (WHO, [http://www.who.int/neglected\\_diseases/diseases/zoonoses/en/](http://www.who.int/neglected_diseases/diseases/zoonoses/en/)).

al., (2005), Li & Chen (2014) and Gatherer (2014), corroborated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Committee on the Taxonomy of Viruses, posit that EVD is a potential bioterrorism agent<sup>3</sup> which belongs to the genus *filovirus* of the family virus *filoviridae*<sup>4</sup> and was transmitted to the human population through contact with the secretion of blood or other bodily fluids of infected animals.

EVD is transmitted within humans through direct contact with the secretion of blood, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people and with contaminated surfaces and materials. The family virus *filoviridae* consists of three genera: *Marburgvirus* discovered in 1967, *Ebolavirus* discovered in 1976 and *Cuevavirus* discovered in 2010 (Bausch et al., 2008; Barrette et al., 2009; Mulherkar, 2011; Li & Chen, 2014; Chippaux, 2014). It is pertinent to also state that EVD has five identified subtypes based on its genetic and antigenic characterisation. These subtypes include: *Zaire ebolavirus*, *Sudan ebolavirus*, *Bundibugyo ebolavirus* and *Ivory Coast ebolavirus* which has also been referred to as *Cote d'Ivoire ebolavirus*; these four subtypes circulate in Africa and are pathogenic for humans while *Reston ebolavirus*, the fifth sub type, with origins in Asia, is yet to be recorded as a cause for disease in humans (Feldmann et al., 2004; Pourrut et al., 2005; Groseth, Feldmann & Strong, 2007). *Reston ebolavirus* has however been discovered in nonhumans and linked to swine suffering from porcine reproductive and respiratory disease syndrome: it remains the only member of family virus *filoviridae* which has not been linked to disease in humans (Barrette et al., 2009).

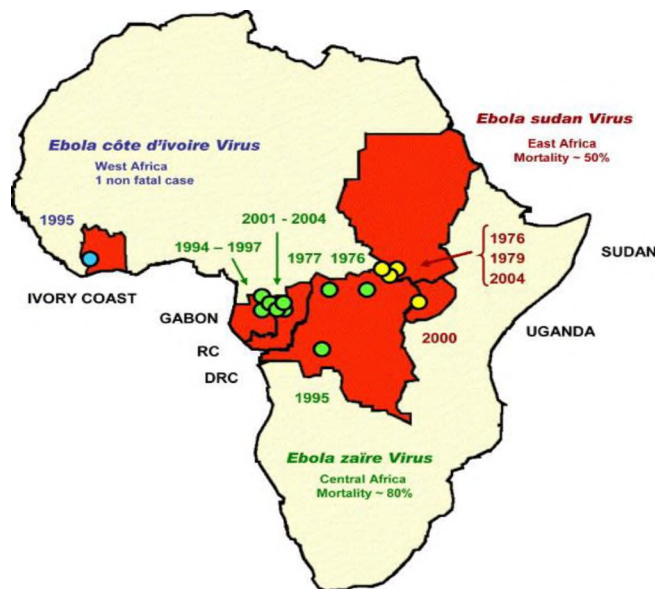
Pourrut et al., (2005), using the map of Africa as depicted in figure one below, show the earliest recorded set of outbreaks that occurred prior to more recent outbreaks of EVD in the years 2007, 2013, 2014 and 2015 in Africa. The map highlights the earliest subtypes of the EVD: *Zaire ebolavirus*, *Sudan ebolavirus*, and *Ivory Coast ebolavirus* or *Cote d'Ivoire ebolavirus*. *Zaire ebolavirus* and *Sudan ebolavirus* remain the two subtypes with the highest mortality rates to date and also predominantly the cause of most EVD outbreaks on record. The 2014 outbreak in West Africa was also caused by *Zaire ebolavirus* (Towner et al., 2008;

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<sup>3</sup> Bioterrorism agent refers to viruses, bacteria or other germs that causes illness or death in people, animals or plants. <http://emergency.cdc.gov/bioterrorism/overview.asp#intro>.

<sup>4</sup> *genus filovirus*- refers to a class or group of causative agents that causes an outbreak of severe/deadly fever while *Virus filoviridae*- refers to the family of causative agents that *genus filovirus* belongs to (<http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Filovirus>)

MacNeil et al., 2010; Li & Chen, 2014). However, *Ivory Coast ebolavirus* has caused only a single human infection which is recorded as the first outbreak of EVD in West Africa (Pourrut et al., 2005) while *Bundibugyo ebolavirus* is recorded to have occurred in the Bundibugyo district of Uganda in 2007 with a mortality rate of 40% (MacNeil et al., 2010) and a recurrence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2012 (Gatherer, 2014).



**Figure 1.** A map of Africa showing the earliest recorded set of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreaks.

RC: Republic of Congo; DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Source;** Pourrut, et al., "The natural history of Ebola virus in Africa." *Microbes and infection* 7.7 (2005): 1005-1014.

Existing literature reveals that EVD occurred at relatively frequent intervals over the past three decades with most outbreaks in central Africa (Fowler et al., 2014; Bausch et al., 2008) while the first recorded West African victim as equally depicted in the figure above was in Ivory Coast in 1994 (Gatherer, 2014; Dixon & Schafer, 2014, Pourrut et al., 2005). Outside Africa, a WHO report reveals that amidst actual occurrences and varying alarms of EVD outbreak, the first confirmed autochthonous<sup>5</sup> case of EVD was recorded in Spain, on 6 October 2014 and represents the first human to human transmission of EVD outside the continent (WHO, 2014).

More recently, in West Africa, there was a major resurgence of EVD in 2014 and 2015 that spanned five countries, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone, with Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone being the most severely affected. This epidemic led to the

<sup>5</sup> Autochthonous refers to a condition endemic or indigenous to the region where found (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/medical/autochthonous>).

declaration of EVD as a public health emergency of international concern in West Africa on 8 August 2014 by WHO. This 2014 EVD outbreak remains the most severe outbreak on record, unprecedented in size and geographical distribution, with more cases and deaths than all previous outbreaks (Gomes et al., 2014; Fowler et al., 2014; Chan, 2014; Fasina et al., 2014; Dixon & Schafer, 2014; Fisman, Khoo & Tuite 2014).

While relevant literature reveals varying figures of cases and deaths depending on the date of publication, a relatively recent report of WHO states that worldwide there have been 28 637 cases of EVD among which 11 315 were deaths. In addition, Guinea (2 536 deaths), Liberia (4 809 deaths) and Sierra Leone (3 955 deaths) have recorded the highest rates of casualties in the outbreak of the epidemic (WHO, 2015). The report from WHO reveals that while early supportive care with rehydration and symptomatic treatment enhances survival, EVD has no licensed treatment proven to neutralise the virus though a range of blood, immunological<sup>6</sup> and drug therapies are under development. Kinsman (2012:1) also asserts that though EVD currently has no cure, effective containment measures such as early hospitalisation and isolation of those affected, immediate burial of the dead and provision of accurate health information can significantly reduce the number of infections and deaths.

Scientists state that the outbreak of EVD, characterised by symptoms such as high fever, headache, abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhoea (Gatherer, 2014; Legrand et al., 2007; Dixon & Schafer, 2014; Shuaib et al, 2014), is a major threat to humans and wildlife and usually creates alarm, fear and panic in communities and nations where the epidemic emerges (Chan, 2014; Pourrut et al., 2005; Rouquet et al., 2005; Muyembe et al., 2012). Kinsman (2012: 2-7), citing the epidemic in Uganda as a case study, also argues that the gruesome nature of deaths caused by the outbreak of a deadly infectious disease such as EVD has been deeply etched into public imagination and it consists of two processes: one is the epidemiological process, where government and relevant institutions investigate the cause of the outbreak and how to eradicate the epidemic, and the second is the social process, caused by psychological factors such as fear, alarm and panic. Kinsman also recommends that the excessive fear and panic which characterise EVD outbreaks must be prevented in the eventuality of future epidemics by openness in the dissemination of accurate and crucial information.

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<sup>6</sup> Immunological (adjective) - relating to Immunology, refers to the broad branch of biological sciences that studies the defence system of organisms. <https://www.immunology.org/page.aspx?pid=1262>.



## ***1.2 Research Goals/Objectives***

The outbreak of EVD in Nigeria on 20 July 2014 created wide-spread apprehension among everyone resident in Nigeria. This was made evident by alarm, fear, anxiety and panic which accompanied intense media attention characterised to a large extent by news of the high infection rate fatalities associated with the epidemic (Mohammed et al., 2014; Nwanne, 2014). Sensationalist news reports and images which depicted EVD's high infection rate and speed in causing gruesome deaths created the tendency for infected people to avoid surveillance thereby increasing the rate of rumour, anxiety and horror which spread faster than the virus (Chan, 2014; Umeora et al., 2014).

While Ayodele (1988) and Omenugha (2004), prior to the EVD outbreak, argue that the Nigerian press has been accused of severally escalating tensions in the country, Nicholas & O'Malley (2013) also assert that print media organisations in most countries generally have as part of their history the business of irrational fear mongering and creating panic and popular anxiety about social problems. Against this background of heightened anxiety, fear and panic, this study seeks to investigate, establish and understand the place of actual EVD information, anxieties, fears and panics in *Vanguard's* coverage of the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria with the aim of bringing to the fore how the line between the dissemination of actual EVD information, and the tendency to disseminate sensationalised articles laden with panic and fear was negotiated while the epidemic lasted in the country.

In this study, I provide a thematic content analysis of EVD articles published by *Vanguard* between July and October 2014. Though *Vanguard* continues to report on EVD, I have chosen to study EVD articles between July and October 2014, as this was the period from the start of the outbreak until the time WHO declared the country free of EVD. Using also interview as method, I conducted interview sessions with a health journalist who works for *Vanguard* and is experienced in reporting epidemics in Nigeria, having reported outbreaks of viral diseases consistently over the years.

In line with the aim of this study, this health journalist who reported consistently on EVD as evidenced in the archived 2014 EVD articles was interviewed to gain an emic perspective of the underlining nuances that characterised the outbreak while also bringing to the fore the reasons that underlined the findings from the thematic content analysis. While efforts to reach other journalists at *Vanguard* who covered the outbreak proved abortive, this health journalist with over thirteen years' experience in reporting epidemics and health issues was interviewed as a representative sample of the team of health journalists who work for the print medium

and covered the outbreak while it lasted in Nigeria. This was useful in further delineating and bringing to the fore how the climate of fear and panic was negotiated by *Vanguard* during the 2014 EVD epidemic. Recurring themes identified from the in-depth thematic content analysis also informed the questions I asked the journalist with a view to locating his self-understanding as a health journalist who reported and disseminated EVD information.

### ***1.3 Significance of the Study***

This thesis adds to the growing body of research work on EVD outbreak. There are several scientific studies on the evolution of EVD including epidemiological research works on the outbreak (Feldmann, Klenk & Sanchez, 1993; Joffe & Haarhoff, 2002; Pourrut et al., 2005; Frieden et al., 2014; Briand et al., 2014). However, while the reportage of the EVD in the media is ‘appropriately generous’ both in the local and international media (Nwanne, 2014: 22), relevant literature indicates that EVD research conducted in the natural sciences exceeds that conducted from the social sciences and specifically those from the field of media studies. Drawing on this, Chigbu & Ntiador (2014) argue that a social science outlook on EVD is important for a broader understanding of the epidemic and its effects on society.

An in-depth study of *Vanguard*’s coverage of the EVD outbreak in Nigeria amid escalating anxiety and fear contributes to the on-going body of trans-disciplinary research work on the epidemic. This study therefore, through thematic content analysis of the archived EVD articles published between July and October 2014 by *Vanguard* and interview sessions with *Vanguard*’s health journalist seeks to contribute to this growing body of EVD research from a social science, news-based perspective.

### ***1.4 Thesis Structure***

Chapter Two discusses further the research context in a more specific way by locating this thesis within the historical, political and social context of Nigerian society both generally and specifically as it pertains to the outbreak of EVD. To do this, the chapter explores the emergence of the Nigerian state alongside a brief historical overview of Lagos State where the EVD outbreak was first recorded, a discussion and historical context of the emergence of EVD in Nigeria, a discussion of the landscape of the press in Nigeria and finally a discussion of *Vanguard*.

Chapter Three discusses the theoretical foundations that underpin this study and guides the interpretation of data collected. The normative theories of the media, the three levels of

analysis and constituents towards deconstructing journalism culture and the theory of moral panic are used to provide the theoretical context in which this thesis is located. The theory of moral panic as posited by Cohen (1972) and reviewed and outlined by other scholars is discussed in this chapter and presented as the theoretical framework useful for unpacking and bringing to the fore the inherent fear and panic that underlined the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria. Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng & White's (2009) normative theories of the media provide the theoretical foundation useful in investigating, unpacking and delineating the roles taken up by the journalists who work for *Vanguard* and covered the EVD outbreak while the epidemic lasted. Finally, Chapter Three discusses Hanitzsch's (2007) three levels of analysis and constituents towards deconstructing journalism culture which was drawn on in the analysis of the data generated during the interview sessions.

Chapter Four discusses the research methodology, methods, data selection and sampling technique that inform this study. Informed by the qualitative approach to research, this chapter discusses the qualitative research design as explicated by Babbie & Mouton (2001) and Babbie (2007). The qualitative approach as a case oriented design that provides a holistic way of understanding a phenomenon in a specific real-life context (Schreier, 2012) is also brought to the fore in this chapter alongside a justification for each criterion used in the overall research design.

Chapter Five systematically presents the data generated and gathered from *Vanguard's* archived 2014 EVD articles. This Chapter arranged in different sections, also analyses and discusses the generated and gathered data. Chapter Six presents, analyses and discusses the data generated from the interview sessions while Chapter Seven presents the summary of findings/conclusions and the recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RESEARCH CONTEXT

#### 2. *Introduction*

The primary aim of this chapter is to provide a concise review of relevant literature that will situate this thesis within its context of study. To achieve this, this chapter presents a discussion of epidemics and the Nigerian state alongside brief historical information about Lagos state where the EVD outbreak first occurred, followed by a contextual discussion of EVD outbreak in Nigeria, and then a discussion of the Press landscape in Nigeria and background information about *Vanguard*.

#### 2.1 *Epidemics and the Nigerian State*

In the Nigerian State, there has been a fairly long history of different epidemics with each outbreak having varying degrees of challenges and affected persons: these has been brought to the fore by different scholars who have alluded to the centrality of health issues to global socio-political discourses. Obadare (2005) posits that the construction of disease outbreaks can only be understood within the embedded context of health, history and politics of the affected country. The long history of the polio epidemic and the years of input by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI)<sup>7</sup> and other governmental and non-governmental agencies to combat the epidemic in Nigeria, and the recent resurgence of the Lassa fever virus among other epidemics confirm that the country has had major combats with severe outbreaks over the years. While WHO has declared that Nigeria is no longer on the polio endemic list due to the interrupted transmission of the wide poliovirus which GPEI has declared as a historic achievement in global health, the Lassa fever outbreak remains endemic in the country with a record of resurgences (WHO, 2015; WHO, 2016).

The instance of the outbreak of hepatitis B virus (HBV)<sup>8</sup> infection, an epidemic in Nigeria, is said to have reached a hyper endemic level while its evolutionary history remains a subject of continuing research. Forbi et al., (2010) state that the burden of HBV remains substantial because despite the availability of the vaccine since 1982 and its inclusion in Nigeria's national immunisation programme in 1995, the vaccine only became available in the country

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<sup>7</sup> GPEI is a public-private partnership led by national governments and spearheaded by WHO, rotary international, the US centers for disease control and prevention (CDC) and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) with a goal to eradicate polio worldwide (<http://www.polioeradication.org/AboutUs.aspx>)

<sup>8</sup> HBV, transmitted through contact with the blood or other body fluids of an infected person, is a potentially live threatening liver infection that can cause both acute and chronic disease (<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs204/en/>)

in 2004. Also, cholera, an acute diarrhoeal infection caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated by the bacterium, *Vibrio cholerae*, is another recurring epidemic in Nigeria. Cholera first appeared in Nigeria in 1972 and there have been intermittent outbreaks of cholera since then with a major outbreak in 2010 that led to 781 deaths out of the 3,000 recorded cases (Adagbada et al., 2012). Furthermore, the outbreak in the 1980s of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), its advanced stage of infection, remains another major epidemic in the history of the Nigerian state (Oyefara, 2007). The devastating effect of HIV/AIDS epidemic has since ceased to be doubted by Nigerian residents as many no longer see it either as a scourge of distant lands or a product of the imagination of some scientists as the country now ranks among the most affected countries in the world (Nasidi & Tekena, 2006:18). Nevertheless, available literature reveals that the country, since the return to democratic governance in 1999, launched serious efforts to tackle the epidemic; each democratically elected government alongside civil societies has made effective moves to combat the epidemic and this has contributed in reducing the rate at which the HIV/AIDS epidemic spreads (Nasidi & Tekena, 2006:18; UNAIDS, 2016). Avian influenza epidemic more commonly referred to as bird flu, measles and yellow fever among other diseases add to the number of outbreaks that have occurred in the Nigerian state over the years (Obayelu, 2007; Grais et al., 2007; Monath et al., 1973). These above instances of epidemics in Nigeria alongside other epidemics in literature bring to the fore that the Nigerian state has had its fair share of outbreaks prior to and after independence.

However, Obadare (2005) argues that the socio-political discourse surrounding these epidemics can easily go unnoticed, if adequate attention is not paid to the underlining 'politics of infectious diseases' (2005:274). Vaughan (1991) and Obadare (2005) argues that the HIV/AIDS epidemic stands out as an example that once again brings to the fore the overarching difference and debates about the origins and the construction of outbreaks and diseases in previously colonised African nations by the western world. While Vaughn (1991) outlines the lingering western position of most medical and journalistic literatures that foregrounds the durability of the European cultural tradition which sees the African continent as synonymous with disease, death and uncontrolled sexuality: Obadare (2005) brings to the fore an inversion of the colonial discourse on Africa where Africa is constructed as a place of social stability and morality, where sexuality is still ordered by a set of traditional norms.

Amidst this historical background of continuing debates about diseases and outbreaks that have ravaged the Nigerian state in the past with some cases of recurring situations, the overview of the reports by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Nigeria and WHO reveals that while more efforts must be made to eradicate or drastically reduce casualties during such outbreaks, there has been appreciable growth in the prevention rate of infectious diseases, both with or without a licensed cure. Consequently, this review of literature also reveals that over the years scholars have paid very little attention to the social responses of Nigerian residents to epidemics as more efforts are geared towards tracking these outbreaks and proffering licensed cure to these diseases while research primarily focused on understanding and bringing to the fore the social responses of residents seems under studied.



**Figure 2:** The map of Nigeria showing the 36 states of the federation and the federal capital territory.

The Nigerian state, according to 2015 statistics from the World Bank, has a population of over 175 million in her 36 states and federal capital territory.

### ***2.1.1 Lagos State***

Lagos State, with an estimated population of 21 million residents according to the world population review, is the most populous state in Nigeria. It is the nation's commercial, financial and industrial nerve centre and is a hub for economic, and travel activities with air, land and sea ports of entry (Shuaib et al., 2014). Lagos city, which consists of a mainland and a group of islands serves as a transportation hub for not just the country but for the west African region and is projected to become one of the world's largest cities by 2025 (UN-Habitat, 2014). Prior to the creation of Lagos State and for a period of time after the state was created, Lagos city was both the capital city of Lagos State and Nigeria and was administered by the federal government through the federal ministry of Lagos Affairs. The state capital city was moved to Ikeja in 1976 while the capital city of Nigeria was moved to Abuja in 1991. Due to a high rate of urbanisation, the majority of residents in the state live in densely congested settlements and as at 2007 the population density has risen to 18150 people per km<sup>2</sup> with an annual growth rate of 3% (UN-Habitat, 2014 as cited by Chigbu & Ntiador, 2014).

EVD was first discovered in Lagos State when a symptomatic traveller flew into the state on a commercial flight and was later confirmed as the index case<sup>9</sup> of the outbreak. The outbreak heightened anxiety within and beyond Nigeria because a protracted EVD epidemic in Lagos State stands out as a major catastrophe which can easily spread with a sustained transmission rate within the vast residents of the state and the nation (Gidado et al., 2014; Shuaib et al., 2014; Frieden et al., 2014; Chigbu & Ntiador, 2014).

### ***2.2 EVD Outbreak in Nigeria***

The outbreak of EVD was first reported in Nigeria on 20 July 2014 when a passenger, having developed symptoms while aboard a commercial airplane, flew from Liberia into Lagos State. There had been no record of the epidemic in Nigeria prior to this incident but there had been earlier reports of severe outbreaks of the epidemic in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia and the outbreak in Nigeria was reported as the first time EVD had spread through air travel (Fasina et al., 2014; Shuaib et al., 2014; Chan, 2014; Gatherer, 2014; Legrand et al., 2007; Dixon & Schafer, 2014).

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<sup>9</sup> An index case refers to the first person to be infected with a disease during an epidemic within a population.

While it can be recalled that there had been occasions of panic during the spread of the highly pathogenic avian influenza (bird flu) through air travel from southeast Asian countries (Van Borm, 2005; Colizza, 2007), the EVD outbreak in Nigeria again brought to the fore the risk of the urban spread of outbreaks hinged on the realisation that epidemics have no boundaries and that air travel is a very efficient means of spreading diseases. The EVD outbreak in Nigeria led to heightened anxiety, fear and panic across several countries as flights to and from Nigeria was highly restricted (Fasina, et al., 2014).

The arrival of the symptomatic passenger (Patrick Sawyer) who was later confirmed as an index case of EVD in Lagos State led to the declaration of a national Ebola emergency by the Federal Ministry of Health, under the auspices of CDC in Nigeria and the Nigerian government. The federal ministry of health and Lagos State government established an Ebola Incident Management Centre which worked alongside the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) with co-operation and assistance from international health organisations to provide an efficient and rapid response to the epidemic. Mr Patrick Sawyer's collapse at the airport coupled with the lack of knowledge of his state of health by the airport medical team led to the spread of EVD with hundreds of primary, secondary and tertiary contacts. Eighteen thousand face-to-face visits were subsequently conducted by contact tracers to assess the development of the outbreak. Sawyer had been placed under observation in a hospital in Monrovia, Liberia but decided to travel against medical advice. On his admission to a private hospital in Lagos, Sawyer was noted to have fever and diarrhoea and was treated for malaria, however, his failure to respond to the malaria treatment coupled with the fact that he came into Nigeria from an EVD-affected country brought about suspicions that he might have contacted EVD though he stated he had not been exposed when queried about the epidemic. He was however confirmed as the index case of EVD in the country after his blood specimen sent to Lagos University Teaching Hospital was confirmed positive with acute EVD infection. By the time Sawyer had died on 25 July, EVD had also spread to the city of Port Harcourt in Rivers State, the second outbreak site through a primary contact who had been exposed to the virus (Shuaib et al., 2014; Fasina, et al., 2014; Gidado et al., 2014; Shittu et al., 2015).

Media reports show that while previous EVD outbreaks attracted substantial media coverage, this recent outbreak generated substantially more coverage all over the world (Mohammed et al., 2014). The media became the strategic and major tool of disseminating crucial information to residents in Nigeria who eagerly and with heightened anxiety followed the



epidemic reports and developments which to a very great extent were substantially covered by the Nigerian media (Nwanne, 2014). While Gidado, et al., (2014) state that Nigerian residents developed a fairly high level of knowledge about EVD, news stories and reports disseminated by the media formed the basis of the information most Nigerian residents were armed with during the outbreak. The survey conducted by Gidado, et al. some weeks after the first index case was reported show that the news media was the primary source of information most residents had about EVD.

The panic during the epidemic led to restrictions of flights to and from all affected West African countries and was also heightened by sensationalist media reports and images that led to wide-spread apprehension (Umeora et al., 2014; Fasina, et al., 2014). While Nigeria was declared free of EVD on 20 October 2014 by WHO, 42 days after the last confirmed or probable case of EVD was reported, WHO's Director General, Margaret Chan and the response team during and after the outbreak stressed fear, alarm and panic generated by EVD deaths as the greatest barrier to overcome by people in the affected West African countries. The fear that EVD has no cure creates the paradoxical likelihood that infected people do avoid the health care system when they perceive EVD symptoms in either themselves or a neighbour, thereby increasing the rate of rumour and panic which spread faster than the virus (Chan, 2014).

An overview of news reports alongside available literature shows that this palpable fear and panic is perpetuated in several ways. Among these is the resort to non-scientific remedies, for instance 'drinking and bathing with salt water' became a rumoured magical cure for EVD and stood as the 'most celebrated' unscientific claim while the epidemic lasted (Umeora et al., 2014:1; Azuine et al., 2015). Gidado et al., (2014) found that some Nigerian residents considered that this will both prevent and cure EVD. Although, the federal government issued a widely circulated warning against this practice, many residents went ahead with the practice which resulted in a number of reported deaths.

Fear and panic during the EVD outbreak was also evident in the behavioural modifications that characterised the period. A decline in handshakes across different cultural communities and social classes in the country stands as one of the most visible modifications. An overview of news reports indicate that many residents resorted to 'elbow shakes' as a way of greeting rather than the usual handshake while the EVD outbreak lasted (Nwuke, 2014). Records of increased purchase and use of hand sanitisers also indicate the palpable fear and panic witnessed during the outbreak, though use of hand sanitisers was recommended by WHO and

CDC, an overview of news reports show that the hand sanitisers were used extravagantly by Nigerian residents at the slightest contact with unfamiliar people, while the price of hand sanitisers rocketed within days of the outbreak as ‘traders sought to make the most of a windfall profit opportunity’ (Nwuke, 2014:3).

Increased patronage of acclaimed scientific, herbal and traditional drugs and products which were either presented or rumoured as cures for EVD also show the fear and panic experienced during the outbreak. Relevant literature reveals that many Nigerian residents opted for *Garicinia Kola* widely known as bitter kola. A Nigerian professor of pharmacy had earlier asserted that *Garicinia kola* could halt the replication of the EVD organism and also reaffirmed his assertion during the outbreak thereby leading to its high demand while the epidemic lasted. While bitter kola was neither officially named as a cure or preventive measure for EVD by Nigeria’s federal government or medical institutions, many residents resorted to its usage thereby leading to its scarcity during the outbreak (Onyeonoro et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the information that went round on social media during the outbreak also reveals the fear and panic that characterised the outbreak. The increased rate of patronage for unverified traditional options such as the use of a particular type of native vegetable, ‘*ewedu*’, as cure for EVD became a topical issue on twitter during the epidemic with many tweeting about their fears and anxiety amidst varying degrees of perspective on the outbreak (Oyeyemi, Gabarron & Wynn, 2014). An overview of news reports during the epidemic in Nigeria reveal the massive rush for *ewedu* which a Nigerian professor of ophthalmology in Lagos University Teaching Hospital claims to prevent and cure EVD. The *ewedu* cure claim was made by the professor during the 2014 edition of the annual African traditional medicine day organised by the nation’s national agency for food and drug administration and control (NAFDAC). However, while the Director General of NAFDAC refuted the cure claim as unverified, unsubstantial and an act that could further mislead Nigerian residents who have had enough psychological trauma during the epidemic, relevant reports show that many resorted to using the native vegetable (Vanguard, 2014; News24Nigeria, 2014).

Umeora et al., (2014) state that spiritualists and charlatans were also responsible for the traditional and unverified cure claims for EVD and were making business out of the heightened anxiety and panic that came with the epidemic. News reports reveal a number of self-acclaimed traditional healers who proclaimed expertise in curing EVD and certain people who were arrested for importation of expired hand sanitisers and fake EVD test kits into the

country (Vanguard, 2014; Nwuke, 2014). However, news reports also reveal that the nation's minister of health, the Director General of NAFDAC and other government officials alerted residents and advised against patronising such persons while stating that anyone with EVD cure claims should come to NAFDAC, the ethics committee or the treatment research group set up by the federal government rather than causing more panic in the country (Vanguard, 2014; The Washington Post, 2014).

The fear and panic that characterised the EVD outbreak was posited by health organisations and agencies within the country and beyond as one of the major underlying factors that caused the reported cases of stigmatisation against affected persons witnessed during the epidemic (WHO, 2015; Yusuf et al., 2015). Fear of stigmatisation being the reason why people will be in denial of having EVD and naturally play down their symptoms when attended to by medical staff or the reason why relatives will hide symptomatic family members comes as a result of trauma and shame they have seen EVD patients experience in their communities (Kinsman, 2012; Chan, 2014; Kuriansky & Jalloh, 2016). Stigma which is a deeply discrediting attribute that taints, discounts and precludes individual(s) from full social acceptance comes with stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination (Goffman, 1963 as cited in Davtyan et al., 2014) and has a negative effect on the mental health of beneficiaries and disease control and prevention. During the outbreak in Nigeria, stigmatising attitudes and behaviours were made evident by refusing the EVD patients and survivors to return home after treatment, burning their clothes, disallowing them from touching their children and other interpersonal conflicts at home rooted in distrust and blame, also, some were abandoned by their spouses while some had their family members often turned away from market places (Umeora et al., 2014:3). However, fear of stigmatisation and stigmatising attitudes and beliefs can be greatly minimised during such outbreaks by conducting qualitative psychosocial research to evaluate communities' beliefs and perceptions on the causes and control of EVD: this will generate depth into effective strategies needed to prevent irrational responses during outbreaks (Umeora et al., 2014; Kuriansky & Jalloh, 2016).

While the outbreak lasted, the federal government, from the initial declaration of EVD emergency to the time the country was declared free by WHO, consistently reassured Nigerian residents of total commitment to the battle against EVD. Although, Tomori (2015) argues that the federal government delayed in the provision of funds for the early and crucial activities of the EOC and also created a false sense of confidence regarding their

preparedness for the epidemic depicted through the official pre-outbreak information, a good number of other commentators believe that the federal government's response was timely and well-co-ordinated. The efficient leadership provided by the Nigerian government during the outbreak led to a rapidly enforced coordination of the national and state response shifts managed by the EOC and eventually led to the early arrest of the epidemic with a case fatality rate lower than those of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone where the majority of EVD cases in west Africa were recorded (Nwanne, 2014; Nwuke, 2014; Shuaib et al., 2014; Patel et al., 2015; Onyeonoro et al., 2015). Relevant literature reveals that government's advocacy for safe burial practices, effective guidelines on the screening of travellers at all ports of entry, facilitation of preparedness/preventive workshops as well as other preventive measures during the epidemic has been applauded by many Nigerian residents, stakeholders, international organisations and observers. Scholars and stakeholders have asserted that during the 2014 EVD outbreak, Nigeria benefited from her past experiences with epidemics such as the country's effective polio eradication efforts (Nwuke, 2014; Shuaib et al., 2014). Also, WHO commended the strong leadership and coordination provided by Nigerian government in rapidly establishing the EOC and Garcia, the WHO epidemiologist deployed to Nigeria during the outbreak states that 'the key to containing the outbreak in Nigeria was just really strong leadership, good coordination and having resources' (WHO, 2015).

However, while the mass media coverage and dissemination of news stories about the EVD outbreak across states, capital cities, towns and even local communities with irregular power supply and unaffordable internet services was affirmed to be important, it has been critiqued for fuelling the fear, anxiety and panic that characterised the outbreak (Umeora et al., 2014; Nwanne, 2014; Yusuf et al., 2015). Though the Nigerian media covered and disseminated crucial EVD news and information, Umeora et al., (2014) and Shuaib et al., (2014) argue that there are instances of highly sensationalised and unbalanced reports and images alongside inaccurate facts that led to nationwide scare, fear and panic while the epidemic lasted. Furthermore, while there are minimal empirical evidence to assess the social media role during the outbreak in Nigeria, available reports show that different social media platforms disseminated useful and crucial EVD information (Nduka, et al., 2014). However, enormous rumours, false and inaccurate information were also circulated and mostly left undisputed and when some of the inaccurate information were disputed by the government's health agencies it took days for the accurate information to circulate on social media (Oyeyemi, Gabarron & Wynn, 2014). Also, the EVD news reports by the international media has been accused of

dehumanising on the part of Africans navigating the epidemic while also portraying the African continent as disease ridden (Benton & Dionne, 2015). This, Yusuf et al., (2015) argue is made evident by the international media reports that focused more on horrific situations associated with the epidemic while remaining almost silent on efforts in place by affected countries to put an end to the scourge.

### ***2.3 Press Landscape in Nigeria***

Historically, the Nigerian press has been in existence prior to the official proclamation/birth of the Nigerian state: while the Nigerian state got her independence on 1 October 1960, the Nigerian press dates back to 1859 when the first Nigerian newspaper, a privately owned press, launched its first edition (Uche, 1981; Adaja, 2012). Relevant literature reveals that though this first established press in Nigeria established by an English missionary, Henry Townsend, was aimed to ‘get the people to read...to beget the habit of seeking information by reading..’, the realisation of journalism as a potent instrument in accomplishing their mission works and as a useful tool for political propaganda, coupled with the success recorded in other British colonies led to the establishment of the foremost newspapers in Nigeria in the late 1850’s and early 1860’s (Adaja, 2012:16; Adebani, 2004:766).

However, the Nigerian press over the years has effectively played a watchdog role by serving as the main source of political education during the agitations against colonialism and subsequently against military rule. This is made evident by the attained political independence which came to being through the patriotic efforts and consistent struggle for democratic governance in the country by Nigerians who used the press as a weapon (Uche, 1981; Adesoji, 2010). The Nigerian press, during the military era, played a vital part in the enthronement of democratic governance in the country by remaining undaunted and effective in her watch dog role which contributed immensely to the fall of the era (Kalejaiye, 1999; Akinfeleye, 2003). Nevertheless, the chequered history of the Nigerian press also includes the apparent ethnic and tribal sentiments that have continuously been part of her existence over the years and are made evident by the ethnically oriented papers that served as mouthpieces for the proprietors and resulted in a weak, partisan and ethnocentric press (Akinwale, 2010). The Nigerian press alongside the chequered history has also been accused of heightening anxiety, tension and panic in the country on several occasions through sensational and prejudiced reporting based on ethnic, religious, political and cultural basis (Ayodele, 1988; Omenugha, 2004; African Media Barometer, 2011).

Conversely, relevant literature also shows that the Nigerian press has been relatively effective in creating and sustaining awareness during outbreaks of epidemics with the coverage of polio, avian flu, malaria, HIV/AIDS, EVD and Lassa fever among others as examples (Babalola & Babalola, 2013; Odoemelam et al., 2014; Population Council, 2014; Yusuf et al., 2015; Bello, 2015). However, both health reporting in general terms and more specifically coverage of epidemics by the Nigerian press have been critiqued to lack significant prominence and depth most especially in the early days of such diseases and outbreaks (Shuaib et al., 2014; Odoemelam et al., 2014; Bello, 2015). MacArthur Hill, a communication specialist with the United Nations Education Fund (UNICEF) has also accused the Nigeria press of selective reporting of public health issues based on their perceived importance of the issue. This, he says, denies local communities and vulnerable groups opportunities to be key sources of public health information (Vanguard, 2010). In this regard, Uzuegbunam et al., (2016) state that there is a challenge of capacity on the part of Nigerian press with regards to the reporting of health issues.

### **2.3.1 Vanguard**

*Vanguard* newspapers, a Nigerian print medium, published by Vanguard Media Limited started as a weekly newspaper on 3 June 1984 and was established by Sam Amuka, editor of the defunct Sunday Times and first managing director of Nigeria's *Punch* newspaper. *Vanguard* has been described as a most refreshing, detailed and a reader friendly newspaper which as a family oriented newspaper also appeals to the upwardly mobile executives and captains of industry. The print medium created with the motto, 'towards a better life for the people', became a daily newspaper on 15 July 1984 and is one of the leading newspapers in Nigeria (<http://www.vanguardngr.com/about/>, 2016).

A 2011 media reach OMD report reveals that *Vanguard* is the fourth most read daily newspaper in Nigeria while the regional statistics in the report show that it topped the list of the 10 most widely read newspapers in south-west Nigeria. The statistics also show that *Vanguard* belongs to the top 10 widely read newspapers in the south-south, south-east and the north-east regions of the country (MediaReach OMD, 2011). *Vanguard* in terms of circulation is rated ahead of many print media organisations in Nigeria with a daily print run of 130 000 copies (Olutokun & Seteolu, 2001). *Vanguard* has a daily circulation rate of 20 000 copies in Lagos state, 12 000 copies in Abuja, 15 000 copies in the south-west, 25 000 copies in the south-south, 15 000 copies in the south-east, 18 000 copies in the north-central and 7 500 copies both in the north-east and north-west (<http://www.vanguardngr.com/about/>,

2016). *Vanguard's* wide circulation, readership and status is also alluded to by the findings that show the print medium's inclusion as part of the representative sample for Nigerian newspapers in relevant academic journals and articles (Olutokun & Seteolu, 2001; Atoma, C.N., 2008; Nwanne, 2014; Bello, 2015). Bello, using *Vanguard* as part of the representative sample for his research reveals that over 50% of his respondents admits to discussing information gleaned from the print media with 'friends, family members, professional colleagues and other people' (2015:210). This further reiterates the place of *Vanguard* as both a useful print medium of enquiry for researchers on varying social phenomena and a recognised print medium in Nigeria.

Although *Vanguard's* EVD reports prior to the 2014 EVD epidemic in Nigeria are not as frequent compared to the reports after the outbreak: *Vanguard* reported the outbreak in affected West African countries (Guinea, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone) and had substantial coverage of the outbreak in Nigeria while it lasted (Nwanne, 2014). While *Vanguard* still reports on EVD till date, the available archives of the 2014 EVD news stories attest to the substantial coverage of the EVD epidemic. Health correspondents and other reporters who work for *Vanguard* from their various locations within the country covered the EVD outbreak regularly with steady updated information about the epidemic. This study shows that these journalists in their coverage of the EVD outbreak spoke with government officials both at the federal and state levels, state and private medical officials, officials of international health organisations, EVD survivors and their families.

This study, alongside an in-depth qualitative content analysis, includes interview sessions conducted with one of the most experienced journalists who covered the outbreak. While efforts to contact and interview other journalists proved abortive, this health journalist was interviewed based on his availability and preliminary findings that attest to his vast experience in health reporting and specifically in reporting epidemics.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3. Introduction**

This study, entitled *Negotiating the line between information and panic: a case study of Vanguard's coverage of the Ebola outbreak in Nigeria*, is located within the broad fields of cultural studies, journalism studies and media studies. This chapter discusses the underpinning theoretical frameworks for this study and presents the theory of moral panic as the theoretical foundation that is used to identify, establish and contextualise the heightened anxiety, fear and panic that characterised the EVD outbreak while it lasted in Nigeria. This chapter also discusses Christian et al's (2009) normative theories of the media which provide the framework useful for investigating, establishing and delineating the role(s) taken up by *Vanguard's* journalists while covering the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria and, finally, discusses Hanitzsch's (2007) three levels of analysis and constituents of journalism culture which also provide theoretical insights useful in unpacking and analysing the interview sessions conducted.

#### **3.1 The Theory of Moral Panic: conceptualisation and critiques**

The seminal work on the theory of moral panic as an academic framework by Stanley Cohen (1972) serves as the bedrock for different models of moral panic today in the academia (Nicholas & O'Malley, 2013; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Garland, 2008; Morgan, Dagistanli & Martin, 2010; Hunt, 1997; McRobbie & Thornton, 1995). Young's (1971) work on the social meaning of drug taking also contributed immensely to the development and launch of the concept of moral panic (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995).

Cohen launched the term moral panic as a means of making sense and characterising the reactions of the media, the public and the agents of social control to the then youthful disturbances. Available literature reveals that over the years the theory of moral panic has evolved into an ambiguous concept that has stirred up numerous critiques and debates amidst the theorists, scholars and divers professionals outside the academia that use the concept. However, despite the wide criticism the concept 'just refuses to go away' (Jewkes, 2004:75), just as Garland (2008) opines that the concept is useful despite its criticisms and if Cohen had not come up with the term 'it would have been necessary for someone else to invent it'



(2008:9). Based on relevant literature Cohen's definition of a moral panic stands as the most frequently used. He defines a moral panic as when

...a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way the society conceives itself (Cohen 1972: 9).

It is pertinent to outline what the 'moral' depicts in the term moral panic. Goode & Ben-Yehuda (1994) state that the 'moral' in a moral panic refers to 'the expression of outrage at the violation of a given absolute value, the undermining of something that a sector of the society regards as good-that is, principles which embody decency, righteousness and virtue'. It is also useful to point out that while moral panics comprises a series of phases, these phases are not rigid and may vary according to the context and subject of the moral panic (Cohen, 2002 as cited by Morgan, Dagistanli & Martin, 2010). This points to the possibility of applying the moral panic framework to varying issues of societal concern caused by a public disquiet within a specified context.

However, Goode (2000) corroborated by Critcher (2006) argues that moral panics should be appreciated as a concept and not as a theory: they both argue that moral panic is an abstraction, an analytical and explanatory concept and a sociological phenomenon useful for tracing similarities and differences between different issues of societal concern. Garland (2008) reviewing Cohen's framework also reveals that a moral panic has a loose set of causal conditions which varies based on its nature and focus. He highlights facilitating conditions to include; the existence of a sensationalist mass media, the discovery of some new or hitherto unreported form of deviance, the existence of marginalised, outsider groups suitable for portrayal as 'folk devils' and an already primed, sensitised public audience. Relevant literature reveals that most moral panic theorists and researchers work within the constructionist framework which aims to explain and analyse how issues commonly regarded as social problems are defined, framed, packaged and explained: how certain people, objects or activities come to be seen as deviant and consequently tagged as folk devil(s) by some

members in the society and also to account for subsequent escalations of social control efforts against them (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2011; Victor, 1998 as cited in Cornwell & Linders, 2002).

Cohen's seminal framework reveals that though there are some cases where moral panics do not disappear, they are mostly impermanent and precarious episodes that erupt into a society's consciousness and thereafter disappear (Clapton, Cree & Smith, 2013). In *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Cohen examines and analyses the then societal issues with the 1960s mods and rockers phenomenon<sup>10</sup> as a case study and he argues that moral outrage coupled with an extensive media coverage led to wide spread alarm and panic. Cohen also argues that for every moral panic there is always an identified 'scape goat' or 'folk devil' that symbolises the source or cause of the public fear, alarm and anxiety. Cohen, in his analysis states that the terms 'mods' and 'rockers' were detached from previously neutral contexts and accorded negative statuses and meanings thereby depicting them as the folk devil (1972:40).

Hier (2002) reviewing Cohen's seminal framework on moral panic states that though moral panic focuses on an identified scape goat/folk devil, this (the scape goat/folk devil) is not the object but simply an embodiment of deeper concerns and fears which is perceived through social definition as the 'problem'. This reveals that the cultural change in 1960s depicted through post-war affluence and sexual freedom that the mods and rockers represented was the actual underlying problem while the folk devil status according to Garland (2008) serves as 'a suitable screen upon which the society can project sentiments of guilt and ambivalence' (2008:15). Cohen's framework further reveals that moral panics depend on the generation of 'diffuse normative concerns' and identifies stereotyping, exaggeration, distortion and sensitisation as criteria for a moral panic (1972:59-65).

However, though Cohen's position can be easily inferred, relevant literature reveals that his framework has been critiqued by scholars who state that the clear neutrality adopted in his seminal and subsequent analysis of moral panic and the absence of an emphatic mention of what he means by 'panic' has led to the fluidity of the concept (Hunt, 1997; Garland 2008). Garland (2008) however states that what is meant by panic in this context stems from the conventional usage as depicted in the Oxford English Dictionary which defines a panic as: 'a

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<sup>10</sup> Mods and Rockers, two British youth subcultures in the 1960s, refer to one of the many sets of figures through which the 60s in Britain is remembered. Initially, at the beginning of the 1960 decade, mods-that is, 'modern' as a term simply referred to a style of dress while the term 'rocker' was hardly known (Cohen, 1972: 10). The rockers subculture centred around motorcycling and their dressing/outfits favoured black leather jackets while the mods subculture with a conscious attempt to appear new centred around modern fashion and music and they thought themselves as more sophisticated, more stylish and more in touch with the times than the rockers hence modern (<http://subcultureslist.com/mods-and-rockers/>).

sudden and excessive feeling of alarm or fear, usually affecting a body of persons, and leading to extravagant or injudicious efforts to secure safety' (2008:10).

Goode & Ben-Yehuda (1994) assert that moral panics vary greatly according to context and range from those with more lasting consequences to those of a more fleeting nature.

However, they argue that Cohen's moral panic framework lacks precision in terms of clear and concise characteristics expected in a case of moral panic. They posit five elements as characteristics of a moral panic episode. The five elements include: volatility (an eruption of public expression and concerns about a condition or set of events by the media, primary definers, moral entrepreneurs<sup>11</sup> etc), hostility (whereby folk devil(s) are identified and forced to endure intense scrutiny and tagged as enemies of the society), measurable concern (the extent of public concern must be significant and verifiable), consensus (broad level of agreement that the threat is genuine and significant) and disproportionality (the state's reaction/measures instituted against the problem being out of proportion to its magnitude) (1994:33-39). Goode & Ben-Yehuda also posit three models of moral panic: the interest group, the elite-engineered and the grassroots models.

The interest group model suggests that moral panics are resultant effects as well as unintended consequences of the crusades/projects launched by specific interest groups to draw public attention to evils and misdeeds they perceive as threats to the society. Goode & Ben-Yehuda suggest that Cohen's framework where he draws attention to interested parties such as rights groups, charities, religious leaders and local councillors and refers to them as moral entrepreneurs belongs to their interest group model. The elite-engineered model is a deliberate undertaking by the ruling class to generate and sustain concern, fear and panic on the part of the public over an issue that they recognise not to be terribly harmful to the society as a whole in order to divert attention from more serious problems. Hall et al.'s (1978) classic analysis of moral panic in 'policing the crisis' has been cited by Goode & Ben-Yehuda as an example of the elite-engineered model. The grassroots model is posited as a more spontaneous outpouring of public anxiety across a broad range of residents in a society. This model, according to Goode & Ben-Yehuda, is founded on genuine public concern and stresses popular participation among the population of a society. The grassroots model is

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<sup>11</sup> Moral entrepreneurs, coined in 1963 by Howard Becker, refers to individuals, groups or formal organisations who work to influence a group or larger society to adopt, maintain, change or discard a set of norms. They claim that a social phenomenon is a social problem or what is generally recognised as a problem is serious enough to warrant immediate attention and decisive action ([http://sociologyindex.com/moral\\_entrepreneurs.htm](http://sociologyindex.com/moral_entrepreneurs.htm)).

hinged on the notion that the media cannot publish news stories and concerns about an event where none exists initially.

However, a review of different frameworks of moral panic reveals that the element of disproportionality and exaggeration have been critiqued by different scholars who have raised ontological and methodological concerns. These concerns are hinged on the nature of public outrage and reaction which cannot be accessed or easily determined either based on the folk devil(s) or the underlying problem let alone determining whether it is proportionate or disproportionate in terms of extensiveness, duration or intensity (Cohen, 1999; Garland, 2008). Furthermore, Cornwell & Linders (2002) in their critique of the moral panic theory argue that the framework is laden with ontological and methodological difficulties and not useful for research. They contend that the concerns of residents in the United States about the use of Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD)<sup>12</sup> in the 1960s does not represent a moral panic as many researchers have posited but it rather represents a rational and reasonable response to the genuine threat it posed and the damage it caused. Cornwell & Linders argue that when faced with emergent social threats, members of the society take up an active role by seeking to clarify and interpret ambiguous and often conflicting information about them through an active process of affiliations and social interactions contrary to traditional depiction that panics are generated among members of the society through the reaction of social actors and moral entrepreneurs to a social threat or problem (2002:309). However, Goode & Ben-Yehuda (2011) disagree and state that the LSD threat in the 1960s was more panic driven than materially real and also that media representations and legislations about LSD proposed and passed were found credible by members of the society and was characterised by Cohen's criteria for a moral panic.

Concerns about panic in today's postmodern world being amoral have also been put forward. This is predicated on the notion that the emergence of new medical and technological threats makes irrelevant and antiquated the older threats that are based on morality with an identifiable folk devil (Ungar, 2001, Waiton 2008). Hier (2002), however, argues that moral panics cannot be easily dismissed: rather a proliferation of it at various levels is to be expected in the risk-laden postmodern era. While McRobbie & Thornton (1995), Hier (2002) and Critcher (2009) in their reviews of the moral panic theory argue that there is a need to

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<sup>12</sup> Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), discovered in 1938, is also known as acid and belongs to a class of drugs also known as hallucinogens. LSD distorts the perception of reality and it is the most potent mood and perception altering drug known. It has no accepted medical use and its manufacture is illegal in the United States ([http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Lysergic+Acid+Diethylamide+\(LSD\)\)](http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Lysergic+Acid+Diethylamide+(LSD))).

reconceptualise the framework, Hier and Critcher have both posited that there is an affinity between the theories of moral panic and moral regulation<sup>13</sup> which should be looked into to reposition the framework. Hier (2002) advocates for a reconceptualisation of moral panics through an explication of the fusion of moral panic with regulatory projects. Also, Critcher (2009) posits that the reconceptualisation is feasible and beneficial if moral panics are located as an extreme form of a more routine process of moral regulation. He however states the need to specify the scope of moral regulation and its boundary with moral panics.

### ***3.1.1 Moral Panics and the Mass Media***

The mass media have always played a central role in organising and determining the way ideas and information flow thereby acting as ‘the main conduit through which ideas circulate in societies’ (Nicholas & O’Malley, 2013:1). While the relationship between the media and moral panics is a complex one, a review of relevant literature shows that the mass media plays a major role in moral panic occurrences (Nicholas & O’Malley, 2013; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2011; Cohen, 1972). The mass media therefore hold a crucial role in both propagating and sustaining panics in societies during social unrest hence the usefulness of the theory of moral panic in this study.

Williams (2013:35) asserts that the moral panic theory specifically embeds the newspaper in history as part of the ‘business of irrational fear mongering’ and major actors in the start and propagation of prejudices, panics and social anxiety about social problems. Critcher (2005) identifies the press and broadcasting as one of the five powerful Ps of moral panic<sup>14</sup> and also Hall et al., (1978) state that though the mass media are not the only forces that shape public consciousness about topical and controversial issues, they are among the most powerful forces that wield such power. The mass media has the potential to play on the normative concerns of the people and to also introduce certain features in the national discourse which can create social problems suddenly and dramatically (Cohen, 1972).

Cohen (1999) succinctly states that without the ‘stable patterned structures’ of politics, mass media, crime control, professions and organised religion, no moral panics can be generated or sustained. Summarising Cohen’s model, Morgan, Dagistanli & Martin (2010) state that moral panic requires the prior existence of public disquiet about a social tension or problem which

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<sup>13</sup> Moral regulation refers to the project of normalising, rendering natural, taken for granted, in a word ‘obvious’ what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order (Corrigan & Sawyer, 1985:4 as cited in Critcher, 2009:18).

<sup>14</sup> The five powerful Ps of moral panic have the capacity to define a social problem and prescribe appropriate actions which can instigate a wide spread panic. These are: the press and broadcasting, pressure groups and claims makers, politicians and government, police and law enforcement agencies and public opinion (Critcher 2005:4).

triggers and get crystallised through significant media attention. This significant media attention often characterised by sensationalised media coverage points to the centrality of the mass media in the generation of moral panics: it also further depicts the concrete role of the media in sustaining a panic. Goode & Ben-Yehuda (1994) opine that a social problem which creates a relatively minimal threat to the society stands the chance of being blown out of proportion and sensationalised by the media so as to generate a greater level of concern.

Furthermore, while some literature reveals that many moral panic analysis derive too much of their evidence from media coverage and mass media role(s) in panics, there is a consensus that the mass media is one of the major social actors in moral panic occurrences (Cornwell & Linders, 2002; Nicholas & O'Malley, 2013). Generally, this brings to the fore the assertion that members of the mass media play a major role in enhancing the spread of moral panics as Cornwell & Linders (2002: 308) succinctly state that members of the mass media play key roles in 'fuelling the interpretive ambiguities and conflicts surrounding moral threats'.

While this section of the chapter has broadly discussed and outlined the different frameworks embedded within the moral panic theory, this study draws primarily on Cohen's seminal framework and the elements and models of a moral panic as posited by Goode & Ben-Yehuda while the assertions from Garland and Hier are also drawn on to corroborate and foreground the analysis and discussion in Chapter Five.

### ***3.2 Journalism Culture and the Normative Theories of the Media***

An overview of relevant literature shows that, irrespective of the distinct similarities among mass media organisation and institutions across various climes and societies, there are a substantial and wide variety of differences across national journalistic cultures (McQuail, 1994; Weaver, 1998b as cited by Hanitzsch, 2007; Carpentier, 2005; Deuze, 2005; Christians et al. 2009). This reveals that while mass media institutions and organisations can be said to be dissimilar in the ways and manners through which they reflect and express their professionalism in terms of the ways they respond to domestic, political and social pressures as well as pressures and expectation from their diverse audiences, there are similar underlying principles, characteristics and values that applies to these media institutions and organisations (McQuail, 1994; Hanitzsch, 2007; Deuze, 2005).

Consequently, over the years there have been critical debates and proposed theories that seek to encapsulate this similarities and dissimilarities and also provide a central point of reference and framework from which scholars in the field of journalism and media studies can draw to

make sense of a wide variety of media phenomena. However, from the available theories in the field, this study draws on Hanitzsch's (2007) theoretical framework for deconstructing journalism culture and the normative theories of the media as formulated by Christians et al. (2009). While this study draws from the normative theories of the media as posited by Christians et al., there have been other theorists that have explored this concept over the years (Siebert & Schramm, 1956; McQuail, 1994).

According to McQuail (1994), the origins of the normative theories of the media which can be traced to the role often attributed to the press in the rise of modern society have over the years explored 'ideas of how media ought to, or are expected to operate' (1994:121).

Furthermore, these normative theories speak to what is desirable of the media in relation to both structure and performance: structure as used here refers to issues that pertain to the freedom of the media from the state and the concerns for multiplicity of independent channels while performance refers to how the media carry out their informative, educative or entertaining duties in the society (1994:121). Christians et al. also state that among other reasons, a new phase of normative theories has emerged due to the tendency to appeal to a fundamentally different philosophical worldview in defining a particular form of public discourse as good or true (2009:38).

The normative theories of the media provide a relatively unified body of explanatory resources that is useful in understanding public policies and validity of the moral claims of certain people in a given society: it is also understood as a continuing conversation that provides the rationale of media roles in a democratic society. Normative theories of the media are therefore not limited to a particular statement but they rather exist in the on-going debates and conversations about justifying a given mode of public discourse (Christians et al. 2009: 66-67). Christians et al. state two fundamental problems why any definitive statement cannot be made concerning what the main tasks and appropriate norms of media institutions should be: first, the presence of varying and opposed interests and expectations from those inside and outside the press and, second, no formal claim can be legitimately made on a free press to carry out any particular task (2009: 121).

Consequently, Christians et al. assert that normative elements depend on personal ideals of professionals in the field of broad communication (2009:69) and posit that journalists play four general important roles in the society. The term 'role' as used here refers to a journalistic concept that embodies a composite of occupational tasks and purposes widely recognised with a stable and enduring form that is located and regulated within an institutional

framework (2009:119). The four normative media roles posited by Christians et al. include: the monitorial, facilitative, radical and collaborative roles and are further expounded below:

### ***3.2.1 The Monitorial Role***

Over the years and right from the beginnings, this role has been a major feature of journalism and serves as the essential task of the news media as well as a core aspect of the journalistic profession (Christians et al., 2009:143). Christians et al. posit that the monitorial role finds its theoretical basis from Lasswell's (1948) description of the basic communicative function of the media which he terms 'surveillance', being a term used to refer to the process of observing an extended environment for relevant information about events, conditions, trends and threats (2009:139).

The monitorial role, most adapted in democratic societies, encapsulates the journalistic activities where the journalists perceive themselves as watch dogs, collecting and publishing both general and specific information of potential interest to the general public. The journalists while carrying out this role act as the fourth estate of the realm which among other things is the provision of a means for holding the government accountable at the bar of public opinion. The journalists also are expected to provide the public with warnings of potential risks, threats and dangers which ranges from weather reports to travel disruptions, foreign wars and disorder. While there is no single way of carrying out the monitorial role due to varying form, format and purpose of diverse media organisations, information flow is self-regulating as media professionals are expected to be motivated to serve their audience and the audience is considered able to judge the quality of information being received (2009: 145-146).

There are identified tensions around the monitorial role with the idea of neutral and objective reporting of events at the centre of these tensions: while neutral refers to being balanced, disinterested and unbiased, objective refers to verifiable facts and reporting refers to telling the story as it is without alteration of any sorts. However, the dominant meaning of the monitorial role delegitimise journalism activities 'that go too far in the direction of expressing opinions, conveying ideologies, or taking too active a part in the wider affairs of society as an involved and partisan actor' (Christians et al. 2009: 146-149). Christians et al. argue that despite the constraints on the monitorial role, both in terms of power relation between the press and the state and economic conditions that underlie media ownership and operations, this media role has shown a wider capacity to survive and propagate itself against odds thereby remaining at the heart of journalistic activity (2009:153-157).



### ***3.2.2 The Facilitative Role***

The facilitative role as posited by Christians et al. speaks to the normative attribute where the media rather than maintaining an artificial consensus and uniform public opinion promote dialogue through effective communication among readers and viewers whereby they engage and participate actively (2009:158). The media through this normative role create a platform where the general public can deliberate on issues in such a way that a general consensus is reached through comprehensive and vibrant negotiations void of political supremacy and the influence of the state. The media facilitate all civic, professional and cultural associations in a deliberative process where public opinions are formed through an interactive dialogue about practical matters and social vision (2009:158-160).

Consequently, this deliberative process facilitated by the media depicts the journalists who engage in this role as respectful of different views, rational in weighing a range of available data and willing to consider 'alternative possibilities' (Macedo 1999 as cited in Christians et al. 2009). The media in carrying out this facilitative role draws from the 'mutual recognition of the deliberative liberties of others' (Bohmann 2000 as cited in Christians et al. 2009) and therefore seeks in this vein to support and strengthen the readers and viewers who make up the civic, professional and cultural associations and not just report on varying issues of interest to them. The facilitative role responds to the understanding that human lives are culturally complex and filled with diverse interpretations (2009:176).

### ***3.2.3 The Radical Role***

This role is based on the notion that there exists a political-economic power structure in society that tends to produce hegemony of the privileged few over the interests of the majority citizens in society. The radical role therefore focuses on exposing abuses of power and aims also to raise popular consciousness of wrongdoing, inequality and the potential for change (Christians et al. 2009:126,180). While a specific definition of the radical role of the media in general and journalism in particular seems impossible because of the variants of radicalism in the contemporary world, the goal of the radical role as posited by Christians et al. is a fundamental or radical change in the power structure of the society. 'Radical' as used here refers to a perspective that unpacks the underlying power relations in the society, challenges the hegemony of those in power and offers 'an alternative vision for the whole structure of the society' (2009:181).

Consequently, the media in carrying out this role relate to both the concept of power and citizenship because this radical role serve the set of people amidst the general public who are

opposed to the societal structure because they are either underrepresented or disenfranchised (2009:189). It is pertinent to state that radical journalism is practised by critically engaged journalists working either within the conventional or alternative media with reference to fundamental issues including social justice and human rights and is not basically defined according to a medium or a whole media system. Rather, it is defined according to a specific form of journalism within a conservative or liberal mainstream (2009:190).

Although the facilitative and radical roles operate at the level of civic groups and cultural associations and both promote the people's power and privileges in the society they can be distinguished based on the purposes they are supposed to serve: the facilitative role aims at promoting dialogue among citizens while the radical role mobilises opinion against the power structure in the society. Christians et al. argue that even in a well-functioning democratic society there is constant need for a radical role by journalists to safeguard democracy because an ideal democratic theory seldom works. Christians et al. further argue that even though it is factual that an ideal democracy can be supported by the monitorial, facilitative and collaborative roles thereby excluding the need for a radical role: the radical role remains a reserve structure or procedure that ensure that minorities and powerless segments are not marginalised in the society (2009:195).

### ***3.2.4 The Collaborative Role***

This role, to a great extent, is scarcely represented in literature on press roles because it goes against the libertarian ideal of a free and autonomous press. However, it brings to the fore tasks the media take up in situations of unavoidable engagement with social events and processes. The collaborative role advocates a partnership between the media and centres of power in the society, which in most occasions is the state. This role is appropriate in developing nations under pressure to develop economically and socially amidst scarce resources and immature political institutions (Christians et al. 2009:127). This partnership advances mutually acceptable interests because it meets the needs and expectations of both the state and the media and Christians et al. argue that the collaborative role is too pervasive and historically important to be either overlooked or ignored (2009:196-197).

Christians et al. further posit that a collaborative role between media and the state becomes necessary and often advocated under unusual conditions of crisis or emergency, or threat to the society due to external or internal causes (2009:127). While the collaboration between the media and the state stand out as a special case because of the state's ability to fundamentally alter what becomes reported as news, this role depicts collaboration not just with the state but

also with corporations that advertise through the media thereby subsidising the access of the general public to the media, community activists and other centres of power. Specifically, in relation to the state, collaboration signifies the media's acknowledgement of the state's interest either passively, unwittingly, reluctantly or wholeheartedly and Christians et al. drawing from Held's (1995) work state three categories as the conditions for the media's collaboration with the state-compliance, acquiescence and acceptance (2009:197-198).

Collaboration through compliance offers the weakest compelling reason or motivation and it is achieved through coercion, apathy or as a form of tradition. Collaboration comes through coercion when the journalists are left with no choice or compelled by a law or overt control measures while collaboration through apathy comes from an uncritical acceptance as a result of the journalists' indifference or ignorance. Furthermore, journalists collaborate as tradition when collaboration comes as a custom or habit that comes with history.

Collaboration through acquiescence can either be pragmatic or instrumental as it offers a reluctant acceptance whereby the journalists accept to collaborate to avoid coercion.

Collaboration for pragmatic reasons comes to the fore when journalists accept their fate and prevent coercion while they acquiesce for instrumental reasons when there are benefits from the collaboration.

Journalists' collaboration through acceptance presents the merits of the collaborative role and it is offered either through a practical or normative agreement. Journalists enter into a practical agreement when they judge a collaborative role to be right or correct after considering all they know about the particular circumstances of the collaboration while they enter into a fully normative agreement when they take into account all that needs to be known about the arrangement, outcome and consequence of the collaboration for the larger society (2009:199-200).

These normative roles of the media as expounded above will be used as a framework to establish and delineate the role(s) taken up by *Vanguard's* journalists while covering the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria. However, to further understand the role(s) and normative leanings of these journalists and to unpack and analyse the interview sessions conducted, Hanitzsch's (2007) three levels of analysis and constituents of journalism culture will be drawn on.

Hanitzsch (2007) expounding his framework acknowledges that the term 'culture' is defined in many ways that have driven the cultural analysis of journalism further into a highly

heterogeneous field. He posits that journalism culture, which he defines as a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously and unconsciously legitimate their role in society and make their work meaningful for themselves and others becomes evident in the way journalists think and act (2007:369). This is what Deuze (2005) refers to as the ways by which 'journalists from all walks of their professional life negotiate their core values' (2005:458). Hanitzsch argues that journalism culture is more than ideology although in literature both ideology and culture are often used interchangeably. While ideology, generally understood as both a system of ideas and also in terms of struggle over dominance, serves as an important theme to the cultural analysis of journalism, journalism culture spans beyond this in that it is the space where these diverse professional ideologies struggle over the dominant interpretation of journalism's social function and identity (2007:370).

Hanitzsch further outlines three basic levels of analysis from which journalism cultures can be understood and articulated: the cognitive, evaluative and performative levels. The cognitive level refers to the structural foundation that underlies and shapes the perception and interpretation of news and how news values are attributed to events, the evaluative level is depicted by the professional worldviews of journalists as well as their role perception and their occupational ideologies while the performative level comes to the fore in the way journalists carry out their work and functions such as their methods of reporting and news formats (2007:369).

Furthermore, Hanitzsch posits institutional roles, epistemologies and ethical ideologies as the three constituents that seek to provide an analytical grid which maps diverse journalism cultures. These constituents are further divided into seven principal dimensions: interventionism, power distance, market orientation, objectivism, empiricism, relativism and idealism (2007:371) and have been used as a framework in conducting research into the journalism culture of several countries across continents as published in Hanitzsch et al., (2010; 2011).

Institutional Roles			Epistemologies		Ethical Ideologies	
Interventionism	Power Distance	Market Orientation	Objectivism	Empiricism	Relativism	Idealism
Intervention (+) Passive (-)	Adversarial (+) Loyal (-)	Consumers (+) Citizens (-)	Correspondence (+) Subjectivity (-)	Empirical (+) Analytical (-)	Contextual (+) Universal (-)	Means (+) Outcome (-)

**Table 1.**

*The constituents and principal dimensions of journalism culture.*

*Source; Hanitzsch, (2007). Deconstructing journalism culture: Toward a universal theory. Communication theory, 17(4), pp.371.*

Hanitzsch uses the above Table, tagged Table 1, to illustrate the three constituents and their seven dimensions which he presents using two idealistic extremes (+,-). However, he reveals that these two extremes are rare and impractical in the ‘real’ world of journalistic practice as the ‘truth’ most of the time lies between both extremes. Consequently, these three constituents and seven dimensions depict the wide variety and relative differences that is plausible in the ‘diverse and coexisting worlds of journalism’ (2007:371). The constituents and dimensions are further expounded below.

### **3.2.5 Institutional roles**

Hanitzsch in this first constituent refers to the prescriptive nature of journalism practice both in terms of the journalist’s normative responsibilities and functional contribution to society. Institutional roles as posited by Hanitzsch refer to the professional role perceptions, news functions and media roles which are based on the dimensions of interventionism, power distance and market orientation and underlies where the journalist is positioned within two idealistic extremes. The institutional roles posited here draw on Janowitz’s (1975) and Cohen’s (1963) work on the classification and suggestion of gatekeeper and advocate roles in journalism practice. This work brought to the fore the distinction between neutral and participant roles and Hanitzsch takes it further by his 3 multidimensional approach which captures the global variance among journalists’ (2007:371-375).

The interventionism dimension as depicted above stretches between the socially committed, active, assertive and motivated journalist who is an advocate for the marginalised (interventionist) and the detached and uninvolved journalist (passive) who is basically dedicated to objectivity, impartiality, fairness and detachment without taking an advocacy

stance (2007:372-373). The power distance dimension, originally coined by Hofstede (1980) as a way of referring to a dimension of cultural variance, refers to the positions journalists take in their relationship to the powers that be both among the political elites, entrepreneurs and individuals regarded as power brokers in the society. This power distance is depicted through the kind of journalism culture where journalists function as the fourth estate and position themselves as ‘watchdogs’ and as agents of social control by openly challenging the powers that be (adversarial) and secondly through the journalism practice that positions itself as ‘loyal’ to those in power by taking on a ‘propagandist role’ that acts always in defence of the authorities and acts as a sort of an ideological state apparatus<sup>15</sup> going by Althusser’s framework (2007:373-374). Market orientation, the third dimension of institutional role, refers to the journalism practice where news are produced with priority to the interest of the public who are seen as citizens who has the right to accurate information that will ultimately promote public participation in governance. On the reverse side of this dimension is the high extreme of market orientation where journalists work with the aim to increase their capital base and therefore prioritises what the public ‘wants to know at the expense of what they should know’ thereby seeing them as consumers (2007:374-375).

### ***3.2.6 Epistemologies***

Hanitzsch drawing on Dancy’s (1985) definition of epistemology, which is the study of knowledge and the justification of belief, refers to the epistemology constituent concerned with the philosophical underpinnings that news work stems from in journalism as an important part of journalism culture. This constituent, based on objectivism and empiricism as dimensions, raises considerations that seek to better understand the extent to which media coverage and reporting can be objective and truthful: if truthful, how can the truth claims be justified (2007:375-376).

The objectivism dimension tracks in between correspondence and subjectivity in relation to the question of how truth can be attained. While journalism culture that tilts towards the correspondence claims that there is an existence of an objective and ultimate truth ‘out there’ which must be ‘mirrored’ with precedence to precision and accuracy and not be created, invented or altered in anyway: extreme subjectivity comes from a constructivist idea that there is no absolute/ultimate truth or an objective reality and that news are products of

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<sup>15</sup> Ideological state apparatus, a term developed by Louis Althusser, refers to complex systems containing several institutions which transmits the values of the state to interpellate individuals in the society with the aim to reproduce capitalist relations of production (<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>; <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O88-ideologicalstateapparatus.html> ).

selective interpretations that comes from an ‘infinite number of subjective accounts’ (2007:376). The empiricism dimension deals with the way truth claims are justified and tracks between two ideal-typical ways of justifying truth claims: either empirically or analytically. Journalism cultures lean towards empiricism as the justification of truth when it emphasises observation, measurement, evidence and experience and towards the analytical end when it gives priority to analyses, reason, ideas, values and opinions (2007:377).

### ***3.2.7 Ethical ideologies***

This third constituent of journalism culture, with relativism and idealism originally developed by Forsyth (1980) as dimensions, is concerned with how journalists respond to issues of ethical dilemmas (Hanitzsch, 2011:276). Relativism shows the extent to which journalists base their personal philosophies on universal ethical rules: journalism cultures lean towards the contextual pole when journalists believe that ethical decisions are dependent on situational context and towards the universal pole when journalists rely on moral absolutes irrespective of the context. However, idealism refers to the consequences that come to the fore when journalists respond to ethical dilemmas: journalists oriented towards the high idealistic scale are means-oriented as they believe consequences must always be obtained with the ‘right’ action while journalists inclined towards the low idealistic scale are outcome-oriented and admit that harm will sometimes be necessary to produce a greater public good (2007:378-379, 2011:276).

The theory of moral panic, the normative theories of the media and the three levels of analysis and constituents of journalism culture as discussed above underlie the analyses and discussions in chapters five and six.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY**

#### ***4. Introduction***

This chapter presents a discussion of the research design, methodology, methods, data selection and sampling procedure that inform this study. The first part of this chapter presents a discussion of the research design and methodology which is embedded in the qualitative research tradition and also presents *Vanguard* as a case study for this thesis. The second and third parts discuss qualitative content analysis and interviews as methods used in this study while the fourth part discusses the data selection and sampling procedure.

#### ***4.1 Research Design and Methodology***

A research design refers to the procedure used in collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data: it describes the model used for conducting research and is useful as a guide that aids the researcher's decisions while carrying out the study (Clark & Creswell, 2011). Yin (2003) states that every empirical study has a research design either implicitly or explicitly and describes the research design as the logic that links the data to be collected for a study to the initial questions of study.

The research design used for this study is embedded in the qualitative approach to research which is underpinned by the phenomenological tradition that emphasises and takes into account the fact that all human beings are in a continual process of constructing, interpreting and making sense of their world (Bryman, 1984:78; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:28-29). This phenomenological tradition rooted in the lived experiences of people is centred on human consciousness which primarily entails the understanding of individuals in terms of their own personal interpretation of reality and the meanings they give or make of social practices in the society: it is an investigation into what constitutes consciousness without a subject-object dichotomy (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:28-33; Lock & Strong, 2010:33). This is in contrast to the positivist tradition, which is a natural science approach within the quantitative methodology, where the researcher displays the tendency that 'sees people as inert' thereby viewing events from the perspective of a cluster of empirical concerns imposed upon social reality that sees events outside the individuals' lived experiences and interpretation of reality (Bryman, 1984:78). This study is embedded in the qualitative approach to research underpinned by the phenomenological tradition because it speaks to the aims/objectives of



seeing the social world from the perspective and experience of the health journalist who works for *Vanguard* and covered the EVD outbreak in Nigeria while also investigating and establishing the place of useful EVD information, anxiety, fear and panic in *Vanguard's* coverage of the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria.

Qualitative research as a methodology provides a platform through which a social phenomenon can be understood within a specific context while unusual or unanticipated discoveries can also be explored (Merriam, 2002). The qualitative research tradition provides the researcher with methods and tools with which social phenomena can be investigated in-depth thereby coming up with rich data that enhance a contextual understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. The qualitative approach 'takes as its departure point the insider perspective on social action' and allows the researcher to see the social world from the respondent's view by using a collection of methods and techniques with shared principles or logic (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:34).

This thesis uses thematic content analysis and interview to study the coverage of the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria by *Vanguard*. These methods are embedded in a qualitative approach which is useful because it allows the researcher to conduct an in-depth case oriented research and it proffers a platform with which webs of meanings can be penetrated within a particular context. It allows for the 'how' and 'why' of *Vanguard's* 2014 EVD coverage. *Vanguard* as a print medium was used as a case study because it gave considerable coverage to the EVD outbreak and the electronic archives of all EVD reports are readily available and accessible.

However, qualitative case study as an approach has over the years been critiqued and often stereotyped for lack of rigour, authenticity and authority, for providing little basis for generalisation, for taking too long to complete and for resulting in massive and unreadable data (Yin, 2003; Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000). To avoid these pitfalls, this study used a timeframe and sample size that produced useful sets of data while also employing more than one method to ensure the thoroughness of the study. Yin (2003) argues that while the case study approach to research is not to enumerate frequencies, it is useful in expanding and generalising theories. Gomm, Hammersley & Foster also argue that the case study approach to research leads to a form of naturalistic generalisation which is intuitive and empirical, not attained through scientific induction but arrived at by in-depth contextual knowledge that comes by recognising the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural co-variations of happenings (2000:22). Yin further states

that while scientific facts and generalisations comes as a result of multiple set of experiments that have replicated the same phenomenon, multiple-case studies with appropriate research designs are also generalizable to theoretical propositions (2003:10).

Furthermore, while there are two major methodologies, quantitative and qualitative, the appropriateness and validity of the qualitative approach to research has over the years been debated and the engagements are still on-going (Bryman, 1984; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Silverman, 2013). While there is no simple distinction between the qualitative and quantitative approach to research (Silverman, 2013), the choice amidst these two methodologies should be based on the nature of research questions to be answered and not just on ontological and epistemological commitments (Bryman, 1984; Lindlof, 1995).

Bryman (1984) argues that an underlying reason for the continual divergences between the quantitative and qualitative approaches is the simultaneous and occasionally confused treatment of both philosophical and technical issues. Philosophical issues refer to questions of epistemology, that is, the appropriate foundation for studying the human society while technical issues speak to the appropriateness of methods of research in relation to one another (1984:75). However, reliability can be realised through the researcher's ability to document, demonstrate and follow the study procedure consistently (Silverman, 2010) while the question of validity in qualitative research is the question of methodological appropriateness and inter-subjectivity of the researcher (Kvale, 1989).

This study, with an understanding of the basic methodological issues in knowledge production, employs the qualitative case study approach using thematic content analysis and interview, firstly because it provides a useful set of systematic and concise procedures which enhances the inter-subjectivity of the researcher. Secondly, this is hinged on Tuchman's (1991) argument that the most significant news-based studies have been through the qualitative approach. Thirdly, because it aims to have a particularistic (focus on a particular context), naturalistic (about real people and situations) and thick explanatory as well as descriptive data that is inductive, holistic and heuristic (illuminates the reader's/researcher's understanding of the phenomenon) (Willis, 2007) and not to provide evidence that is solely based on the 'logic of mathematics, the principle of numbers or the methods of statistical analysis' (Meyer, 1988:247 as cited in Lindlof, 1995).

#### ***4.2 Thematic Content Analysis***

Content analysis is a method which is useful for systematic analysis of media content in a way that is less prone to the subjective selectiveness of the researcher (Cottle et al., 1998). It provides a useful method for the researcher to draw inferences from the data generated either during a field study or from media texts in a systematic and objective way. Content analysis is useful in investigating different media or communication phenomena as it brings to the fore underlying meaning and ideas through the analysing of patterns in textual elements (Holsti, 1969). As one of the classical methods and procedures for analysing texts-ranging from media products to interview data (Flick, 2002; Cottle et al., 1998), content analysis has been defined by Berelson (1952) as a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (1952:18). Although, content analysis as a method of inquiry is by definition quantitative and the notion of objectivity has been severally critiqued as unattainable, it remains useful within the quantitative and qualitative research traditions for interrogating and unpacking content, to identify and count the occurrence of specific dimensions and to better understand the representation of facts embedded in texts (Krippendorff, 2004; Cottle et al., 1998). This study employs qualitative content analysis (QCA) which goes beyond the frequency of occurrence of content features to capture the underlying symbolic and complex interactions of texts to reveal latent content and context (Kracauer, 1952; Cottle et al., 1998; Kohlbacher, 2006).

QCA has been defined as ‘a method for describing the meaning of qualitative material in a systematic way. It is done by classifying material as instances of the categories of a coding frame’ (Schreier, 2011:1). QCA will be useful as a method in this study because it provides a means whereby the meaning of a qualitative material can be described in a systematic way that allows the researcher to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific way. QCA selects and classifies materials into categories and aims to test pertinent assumptions and hypothesis with a view to bringing to the fore the substantive and underlying meaning of the materials with or without special regards for frequency counts (Kracauer, 1952).

Consequently, this study uses QCA in analysing the sets of data generated and gathered both from *Vanguard’s* 2014 EVD articles and the interview sessions with *Vanguard’s* health journalist. In applying QCA, this study uses thematic content analysis which is useful in enhancing the systematic presentation of the data in themes, relatively comprehensible units and categories of analysis (Holsti, 1969; Smith, 1992).

In applying thematic content analysis, this thesis in addition to drawing on direct statements made by the interviewee as themes useful for the analysis in chapter six, also uses sensationalism as a useful concept in categorising the generated and gathered data presented and analysed in chapter five. It is pertinent to state however, that in an attempt by scholars and researchers to account for the social, cognitive and discursive mechanism of ‘sensationalism’ as a term; it is often used differently across different contexts (Grabe et al. 2001; Molek-Kozakowska, 2013; Ge, 2016). Grabe et al. (2001:636) further alluding to this states that there are ‘fragmented and largely incomparable measurements about the concept’. However, this thesis draws on Ge’s assertion that over the years, sensationalism as a term has been methodologically investigated through content analysis by identifying features that could potentially provoke emotional response from the consumers of such information (2016:23). This study therefore investigates *Vanguard’s* coverage of the EVD outbreak by broadly categorising as sensationalist, the print medium’s news reports that has fear, EVD mortality rates and panic not just as headlines but as major features. These categories include features such as the tone of the news report, use of exaggeration and other literary techniques to magnify emotional impact, use of evaluative stances, vocabulary and headlines that are not in congruence with the main reports. This study as further highlighted in chapter five categorises such news reports, sometimes irrespective of the degree of factuality or accuracy, as those with the propensity to induce fear and panic amongst *Vanguard’s* readership.

### **4.3 Interviews**

A research interview as a method relies on the understanding that the individual’s perspective is an important part of generating joint knowledge of social processes and of the human condition (Henning et al., 2004; Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). An interview is a conversation, usually between two people in which the researcher/interviewer is seeking responses for a particular purpose (Gillham, 2000). While conversation remains a basic mode of communication, the research interview is a professional and specific form of conversation which aims to obtain a nuanced and qualitative description and understanding of social phenomena from the lived world of the interviewee (Kvale, 1996). As a method, it is used to elicit respondents’ perceptions of past experiences, scenes, events as well as descriptions of the past that are mostly unavailable for observation (Lindlof, 1995; Silverman, 2013). This study used interview as a method to elicit invaluable data from an experienced health journalist who work for *Vanguard* with the aim to obtain a nuanced and qualitative data which brings to the fore how the unusual terrain experienced during the EVD outbreak was

negotiated. Interview as a research method was also useful for this study because it served as the platform used to deeply and broadly explore themes and patterns that came to the fore during the thematic content analysis while also serving as a means of identifying unexpected themes.

This study, using interview as a method, conducted in-depth semi-structured interview sessions using an audio recording device to record the data elicited. These interview sessions were preceded by preliminary discussions with the interviewee, that is, the health journalist. These preliminary discussions provided an opportunity for the researcher to acquaint himself with the interviewee. The interviewee gave his informed consent after the researcher had provided as part of the preliminary discussions adequate information about the study. To create an avenue where the interviewee finds it easy to provide detailed and factual narratives, the researcher assured the health journalist of concealed identity. The identity of the research participant is also concealed to ensure that his privacy and confidentiality is not compromised.

#### ***4.4 Sampling, Data Collection and Ethical Considerations***

The research participant in this study was selected using the purposive sampling technique which as an intellectual strategy allows the researcher to select participant(s) who can proffer answers to the research questions/goals (Marshall, 1996). Purposive sampling as a technique which evidences the ‘conscious and deliberate intentions of those who apply the procedures’ (Deacon et al. 1999:50) was useful for this study because it allows for a selection of the participant who actively covered and reported the outbreak and therefore is salient in achieving the research goals of this study. Furthermore, as a study conducted within the qualitative research tradition, purposive sampling is useful because it proffers the platform to gain intensive and in-depth understanding which this thesis aims to achieve and not an extensive statistical representation which depicts sampling within the quantitative research tradition.

Consequently, the research participant/respondent for this study was selected out of the health journalists who work for *Vanguard* drawing on the researcher’s preliminary findings which shows the respondent’s experience and recognition as an outstanding health correspondent in Nigeria. The purposive selection was also based on archived electronic copies of EVD news reports which reveal the research participant/respondent’s active coverage of the outbreak. However, as stated in chapters one and two, the researcher made efforts within the available

time and resource to contact other journalists at *Vanguard* who covered the outbreak but to no avail. Consequently, the available research respondent, experienced in reporting epidemics and health issues, was interviewed as a representative sample of the team of health journalists who work for the print medium and covered the 2014 EVD outbreak.

In collecting data for this study, the electronic copies of 2014 EVD articles were retrieved from *Vanguard's* website. The EVD articles that were retrieved spanned the months of July and October 2014, as this was the period from the start of the outbreak until the time WHO declared the country free of EVD. These months map out the timeframe of the study. Data was also generated through the interview conducted. The interview sessions produced rich, intensive, thick and in-depth data for this study and the researcher ensured that the entire interview was recorded and transcribed immediately after each session. These collected data, generated and gathered through the sessions and the EVD articles are presented, analysed and discussed in chapters five and six of this dissertation.

Ethical considerations and protocols remain an important component of research and must be taken into account throughout the research study beginning from the preliminary study and formulation of research questions to sampling procedure, accessing data, seeking consent of the research participant, data analysis, presentation of findings to readers or when the findings are finally published (Ali & Kelly, 2004). The researcher ensured that before and during the study, ethical protocols were observed. Drawing from Sales & Folkman's (2000) text on ethical guidance, the researcher ensured that respect for the respondent and his autonomy as a person of worth whose participation in the research remains his autonomous choice was maintained throughout the study thereby earning his trust. Trust from the participant was also established and upheld by informing the interviewee of his right to withdraw from the research project at any stage while also providing him with detailed information about the research project both verbally and through an information sheet.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### **5. Introduction**

This chapter presents the first set of data for this study alongside its analysis and discussion. This data is the generated *Vanguard's* EVD articles published between July and October 2014, being the timeframe for this study. The data analysis and discussion uses the theories of moral panic and the normative theories of the media as framework while tables 2, 3 and 4 are used in this chapter to present the data.

#### **5.1 Data Presentation**

The gathered electronic copies of EVD articles between the months of July and October 2014 totalled 337 and information emerging from this data is presented in Table 2 below and arranged according to the month of publication. This data consist of hard news stories, opinion pieces, features, EVD updates and editorials published and categorised under the broad theme of the Ebola outbreak on *Vanguard's* website. Although all EVD articles published between July and October 2014 are employed for this analysis, the data presented, analysed and discussed is based on and limited to the archived EVD articles within the timeframe that are accessible and available on *Vanguard's* website.

Table 2 below consists of six columns. The first column presents the months of July to October 2014. The second column presents the total number of available and accessible electronic copies of EVD articles (hard news stories, opinion pieces, features, EVD updates and editorials) published within the months that constitute the timeframe for this study. These articles presented in the second column were generated from the Ebola outbreak menu bar which archives all electronic copies of published EVD articles on *Vanguard's* website. The third column presents two things: the number of published EVD articles within the timeframe for this study with the propensity to arouse anxiety, fear and panic among readers and the percentage of these articles in relation to the total number of EVD articles published in each respective month as indicated in the second column. The articles in the third column, further presented, analysed and discussed in section 5.5 below, either laid emphasis on the mortality rate of EVD or conveyed anxiety, fear and panic not just as headlines but as a major theme of the report. The fourth column presents in percentages the rate of either increase or decrease in the propensity to arouse anxiety/fear or panic while the fifth column of the table presents the

number and percentage of published articles that are interpretive and investigative of the EVD outbreak in relation to the month in each row. The sixth column presents in percentages either the rate of increase or decrease in investigative and interpretive articles. The rate of either increase or decrease as presented in columns four and six is calculated in percentages for the months of August, September and October respectively by finding the percentage difference across the months using the percentage figures presented in columns three and five. The articles categorised as investigative and interpretive in columns five and six, are those that provide some level of depth into the cause and consequences of EVD and provide information on preventive measures against the epidemic. These investigative and interpretive EVD articles consequently have the propensity of dousing anxiety, fear and panic amidst the readership of *Vanguard* and are further presented, analysed and discussed in section 5.7 of this chapter.

It is pertinent to point out that while the number of generated and gathered EVD articles for this study is presented in column two of Table 2 below, the EVD articles that do not belong to any of the categories outlined above are not presented in the other columns of Table 2 and in the subsequent analysis and discussion. The rationale for this is drawn from the aim of this thesis which seeks to understand how *Vanguard* covered the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria and how the health journalists who work for the print medium negotiated the line between information and panic while the outbreak lasted. Therefore, the EVD articles which do not have the propensity to rouse, inspire or douse anxiety, fear and panic are not included in the subsequent data analysis and discussion. *Vanguard's* EVD articles with headlines: ***European Union names Ebola coordinator, Doctors challenge world leaders on Ebola outbreak*** and ***Africa Union chief to visit Ebola-hit nations*** are three examples of published EVD articles within the timeframe for this study that do not clearly fall within the aforementioned categories and therefore are not included in the analysis and discussion.

However, EVD articles with headlines: ***Ebola fever' grips the world*** and ***Ebola virus can be managed. It is not a death sentence*** are examples of articles that has the propensity to either rouse or douse anxiety, fear and panic. The first EVD article has the propensity to inspire anxiety, fear and panic amidst *Vanguard's* readership drawing on the headline and emphasis the article's lead and main text placed on EVD's mortality rate and fears. This study therefore categorise such articles as those with the propensity to inspire or heighten anxiety, fear and panic compared with other published EVD articles within the time frame. The second article has the propensity to douse anxiety, fear and panic drawing on the interpretive and



investigative nature of the article which unpacks and lays emphasis on medical and scientific ways EVD can be avoided and mitigated. This study categorises articles such as the second example cited in this paragraph, which proffers mitigation strategies and unpacks the myths that surround EVD as those with the propensity to douse anxiety, fear and panic. These two EVD articles alongside other articles in these categories will be further analysed and discussed in the sections below.

**Table 2.**

*Numbers, percentages and monthly difference and variation in percentages of EVD articles.*

Month	Number of EVD articles	Number and percentage of articles with the propensity of arousing anxiety/fear or panic	Rate of either increase or decrease in the propensity of arousing anxiety/fear or panic in percentages	Number and percentage of Investigative/Interpretive articles	Rate of increase or decrease in Investigative/Interpretive articles that has the propensity to lessen anxiety/fear/panic in percentages
July	19 EVD articles	10 EVD articles (52.6% of 19)		3 EVD articles (15.8% of 19)	
August	170 EVD articles	44 EVD articles (25.9% of 170)	26.7% <i>reduction rate</i>	48 EVD articles (28.2% of 170)	12.4% <i>increment rate</i>
September	71 EVD articles	4 EVD articles (5.6% of 71)	20.3% <i>reduction rate</i>	10 EVD articles (14.1% of 71)	14.1% <i>reduction rate</i>
October	77 EVD articles	7 EVD articles (9.1% of 77)	3.5% <i>increment rate</i>	6 EVD articles (7.8% of 77)	6.3% <i>reduction rate</i>

## 5.2 Analysis and Discussion

The EVD articles presented in Table 2 above reveal that the EVD outbreak had substantial coverage in terms of reporting and dissemination of news reports, opinions, features, editorials and regular updates about the epidemic while it lasted. However, while this establishes the fact that *Vanguard* gave the outbreak due attention while it lasted, the coverage of the epidemic prior to its outbreak in Nigeria was not substantial. This is evidenced by the number of EVD articles published in July 2014. The total number of EVD articles for each of the months of August, September and October 2014 respectively supersedes that of July 2014. This shows that while the epidemic was confined to Guinea, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone in varying degrees of occurrence, it was not prominently and consistently featured in *Vanguard*.

An overview of the news reports, features, opinion pieces and editorials published by *Vanguard* in July 2014 prior to the actual EVD outbreak shows that apart from the news report dated 14 July with the headline '*Lagos issues alert on Ebola, gives precautionary tips*' which served as a proactive measure in educating the readership about EVD, other articles did not provide adequate information on EVD. Other articles such as the insurgency by the radical Islamic sect (Boko Haram)<sup>16</sup> in Nigeria, the school girls abducted by the sect, build up stories and analyses about the elections in some Nigerian states and the 2015 general elections were major stories and issues *Vanguard* was preoccupied with at the time.

*Vanguard's* shift of focus to EVD is evidenced in the increased numbers of EVD articles which correlates with the date of Patrick Sawyer's arrival in the country and subsequent confirmation as the EVD index case. This is further evidenced by the prominence given to EVD coverage in August 2014 with the 170 EVD articles published during the month which outnumbers other EVD articles in the remaining months within the timeframe. While the months of August and September show an increase in the amount of articles published compared with the month of July, they also show a change from the kind of sensationalist coverage with a propensity to induce panic to the kind of information that has the propensity to lessen fear and panic. This shows the possibility of a more conscious and careful approach in the coverage of the outbreak compared to the month of July where 52.6% of 19 articles have the propensity of arousing anxiety/fear and panic.

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<sup>16</sup> Boko Haram, a radical Islamic sect, is officially known as Jama'atu Ahlus Sunnah Lid Da'awati Wal Jihad, that is, people committed to the prophet's teachings for propagation and jihad and was founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf, a Muslim cleric, in Maiduguri, north eastern Nigeria and has been literally translated to mean 'western influence is a sin', 'western fraud' or 'western education is forbidden' (Smith, 2015).

The coverage of the epidemic in the month of August with a 26.7% reduction rate in articles with the propensity to inspire anxiety, fear and panic alongside a 12.4 increment rate in articles with the propensity to lessen fear and panic is comparatively substantial and more balanced than other months within the timeframe. However, Table 2 also shows a 3.5% increment in the number of published EVD articles with the propensity to inspire anxiety, fear and panic in the month of October and a reduction of 14.1% and 6.3% in the amount of published EVD articles with the propensity to lessen anxiety, fear and panic for the months of September and October respectively. Drawing on the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, the comparatively imbalanced reporting exemplified by the percentage decrease in the amount of articles with the propensity to lessen anxiety, fear and panic for the months of September and October correlate with the relative stability that was recorded in Nigeria during the 42 days count down after the last confirmed or probable case of EVD was reported and prior to WHO's official declaration of the country as EVD free on 20 October 2014. This shows that while *Vanguard's* coverage was relatively effective when there were visible and heightened anxiety, fear and panic, the coverage of the epidemic was no longer consciously and meticulously carried out when there was relative stability prior to the eventual declaration of the country as EVD free.

To further draw on the data presented in Table 2 above, the section below presents, analyses and discusses a representative sample of the data generated to bring to the fore the inherent anxiety, fear and panic that underpinned the EVD outbreak while it lasted. It is pertinent to state that in the subsequent sections below, the qualitative and purposive sampling method discussed in Chapter Four is drawn on as the rationale that underpins the EVD articles purposively selected, presented, analysed and discussed as a representative sample of the entire data set for this study. Purposive sampling as previously outlined is a research technique which evidences the 'conscious and deliberate intentions of those who apply the procedures' (Deacon et al. 1999:50).

### ***5.3 Analysis and Discussion Using Cohen's Framework of a Moral Panic***

This analysis draws on the seminal moral panic framework and model of Cohen (1972) and also consequently draws on Goode & Ben-Yehuda's framework discussed in Chapter Three as the theoretical framing useful for establishing, bringing to the fore and understanding the place of anxiety, fear and panic during the EVD outbreak as evidenced in the generated data

presented in Table 2 above. To do this, it is pertinent to outline again Cohen's descriptive definition of a moral panic as when:

...a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way the society conceives itself (Cohen 1972: 9).

### ***5.3.1 EVD outbreak as a condition, episode, person or group of persons that emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests...***

Drawing on the articles published by *Vanguard* during the EVD outbreak in Nigeria, it can be deduced that the outbreak of the epidemic in Nigeria is a perfect fit in the category of moral panic. The articles published by *Vanguard* evidences the depiction of the epidemic as a threat to the values and interests of the Nigerian society. The headlines of three news reports by *Vanguard* is used to bring this to the fore: ***FG confirms Ebola death in Lagos, warns citizens to be vigilant*** published July 25 2014, ***Jonathan sets aside N1.9bn to fight Ebola*** published August 8 2014 and ***NMA bows to Ebola threat*** published August 25 2014 are three news reports out of the generated data for this study. These three EVD articles by journalists at *Vanguard* reveal that the stakeholders and the Nigerian government recognise the outbreak as a threat and a condition that must be tackled headlong.

The first news report: ***'FG confirms Ebola death in Lagos, warns citizens to be vigilant'*** reveals the disposition of the federal government of the country to the outbreak as the news reported the then Minister of health as both confirming the death in Lagos as a result of the virus and acknowledging the epidemic as a real threat while also announcing the establishment of emergency centres. The second news report: ***'Jonathan sets aside N1.9bn to fight Ebola'*** further emphasises the position of the Nigerian federal government as it sees the outbreak as a condition and episode the president referred to as a national emergency that needs to be fought and won hence the allocation of a generous amount of money by the then president Jonathan to tackle the societal menace. The news report which stated the president

as ordering the immediate release of the N1.9billion further reiterates the priority the government placed on eradicating the threat in the society.

Furthermore, the third news report: '*NMA bows to Ebola threat*' also signifies the EVD outbreak as a threat to the wellbeing of the Nigerian society not just by the government but by stakeholders as the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) decided to call off their on-going strike action not because their demands were met by the government but because they realised that the epidemic was a major threat to the entire country irrespective of class, social status or political affiliations hence NMA's resolve that the outbreak was an 'urgent national emergency'. The news report reveals that the decision of the NMA to suspend their seven-week-old strike also came as a result of the series of appeals from stakeholders in the country: this reveals firstly that the stakeholders in the country perceive the epidemic as a major threat that demands urgent attention, and secondly, reveals the collective resolve of the stakeholders to prioritise the eradication of the threat hence the appeal to the NMA to call off their strike action despite their unmet demands. This three news reports discussed affirm the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria as a threatening episode/condition within the country.

***5.3.2...its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people:***

Using Cohen's moral panic framework, the gathered data further brings to the fore the understanding that underlies the disposition of Nigerian residents to the epidemic while it lasted. This is depicted in the stereotypical way Sawyer was 'othered' thereby portraying him as the 'folk devil' who came in to alter the well-being of Nigerian residents. The residents in Nigeria who *Vanguard* reports on and those who wrote feature and opinion pieces about the EVD outbreak constitutes the 'right-thinking' people in the society who raised and fiercely manned the moral barricades by castigating Sawyer at every opportunity while insisting it was morally wrong for him to have travelled to Nigeria without ascertaining his state of health despite the fact that he knew he was exposed to the virus. To understand the moral stance assumed by these 'right-thinking' people in Nigeria, it is useful to again draw on Goode & Ben-Yehuda's outline of what the 'moral' which depicts the morality stance in a moral panic means as highlighted in Chapter Three of this study: the 'moral' refers to '*the expression of outrage at the violation of a given absolute value, the undermining of something that a sector of the society regards as good-that is, principles which embody decency, righteousness and virtue*' (1999).

The headlines of the following three EVD articles evidence this: *Sawyer was mad to bring Ebola here-Jonathan* published August 12 2014, *Ebola: Sawyer was evil, a terrorist-Nigerians* published August 23 2014 and *Ebola Outbreak: Obasanjo blasts Liberia over Sawyer* published August 30 2014. The first of the three EVD articles; ‘*Sawyer was mad to bring Ebola here*’ was published as a front page news story being a statement credited to the then president of the country, Goodluck Jonathan. This evidences the fact that the former president belongs to one of Cohen’s categories of ‘right thinking’ people in the nation who out rightly condemned Sawyer and equated his state of being to madness.

The headline of the report depicts Sawyer as the folk devil and ‘scape goat’ with the report further quoting Jonathan’s view that Sawyer’s visit to Nigeria was ‘pure madness’. While Cohen’s outline and framework above do not out rightly emphasise the role of a folk devil, moral panic theorists and researchers has however argued that this is implicit in the outline. This implicit role of the folk devil can also be observed through the data gathered for this study as the moral barricade erected and manned by the ‘right thinking members’ of the society, in this specific case the former president, is against Sawyer, the personified form of the EVD epidemic. This speaks to Garland’s assertion that folk devils which are targets for moral panics ‘*are not randomly selected but are cultural scape goats whose deviant conduct appals onlookers...*’ (2008:15). The outburst of the former president in referring to Sawyer as a demented person stems from his appalled state which comes as a result of Sawyer’s deviant conduct which placed millions of Nigerian residents at risk. This outburst, which made the front page, was recorded as his first public statement on the outbreak since the epidemic was first recorded in the country.

The second EVD article, ‘*Ebola: Sawyer was evil, a terrorist-Nigerians*’ further emphasises the stereotypical way Sawyer’s deviant conduct was labelled and criticised by the cross section of Nigerian residents that *Vanguard* spoke with. This EVD article published on 23 August 2014, over three weeks after Sawyer had been certified dead, reveals that the disgust this cross-section of residents had for him was far from dissipating. Sawyer’s label as a terrorist and personification as the embodiment of evil which is seen as synonymous with the EVD itself which scientists and researchers defined originally as a bio-terrorism agent creates a perfect fit with Cohen’s framework and also resonates with Meylakhs’s (2005) assertion which states that: ‘*..along with society’s mobilization for battle with evil, personification of this evil, that is, the folk devil(s) personally responsible for the situation is also necessary...*’ (2005:183). These ‘right thinking’ Nigerian residents from different parts and strata of the

society who were interviewed about their perception of Sawyer in this report by *Vanguard* ranges from medical practitioners to business men and women in their different categories. Statements such as *Sawyer was heartless, He was very wicked, He was a thief, He was a terrorist, devil* (among others encapsulated in the report) evidence the stereotypical views alongside the moral claims and barricades manned by these residents during the outbreak.

The third EVD article, '*Obasanjo blasts Liberia over Sawyer*' also reveals the outburst of another prominent Nigerian, who has served both as a former head of state during the military rule and also as a democratically elected president. He specifically accused Sawyer of conniving with some authorities from his country in bringing EVD to Nigeria. This claim by former president Obasanjo also categorises him using Cohen's framework as belonging to one of the groups of the 'right thinking people' in the country. These three EVD articles which bring to the fore the sudden 'popularity' of Sawyer as the folk devil and an embodiment of evil show how appalling his visit is to Nigerian residents and represents the deeper issues his presence brought to the nation. This resonates with Hier's (2002) stance as highlighted in Chapter Three that '*though moral panic focuses on an identified scape goat/folk devil, this (the scape goat/folk devil) is not the object but simply an embodiment of deeper concerns and fears which is perceived through social definition as the 'problem'*'. While there are other EVD articles within the generated data that also make explicit the stereotypical depiction of Sawyer as the folk devil in the EVD outbreak in Nigeria alongside the moral claims manned by angered and concerned Nigerian residents against him, these three articles analysed above are used as a representative sample.

### ***5.3.3...socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to:***

This speaks to the steps taken to mitigate the epidemic and hinges on the realisation that there is actually an outbreak which as a social menace threatens the collective existence of the human population in the society, in this case the Nigerian state. These socially accredited experts refer to the established authorities whom the people have come to trust as having the skills and tools to proffer diagnosis, ways of coping and solutions to the social menace. Furthermore, these experts are members of the society and institutions that are socially accepted and speak to issues by confirming the rightness or otherwise of decisions taken by people to mitigate and eradicate such menace. While these experts include government authorities, medical institutions and scientists, it also extends to religious leaders and other moral entrepreneurs whom the society has come to accept and respect as persons who are

either knowledgeable in matters of public interest or speaks in the interest of the public. The data generated for this study reveals rich instances that ensued and evidences the place of these socially accredited experts during the EVD outbreak.

The following three EVD articles published on 13 August 2014 illustrate these instances: *FG urges use of hand sanitizers, gloves to curb spread of ebola: Ebola, Avoid bush meat, Sultan warns Muslims* and *Ebola: Lagos doctors seek adequate panic, facilities in hospitals*. These three articles speak to the place of the socially accredited experts during the outbreak in bringing to the fore ways of coping and mitigating the dreaded epidemic. The first EVD article: '*FG urges use of hand sanitizers, gloves to curb spread of ebola*', a news story report on Nigerian federal government's coping mechanism against the epidemic reveals the leadership of the country as one of the socially accredited experts. The news article reports the director-general of the federal government-led national orientation agency (NOA), Mr Mike Omeri advising the residents in the country to adopt the wearing of gloves and the use of hand sanitisers 'as a necessary measure to prevent the spread of the deadly virus' (Vanguard, 2014). The NOA, being a member of the technical committee set up by the country's presidency to fight the deadly virus, spear-headed the sensitisation campaigns of the government and also emphasised personal hygiene alongside the wearing of gloves and use of hand sanitisers. The place of NOA and by extension the federal government as a socially accredited expert accepted by the teeming residents is made evident by the huge patronage for hand sanitisers during the outbreak as discussed in Chapter Two of this study.

The second EVD article: '*Avoid bush meat, Sultan warns Muslims*' published as a news story report reveals the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Abubakar III, warning Nigerian Muslims to desist from eating monkeys and other bush meat to avoid contacting EVD. The Sultan of Sokoto is the spiritual leader of the over 74 million Muslims in Nigeria, commands respect within the Muslim faithfuls and beyond in the country and ranked the 18th most influential Muslim leader in the world (Premium Times, 2014). The stern warning to steer clear of bush meat came as a result of the scientific findings that reveal that Ebola virus was first discovered in bush meat specifically monkeys and fruit bats. The news report reveals that the Sultanate's warning was hinged on this scientific report coupled with Islamic injunctions that discourage consumption of monkeys. This EVD news report further brings to the fore the place of socially accredited experts and moral entrepreneurs in proffering and lending their voices to mitigating strategies against the EVD epidemic.

Furthermore, the third EVD article '*Ebola: Lagos doctors seek adequate panic, facilities in*



*hospitals'* evidences the place of the medical institutions in proffering mitigating strategies that will lead to the halt of the epidemic. This EVD article speaks to the place of good health facilities in the containment of EVD and specifically the call on the government by medical doctors in the employment of Lagos state to provide these facilities in all hospitals. This report and an overview of other EVD articles reveal the legitimization of the medical profession as both an authoritative voice and a highly revered expert in both diagnosing and proffering ways of mitigating the epidemic. This is further evidenced by other socially accredited experts and moral entrepreneurs who premised their stance and views on medical and other scientific reports.

***5.3.4...the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible.***

Finally, extracting this phrase alongside those analysed above from Cohen's descriptive definition and framework for a moral panic further provides a useful basis for bringing to the fore and analysing the varying nuances that characterised the EVD outbreak as evidenced in the generated data. Available literature and specifically the data for this analysis shows that 'the condition' referred to above, which is the EVD outbreak in Nigeria was contained and the spread of the epidemic was halted. This became official when WHO declared the nation EVD free six weeks (42 days) after the last probable EVD case was recorded.

The containment of the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria is further evidenced in the generated data by EVD articles such as *Nigeria to be declared Ebola free* published 19 October 2014, *Ebola: Jonathan welcomes WHO's declaration on Nigeria* published 20 October 2014 and *Nigeria has defeated Ebola-WHO* published 21 October 2014. These three EVD articles speak to WHO's official pronouncement of Nigeria as EVD free and the former president, Goodluck Jonathan's acknowledgement of the declaration while calling for continued vigilance against the re-entry of EVD and directing that all measures put in place at all ports of entries into the country must be sustained. These three articles make it clear that the epidemic in Nigeria did not deteriorate and become more visible but was halted and defeated as declared by the global health body.

This framework and definition by Cohen and the series of EVD articles outlined and discussed above has been useful in establishing and understanding the place of heightened anxiety, fear and moral panic during the EVD outbreak. Specifically, this foregrounds the underlining and inherent fear and panic while also foregrounding the personification of sawyer as evil during the EVD outbreak in Nigeria. Drawing on the EVD articles expounded above, it can also be established that the public concern from Nigerian residents show that

EVD was unanimously agreed to be a societal menace and threat to the wellbeing of the Nigerian state.

#### ***5.4 Further Analysis and Discussion Using Goode & Ben-Yehuda's Framework of a Moral Panic***

Goode & Ben-Yehuda (1994) as discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation present five characteristic elements and three models of moral panic which they propound by drawing on Cohen's seminal framework. This is useful to further delineate and foreground the place of anxiety, tension, fear and panic during the EVD epidemic in Nigeria. They posit five elements: volatility, hostility, measurable concern, consensus and disproportionality as notable characteristics of a moral panic episode. While these five elements are evident in the above analysis using Cohen's descriptive definition and framework, the place of disproportionality cannot be clearly emphasised because there are no clearly defined parameters to access what is either proportionate or otherwise. This speaks to the available literature reviewed and discussed in Chapter Three which asserts that the place of disproportionality in terms of public concerns, outrage and reactions cannot be easily accessed or determined in terms of extensiveness, duration or intensity (Cohen, 1999; Garland, 2008).

However, volatility which refers to an eruption of public expression and concerns about a condition or set of events by the media, primary definers, moral entrepreneurs and others stands out in the above analysis. In particular, volatility is apparent in '*Ebola: Sawyer was evil, a terrorist-Nigerians*' and '*Obasanjo blasts Liberia over Sawyer*' analysed above. These two EVD articles also speak to hostility, measurable concern and consensus as characteristics of a moral panic episode. Hostility which speaks to the intense scrutiny and outbursts towards the folk devil and scape goat is evident in the EVD outbreak while measurable concern which refers to significant and identifiable public concern and outbursts is also illustrated through these two articles as analysed above. These aforementioned EVD articles also speak to consensus because they indicate broad level agreement across all social strata that the threat, that is, the EVD epidemic, is genuine, tangible and significant.

The EVD outbreak in Nigeria can also be further understood and expounded by drawing on the three models of a moral panic as posited by Goode & Ben-Yehuda (1994) and discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation. The three models are the interest group, the elite-engineered and the grassroots models and, of these, the grassroots model serves as the best fit

for the analysis outlined above as it logically illustrates the EVD outbreak in Nigeria as evidenced in *Vanguard's* coverage. The interest group model suggests that moral panics are unintended consequences of the crusades/projects launched by specific interest groups to draw public attention to evils and misdeeds they perceive as threats to the society while the elite-engineered model refers to a deliberate undertaking by the ruling class to divert attention from more serious problems by generating and making concerted efforts to sustain concerns, fears and panic amidst the general public over an issue that they recognise not to be terribly harmful to the society.

The grassroots model of a moral panic, however, refers to a more spontaneous outpouring of public anxieties and concerns from a broad range of residents drawn from different strata of the society. This model, according to Goode & Ben-Yehuda, is founded on an outburst of genuine public concern and stresses popular participation among the population of a society. This model speaks to the EVD outbreak in Nigeria as it was characterised by different outbursts and spontaneous reactions from residents in different parts of the country. These outbursts and responses to the outbreak came as an impulsive response that stems from the magnitude of the threat that the nation faced.

The EVD articles with headlines ***Ebola: Sawyer was evil, a terrorist-Nigerians, Obasanjo blasts Liberia over Sawyer, Sawyer was mad to bring Ebola here*** and ***Ebola: Nigerians want ECOWAS diplomat jailed*** illustrate the epidemic's perfect fit into the grassroots model. The first and fourth articles report a cross-section of Nigerians from different backgrounds and social classes in the country who voiced their concerns and annoyance spontaneously about Sawyer and the ECOWAS diplomat who escaped to Port Harcourt from Lagos after he evaded home observation which he was placed on by medical team from Lagos State government due to his primary contact with Sawyer.

The second and third articles outlined in the above paragraph also report outbursts from two Nigerian Leaders: former president Obasanjo and then president Jonathan respectively. While these second and third articles have been analysed above, it is pertinent to state that the two leaders prior to and during the EVD epidemic in Nigeria were at logger heads and were no longer on good terms (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-25494507>: <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/176871-jonathan-slams-obasanjo-says-ex-president-canvassing-head-interim-govt.html>). However, during the epidemic the two leaders, were both spontaneous and impulsive in their outbursts and reactions to the EVD outbreak in Nigeria as they spoke up against the threat and the folk devil while later proffering ways of

coping and mitigating against the deadly virus. These four EVD articles aptly illustrate how the outbreak fits into the grassroots model of moral panics. What this portends is that unlike some major episodes of moral panic which according to available literature falls within the interest group or elite engineered models, the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria falls within the grassroots model of a moral panic which is hinged on the notion that the media cannot publish news stories and concerns about an event where none exists initially. This therefore disproves the notion that the emergence of new medical and technological threats makes irrelevant and antiquated the older threats that are based on morality with an identifiable folk devil and resonates with the assertion that moral panics cannot be easily dismissed: rather a proliferation of it at various levels is to be expected in the risk-laden postmodern era. (Ungar, 2001; Hier 2002). The above analysis and discussion using Cohen and Goode & Ben-Yehuda's framework has brought to the fore the characteristics of a moral panic episode which reveals the public concerns, inherent anxieties, fears and panic that underlined the outbreak which in the case of the EVD epidemic in Nigeria stems from a grassroots model.

However, while the inherent anxiety, fear and panic has been presented, analysed and discussed, the table 3 below in line with the aim of this study further presents, analyses and discusses for each month within the timeframe of this study, two headlines each of EVD articles that has the propensity to either inspire or heighten anxiety, fear and panic amidst *Vanguard's* readership. The headlines of these EVD articles are presented because headlines precede articles and also present a summary of articles. This also hinges on Chilwa's (2012) assertion that a headline is a unique type of text and an important part of the way in which the article appeals to the reader. Chilwa further states that headlines present articles in a minimum number of words while displaying significant linguistic and graphological features. Drawing on this pivotal role to convey content, the headlines of eight EVD articles in Table 3 of section 5.5 below are presented, analysed and discussed alongside an overview of the main text in each article as a representative sample of the entire generated data that has the propensity of inspiring or heightening anxiety, fear and panic.

The rationale for the discussion and analysis of the EVD articles presented in Table 3 below is further hinged on the overview of literature as discussed in chapter 3 which emphasises that the mass media plays a major role in the occurrences, fuelling and propagation of prejudices, anxieties, fears and panics about social problems. Therefore, the analysis below seeks to further unpack and investigate the EVD articles with the propensity to arouse and inspire anxiety, fear and panic while the epidemic lasted in Nigeria.

## 5.5 Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of EVD Articles with the Propensity of inspiring or heightening Anxiety, Fear and Panic

**Table 3**

*Headlines of articles with the propensity to inspire or heighten anxiety, fear and panic*

July	-Ebola: panic spreads (Front page news); July 31, 2014 -Ebola fever' grips the world; July 31, 2014
August	-Anxiety in Edo community as man dies of suspected Ebola symptoms; August 11, 2014 -Ebola kills 56 in two days says WHO; August 13, 2014
September	-Liberia braces for worst as Ebola death toll jumps; September 9, 2014 -Ebola's death hits 2,400 as Cuba pledges medics; September 12, 2014
October	-UN pleads for more money to combat Ebola as fears mount; October 18, 2014 -Third UN employee dies from Ebola; October 20, 2014

These EVD reports presented in table 3 above, as outlined earlier in this chapter, are articles that either laid emphasis on the mortality rate of EVD or conveyed anxiety, fear and panic not just as headlines but as a major theme of the article. The articles are discussed and analysed below:

### 5.5.1 Ebola: panic spreads

This EVD article is a front page news story published on 31 July 2014 by *Vanguard*. This brief headline published on the front page of the newspaper creates and conveys a brief summary and situation report of the epidemic that has found its way into Nigeria. However, this headline made up of three words is capable of evoking fears and fuelling panic amidst the readership. The catchy headline is not just semantically captivating but creates an imagery which potentially can fan embers of anxiety and fear which is already inherent as a result of the outbreak earlier on in the month of July. While 'Ebola' in the headline above can be interpreted as the theme of the news report, the other two words 'panic spreads' accompanying the virus and name of the epidemic make it easy not just to grab the attention of readers but to create a visual imagery of a fast growing tension, anxiety and unrest all over the country.

Drawing on Chiluba's assertion that most times readers merely read the headlines and the lead without reading the entire text (2012:43), coupled with the understanding that headlines on front pages of newspapers are often printed in bold letters thereby occupying larger spaces

than regular texts, it can be asserted that this headline has the propensity to heighten anxiety, fear and panic. This bold headline on the front page of *Vanguard* emphasises in its first paragraph that panic has spread among Nigerians as a result of the death of Sawyer and thereby creates an imagery which can contribute in no small measure in heightening the tension in the country.

#### ***5.5.2 Ebola fever' grips the world***

This article published 31 July 2014 speaks to the death of Sawyer in Nigeria and also speaks to the two people that were quarantined in separate instances in Hong Kong and in the United Kingdom for showing symptoms similar to that of EVD after visits to Africa. This alongside the outbreaks in Nigeria and other West African countries led to the article with the above headline. This headline, considering the choice of words and the visual imagery it has the tendency to evoke, has the propensity to inspire fear and panic across the vast readership of *Vanguard*.

The personification encapsulated in the headline stands more as an exaggerated statement considering the meaning of the verb '*grip*' in relation to '*the world*' and therefore has the propensity to stir up anxieties. This article published on the same day with the front page news headline, *Ebola: panic spreads*, presented above creates the platform on which anxiety, fear and panic can be stirred and heightened considering the declarative stance of both sentences. This speaks to the literature discussed in Chapter Three where Morgan, Dagistanli & Martin (2010) summarising Cohen's model assert that panics get heightened and crystallised through significant and sensationalised media attention.

#### ***5.5.3 Anxiety in Edo community as man dies of suspected Ebola symptoms***

This article published on 11 August 2014 is a news story that brings to the fore the anxiety that came as the resultant effect of a death suspected to have EVD as cause. While this news report conveys a factual account of the situation, the uncertainty that surrounds the death has the propensity to inspire anxiety and panic across the state considering that the region was yet to record an occurrence of EVD prior to when this news story was published. The headline's emphasis on the death of the man alongside the lead and main text of the article which emphasises the pandemonium in the community and environs without a clear information on the certainty of the claim and mitigating strategies in the eventuality of medical confirmation of the cause of the death provides the tendency for heightened fear and anxiety in the state and region.

#### **5.5.4 *Ebola kills 56 in two days says WHO***

This article published on 13 August 2014 presents a report by the global health body, WHO, which makes explicit the current mortality rate of EVD. While the article was most likely published with the intention to inform the readership of *Vanguard* about the latest official release by WHO, the headline has the propensity to inspire anxiety, fear and panic in Nigerian communities where tensions are already inherent. The propensity to arouse these anxieties and fears despite the headline attributed to a recognised health organisation hinges on the personification of ‘*Ebola*’ being the agent and subject which ‘*kills*’ 56 in just two days and the imagery it evokes coupled with the growing number of deaths and EVD victims specifically in Nigeria at the time this article was published.

#### **5.5.5 *Liberia braces for worst as Ebola death toll jumps***

This EVD article published on 9 September 2014 also has the propensity to go beyond the intention of informing the readership to keep them abreast of the happenings around the epidemic to inspire and heighten worries, uncertainties and fears. This headline which points to fruitless efforts in mitigating the epidemic conveys an imagery of massive loss of lives in the helpless communities of Liberia. This article, hinged on a WHO assessment that indicates that the worst is yet to come as far as EVD epidemic is concerned in the country, stated that Liberia comparatively has reaped ‘*the lion’s share of misery*’ among the affected West African countries. The pessimistic string of words presented as the headline also employs personification, as seen in ‘*...Ebola death toll jumps*’, and potentially possesses the propensity to worsen the tensions and worries of readers. The visual image the ‘*death toll*’ that ‘*jumps*’ creates in the mind of the readers coupled with the increased number of EVD cases then in Nigeria stands out as an article that can elicit fear and panic.

#### **5.5.6 *Ebola’s death hits 2,400 as Cuba pledges medics***

This EVD article published on 12 September 2014 is also categorised as one of the reports that has the tendency to fuel fear, anxiety and panic drawing on the mortality rate of 2,400 as shown in the headline. Although there is a possibility that readers might be used to such fearful headlines and reports (in view of the analysis above of various headlines), the number of deaths mentioned in this particular article can inspire rather than lessen anxiety, fear and panic. While the pledge by the Cuban medics to come to the aid of the EVD affected West African countries can be reassuring, the part of the headline that gets topicalized thereby foregrounded ahead of the latter part has the propensity to captivate the readers and induce fears because of the choice of words and the high mortality rate.

### ***5.5.7 UN pleads for more money to combat Ebola as fears mount***

This EVD article published on 18 October 2014 provides more information on the state of the epidemic in the affected countries. It is categorised as one of the reports on EVD with the propensity to rouse or heighten anxiety and fear drawing on the '*more money*' request by the '*UN*' despite the huge amount of money that has been allocated for this purpose in the respective countries affected by the epidemic alongside other financial aids from international corporations and agencies prior to publishing this article. These pleas by the UN for more funds, the mounting *fears* coupled with the article lead that states that the fight to stop EVD was being lost while the epidemic escalated amidst global travel fears does not stand a chance of adequately lessening the fears and concerns about the epidemic but rather has propensity to inspire fears.

### ***5.5.8 Third UN employee dies from Ebola***

Finally, this EVD article published by *Vanguard* on 20 October 2014 has the propensity to inspire fear and anxiety rather than lessen it due to the major emphasis the headline, lead and main text all place on the death of the UN employee rather than on efforts in place to mitigate the epidemic in the affected countries. The report which also brought to the fore the earlier deaths of two UN workers coupled with the headline which provides information on the latest death has the tendency to instil anxiety and fear among the readership considering the UN is a global organisation expected to adequately provide for the welfare of its staff. The death of the three UN employees caused by EVD despite their assumed access to protective gloves, sanitisers and other key equipment and facilities has the propensity to inspire fear and panic.

These eight EVD articles presented and analysed above reveal the tendency and propensity for anxiety, fear and panic to be inspired or heightened during the 2014 outbreak in Nigeria while the earlier data presentation, analysis and discussion also bring to the fore the inherent, anxiety, worry, fear and panic that characterised the outbreak. Using the normative theories of the media as framework, the presentation, analysis and discussion in the next section, in line with the aim of this study, seek to delineate which of the roles discussed in Chapter Three speak to the analyses presented above. Section 5.6 also draws on this to understand and analyse the interpretive and investigative EVD articles that have the propensity of dousing the inherent anxiety, fear and panic that characterised the outbreak.



## **5.6 Data Analysis and Discussion Using the Normative Theories of the Media**

Drawing on the normative theories of the media which provide a relatively unified body of explanatory resources useful in understanding public policies and validity of moral claims of certain people in a given society as asserted by Christians et al. (2009) the roles taken up by *Vanguard's* journalists while covering the EVD outbreak can be delineated. An overview of the generated data shows that the monitorial, facilitative and collaborative roles of the media are employed in the coverage of the epidemic. The radical role of the media which seeks to unpack the underlying power relations in the society by challenging the hegemony of those in power and by offering alternative visions for the whole structure of the society was not employed by the health journalists who work for *Vanguard* in the coverage of the epidemic. Drawing on the data for this study, the monitorial, facilitative and collaborative roles of the media are presented below.

### **5.6.1 The Monitorial role**

The monitorial role as asserted by Christians et al. remains at the heart of journalistic activity and has been a major feature of journalism which serves as the essential task of the news media as well as a core aspect of the journalistic profession (2009:143). This monitorial role, out of the three normative roles used during the EVD outbreak was employed the most by the journalists who covered the epidemic. This role which is evidenced in the entire first set of data generated for this study and also exemplified in the EVD articles analysed in the earlier sections of this chapter speaks to Christian et al.'s assertion about the monitorial role being a major feature in journalism. The EVD articles presented in Table Three of section 5.5 above further foreground this role and serve as useful samples that depict the monitorial role of the journalists at *Vanguard* who covered the outbreak. The monitorial role which according to Christians et al. varies in terms of operational mode across media organisations speaks to the collection and publishing of both general and specific information of potential interest to the general public.

However, while this role was effectively carried out by the journalists who work for *Vanguard* while the outbreak lasted, it was not carried out effectively prior to the outbreak of the epidemic in Nigeria. Drawing on Christians et al.'s assertion discussed in Chapter Three that the monitorial role also entails the timely dissemination of warnings about potential risks, threats and dangers to the general public, it can be deduced from the data presented and as highlighted earlier on in this chapter that the EVD coverage was not prioritised appropriately before the outbreak in Nigeria. Therefore, as far as the 2014 EVD epidemic in Nigeria is

concerned, the monitorial role was not adequately carried out before EVD was recorded in the country although the role became effective after the outbreak.

### **5.6.2 *The facilitative role***

The data gathered for this study also reveals that the facilitative role was employed by the health journalists who covered the EVD epidemic. Gleaning from Christians et al.'s assertion that the facilitative role of the media achieves a general consensus by providing a platform where different views are aired amidst vibrant dialogues and negotiations that are void of all forms of supremacy, it becomes evident from the data for this study that the health journalists at *Vanguard* employed this role during the coverage of the EVD epidemic. The grassroots model of a moral panic discussed above which speaks of the consensus and spontaneous outpouring of public anxieties and concerns from a broad range of residents drawn from different strata of the society stems from a facilitative role on the part of *Vanguard's* health journalists.

It is pertinent to bring to the fore the intersection of the grassroots model and facilitative role of the media. These two frameworks arguably intersect drawing on their operational modes. The grassroots model of a moral panic is achieved through consensus and spontaneous outpouring of public concerns and one of the ways this can be measured is through the facilitative role of the media which provides a platform for broad and wide responses to pertinent societal issues. Health journalists at *Vanguard* did not just report on varying EVD issues and developments that surrounded the outbreak but provided a platform for views and perspectives from Nigerian residents as evidenced in the EVD articles presented, analysed and discussed in 5.4 above. The articles in 5.4 above therefore serves also as a representative sample of EVD articles that evidences the facilitative role of *Vanguard's* health journalists.

### **5.6.3 *The collaborative role***

This role as outlined in Chapter Three brings to the fore tasks the media take up in situations of unavoidable engagement with social events and processes. It speaks to the media's acknowledgement of the varying interest of either the state or other centres of power in the society to advance or achieve mutually acceptable interests (Christians et al., 2009). The collaborative role during the EVD outbreak speaks to the mode of engagement with the state and other established institutions by the health journalists at *Vanguard* while covering the epidemic. This refers to who the health journalists talk with or give preference in their reporting while ensuring that the accurate information which includes the cause and ways to mitigate the epidemic is understood and disseminated amidst the readership of *Vanguard*.

An overview of the data generated for this study alongside the understanding gleaned from the collaborative role of the media as discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation shows an intersection between the interpretive and investigative EVD articles and the collaborative role of the media. The interpretive and investigative EVD articles as earlier presented in this chapter provides some level of depth into the cause and consequences of EVD alongside preventive measures against the outbreak. These investigative and interpretive EVD articles consequently have the propensity to douse and lessen anxiety, fear and panic amidst the readership of *Vanguard* drawing on the in-depth analysis that brings to the fore the causes and consequences of the viral infection as a major theme rather than placing emphasis on the inherent or heightening panic and EVD mortality rates.

Furthermore, an overview of these investigative and interpretive EVD articles speak to the collaborative role engaged in by the health journalists at *Vanguard* considering that such articles entails collaboration with other institutions before an in-depth and well-rounded reporting into the causes and consequences of EVD can be achieved. This role informs the interpretive and investigative reporting that was done during the epidemic by collaborating with the state and other health institutions to halt the spread of the outbreak which is in the interest of all residents in the country. Consequently, this brings to the fore the intersection between the collaborative role of the media and the investigative and interpretive EVD articles. An analysis and discussion of the investigative and interpretive EVD articles with the propensity to douse anxiety, fear and panic will also be useful in understanding and bringing to the fore the collaborative role of the health journalists at *Vanguard* who covered the outbreak. While the monitorial and facilitative roles have been exemplified in the EVD articles analysed and discussed in the sections above, EVD articles exemplifying the collaborative role which speaks to columns five and six of Table 2 will be analysed and discussed using Table 4 of section 5.7 below. Christians et al. asserts that a collaborative role between the media, state and other major institutions becomes necessary under unusual conditions of crisis, emergency or threat to the society (2009:127). Drawing on this assertion, the level of collaboration of *Vanguard's* health reporters with the state and other institutions to halt the spread of EVD will be analysed and discussed in the next section.

### **5.7 Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Interpretive and Investigative EVD Articles with the Propensity to Douse Anxiety, Fear and Panic.**

**Table 4.**

*Headlines of interpretive and investigative articles with the propensity to douse anxiety, fear and panic*

July	- <i>Lagos issues alert on Ebola gives precautionary tips; 14 July 2014</i> - <i>Facts on Ebola virus disease; 30 July 2014</i>
August	- <i>Ebola: Risky myths and rumours; 10 August 2014</i> - <i>Bitter Kola and Ebola, What Nigerians must know--Health Minister; 10 August 2014</i>
September	- <i>Ebola virus can be managed. It is not a death sentence; 5 September 2014</i> - <i>Recognising Ebola virus disease in young children; 5 September 2014</i>
October	- <i>Ebola: five questions about the killer virus; 20 October 2014</i> - <i>Ebola: timeline of a ruthless killer; 24 October 2014</i>

Table 4 above presents as a representative sample for each month within the timeframe for this study two headlines each of EVD articles that are investigative and interpretive, that is, those reports that provide some level of collaboration to afford in-depth reporting into the cause and consequences of EVD alongside preventive measures against the epidemic thereby having the propensity to douse anxiety, fear and panic amidst the readership of *Vanguard*.

The two EVD articles presented above for the month of July give a historical overview of EVD alongside its transmission rate. ***Lagos issues alert on Ebola gives precautionary tips*** published on 14 July 2014 is a news story which provides background information on EVD and preventive measures prior to the outbreak in Nigeria as outlined earlier in this chapter. This news story was aimed at sensitising the general public about EVD and the then commissioner for health in Lagos state was given preference in the report as he sensitised the public on behalf of Lagos state government. Furthermore, ***Facts on Ebola virus disease*** published on 30 July 2014 provides detailed information on the epidemic which includes its diagnosis, transmission rate, symptoms and signs alongside its treatment and vaccine drawing on WHO as source of the information. These two interpretive and investigative articles unveil important information about EVD and show collaboration with WHO and Lagos state government to provide necessary information that if disseminated timeously has the tendency and propensity to lessen the rate of anxiety, fear and panic.

The two articles presented above for August both published on the 10th day of the month provided in-depth information on the issues surrounding EVD. ***Ebola: Risky myths and rumours*** is an article by one of *Vanguard's* content developers which presents the unfounded myths and rumours that surround the epidemic alongside the accurate information that counters each myth and rumour by drawing on reports and official statements from certified medical institutions. The second article ***Bitter Kola and Ebola, What Nigerians must know--Health Minister*** presents an exclusive interview with the country's then minister of health where he provided information on efforts the government is making to halt the spread of the deadly virus while also stating that bitter kola is not a scientific cure for EVD as the previous research efforts to proffer cure for the deadly virus were not concluded. These two articles provide information that has the propensity to lessen the rate of fear and panic amidst *Vanguard's* readership while the second EVD article shows collaboration with the federal government of Nigeria to provide this detailed information.

The two articles presented above for September, both published on the fifth day of September, provide explicit and useful information about the epidemic: this in-depth report provides information with the propensity to lessen fear and anxiety. The first EVD article, ***Ebola virus can be managed. It is not a death sentence***, stems from a statement credited to Nigeria's then minister of health who explicitly stated that despite the unavailability of scientifically tested and certified vaccines, EVD can be survived by victims if well managed while also stating that the country has well equipped doctors that are on hand to effectively assist EVD patients. The second EVD article with the headline: ***Recognising Ebola virus disease in young children*** was written by Professor Adenike Grange, a consultant paediatrician and former minister of health in Nigeria. This article provides an understanding of how to effectively protect children from EVD considering their immaturity and low immunity alongside the fact that some of the signs and symptoms of EVD are also common symptoms of illnesses in children under two years of age. These two articles show collaboration with the then Nigerian federal government who the then minister of health represents and also collaboration with consultants in the medical institutions as evidenced in the paediatrician's article. These collaborations provide necessary information that if disseminated timeously has the propensity to lessen the rate of anxiety, fear and panic.

Finally, the two articles presented for the month of October also bring to the fore the collaborative role employed by *Vanguard* during the coverage of the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria. ***Ebola: five questions about the killer virus*** and ***Ebola: timeline of a ruthless killer***

published on 20 and 24 October respectively are articles that show *Vanguard's* collaboration with WHO. The two articles written by *Vanguard's* content developer present likely questions readers might have about EVD alongside answers to the questions and also a historical overview of EVD from 1976 till 2014 by drawing from statistics and health reports from WHO.

The above analysis and discussion of the articles in Table 4 show that *Vanguard* took up a collaborative role during the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria. This brings to the fore *Vanguard's* collaboration with the federal government of Nigeria, Lagos state government, WHO, consultants and other medical officers in the medical institutions. The varying degrees of EVD interpretation and investigation into the EVD epidemic as evidenced in the articles presented and discussed above also show that these articles by providing and laying emphasis on this important information and not on mortality rates and the lack of scientific cure has the propensity to lessen the worry, anxiety, fear and panic amidst the readership of *Vanguard*.

This chapter presented the data gathered and generated for this study alongside the analysis and discussion. This shows the variations in the coverage of the EVD outbreak alongside the anxiety, fear and panic that accompanied the outbreak. These variations and percentage differences across the months that constitute the timeframe for this study brings to the fore the underlining nuances that characterise the coverage. This chapter also brought to the fore an analysis and discussion of the spontaneous nature of anxiety, fear and panic that characterised the outbreak alongside a further analysis and discussion of EVD articles possessing the propensity to either inspire or douse anxiety, fear and panic. Finally, drawing on the normative theories of the media and the data generated and gathered for this study, this chapter expounded on the monitorial, facilitative and collaborative roles of the media in relation to the data while also highlighting the intersection between the collaborative role of the media and the EVD articles with the likelihood to douse anxiety, fear and panic.

The data presentation, analysis and discussion outlined in this chapter proffers an in-depth understanding of how *Vanguard* fared during its coverage of the outbreak and this is useful in delineating and further understanding how the space between the dissemination of useful EVD information and the possibility of inspiring fear and panic was negotiated by the health journalists at *Vanguard* while the outbreak lasted. The next chapter presents a second set of data for this study which is generated from the interview sessions with *Vanguard's* health journalist. The chapter also presents an analysis and discussion of the interview sessions.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE INTERVIEW SESSIONS**

#### ***6. Introduction***

This chapter presents the second set of data for this study alongside analysis and discussion of the data. The first set of data gathered and generated for this study are the EVD articles discussed in Chapter Five. This Chapter presents, analyses and discusses data generated from the interview sessions with an experienced health journalist who works for *Vanguard* and actively participated in the coverage of the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria.

The health journalist who is the sole research participant for this study was purposively selected as outlined in the previous chapters of this dissertation. This is hinged on his years of experience in reporting outbreaks such as polio, HIV/AIDS, Lassa fever among other past epidemics in Nigeria and based on his active participation in reporting the 2014 EVD outbreak which is evidenced by the EVD articles archived on *Vanguard's* website. The data generated from the interview sessions will be analysed and discussed to further delineate and understand the context that underlies the analysis and discussion in chapter five. This data also brings to the fore an understanding of the self-perception and the reasons behind the normative leanings of this health journalist while negotiating the line between the dissemination of useful EVD information and the possibility of creating fear and panic during the coverage of the outbreak.

The data generated from the interview sessions and presented here serves as a representative sample that provides an emic perspective into how journalists who covered the epidemic fared while the 2014 EVD outbreak lasted in Nigeria. This data will be analysed and discussed by drawing on the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Three and more specifically the three levels of analysis and essential constituents of journalism culture as posited by Hanitzsch (2007). The data presentation below gives an account of when, where and how the interview sessions were carried out alongside an overview of the interview session while the data analysis and discussion section is outlined in a more detailed way by drawing on both the themes from the interview sessions and the theoretical framework for this study.

### **6.1 Data Presentation**

The interview sessions were conducted on 27 and 28 August 2016 on Rhodes University campus when the health journalist was in Grahamstown for an annual conference. The interviews were conducted using a voice recording device and were transcribed by the researcher after each session. The health journalist gave a detailed response to all the questions asked thereby providing the needed context by drawing on his experience in health coverage and specifically in the coverage of the 2014 EVD outbreak. The respondent, that is, the health journalist, responded by broadly engaging with the following questions prepared by the researcher prior to the interview sessions:

- i. The 2014 Ebola outbreak in Nigeria has come and gone. However, looking back at the coverage of the epidemic by you and your colleagues at *Vanguard*, what were the challenges your team faced and how did you perceive your role as a health journalist during the outbreak?
- ii. How did you as a journalist negotiate the climate of anxieties and fears which literature and media reports reveal as characteristics of the Ebola outbreak in Nigeria, how did this affect your coverage of the outbreak and how close were you and your colleagues at *Vanguard* to the Ebola victims and the quarantine sections where the victims were admitted?
- iii. Analysis shows that there were sensationalised Ebola articles published by your team at *Vanguard* that have the propensity to inspire or heighten anxiety, fear and panic especially in the month of July 2014. What is your take on this?
- iv. Analysis also shows relatively balanced coverage of the Ebola outbreak in the month of August compared to the coverage in the months of July, September and October 2014: what is your take on this and what was the situation like at *Vanguard* during these periods?
- v. What was management's disposition during the Ebola outbreak? Was there a direct or indirect nudge to sensationalise the Ebola articles?
- vi. Analysis reveals that *Vanguard* collaborated with relevant institutions and government agencies during the outbreak: how effective and useful were these collaborations?
- vii. Looking back again to the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Nigeria, what are your thoughts as a journalist who actively participated in the coverage and what are also your thoughts about *Vanguard's* coverage of the outbreak?



During the interview sessions, the respondent provided detailed and broad narratives as answers to the questions outlined above. However, it is pertinent to state that follow up questions were also instinctively posed to the research participant to get a clearer understanding of the initial answers. Although the questions were all answered in detail, they were not asked in the exact order they were prepared before the interview sessions and presented above due to the semi-structured approach of the researcher. The health journalist during the interview stated that the EVD outbreak in Nigeria was unique both as an epidemic and a social issue while also stating that there is a huge difference between reporting EVD outbreak in other countries and reporting EVD outbreak in Nigeria considering the immediate threat it portends drawing from its mode of transmission. He also stated that the journalists on the ground were not adequately equipped to respond to such an outbreak hence the outburst of anxiety, fear and panic that characterised the media coverage in the early days of EVD in the country.

The health journalist further asserts that the media generally were not prepared to effectively cover the outbreak owing to the lack of basic understanding about the science that underlies EVD. The interviewee stated that this lack of understanding coupled with the uncoordinated response by government and media initially experienced in the early days of the outbreak are key reasons for some of the sensationalised and alarmist EVD reports. The interviewee, while alluding to the literature that speaks to the role of the print media in perpetuating and heightening fears and tensions, stated that the fear and panic that have the tendency to stem from some articles published by *Vanguard* during the outbreak was not a deliberate act by the health journalists who covered the epidemic but a resultant effect of the general hysteria that clouded the early days of the outbreak.

The health journalist reveals that there was a huge tendency for *Vanguard* to use scoops and sensationalise the EVD reporting to conform to the agenda setting of other media organisations and also to position the print medium for huge sales and profit. He pointed out that while the coverage cannot be said to be void of sensationalised reporting especially in the early days of the outbreak, the health journalists at *Vanguard* made conscious efforts to report and publish only verified and factual stories and articles while also advising the management of the print medium against sensationalising headlines and content of the articles.

During the interview, the health journalist in response to the question of how close were the journalists in *Vanguard* to the victims of the outbreak and the quarantine section stated that journalists were not allowed to visit the quarantine section where the isolated EVD victims

were housed because the medical officers on ground insisted on maximum containment. The interviewee further stated that the journalists were also disallowed access to the quarantine section due to the unavailability of sufficient protective kits while pointing out that the kits were disposable and therefore the use were regulated. Consequently, the health journalists at *Vanguard* did not go close to the EVD victims and were only able to interview survivors after they were given a clean bill of health and discharged from the quarantine centres. The health journalist revealed that while the outbreak lasted the main sources of information were the federal and state governments, government and private medical institutions, WHO and the internet while stating that in the early days of the outbreak the main source of information was the press briefings held by the government.

Furthermore, the health journalist in response to the question on the EVD coverage which according to the analysis presented in Chapter Five was comparatively more effective in the month of August than the months of July, September and October stated that it was more of a general occurrence across the media organisations in the country and speaks generally to the nation's approach to issues which is popularly described in the country as the fire brigade approach<sup>17</sup>. The health journalist asserted that most media organisations, stakeholders, governments and private institutions in the country only paid close attention to EVD after its outbreak in the country and immediately the obvious threats seemed solved and no new EVD cases were recorded, moved on to concentrate on other issues as their attention gradually waned from the EVD outbreak. Specifically, the health journalist affirmed that although *Vanguard* reported on EVD minimally before it was recorded in Nigeria, the print medium was also caught in the fire brigade approach.

When asked about the disposition of *Vanguard's* management to the coverage of the outbreak, the health journalist stated that the management of the print medium gave due priority to the coverage of EVD and was supportive of the health desk. However, the journalist noted that days into the outbreak there were occasions of debates and arguments with management on how specific or factual the reporting should be in terms of mortality rates and confirmed or suspected EVD cases.

It was revealed that there was the tendency to simply give the total number of EVD cases without specifying the number of confirmed and suspected cases and also the exact mortality rate. While the management were more disposed to publishing the total figure of EVD cases

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<sup>17</sup> The fire brigade approach is used popularly in Nigeria in describing last minutes efforts put in place to solve an issue that is not entirely new and has not been taken as a serious challenge but which has recently become an immediate threat. It is an approach that is never prepared and fully ready for emergency situations.

without a breakdown into exact cases mainly because it was straightforward and because of the attendant propensity of more sales which translates to better profit, the health journalists insisted on a more factual reporting and the management subsequently agreed thereby leading to a more accurate coverage of the outbreak. The interviewee further stated that this came as a result of the personal commitment of the health journalists at *Vanguard* to contribute to effective and accurate dissemination of information about EVD. However, he stated that the absence of effective preparation and a coordinated response by the Nigerian media generally, *Vanguard* inclusive, led to the EVD articles that were laden with anxieties, fears and panics.

## **6.2 Data Analysis and Discussion**

To further unpack the data generated from the broad narratives that ensued during the interview sessions, this section draws on some direct statements made by the health journalist and presents them as themes to be analysed and discussed in relation to both the analysis and discussion in Chapter Five and the theoretical framework in Chapter Three.

### ***6.2.1...Ebola was new both as an epidemic and a social issue and the response by the media was a big challenge...even though the media has responded to epidemics in the past, little or nothing was known about Ebola...***

These direct assertions were made by the health journalist during one of the interview sessions and are useful in understanding some of the nuances and context that underlies the self-perception of this journalist while covering the EVD outbreak. The above assertions by a health journalist who played a prominent role in the coverage of the EVD outbreak at *Vanguard* speak to the cognitive and evaluative levels of analysis from which journalism cultures, as posited by Hanitzsch (2007), can be understood and articulated. As discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation, the cognitive level speaks to the structural foundation that underlies and shapes the perception and interpretation of news and how news values are attributed to events by journalists while the evaluative level is depicted by the professional worldviews of journalists as well as their role perception and their occupational ideologies.

The EVD outbreak was perceived and viewed as an epidemic which little or nothing was known about and therefore was seen as a challenging societal issue which the media initially could not efficiently and adequately report. Consequently, the cognitive and evaluative level of understanding that shaped the respondent's perception of EVD in the early days of the outbreak underlies his disposition to the coverage of the epidemic and could indicate the disposition of other journalists at *Vanguard* who covered the outbreak. This aligns with the

relative paucity of in-depth coverage of EVD in the early days and weeks the epidemic broke out in Nigeria as evidenced in Table 2 presented in Chapter Five where 52.6% of the 19 EVD articles published by *Vanguard* in the month of July 2014 have the propensity to inspire anxiety, fear and panic. This initial cognitive and evaluative level of perception of EVD by the experienced health journalist purposively selected for this interview serves as a representative sample useful in understanding the likely disposition of an average health journalist who covered the outbreak.

Furthermore, drawing on Hanitzsch's assertion that the institutional role is one of the analytical grids useful in understanding the normative leanings and functional contributions of journalists to the society as outlined in Chapter Three of this dissertation, the normative leanings and roles of *Vanguard* as an institution in the early days of the outbreak can be further unpacked. The newness of EVD in Nigeria and the challenges of reporting it as an epidemic not of distant lands but as an officially recorded outbreak in the country speaks to the interventionism dimension of the institutional role which refers to the journalistic stance of an assertive, active, socially committed and motivated professional. This interventionism dimension when taken up by journalists has the potential to contribute meaningfully in mitigating the outbreak.

However, the initial challenges that comes with reporting EVD as an outbreak creates a difficulty in taking up an active interventionism dimension. This is evidenced in the July 2014 EVD articles presented in Table 2 where there was a relatively low percentage of in-depth EVD coverage that could exemplify the interventionism dimension of the health journalists as being ready to provide substantial EVD articles with the propensity to douse anxiety, fear and panic. The August 2014 EVD articles, however, tilt towards the active dimension as presented in Chapter Five as a result of the relatively balanced coverage in terms of in-depth, investigative and interpretive reporting when compared with the articles for the months of July, September and October 2014.

***6.2.2 The national response to the outbreak did not factor in the media at the initial stage: there were no media representation in the response mechanism and this led to an uncoordinated response by journalists which in turn led to spontaneous and alarmist coverage that reported doom, mortality rates, and fears rather than advances to contain the outbreak...***

The above statement made by the health journalist in response to questions about the coverage of EVD being a challenge when it was first recorded in Nigeria and also about the

EVD articles that were sensationalised provides more contexts to draw on in understanding the underlining nuances that characterised the outbreak. As the statement above points out, the lack of media representation in the initial national response created a momentary constraint for health journalists to access factual information crucial to the containment of the outbreak.

The research participant stated that journalists not being incorporated into the earliest efforts at mitigating the outbreak inhibited a holistic coverage that could have effectively disseminated factual EVD information. This momentary constraint is borne out by EVD articles published in July 2014 which lack sufficient depth and have the likelihood and propensity to inspire anxiety, fear and panic as analysed and discussed in Chapter Five. This speaks to the relatively low 15.8% in-depth EVD articles for July 2014 with the propensity to lessen anxieties, fear and panics. This also speaks to *Vanguard's* inability in the month of July to effectively take up the collaborative role to enhance an interpretive and investigative EVD coverage with the propensity to lessen anxiety, fear and panic. This inhibits the health journalists who work for *Vanguard* from taking up an active interventionism dimension of the institutional role posited by Hanitzsch (2007).

***6.2.3...However, as a result of our personal motivation and curiosity, some of us health journalists went beyond the call of duty out of a desire not to report falsehood and be more factual...***

By drawing on the above statement made by the respondent, how *Vanguard* fared during the outbreak and how the journalists who covered the EVD outbreak at the print medium negotiated the line between actual information and the tendency to create panic during the coverage can be further delineated. The health journalist during the interview session stated that he and his colleagues at *Vanguard* went extra length to bring in different perspectives into the EVD coverage despite the constraints that characterised the outbreak. The personal commitment to knowing the truth about EVD and disseminating this actual information came as a result of the heightening hysteria that was spreading widely across the country days after Sawyer was confirmed to have been infected by EVD. Although the media response was not coordinated initially, the interviewee stated that despite the customary fire brigade approach, efforts were made to disseminate actual EVD information.

The interviewee stated that the efforts made by the team of health journalists at *Vanguard* to understand and report EVD when it was initially recorded in Nigeria, prior to when the government organised a two-day workshop for journalists, speaks to the personal motivation

of these journalists to contribute effectively in containing the epidemic. The visit to the quarantine section and attempts to speak with the EVD affected persons by *Vanguard's* health journalists were also drawn on by the respondent as a measure of personal commitment. Furthermore, the health journalists' insistence to distinctly state and specify the actual number of EVD confirmed cases differently from EVD suspected cases in their reporting which was against the management's initial idea to publish the total number of EVD cases without a specific break down was also drawn on by the interviewee as an indicator to the journalists commitment to factual reporting. Although, *Vanguard* was caught in the fire brigade approach and published some sensationalised EVD articles that have the propensity to inspire fear and panic, the assertion cited above exemplifies the inherent desire of the journalists to disseminate factual EVD information.

These efforts by the health journalists to be factual speak to epistemologies, one of the three constituents of journalism culture postulated by Hanitzsch (2007). Epistemologies as posited by Hanitzsch foregrounds the philosophical underpinnings that news coverage stems from and helps to clearly delineate the extent to which journalists claim that their news coverage can be objective and truthful and if truthful, how the truth claims can be justified. Drawing on the objectivism dimension of this theoretical postulation, and in relation to the above assertion by the interviewee, the health journalists at *Vanguard* who covered the EVD outbreak operate with the understanding that there is an existence of an objective and ultimate truth 'out there' which must be 'mirrored' with precision and accuracy and not be created, invented or altered in anyway.

Furthermore, the market orientation dimension embedded in the institutional role of Hanitzsch's framework can be drawn on in this analysis. The initial tendency and disposition of *Vanguard's* management to attract more sales and profit by publishing the total number of EVD cases without specifying either the number of confirmed and suspected cases or the exact mortality rate speaks to the reverse side of the market orientation dimension outlined in Chapter Three of this study. The reverse side of this dimension is the high extreme of market orientation where journalists work with the aim to increase their capital base and prioritises this at the expense of what the public should actually know thereby seeing them as consumers. Although *Vanguard's* management team supported the health desk in the EVD coverage, gleaning from this framework further evidences that, prior to when management shifted grounds at the insistence of the health journalists their priority was primarily on sales and profit and not fully on the accuracy of the EVD articles.

***6.2.4...as time went on, we were able to get more up to date, reliable and factual information about EVD and our response became more refined and coordinated and not just spontaneous...***

The above statement by the health journalist speaks to an improved and enhanced coverage of EVD by the team of journalists who works for *Vanguard* and reported the outbreak while it lasted. This comes as an improvement on the initial national response to the outbreak which excluded the media. The interviewee revealed that the inclusion of the media in the strategic EVD mitigation efforts gave direct access and means for the media to gain more understanding about EVD. Consequently, the understanding of EVD and of the strategies to contain it afforded a platform for enhanced dissemination of interpretive and investigative EVD articles which had the propensity to douse anxiety, fear and panic.

The respondent's assertion cited above speaks to the collaborative role of the media whereby the media not only covers the outbreak but voluntarily accepts to work with the government and major stakeholders to achieve a common goal and purpose. As Table 2 demonstrates, the refined and coordinated EVD coverage is evident in the 28.2% investigative and interpretive EVD articles for August 2014 which indicates more effective collaboration compared with the 15.8% investigative and interpretive EVD articles for July 2014. This refined and coordinated response to the outbreak later achieved by *Vanguard* speaks to the 12.4% increment of investigative and interpretive EVD articles between the months of July and August 2014. This increment as outlined in chapter five comes through effective and substantial collaboration which speaks to journalists working in partnership with government and medical institutions to better investigate, interpret, understand, proffer mitigating strategies and consequently disseminate refined and in-depth EVD articles.

Furthermore, drawing on the collaborative role as analysed and discussed in Chapter Five, the assertion by the interviewee on the need for the media to be included in the national response to EVD and the theoretical framework on normative roles of the media as posited by Christians et al (2009) shows that the collaborative role the health journalists at *Vanguard* took up is by a fully normative agreement. The collaborative role according to Christians et al is by a fully normative agreement when journalists take up this role with a perfect understanding of all that needs to be known about the arrangements, outcomes and consequence of the collaboration for the larger society.

Gleaning from the shift from a majorly spontaneous EVD response to a more refined and coordinated response exemplified by the 12.4% increase in interpretive and investigative

articles between the months of July and August 2014, a relatively active interventionism dimension of an institutional role from *Vanguard* can be highlighted. This institutional role speaks to *Vanguard's* functional contribution as a media institution to the containment of EVD evidenced by the more refined reporting and collaborative role of the journalists who covered the outbreak.

Hanitzsch (2007) also theorises about journalists' power distance dimension alongside the interventionism dimension of the media's institutional role. This power distance dimension as outlined in Chapter Three of this dissertation speaks to the positions journalists take in their relationship to the powers-that-be in the society which, in most circumstances, is the government of the nation. Consequently, it can be deduced from the sets of data for this study that the health journalists who covered the outbreak collaborated with the government to mitigate the outbreak without taking up an adversarial or propaganda role during the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria.

***6.2.5...Although we had a premonition at Vanguard that Ebola could come to Nigeria, in a way we were also caught unawares thereby getting trapped in the fire brigade approach which sadly is fast becoming a common approach in the country..***

This came from the health journalist as part of the response to a follow up question on whether *Vanguard* as a media organisation or the health journalists who covered the epidemic had a premonition that the epidemic might break out in Nigeria prior to Sawyer's visit. The health journalist revealed that though *Vanguard* did not totally rule out the possibility of EVD in Nigeria they were not fully prepared in the case of any eventuality such as Sawyer's visit that led to EVD finding its way into Nigeria through air travel. The 19 EVD articles published by *Vanguard* in the month of July 2014 compared to the 170 EVD articles published in the month of August 2014 show the major difference in the coverage which also speaks to the attention paid to EVD in these two months. This also speaks to the absence of sufficient proactive measure considering that there had been major outbreaks in the West African countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone prior to when EVD was recorded in Nigeria. This assertion by the interviewee corroborates the analysis in Chapter Five which by drawing on the gathered data shows that EVD was not prominently and consistently covered by *Vanguard* prior to its outbreak in Nigeria. Consequently, it can be argued that the newspaper took insufficient proactive measures.

Furthermore, the research participant highlights the fire brigade approach which he states as the approach most media organisations, *Vanguard* inclusive, in the country took during the



EVD outbreak. The fire brigade approach describes an editorial approach that responds to issues only when they become a major threat and moves on once they appear resolved. The analysis and discussion in chapter five shows that the reduction in interpretive and investigative EVD articles that has the propensity to douse anxiety, fear and panic for the months of September and October 2014 as presented in Table 2 correlates with the 42 days countdown to WHO's expected declaration of Nigeria as EVD free. This exemplifies the fire brigade approach referred to by the health journalist and speaks to the reduction rates of 14.1% and 6.3% in in-depth interpretive and investigative EVD articles for the months of September and October 2014 respectively. This reduction rate in in-depth coverage points to a gradual shift of attention from EVD to other issues considering that there were no longer newly recorded EVD cases and the countdown by WHO to finally declare the country EVD free had begun.

The health journalist asserted that *Vanguard* was caught up in the fire brigade approach and that this approach was largely responsible for the surge in EVD articles for the month of August 2014 and the reduction rate recorded in the months of September and October 2014. This assertion by the interviewee correlates with the analysis and discussion in chapter five which is also summarised in the paragraph above. *Vanguard* being caught unawares despite the premonition about EVD alongside the fire brigade approach exemplifies Hanitzsch's performative level of analysis and is useful in further highlighting and clearly articulating the performance of the journalists while the outbreak lasted.

In conclusion, this chapter presented, analysed and discussed the data generated from the interview sessions with *Vanguard's* health journalist. The chapter brings to the fore the nuances that underlies *Vanguard's* coverage of the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria to enhance a contextual understanding of the analysis and discussion presented in Chapter Five with the aim to further understand how the health journalists negotiated the line between disseminating factual and useful EVD information and the tendency to create panic during the coverage of the outbreak. The next chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS/CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### ***7. Introduction***

This study investigated *Vanguard's* coverage of the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria to understand how the health journalists who worked at *Vanguard* negotiated the line between disseminating important EVD information and journalism which might cause fear and panic during the coverage of the outbreak. This final chapter outlines the summary of findings/conclusion and recommendations of this dissertation.

#### ***7.1 Summary of Findings/Conclusion***

This study was informed primarily by the researcher's first-hand experience during the 2014 EVD outbreak in Lagos state of Nigeria coupled with the literature that shows that print media organisations over the years have been accused of escalating anxiety, fear and panic about social problems, both real and media instigated. The study built a theoretical framework using the theory of moral panic, normative theories of the media and the three levels of analysis and essential constituents of journalism culture.

The study recognises the inherent anxiety, fear and panic that characterised the outbreak and reveals that the 2014 outbreak of EVD in Nigeria posed significant challenges to the health journalists who covered the epidemic. This study shows that the EVD coverage was challenging and more demanding as compared to *Vanguard's* coverage of previous outbreaks of viral diseases in Nigeria. The study shows that this challenge stemmed from the apparent lack of sufficient understanding about the science that underlies EVD (among journalists and the population), the initial exclusion of the media from the national response to contain the outbreak, and the lack of sufficient proactive measures by the government and the print medium, evidenced by the research participant's assertion and the relatively low numbers of EVD articles published by *Vanguard* prior to the outbreak in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study also shows that the challenges encountered during the coverage of the EVD outbreak stemmed from the lack of a medical proven cure and the fact that the outbreak was the first time EVD appeared and was reported in Nigeria.

The study shows that a ‘fire brigade approach’ characterised the coverage by *Vanguard*. This approach is exemplified by the paucity of EVD articles prior to when the epidemic was recorded in Nigeria and also by the gradual decline and shift of attention from EVD and the coverage to other issues when there were no longer newly recorded cases and the 42-day countdown by WHO to finally declaring the country EVD free had begun. In addition, the surge in the publication of EVD articles after Patrick Sawyer arrived in Nigeria and was medically confirmed as the index case has the propensity to inspire and heighten tension, anxiety and panic among *Vanguard*’s readership. This is evidenced by the data characterised by a high number of sensationalised articles that has mortality rates, fear and panic as central themes.

This study by investigating *Vanguard*’s coverage of the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria brings to the fore a contextual understanding of the outbreak by delineating and consequently establishing the place of heightened anxiety, fear and panic that characterised the epidemic. This was done by drawing on the theory of moral panic and on *Vanguard*’s EVD articles to foreground through an in-depth analysis the heightened and inherent anxiety, public concern, tension, fear and panic that underlined the EVD outbreak in Nigeria. The study shows that the heightened anxiety, fear and panic that characterised the outbreak stems from a grassroots model of moral panic and also intersects with the facilitative role of the media. The grassroots model of moral panic, as outlined in Chapters Three and Five, speaks to a spontaneous outpouring of public anxiety and concern from a broad range of residents drawn from different strata of the society. The facilitative role taken up by *Vanguard* provides a platform through which this could be expressed.

While the in-depth analysis and discussion foregrounds the place of inherent anxiety, fear and panic, it also shows that in addition, within the journalism itself, reporters also used sensationalist tactics to report on the epidemic. This study shows that the theory of moral panic is a useful framework of analysis in situations and contexts where there are genuine concerns, threats and actual panic. This is a departure from the way the theory is applied in most literatures where the moral panic framework is used to bring to the fore how certain groups in the society introduce and heighten anxiety, fear and panic where there may be no serious social threat.

Furthermore, this study makes clear the normative leanings of the health journalists who covered the outbreak. It shows that health journalists took up the monitorial, facilitative and collaborative roles of the media during the EVD outbreak. Although this study shows that the

monitorial role was not effective prior to the outbreak of EVD in Nigeria, the role became more effective after the first outbreak was recorded in the country while the facilitative role was also effectively taken up while the outbreak lasted.

The study also shows an underlying, inherent commitment to factual reporting and dissemination of useful EVD information by the health journalists. However, this inherent commitment to factual reporting by health journalists during outbreaks though important is not adequate enough if sensationalised reporting with the propensity to inspire anxiety and panic during outbreaks of viral diseases such as EVD must be mitigated. Consequently, 'the fire brigade approach' which exemplifies the delayed response and lack of sufficient proactive measures by the journalists during the outbreak was not helpful in the EVD containment efforts by the assessment of my interviewee.

The study also shows that the collaborative role of the media intersects well with interpretive and investigative articles which have the propensity to douse anxiety, fear and panic. This intersection is exemplified in the analysis which reveals that interpretive and investigative EVD articles draw on effective and substantive collaborations with federal and state governments and with medical professionals and institutions to unpack, interpret, investigate and disseminate useful and helpful EVD information.

In conclusion, this study adds to the growing trans-disciplinary body of knowledge on EVD from a social science, news-based perspective. This study shows that despite the commitment to factual reporting and dissemination of actual EVD information by *Vanguard's* health journalists, the insufficient proactive measures, the initial exclusion of the media from the national response to contain the outbreak, the fire brigade approach and the relatively low understanding about the science that underlies EVD, led to sensationalised EVD articles with the propensity to inspire and instigate anxiety, fear and panic. Consequently, this reveals that an inherent commitment to factual reporting and dissemination of actual information in the absence of effective and efficient proactive measures and collaborations that enhances interpretive and investigative news articles and presence of a fire brigade approach with a relatively low level of understanding about EVD is not sufficient. Deliberate and proactive dissemination of interpretive and investigative EVD articles that stem from a solutions-based journalism has the propensity to douse anxiety, tension, fear and panic and give people solid, factual information.

## ***7.2 Recommendations***

Drawing on the findings outlined in the section above, this study recommends continuous training for health journalists to update their knowledge base about emerging and infectious diseases with the aim to properly position them for effective coverage during outbreaks of epidemics and other diseases. This study also recommends that the media be included in national responses to epidemics and other diseases for a holistic and sustained containment effort.

This study further recommends a strategic and effective proactive measure that entails a continuous dissemination of factual information about EVD, and by extension, other epidemics and diseases before and beyond an outbreak. This will effectively sensitise the readership about the viral infection or disease and consequently reduce the likelihood of heightened anxiety, fear and panic. Furthermore, articles that proffer genuine and effective ways of coping during outbreaks should be prioritised and given prominence in the mass media.

Finally, this study will recommend for further study a reception analysis to include EVD survivors, families of survivors, medical officials that received and treated Sawyer and other EVD affected persons alongside a cross section of Nigerian residents in geographic areas where this study has not been conducted. This will enhance the socio-cultural understanding of how news stories and articles are received and inform better communication and mitigation strategies in the eventuality of a future outbreak of either EVD or other epidemics and diseases.

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