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Reporting on political corruption in Nigeria: Sources, ownership affiliations, and other determinants of news frames

Effiong Etim Henshaw

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of City, University of London for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Journalism

January 2024

Declaration

I, **Effiong Etim Henshaw**, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signature:

COVID-19 Impact Statement

This statement is provided for the aid and benefit of future readers to summarise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the scope, methodology, and research activity associated with this thesis. The academic standards for a research degree awarded by City, University of London and for which this thesis is submitted remain the same regardless of this context.

Title of the research project: Reporting on political corruption in Nigeria: Sources, ownership affiliations, and other determinants of news frames.

1. **Summary of how the research project, scope or methodology has been revised because of COVID-19 restrictions.**
   Interviews were done by telephone or WhatsApp instead of in-person. The preference for conducting interviews via telephone/ WhatsApp to visiting and holding these interviews with journalists in their work settings was in accordance with the health guidance on continued caution to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus despite the lifting of travel restrictions.

2. **Summary of how research activity and/or data collection was impacted because of COVID-19 restrictions, and how any initially planned activity would have fitted within the thesis narrative.**
   Observing journalists in the actual practice of reporting on political corruption may have provided insight on the workings and inter-relationships between reporters and editors in the production of the news, rather than relying on accounts of their experiences. Doing interviews using the telephone did not support the analysis of non-verbal cues. However, the researcher was careful to use verbal cues as indicators. Poor connection due to weak internet bandwidth or phone connection sometimes interfered with the flow of the interview and the tone of the voice which meant that it became difficult to pick up changes in voice tone and hesitancies. In many cases, the researcher had to confirm what had been said.

3. **Summary of actions or decisions taken to mitigate for the impact of data collection or research activity that was prevented by COVID-19.**
   Doing in-depth interviews by telephone or WhatsApp calls.

4. **Summary of how any planned work might have changed the thesis narrative, including new research questions that have arisen from adjusting the scope of the research project.**
   No new research questions were developed.

Date of statement: 28/12/2023

Abstract

Research on the media's ability to address political corruption have tended to focus substantially on Western democracies, despite the increasing democratisation of countries in other regions of the world, including those on the African continent. Since emerging from military rule in 1999, Nigeria has been described as Africa's largest democracy and is considered as having one of the continent's most vibrant press, yet it continues to be branded as politically corrupt by scholars and policy makers alike. This study, drawing from content analysis of almost 700 articles and qualitative interviews with 24 experienced journalists, examines press coverage of political corruption in the country. It compares news reporting on political corruption in a competitive election year (2019) when journalists are actively courted by political elites because votes are at stake, to a relatively lack-lustre routine year (2020) when these elites prefer to be reticent about malpractice. Findings from the content analysed reveal a preference for portrayals of political corruption as blame assigned to the government for causing or solving the problem, or as accusations and counter-accusations between contending political elites, regardless of the year examined. However, while political elites remain the principal sources used in news articles to discuss corruption in both years, there is a sharp increase in the deployment of civil society organisations as sources in the non-election year. Interviews with journalists highlight a range of discreet considerations determining the portrayals and serving to restrict the authoritative reporting on political corruption, among them, access to sources, ownership affiliations, and risks on reporting malpractice.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACB:	African Continental Bank
ACN:	Action Congress of Nigeria
AG:	Action Group
AM:	Amplitude Modulation
APC:	All Progressives Congress
BBC:	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBN:	Central Bank of Nigeria
CBP:	Central Bank of the President
CCB:	Code of Conduct Bureau
CNN:	Cable News Network
CPC:	Congress for Progressive Change
CPI:	Corruption Perception Index
CSO:	Civil Society Organisation
EES:	European Election Survey
EFCC:	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
FBI:	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FM:	Frequency Modulation
FoIA:	Freedom of Information Act
FRCN:	Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
Govt.:	Government
ICPC:	Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Commission
IDPs:	Internally Displaced Persons
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
INEC:	Independent National Electoral Commission
Insti. :	Institution

LP:	Labour Party
MASSOB:	Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MPs:	Members of Parliament
NBC:	National Broadcasting Commission
NBC:	National Broadcasting Corporation
NBS:	National Broadcasting Service
NCNC:	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons
NDDC:	Niger Delta Development Commission
NFIU:	Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit
Nig.:	Nigeria
NNPP:	New Nigeria People's Party
NTA:	Nigerian Television Authority
Oppo.:	Opposition
P&T:	Post and Telegraph
PDP:	Peoples Democratic Party
PEPs:	Politically Exposed Persons
PRO:	Public Relations Office
Rel.:	Religious
SAP:	Structural Adjustment Programme
SPSS:	Statistical Package of the Social Sciences
TVC:	Television Continental
UHF:	Ultra High Frequency
VHF:	Very High Frequency
VOA:	Voice of America
VON:	Voice of Nigeria

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 General introduction

This chapter sets outs the thesis in broad terms by situating this study on Nigeria in the general context of political corruption and the media's role in addressing it. It also touches on the theoretical framework employed for the thesis and lays out the objectives of the study as well as the research questions. Thereafter, it presents the scope of the thesis, offers justifications for the research, and in the last section provides an overview of the constituent chapters of the thesis.

The media's ability to limit political corruption has long been of interest to scholars evidenced by numerous studies on the subject. There is scholarly consensus that given a complex set of interacting factors, including but not limited to, ownership, press freedom and democracy, the media can, to some extent, address political corruption (Hamada et al. 2019; Brunetti and Weder, 2003; Bhattacharyya and Hodler, 2015; Stapenhurst, 2000; Schudson, 2008; Camaj, 2013; Coronel, 2010; Mancini, 2019). To buttress this point, Schudson (2008) writing on the watchdog role of the press in a democracy, suggests that scrutiny by the media "is sufficient to produce in the leaders a fear of public embarrassment or public discrediting, public controversy, legal prosecution, or fear of losing an election" before concluding that "the job of the media… is to make powerful people tremble" (p.24).

In general however, scholars' positions on the press' ability to limit political corruption are rooted in the Western liberal tradition of the press' role as the fourth estate. From

this supposedly independent position, the press scans and scrutinises the activities of political elites in the other three estates of the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary, in order to expose their wrongdoings to citizens (Schultz, 1998; Conboy, 2004; Waisbord, 2000, 2010; Oso, 2013). Indeed, as Mancini (2019) points out, “almost all the existing literature on the matter (corruption) focuses on Western, liberal democracies” (p.156).

Scholars’ concentration on “Western, liberal democracies” is in spite of the increasing democratisation of countries in the global south (Farrales, 2005; Carbone and region of the world (Tanzi, 1998; Cockcroft, 2010, 2012). Cockcroft (2010) in highlighting the problem of political corruption in the global south states that, “several regimes have come to power with the mandate to address the issue. These have included Vicente Fox in Mexico (2000-06), Luiz Ignacio “Lula” da Silva in Brazil (2002-present), Olusegun Obasanjo in Nigeria (1997-2007) and Alejandro Toledo in Peru (2001-06)” (p.25). He submits however, that these regimes have either failed to address the problem or have become embroiled in it themselves. For instance, Jose Dirceu, President Lula da Silva’s Chief of Staff was found guilty by Brazil’s Supreme Court for his involvement in the *Mensalão* scandal where monthly payments were made to parliamentarians to secure support for legislation drawn up by the president’s political party. In President Obasanjo’s case, bribes were suspected to have been given to secure for him a third term, against the pre-established constitutional limits of two terms as president (Lawal and Olukayode, 2012; Cockcroft, 2010; Agbiboa, 2012, 2013; Posner and Young, 2007). Moreover, the concentration on Western democracies is in spite of the presence of a vibrant press in several countries in the global south that have exposed political corruption, leading to the removal of the

implicated politicians (Olukoyun, 2004; Coronel, 2003; Waisbord, 2000; Newman et al., 2023). Coronel (2003), for instance, cites the press' exposure of political corruption as culminating in "the downfall of four presidents − Fernando Collor de Mello of Brazil in 1992, Carlos Andres Perez of Venezuela in 1993, Abdala Bucaram of Ecuador in 1997 and Alberto Fujimori in 2000" (p.10). These were all nascent democracies in Latin America, and the media's effective reporting exposing corruption, established the press' viability in that region of the world (Coronel, 2003).

Concerning Africa, scholars suggest that although the press has exposed corruption, leading in some cases to the removal of corrupt politicians from public office, there are several constraints hampering its efficacy, thus qualifying its success (Rønning, 2009; Olukoyun, 2004). Specifically, a combination of contextual factors influence the press' performance including the cost of investigative journalism, corruption among journalists, and ownership interests (Mano and El Mkaouar, 2023; Asomah, 2020; Oso, 2013; Rønning, 2009). Both Rønning (2009) and Asomah (2020) are of the view that the media in Africa is closely affiliated with the corrupt politicians they are supposed to scrutinise, making it unlikely for them to expose official malpractice by these political elites.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, there is, as already indicated, a dearth of scholarship on media coverage of political corruption in non-Western societies, thus adding weight to Wasserman and de Beer's (2009) call for de-Westernising the field of journalism studies. They stress that although there are commonalities in the practice of journalists, and by extension the media, significant differences remain. These differences, they argue, require an investigation for a holistic understanding of the

media in non-Western societies. Their position is consistent with Brüggemann (2014) in his discussion on framing practices. He writes that, “inevitably, there will be differences between journalists working in different organizational and cultural contexts” (p.62) and the challenge is to unearth the distinct challenges related to these contexts. Taken together, these foregoing positions suggest an obvious gap in the scholarship on the media’s ability to address political corruption.

1.2 Media reporting on political corruption in Nigeria

By focusing on the media reporting on political corruption in Nigeria, this thesis contributes to closing the gap in the literature on the media reporting on political corruption in non-Western societies, and specifically, Nigeria. Even though academic studies that focus on the media construction of political corruption in Nigeria are not new, much of the literature have employed the agenda setting theory (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2005). Essentially, a large corpus of the literature has explored the relationship between the reporting on political corruption and assignment of importance to the issue by the public based on such coverage (Ciboh, 2010; Iwokwagh and Batta, 2011; Edmund and Wilson, 2018; Ayodeji-Falade and Osunkunle, 2020). Ciboh’s research, for example, examined six Nigerian newspapers over six years (2001-2006) to conclude that given the level of corruption in the Nigerian state, the issue is under-reported in the press.

Inversely, only very few studies have deployed framing theory to examine the portrayal of political corruption in the media. One such study was Abubakre’s (2017) research. She employed framing theory to examine online editorials on political corruption published on Nigeria’s Democracy Day, May 29th, 2016. The date marked the

anniversary of President Muhammadu Buhari's first year in office. Her study uncovered the issue-specific genre of frames, and specifically, the Uncompromising and Witch-hunt frames in these editorials. Unsurprisingly, the newspapers that were either ethnically or politically affiliated with the president promoted the Uncompromising frame, in this case *Daily Trust* and *The Nation. Daily Trust* is a northern newspaper from the same ethnic/regional affiliation as the president whereas *The Nation* is owned by Bola Ahmed Tinubu who belongs to the same political party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), as the president. The frame suggested that Buhari was uncompromising in his stance on corruption. But the Witch-hunt frame, indicating that the fight against corruption targeted mainly those of the opposition party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), was advanced by newspapers that were neither politically nor ethnically associated with Buhari, as such, *The Guardian*, *Punch* and *Daily Sun*.

Yet, even fewer studies have applied generic news frames having clear, measurable indicators, useful for theory development, in order to understand the news frames deployed to discuss the subject as it relates to Nigeria, as seen in the research by Adisa et al. (2018). This thesis adapts, through the inductive-deductive approach (Van Gorp, 2010; D'Angelo, 2017; Brüggemann and D'Angelo, 2018), Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five frames of attribution of responsibility, human interest, conflict, economic consequences and morality to explore news frames on political corruption. The presence of these frames in the news were determined by a set of clear, measurable indicators devised by the authors in their seminal study of the framing of European politics, including corruption, in the Dutch media.

Thus, this study's originality is its employment of framing theory to explore news portrayals of political corruption in the very specific context of comparing a full election year to non-voting year. Furthermore, there are virtually no studies that examine the use of sources deployed by journalists for the news on political corruption. As such, and additionally, this thesis' novelty also stems from its use of framing theory to empirically unpack the broad range of local and international political actors used as sources by journalists to construct the news on political corruption when the election year is compared to the non-voting year.

The election year in Nigeria, like other parts of the world, hosts the crucial final months of political campaigns leading to eventual voting by citizens of the country. The news on political campaigns and elections involve many actors including media owners, editors, journalists, aspiring candidates, their designated spokespersons, and party loyalists (Gulati, Just and Crigler, 2004; Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2011). "Each actor endeavors to control how the news is told" (Gulati, Just and Crigler, 2004, p.237) or as Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2011) put it, "political actors compete even more intensely than usual for control over media messages" (p.609). Akaeze (2023) depicts elections in Nigeria as "battles, few things are left to chance and the battle is often not just restricted to the campaign ground…(but) fought in the field and in the media" (p.143).

In effect, election news is a vigorously contested affair, often highly-charged and even combative. In stark contrast, news in the non-voting year is relatively lacklustre and bland. As expected of comparative studies, findings from this thesis, bring into sharp focus the changes in the news coverage on political malpractice when the election

year changes to the routine year. Among the study's most striking findings from examining news reports is the hundred-fold increase in the use of the human interest frame to discuss political malpractice in the non-voting year subsequent to the election year.

Similarly, the use of Nigerian civil society organisations (CSOs) as sources in the news in the non-voting year increased a hundred percent relative to its low use in the preceding election year where these organisations were scarcely deployed in the publications investigated. When journalists interviewed for the study were questioned about the sharp rise in the use of Nigerian CSOs as sources in the routine year, they admitted that their access to politicians and official government appointees whom they consider the most authoritative sources on political corruption depends on the year examined. Categorically, politicians who were eager to be used as sources for news on political malpractice in the election year become reticent, and in many cases even unavailable, in the routine year. This led them to turn to the CSOs, who are "experts" and are always available regardless of the political calendar.

In some respects, Nigeria presents an important study that warrants a research of this nature. Obe (2007) observes that "Nigeria—from arid deserts in the far north to petroleum-rich mangrove swamps on the Atlantic coast—is a microcosm of Africa itself" (p.144). It is Africa's largest economy and most populous country with a rich cultural diversity drawing from a large variety of ethnicities which some scholars and policy experts say number over two hundred and fifty (Obe, 2007; Kifordu, 2011; Fashagba, 2021; Alapiki, 2005; World Bank, 2023; International Monetary Fund, 2023). Like other countries in Africa, Nigeria has a long history of colonial rule, military

dictatorships and the transition to democracy in final years of the twentieth century, and since the beginning of its Fourth Republic in 1999 has held elections with pre-determined consistency (Omotola, 2010; Carbone and Cassani, 2016).

Here, however, it must be stated that some scholars have questioned the quality of the country's democracy (Bisong and Ekanem, 2020; Lawal and Olukayode, 2012; Aka, 2003). They cite a number of inconsistencies in Nigeria's idea of democracy, including the lack of adherence to its laws and constitutional provisions, lack of equality of all citizens, lack of independence of the judiciary, and restrictions on freedom of speech and in publications to suggest that the country falls short of being a true democracy (Bisong and Ekanem, 2020; Lawal and Olukayode, 2012; Aka, 2003). Yet, as Carbone and Cassani (2016), ardently point out, while regular elections do not equate to democracy, they "are indicators of democracy and even potential drivers of democratic progress" (p.36).

Nigeria also has a long history of political corruption. Some have argued that corruption began in pre-independence Nigeria (Pierce, 2016a, 2016b; Tignor, 1993) and grew in scale in the post-independent years, transcending the combination of civilian and military regimes (Pierce, 2016a, 2016b). Official corruption has continued unabated in the four civilian administrations that have ruled during the country's Fourth Republic (Pierce, 2016a, 2016b; Tignor, 1993; Agbiboa, 2012, 2013; Amundsen, 2017). Consistent with this argument, Transparency International, an organisation that measures the perception of corruption in countries around the world has regularly ranked Nigeria as corrupt, regardless of the presence of military or civilian government in power.

Transparency's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), widely used in academic studies, ranks countries based on the perceived level of corruption among public officials. Every country in the ranking is rated based on scores of between 0 (very corrupt) and 100 (very clean). In the closing years of military rule, Nigeria scored 0.69 to rank as the most corrupt country of 54 countries surveyed in 1996 (Transparency International, 2023). In 1997, it scored 1.76 and was also the most corrupt of 52 countries surveyed (Transparency International, 2023). In 1998, the last full year of military rule, it improved marginally to rank 81 of 85 countries surveyed with a score of 1.9 (Transparency International, 2023).

Interestingly, in 2019, twenty years after the return to civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria's ranking stood at 146 of 180 countries in the survey with a score of 26. This situated it as still one of the most corrupt countries in the world, the 17th most corrupt country in Africa, and the most corrupt country in West Africa, suggesting the persistence of political malpractice despite the transformation from military autocracy to civilian rule (Transparency International, 2023). Predictably, the persistence of political corruption has resulted in mass poverty, with the country rated as the second poorest in the world (World Bank, 2023), notwithstanding its substantial earnings from oil exports since 1970 (Pierce, 2016a; Amundsen, 2017).

Intriguingly, despite a number of challenges faced by its media, including the lack of press freedom, Nigeria has also long been regarded as having one of the continent's most vibrant media (Newman et al., 2023; Rønning, 2009; Olukoyun, 2004; Grant, 1971). Its newspapers, beginning in the colonial period with *Iwe Irohin,* identified by

scholars as the country's first newspaper, have typically been involved in politics and many have held a critical posture towards the government of the day (Omu, 1967; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Okafor, 2014; Akingbulu, 2010; Yusha'u, 2018; Oboh, 2021). Some like the *African Pilot* and *Nigerian Tribune* spoke pointedly about the oppression of Nigerians at the hands of their British colonialists in the agitation for independence. In the current Fourth Republic, *The News*, a magazine, now defunct, exposed wrongdoing by Alhaji Salisu Buhari, who had been elected Speaker of the House of Representatives at Nigeria's return to democracy (Jibo and Okoosi-Simbine, 2003). Investigations by *The News* revealed that Salisu Buhari had lied under oath that he was 30 years of age, one of the criteria to be elected into the House of Representatives, and had attended the University of Toronto when in fact he was less than 30 years and had not graduated from any university (Otusanya et al., 2015; Olutola and Isaac, 2016). The revelation led to his resignation both as the Speaker and member of the House of Representatives.

Thus, the reputed vibrancy of the Nigerian media makes the continued existence of political corruption incongruous. Perhaps Rønning's (2009) position best encapsulates this apparent contradiction. According to him, Nigeria "has had one of Africa's freest, bravest and most outspoken media. The Nigerian press has over the years revealed grand corruption schemes. But still the country is both in reality and in perception one of the most corrupt places in the world" (p.165). Indeed, critically examined, his assertion poses the question: what accounts for persistence of political corruption despite the evident portrayals of the issue in the press? Further still, and perhaps more relevant to this thesis, how is the news on political corruption portrayed and why is it portrayed in such a manner?

1.3 Framing theory

As previously indicated, only a few studies on media reporting on political corruption in Nigeria have utilised framing theory to examine the subject (for examples see Abubakre, 2017; Adisa et al., 2018). This thesis uses framing theory which is "about the content of the news" (Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke, 2016, p.7). Framing denotes how certain aspects of an issue are foregrounded, with other aspects of the same issue kept in the background, if not totally excluded, to promote a particular perspective (Kitzinger, 2007). Essentially, since news reports cannot relay all the information on a subject, a news frame highlights the most important aspects of an issue as determined by journalists who use culturally shared and mutually agreed meanings to communicate the essential characteristics of a story to readers. Specifically, news framing "denotes how journalists, their sources, and audiences work within conditions that shape the messages they construct as well as the ways they understand and interpret these messages" (D'Angelo, 2018; p.xxiv).

Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2011) employed framing theory in their comparative research on election news in Sweden and the United States. Their examination of "259 Swedish and 222 US television news stories aired on the three leading channels in each country" (p.605) uncovered, among others, the dominance of the strategic frame in the United States, with news on politics emphasising tactics and strategic manoeuvring. On the other hand, they found that Swedish broadcasters used the conflict frame more frequently, playing up disagreement and counter-accusations in the news, than their American counterparts. Closely related to the significance of these frames in both countries was the use of campaign operatives as sources for the conflict

frames in Swedish television news, and the deployment of media analysts/journalists as sources for the strategic frames in US television news. Likewise, the application of framing theory in this thesis facilitated an examination of not only what is presented as news in terms of the frames used but the conditions that influenced such a presentation, including journalists' use of sources, as well as the organisational constraints that shape their presentation of the news (D'Angelo and Shaw, 2018; Brüggemann, 2014; Borah, 2011).

1.4 Objectives of study and research questions

Given the foregoing, this thesis has the following objectives:

1. It seeks to examine how the media reports on political corruption in Nigeria in the current democracy, the Fourth Republic, which began in May 1999. Considering the importance of elections and the assumption that they present an opportunity for the media to discuss the most important issues relating to the country, including political corruption, it compares news reporting on political corruption in the election year of 2019 to the non-election year, 2020. Both years have been purposely selected. At the commencement of this study in 2020, Nigeria's most recent general elections held in 2019. As such 2019 was the election year and 2020, the non-election year.
2. To understand how framing theory applies to news reporting in Nigerian newspapers in the years studied. The research investigates four Nigerian newspapers, *Daily Trust, Leadership*, *Punch* and *This Day,* to understand the framing of political corruption. The newspapers are drawn from Nigeria's broad regional division of north and south that scholars have consistently argued, influence the portrayal of significant national issues including political corruption

(Ziegler and Asante, 1992; Bourgault, 1995; Olukoyun, 2004; Yusha'u, 2010a, 2010b, 2018; Ojo, 2013)

3. To explore the development of the Nigerian media and factors shaping it. Specifically, this research traces the beginnings of the Nigerian media and the pivotal factors that have shaped it over the course of the years (and decades) from pre-independence to date.

Related to these objectives, the study examined the aforementioned newspapers using content analysis and semi-structured in-depth interviews with journalists to answer its research questions. The most significant of these questions are:

1) How are the five frames: attribution of responsibility, human interest, conflict, economic consequences, and morality, used across the four newspapers?
2) How are sources used by the different newspapers?
3) What are the key considerations influencing news reporting on political corruption?

1.5 Scope of study

The study investigates media coverage on political corruption when the election year, 2019, is compared to the non-voting year, 2020. It focuses primarily on hard news on political corruption in the newspapers and in the specific years identified for the study. The version of the four newspapers examined were the printed, hard copies of the newspapers, not the online version of these newspapers which are often markedly different.

The study is not concerned with media coverage on political corruption as expressed in newspaper editorials, opinion pieces or columns in the newspapers examined. Neither does the study explore news on political corruption as it relates to any other newspapers, including those newspapers that are exclusively online. An important rational for the exclusion of online newspapers is on account of the uncertainty around access for their retrieval and the changing nature of online news, as they are often updated with the most recent information on the issue. Also, it does not explore news on political corruption in the broadcast media comprising television and radio networks. Neither does it examine the news on any of the various social media platforms where such news is hosted by newspapers or indeed discussed by users of such platforms. Here again there are issues with access for the retrieval of such news and, the deletion or blocking of accounts on some social media platforms, which pose problems for research.

The specificity of the study in both the newspapers and years examined supports clarity for understanding the subject with the production of unambiguous results. However, to fully understand media coverage on political corruption, the study also provides a background on Nigeria. This includes the country's history from independence, its return to democracy, and the nature of its elections in the Fourth Republic. Furthermore, it explores framing theory because this informs the utility of the theory for the study.

1.6 Justification for the study

As previously stated, no other study has examined media coverage on political corruption in Nigeria in the specific context of comparing the election year of 2019, with the non-election year of 2020. As such, the study goes to the very heart of the argument that the press is at its most powerful during the election year because it not only acts as the main channel of communication for politicians but is also able to expose corruption and influences voting (Strömbäck and Kaid, 2009; Schauseil, 2019). Accordingly, it tests the assumption that coverage of political corruption will be more independent and as such consequential in the election year than the routine year. Furthermore, it tests the long and often celebrated vibrancy of the Nigerian media, particularly newspapers, that some say have been pivotal in exposing corruption (Grant, 1971; Olukoyun, 2004; Rønning, 2009; Ogbondah, 2011; Santas and Ogoshi, 2016; Chama, 2019).

The study's theoretical and methodological frameworks are also crucially important, and are additional justifications for the study. Scholars of framing have stressed the potency of the theory for research on political news (Blumler, 2015; Schudson, 2003; Entman 1993), however its usage for studying media reporting on political corruption in Nigeria has been rare. Employing framing theory, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods as advocated by scholars, supports a comprehensive study of political news and the important factors shaping its presentation. Specifically, the study combines content analysis of six hundred and sixty-one hard news stories on political corruption and semi-structured in-depth interviews with twenty-four journalists to unveil the important considerations influencing news framing on corruption.

1.7 Overview of the chapters

The study is organised into eight chapters. The first is the introduction. Chapter 2, Literature Review and Theoretical Framework, explores the role of the media as the fourth estate, the constraints that inhibit the fulfilment of that role, and as they relate to Nigeria specifically. The chapter also provides a review of the literature on media coverage on political corruption divided into three sections: supranational studies, single-country or national studies, and sub-national studies. Additionally, it discusses the related political communication theories of agenda-setting, priming and framing, with understandably greater elaboration given to framing theory. Examples of the application of framing to the study of news on political corruption are also presented in the chapter. Considering the significant use of agenda-setting to study media coverage on corruption and some scholars' depiction of framing as an extension of agenda-setting, the chapter compares framing with agenda-setting to establish the clear differences between the two theories of communication.

Chapter 3, Nigeria, Political Corruption and Media Development, provides an overview of Nigeria in the context of the salient aspects of its history from independence to the current Fourth Republic. It also discusses the country's history of political corruption as well as its scale and impact on the country. Furthermore, it explores the development of the media in Nigeria, from the pre-independence era to the present day to highlight the factors that have shaped its development, before going on to examine the media's reporting on graft. For clarity, and in light of the important distinctions in the origination and development of newspapers, broadcast media and Internet-based media, the chapter examines these three different categories of the media separately.

Chapter 4, Methodology, focuses on the mixed methods of the study and provides the justification for employing these methods. For the most part, it discusses the quantitative and qualitative methods employed for the research. For the quantitative method, content analysis, it lays out the sampling of the four selected newspapers, defines the news frames and coding procedure, and presents the results from the intercoder reliability. For the qualitative method, it discusses semi-structured in-depth interviews with editors and reporters, and rationalises using a mix of purposive and snowball sampling to interview journalists who have reported on political corruption. It also discusses the analysis of the data collected and the challenges encountered in the process.

Chapter 5 and 6 present the results from content analysis and depth interviews respectively. The empirical data from the news examined was analysed with the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results are presented in both graphical and statistical format for clarity and ease of comprehension. For the in-depth interviews, findings from the thematic analysis of data collected from semi-structured interviews are presented. Chapter 7, Discussion and Implications, brings the findings from both chapters 5 and 6 together to answer the research questions in detail. Chapter 8, Conclusion, is the final chapter. It highlights the main contributions of the thesis as well as its limitations, offers a modest recommendation, and suggests areas for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an examination of the liberal tradition of the press as the fourth estate that constitutes the basis for the media's reporting on malpractice, and the various challenges that are encountered in fulfilling that idealistic role (Schultz, 1998; Graber, 2003; Hampton, 2010; Ibrahim, 2020). Due to their particular relevance to the role of the press as the fourth estate, the chapter also discusses press freedom and newspapers as sources of political information. Thereafter, it explores the relevant literature on media reporting concerning political corruption. By examining previous scholarly work on media coverage of political corruption in other countries and Nigeria, it provides a context for situating this study within the corpus of broader scholarly work undertaken by numerous other researchers. Finally, it discusses briefly and in a general sense, theories of communication, before providing a more detailed examination of the political communication theories of agenda-setting, priming and framing. However, considering that framing theory is adopted for the study, a much greater focus is given to the theory.

2.2 Liberal tradition of the press as the fourth estate of the realm

The designation of the press as the fourth estate has been popularly assigned to Edmund Burke (Schultz, 1998; Norris, 2008; McNair, 2009; Ibrahim, 2020) who was a member of the British parliament. The news media, primarily newspapers (Conboy, 2004, Hampton, 2010), earned the designation of an independent political institution

separate from three other institutions. These three institutions were the judiciary, the executive, and the parliament (Schultz, 1998) or “the House of Lords (spiritual and temporal) and the House of Commons” (Conboy, 2004, p. 109). Initially, the press’ role as the fourth estate was seen as merely reporting the activities of those in the parliament to the public, often to gain public support for policies or political parties (Schultz, 1998; Conboy, 2004). However, this later changed to incorporate the function of a watchdog, charged with scrutiny over the actions of elites in the other institutions, and more generally the powerful and influential in the society (Schultz, 1998; Conboy, 2004).

A crucial factor accounting for this change in the press’ posture was its commercial success, derived from advertisements and circulation/readers’ patronage. This freed the press from its economic dependence on the political class for sustenance, for example, through subsidies from political parties or tax exemptions from the government (Schultz, 1998; Conboy, 2004; Hampton, 2010). As Schultz (1998) puts it, “the Fourth Estate became less an agency of other elites and, the dictum that the role of the press was to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted emerged” (p.3). Hence, the fourth estate’s main character constitutes significant autonomy of the press, representation of the public interest rather than elites’ interest, and the “independent power to directly and independently challenge the dominant group” (Donohue, Tichenor and Olien, 2000; p.118), typically those in government.

At this point, it is important to highlight that the idea of the press as the fourth estate is rooted in democracy (Schultz, 1998; Norris, 2008; McNair, 2009; Schudson, 2008).

McNair (2009) and Schudson (2008), for instance, have observed that the functions of the press and democracy are closely related. This is because the essential functions of the press as the fourth estate is largely dependent on press' freedom to operate independently in supporting the public/citizens' interest which is at the heart of a democratic society (Norris, 2008; Hampton, 2010). Norris (2008) stresses the importance of a free press for democracy and classifies its role into three core functions. Firstly, it acts as a watchdog, scrutinising powerful political elites to report on corruption and other examples of maladministration. This is effective in democracies because "voters can use information provided by the media to hold parties and leaders to account" (Norris, 2008; p.189).

Secondly, the democratic free press, typically highly diversified, represents a wide variety of citizens' interests and encourages vigorous public debate and deliberation on the actions of government. Thus, "it provides citizens with information to compare and evaluate the retrospective record, prospective policies, and leadership characteristics of parties and candidates, providing the essential conditions for informed voting choices" (Norris, 2008; p.190). Lastly, the press in a democracy plays the important role of setting the agenda and influencing government policies. Here, the press acts as a channel of information that highlights opportunities requiring the intervention of the government. Overall, the press supplies quality information for decision making.

Scholars consistently point to some examples of the press' ability to hold elites to account as evidence of the media's efficacy as the fourth estate. Among these examples are the Watergate scandal and the Pentagon Papers in the United States of

America, and the Cash-for-Questions and Parliamentary Expenses' scandal in the United Kingdom (Schudson, 2003, 2004; Hampton, 2010). Many are now very familiar with these examples, so a brief summary of only two, the Watergate and Parliamentary Expenses' scandals, will suffice in buttressing the press' role in bringing them to public attention with consequences for implicated political elites.

Described as "the mother of all modern scandals" (Schudson, 2004, p.1232), Watergate centred on President Richard Nixon's attempt to cover up his knowledge of the burgling of the Democratic Party's National Committee headquarters following the arrest of five men on June 17, 1972. Several journalists at the *Washington Post* spearheaded by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, publicised the Nixon's administration's role and in particular, the president's specific knowledge, even approval of, related crimes that ranged from the harassment of political opponents to illegal wiretapping. All of these were intended to give the Nixon administration an unfair advantage to win his re-election to the White House that year. "In the critical first six months after the break-in, the *Post* published some 200 news articles about Watergate" (Feldstein, 2004). These stories contributed to galvanising public disapproval of Nixon's abuse of his presidential powers which ultimately led to his resignation from office on August 9, 1974, ahead of an impending impeachment. Schudson (2004) stresses the significance of the scandal as reinforcing the role of the press as the fourth estate in stating that Watergate became the touchstone that established the crucial role of the press in a democracy.

In the Parliamentary Expenses' scandal, the *Daily Telegraph*'s serial publication of the details of expenses claimed by members of parliament (MPs) exposed the frivolity with

which elected parliamentarians treated public funds (vanHeerde-Hudson, 2011). Their greed, against the backdrop of the 2007-2008 banking financial crisis and the subsequent economic recession, indicated that the politicians were playing by a different set of rules from the citizens who had elected them to public office. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that many of the parliamentarians linked to the expenses' scandal had not done anything illegal in the strict sense of breaking any of the rules governing the claims they presented (vanHeerde-Hudson, 2011). However, the resistance faced by journalists in accessing the MPs' record of expenses was proof of parliamentarians' lack of transparency and unwillingness to be held accountable. Accordingly, the revelation of their expense claims by the *Daily Telegraph*, beginning May 8, 2009, ignited a groundswell of public anger that followed. In the end, "148 MPs stood down before the May 2010 General Election, including cabinet and ministerial resignations, but the biggest scalp was that of Speaker Michael Martin, the first speaker to resign in some 300 years" (vanHeerde-Hudson, 2011; p.241).

The large degree of variance observed in the severity of the two examples illustrated above, President Nixon's obvious illegality in contradistinction to the wasteful but legal actions of some British MPs is significant. It suggests that the media's scrutiny over political elites and institutions to expose their activities is considered a defining attribute of the press as the fourth estate (Schultz, 1998; Bennett and Serrin, 2005). Bennett and Serrin (2005) view this as the media's watchdog role, defined as the "independent scrutiny by the press of the activities of government, business, and other public institutions," (p.169) aimed at making their activities known to the public and among the press' most important functions.

2.3 Challenges to the Fourth Estate ideal

Yet, in spite of its successes, there are some practical limitations that inhibit the operations of the press, suggesting that their ability to routinely and effectively function as the fourth estate could be unachievable, even mythical (Ibrahim, 2020; Hampton, 2010; Donohue, Tichenor and Olien, 2000; Graber, 2003). One complication affecting the press' performance as the fourth estate is the balance between the drive for profits by news organisations and their service of the public interest (Hampton, 2010; Schudson, 2003; Graber 2003). Both Graber (2003) and Schudson (2003) are of the view that news organisations are primarily business concerns, and like other business concerns are especially interested in growing their profits. This drive for profits has led to drastic cuts in many areas of their operations, including a reduction in the number of journalists assigned to gather information, and cuts to investments earmarked for the crucial tasks of investigative journalism. Both of these appear to be clearly at odds with the objective of uncovering political malpractice. Reinforcing their stance, Hampton (2010) cites evidence in the British media to illustrate the continuing increase in the numbers of freelance journalists over the years, and the reliance on them for news. He states that, in contrast to full-time journalists, freelance reporters, paid on the basis of "delivering copy, are not in a position to devote months to an investigative project that might never result in a story" (p.8).

Another obstacle to the press' independence and, consequently, its ability to serve the public interest is the reliance on official sources for news (Bennett, 2010; Hampton, 2010; Schudson, 2003). Bennett (2010) reasons that the obligation to report to the citizens on the activities of political institutions and elites inevitably makes journalists dependent on these institutions and politicians as sources for news. In particular,

during instances of political corruption and other failures in governments, journalists working with tight deadlines become vulnerable because these sources are often the only ones that have not only the authoritative information required, but can interpret the complexity of such information. Hampton (2010) has observed that this has led to officials with vested interests releasing “relatively complex but important information close to reporters’ deadlines” (p.9). Doing so ensures that it is the interpretation of the sources’ account of these events that dominates journalists’ report on the subject. Further, journalists become wary of antagonising these official sources so as not to be deprived of their access to them, because lack of access would be detrimental to their ability to report authoritatively. Hampton’s (2010) position is consistent with Graber’s (2003) argument that “the media lack subpoena powers to trace hidden information. They must depend on what is voluntarily supplied or what emerges when insiders leak information to the press” (p.147).

An additional challenge to the putative role of the press as the fourth estate is the failure to routinely check the political class. Some scholars contend that the reputed adversarial posture of the press, focused on scrutinising the political class, is not always the case (Graber, 2003; Hampton, 2010; Donohue, Tichenor and Olien, 2000). Graber (2003) for instance, writes that it is assumed that the media is inclined, even mandated, to perform their oversight function of political elites, but “in reality, their powers are very limited and no match for the power of politicians” (p.147) who are intent on covering up their actual intentions. Reinforcing Graber’s position, Hampton (2010) suggests that in the early stages of the Iraq War (2003-2011) the media took an uncritical stance and was unquestioning of the claims made by the Bush administration of the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. This gullibility

was writ large in the face of clear and contradicting evidence from the United Nations' weapons inspectors that was available to the media. But, as Hampton (2010) has argued, the press' scrutinising role is selective and is typically ignited in cases where public support is strongly against the position of the state. In the example of the American invasion of Iraq under Saddam Hussein, public support was decidedly in favour of the invasion at the beginning and turned in the later years against the war, with the media likewise shifting position along with the public.

Closely related to the above is Donohue, Tichenor and Olien's (2000) view that the media is more of a guard dog that protects the dominant interest, principally the powerful political and economic interests in society, than a watchdog that surveils the powerful elites to protect the public interest. From their perspective "there is rarely a single public interest" (p.25), as society is constituted of multiple interests, and the media usually supports the dominant interest. Thus, the media is neither independent nor separate from the other institutions, and what is often considered the independence of the media, on which its efficacy as the fourth estate rests, is in reality the media's support of the most powerful interests in society. As evidence, Donohue, Tichenor and Olien's (2000) argue that the questions often posed by journalists in the guise of critical scrutiny, are in reality a reflection of the concerns of the prominent interest groups or opposition politicians. According to them, "the media do not have the capacity to innovate in devising social policy or political action, but must necessarily deal with ideas and actions generated among the powerful groups" (p.25).

Furthermore, a significant impediment worth highlighting is the concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few powerful proprietors (Hampton, 2010; Ibrahim, 2020;

Mano and El Mkaouar, 2023). Concentration of ownership threatens the diversity of viewpoints and harms public interest because powerful owners can restrict access, interfere with media operations to undermine critical coverage involving vested interests, and are often biased when it comes to the coverage of issues relating to their own business interests (Hampton, 2010; Mano and El Mkaouar, 2023). Indeed, as Hampton (2010) argues, it is unrealistic to expect these media owners to produce reports that go against their interests. In the African context, Mano and El Mkaouar (2023) describe these media owners as "well-connected political and economic elites" (p.4) capable of leveraging their positions for commercial and/or political advantage to the detriment of the public interest.

A final challenge worth noting is the growing use of the Internet for disseminating information on politics which has led to an increase in fake news (Ibrahim, 2020; Oboh, 2021). Defined as the deliberate distortion of information "designed to deceive its intended audience" (Ibrahim, 2020, p.28), fake news undermines the fourth estate's position of the press as a bastion of truth, accuracy and transparency, premised on a code of ethics and moral responsibility.

All the preceding challenges are relevant to the discussion on the effective performance of the Nigerian media in its fourth estate role, although with contextual variations (Oso, 2013). For instance, news organisations are not only established as profit-oriented enterprises but many have long been closely affiliated to members of the political class (Babasola, 2023; Akaeze, 2023). Babasola (2023) has suggested that *Leadership, Daily Trust, Punch* and *The Nation* are affiliated to the All

Progressives Congress (APC), the country's governing political party, while *Vanguard* and *This Day* are closely connected to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the main opposition political party. This makes it difficult for them to maintain the independence required for critical reporting on political elites even when confronted with clear evidence of political malpractice.

Furthermore, and related to their profit-making orientation, is that the Nigerian media has often resorted to drastic cost-cutting measures to stay afloat. Unsurprisingly, this has led to "reduction in personnel cost, reduction in the cost of news gathering, particularly in areas such as investigative journalism" (Oso, 2013, p.19). Expectedly, these steep cuts inhibit the capacity of the media to source information independently, leading them to rely on what Oso (2013) describes as packaged news delivered through press statements, press conferences, and briefings that emphasise the account and interpretation of events promoted by their affiliated political elites. The situation is exacerbated by restricted access to information that has led the press to further rely on state institutions for the provision of public information, thus further weakening the independence of the press and their efficacy for objective and quality reporting of news on politics.

Yet again, in Nigeria, like much of Africa and indeed the global south, there is the tension that rises from the conflict of the media's role as a watchdog and its use for development journalism. Development journalism, focused on reporting the policies and programmes of the government, and their impact on the population, is also in the public, or more accurately, national interest (Waisbord, 2000, 2010; Oso, 2013). But it

is at odds with the idealist posture of autonomy, critical reporting on government activities and objectivity required by the media in its fourth estate role (Waisbord, 2000, 2010; Oso, 2013). Such tension apparently limits the proper functioning of the press in its ideal role of scrutinising politicians and political institutions.

Overall, the strong nexus between politics and the economy; the drive for profitability above professional journalistic considerations; the lack of access to information; and the tension between development journalism and scrutiny of political elites are some of the factors that limit the efficacy of the fourth estate in Nigeria. Beyond these challenges, however, there is the notion that the idea of fourth estate anchored on Anglo-American liberal tradition of the free press operating in a democratic society, has practical limitations in non-democratic societies (Matheson, 2010; Waisbord, 2000, 2010; Oso, 2013). This is rational since the free press with fourth estate duties only emerged in the context of a democratic society (McNair, 2009; Waisbord, 2000). This raises the important question of its applicability to Nigeria because, as indicated in the introductory chapter, the country cannot be described as a democracy in the true sense of the idea of a nation governed by democratic principles. Consequently, some scholars have argued that the Nigerian media cannot be described as being exactly free in carrying out its functions. One evidence of this, is the harassment of media organisations by state actors in instances of unfavourable coverage of political issues (Mano and El Mkaouar, 2023; Oso, 2013; Ogbondah, 2011).

2.4 Press freedom

As previously observed, press freedom is relevant to any discussion on the media's effective performance as the fourth estate in a democracy (Waisbord, 2000; Norris, 2008). Press freedom in this context goes beyond the autonomy that is derived from a buoyant economy that underpins sustainable and profitable operations of the media, making them independent from the corrupting overtures of influential political and business interests. Rather, it emphasises the existence of, and adherence to, substantive laws that support the freedom of the press to publish information without fear of reprisals from powerful actors (Schudson, 2017; Heyns and Srinivasan, 2013; Norris, 2008). Norris (2008) states that a range of laws including, but not limited to those on libel, official secrecy, registration licences for operations, and broadcasting regulations, inhibit press freedom because they expose journalists to repressive actions for their reporting.

With regard to Nigeria, Sections 22 and 39 of the country's 1999 Constitution guarantees the media's position to hold government accountable and guarantees freedom of expression respectively (Government of Nigeria, 2023; Apuke, 2016; Oso, 2013), thus supporting the media's watchdog role. Specifically, Section 22 of Nigeria's 1999 constitution states that,

> The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people (Government of Nigeria, 2023, p.16)

However, the Constitution does not offer any protective guarantees to the press (Government of Nigeria, 2023; Apuke, 2016; Suleiman, 2017). Furthermore, Freedom House, a non-profit organisation that monitors political and civil liberties in countries around the world, observes that Nigeria's constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of speech, expression and the press are "limited by sedition, criminal defamation and so-called false-news laws" (Freedom House, 2023). The government further limits press freedom through various measures including harassment and arrest of journalists "especially when they cover corruption" (Freedom House, 2023).

Freedom House's position is consistent with the perspective of Reporters Without Borders, an independent international organisation that advocates for the right to freedom of information. According to Reporters Without Borders, "Nigeria is one of West Africa's most dangerous and difficult countries for journalists, who are often monitored, attacked and arbitrarily arrested" (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). To buttress this point further, Ndinojuo and Udoudo (2018) provide a list of journalists across traditional and Internet-based media that have either been arrested, charged to court, brutalised or killed between 2015 and 2017, to show the Nigerian government's high-handedness in dealing with journalists. This is in spite of Nigeria having passed its Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) on May 28, 2011. The Act is aimed at facilitating access to information on government and the actions of political elites but has yielded scant benefits for journalists' access to such information (Suleiman, 2017; Duru and Ezeh, 2018).

However, regardless of the inadequacy of laws and the threats faced by journalists, Nigerian newspapers have, historically, in comparison to other traditional media in the country, been freer in acting as watchdogs to address political corruption in the country (Omu, 1967; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Okafor, 2014; Akingbulu, 2010; Yusha'u, 2018; Oboh, 2021). Moreover, as we shall see in the next chapter on Political Corruption and Media Development in Nigeria, newspapers were established by owners who were either independent, motivated by profit or were politicians using their publications as platforms for self-expression and policy promotion as seen in scholars' discussions and classification of Nigerian newspapers (Oton, 1958; Grant 1971; Yusha'u, 2018; Babasola, 2023). This is in contrast to the origins of the broadcast media, initially established and regulated by the central colonial government in order to meet specific purposes in furtherance of their administration of the country (Larkin, 2008; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Uche, 1985; Ume-Nwagbo, 1979).

Finally, although Nigeria, like much of Africa, generally has lower Internet penetration than other regions of the world, particularly the Western countries (Mano and Ndlela, 2020; Silver and Johnson, 2018), the Internet is not free from government control. One evidence of this can be seen in former President Muhammadu Buhari's seven-month suspension of Twitter (now X) from June 2021, after the social network deleted a tweet issued from the president's account because it was considered incendiary (Freedom House, 2022; Anyim, 2021). Also, there are other examples of the government's monitoring and control of the Internet such as the state's arrest and detainment of journalists and publishers who host news platforms that are exclusively online. Some of these journalists are Agba Jalingo of *Cross River Watch*, Ayodele Samuel of *Taraba Truth and Facts*, and Haruna Mohammed of *WikkiTimes* (Newman et al., 2023).

2.5 Newspapers as sources of political information

Closely related to the press' role as the fourth estate is the use of newspapers for gaining knowledge on politics. It is noteworthy that scholars' discussion on the early origins of the press as the fourth estate in the nineteenth century focused exclusively on newspapers (Schultz, 1998; Conboy, 2004; Hampton, 2010; Burrowes, 2011). Burrowes (2011), for instance, writes that "sometime in the early decades of the nineteenth century the 'fourth estate' came into use in reference to the press…reflecting the powerful role of newspapers in shaping public opinion" (p.47). Similarly, Conboy (2004) and Schultz (1998), in their examination of the press' role as the fourth estate during this time, identify the growing commercial viability of newspapers as crucial to their independence and efficient functioning as a watchdog. It is noteworthy that considering newspapers preceded other forms of traditional media, specifically radio and television, for the dissemination of news, it is logical that newspapers are given a preeminent role in the discourse of the media and the fourth estate.

Nonetheless, studies on the use of newspapers for gaining political knowledge provide mixed results (Mondak, 1995; Chaffee and Kanihan, 1997; Druckman, 2005; Fraile and Iyengar, 2014). Mondak's (1995) study on newspapers for example, highlights the efficacy of newspapers for gaining information on local elections, but show that newspapers are not as effective for acquiring knowledge on national and international political affairs. Druckman's (2005) research on newspapers and television suggests that both play a complimentary role. Newspapers, he submits, are better at gaining

knowledge on policies and political affairs as they relate to different political parties, but television trumps newspapers in educating their audiences on the differences between political candidates and deciding who to vote for, especially in local elections.

One explanation for such mixed results is that audiences do not typically rely on a single medium for information but rather tend to use a combination of newspapers, television, radio and other sources including advertisement and word-of-mouth (Chaffee and Kanihan, 1997). Another reason for the ambiguity is, as Druckman (2005) observes, “due to methodological challenges that even the latest studies have not wholly been able to overcome” (p.464). Generally, however, scholars agree that newspapers provide more in-depth information and are given to considerable coverage of politics, with readers given more control on the pace at which they digest the information, which aids them in learning about politics (Mondak, 1995; Chaffee and Kanihan, 1997; Druckman, 2005). By contrast, other media, particularly television, tend to put a greater focus on the personal attributes of political candidates, provide less coverage on politics than newspapers because they have less space, with audiences also having less control on the pace of assimilating the information (Mondak, 1995; Chaffee and Kanihan, 1997; Druckman, 2005; de Waal and Schoenbach, 2008).

Notwithstanding the foregoing, Fraile and Iyengar’s (2014) extensive study is instructive in showing the value of broadsheet newspapers for gaining political information. Their research spanned twenty-seven European democracies, and as such different markets. They used data from the 2009 European Election Survey

(EES) to examine self-reported exposure to fifty-eight television networks and eighty-four daily newspapers. Drawing from interviews with a thousand respondents in each of the countries where respondents were asked “seven political knowledge questions” (p.283), they found that sources providing hard news, in effect, quality newspapers and public service broadcasters, were more helpful for citizens in acquiring political knowledge than commercial broadcasters or tabloid newspapers. A major reason for the difference was because both quality newspapers and public service broadcasters delivered a sizable volume of serious news. In the case of public service broadcasters, the delivery of political news during prime-time viewership was especially effective. Both these media also gave such news good prominence, greater treatment, and much more frequency than tabloids or commercial broadcasters, which were wont to entertain their audiences and so play up superficial and sensationalist news.

Consequently, it is the quality newspapers and public broadcasters that are most useful for helping citizens acquire political knowledge. Furthermore, between quality newspapers and public broadcasters, they found a significant difference in the capacity of those who read newspapers to answer the questions posed correctly, than those who relied more on public broadcasters for news. Broadsheets were also more informative and far more useful in bridging the knowledge gap between the not-so informed and well-informed citizens. This was moreso in an information-rich context like election campaigns as was the case for their study on the 2009 European Union electoral campaigns.

Their findings are not entirely surprising given the latitude of the quality newspapers to discuss politics at length, often with greater frequency than other media, and to efficiently indicate prominence through their manner of assigning page and position to important political news (Tewksbury and Althaus, 2000; de Waal and Schoenbach, 2008; Fraile and Iyengar, 2014). Moreover, the results are somewhat consistent with research comparing print newspapers with online sources for news. In this case, newspapers were found to be influential for the understanding of public affairs because their manner of news presentation acts as a guide to readers on indicating importance. Conversely readers find the copious content available in online sources overwhelming, especially on account of the many links to other sources of information on the Internet (de Waal and Schoenbach, 2008).

2.6 Literature review

Regarding the literature on press coverage on political malpractice, Tumber and Waisbord (2004) attribute news coverage of political malpractice to certain factors. These include the growing relevance of the media as a recognised platform for political competition and the press' watchdog role of demanding accountability from political elites. Their position is strengthened by Palau and Davesa's (2013) view that "media politics" (p.100), a situation where politicians use the media to expose the corruption of their opponents, is frequently deployed as a weapon for winning elections. Likewise, Mukhongo (2010) conceives of the media as a "playground where politics is played out" (p.346), suggesting that the media's centrality to politics underpins the preponderance of news coverage.

In general, however, empirical research into press representations of political corruption tends to follow three general categorisations: supranational, single-country, and sub-national research. The supranational research, typically comparative, examines corruption in two or more countries. These studies outline the similarities and distinctions on the levels of media portrayals and offer inferences for the data uncovered by the research. The single-country or national studies focus distinctively on how the media constructs malpractice in a particular country, as is the focus of this research on Nigeria. Finally, the sub-national investigations explore media coverage on corruption in either a sector of the country or across two or more sub-divisions, with reasons inferred for levels and slant of coverage, among others. These different classifications, beginning with the supranational studies on the media and corruption are examined below, although expectedly, greater emphasis is placed on research investigating Nigeria due to its direct relevance to this study.

2.6.1 Supranational research on media and political corruption

In their influential, cross-country research on corruption, Mancini et al. (2017) scrutinised the French, British and Italian press. In each of these countries, they investigated four newspapers, each newspaper having a different political orientation and affiliation. With these publications, they examined a decade's (2004-2013) corpus of over one hundred and seven thousand (107,000) articles. Their research examined the degree to which levels of press freedom, as ranked by Freedom House, affects reporting of news on corruption.

They found that news coverage of corruption is highest in the Italian press, with the British and French following respectively in the quantity of coverage. This is despite Italy having a lower ranking of press freedom when compared to Britain and France. They also found that the Italian press were more concerned with domestic corruption and saw these cases of corruption as opportunities to “destroy the reputation of politicians and public administrators” (p.74) they disliked. The French media, inversely, were more fact-centred in their reporting, and unlikely to dramatise news on political corruption. Mancini and his colleagues (2017) attributed this trait of objectivity by the French media to its reluctance to identify with any particular political figure or party. They argued that this illustrated how political alignments by the press adversely affect impartial news coverage.

Furthermore, they observed that the British and French press were rather more focused on foreign political corruption and sports-related malfeasance. Nonetheless, each of the newspapers investigated in the different countries appeared to pander to the preferences of their respective audiences in their manner of representing corruption. The dissimilarity in the portrayals caused a lack of agreement in the press on the way political corruption should be addressed. Their research concluded, among others, that market segmentation and political parallelism played a more decisive role than press freedom in the media representation of corruption.

Their findings offer instructive insight for this research on Nigeria because as earlier observed, the country is often characterised as having a not-so-free press which is viewed as inhibiting media investigation of corruption by political elites (Freedom House, 2023; Reporters Without Borders, 2021; Oso, 2013; Ogbondah, 2011; Aka,

2003). Additionally, their research is illuminating in the way it shows the extent to which political affiliations adversely affect objective reporting on political corruption. This also has some relevance for this study in the light of the assertion by scholars and commentators that media ownership in Nigeria is drawn from people of different orientations, interests, and political affiliations with some news organisations purposefully deployed to pursue political ambitions (Akaeze, 2023; Babasola, 2023; Yusha'u, 2018; Abubakre, 2017; Ribadu, 2010; Olukoyun, 2004).

Drawing inspiration from Mancini et al. (2017), Bratu and Kazoka (2018) in their wide-ranging study of seven European countries (the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Romania, Latvia, Slovakia and Hungary) explored the use of metaphors in reporting corruption. They examined over twelve thousand (12,000) newspaper articles between 2004 and 2013, to discover whether the media sufficiently deployed metaphors as descriptors for discussing corruption. Bratu and Kazoka (2018) found, that metaphors were utilised principally in editorials, despite their potency for helping readers to easily understand corruption. However, they observed that even in the infrequent contexts when metaphors were used to portray corruption, they were not sufficiently contextualised in such "concrete corruption stories" (p.69). Thus, their use failed to show the different dimensions of the issue which would have enabled readers to take an informed position on malpractice. Accordingly they argued that the usage of metaphors in the newspapers across the seven countries examined was simplistic and sensational, limiting the way anti-corruption solutions can be found.

Echeverría, González and Tagle Montt (2021) anchored their research on corruption on both Hallin and Mancini's (2004) theory of media systems and Entman's (1993)

framing theory. They sought to understand the consequences of media systems for the framing of corruption in the Latin American countries of Mexico and Chile, taking into consideration the differing levels of corruption as indicated by Transparency International's ranking of these countries in 2018. While Chile was listed as one of the least corrupt countries on the continent, Mexico, by contrast, was regarded as one of the most corrupt nations. According to these scholars, in terms of media systems, the countries had some similarities. For one, both showed strong evidence of political parallelism with the newspapers aligned to the interests of politicians and political parties in their respective countries. Newspapers in both countries also showed low levels of use by the population to access information and had low circulation: the newspapers examined were in the range of between 77,000 and 142,000 copies of circulation. Yet again, journalistic autonomy, the degree to which journalists had control over gathering information and publishing their work, was lacking in both countries. Finally, newspapers in both Chile and Mexico were governed by market logic in their presentation of news. In other words, they were serving the market to generate revenue through advertising and increased circulation.

Their research focused primarily on political corruption stories during the election year in each country. Specifically, these were the presidential campaigns of 2017 in Chile and of 2018 in Mexico. They examined two national newspapers in each country. These were quality publications, *El Mecurio de Santiago* and *La Tercera* in Chile, and *El Universal* and *Reforma* in Mexico. Working with a sample of fifteen and twenty-nine articles from these newspapers in Chile and Mexico respectively, they explored three dimensions of news frames on political corruption. These were visibility (importance of the story), bias of coverage (use of sources), and the framing of

corruption as measured by Entman's (1993) definition of the problem, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and recommended solution to the problem.

In terms of visibility, they found that the Chilean newspapers gave more visibility to corruption news by assigning front page positions to such coverage but the Mexican newspapers provided greater frequency of coverage "with practically twice as many pieces as their Chilean counterparts" (p.160). For sources, Chile showed a higher tendency to use institutional actors such as prosecutors and witnesses, whereas Mexico preferred the use of political adversaries, followed by those political actors indicted for political corruption. On frames, the news organisations in both countries provided similar definitions of the problem. However, Mexican newspapers had a higher frequency of providing causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations than their Chilean counterparts.

Echeverría, González and Tagle Montt (2021) state that the newspapers showed that there was less coverage of political corruption during elections in Chile than was the case in Mexico. Furthermore, political corruption was considered an extra-ordinary event in Chile, and so given higher visibility with the assignment of priority as seen in the front page positions, while "Mexican newspapers provide continuous coverage of multiple corruption cases, but the reports do not necessarily appear on front pages" (p.164). They submit that the findings were consistent with research suggesting that countries with low levels of corruption, because of strong levels of accountability and adherence to the rule of law, have less corruption cases reported in the media. By contrast, countries with high levels of corruption are inclined to pay attention to corruption through frequent media reportage.

Olugboji (2020) studied news framing of aid and corruption in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia, by fifteen British newspapers comprising broadsheets and tabloids over eighteen years (2000-2017). His research, divided into pre- and post-austerity periods of 2000-2009 and 2010-2017 in the United Kingdom (UK), found that the “Stolen Aid” frame was the predominant depiction in the selected time periods. Frames of “Stolen Aid” were followed in number by portrayals of “Poor Governance” and then “Poverty”. Olugboji (2020) also discovered that African leaders in these countries were often cast as dodgy, deceitful, and untrustworthy. These descriptors tended to support the perception that scarce funds from the UK, allocated to these countries, were likely to be stolen and used for unintended purposes. Moreover, the quality broadsheets, gave Ethiopia the most prominence, and appeared to play up the benefits of aid regarding education, trade, and economic development for that country. Conversely, the tabloid press was less inclined to discuss these benefits and focused mainly on Nigeria. Accordingly, Olugboji (2020) inferred that contrary to the familiar perspective that African countries are typically generalised when reported in the British press, there were some differentiations made in the newspapers researched, although these nuances were still limited in context.

Overall, the supranational studies of Mancini et al. (2017), Bratu and Kazoka (2018), Echeverría, González and Tagle Montt (2021) and Olugboji (2020), facilitate a broader understanding of press representation of corruption. These studies sketch out some of the distinctive factors such as commercialisation, political alignments of news organisations, use of sources, and lack of depth that influence the portrayals of malpractice. However, except for Olugboji’s (2020) study, these supranational studies

do not relate to Africa, to say nothing of Nigeria, specifically. They, in fact, stress the importance of conducting such an investigation on Nigeria, as is the purpose of this research. As argued by Wasserman and de Beer (2009), although there are similarities in journalism practice in many countries, there exists distinctive differences that should discourage employing general assumptions to understand specific contexts. For example, levels of participatory journalism in the West, due to access and use of technology, cannot, nor should they be, compared to other parts of the world where access and use are not as extensive.

Considering Olugboji's (2020) work categorically, although his examination of Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia provides some useful perspectives, no less because of his use of framing theory, his study can still be judged as Eurocentric. This is because it investigates the media constructions from the standpoint of the British press. As his findings show, such representations, perhaps because they are external to the continent, and despite a reduction in their use of negative stereotypes, are devoid of sufficient context. This observation was also made by Paterson (1994) and Brookes (1995) some twenty-five years prior, of Western traditional media coverage of the African continent. Indeed, Olugboji's work indicates that despite the passage of over two decades, very little has changed in the disposition of the Western press towards Africa and the resultant media portrayal they disseminate of the continent.

The argument by Echeverría, González and Tagle Montt (2021) that given a combination of factors, including politics and culture, countries with strong levels of accountability and adherence to the rule of law, have less corruption cases reported in the media, whereas those with high levels of corruption are inclined to pay attention

to corruption through frequent media reportage is also noteworthy. Their position is an indication that frequent media exposure of malpractice is not the main driver in the reduction of political corruption. This seems somewhat ironic in the context of the suggestion by scholars that frequent media exposure of corruption discourages political corruption, and vice versa. (Schudson, 2008; Schauseil 2019).

2.6.2 Single country research on media and political corruption

Regarding focused research on media reporting on political corruption in specific countries, Palau and Davesa (2013) studied media coverage of political malpractice in Spain. They analysed over four thousand (4,000) front-page portrayals of corruption scandals in the country's two most influential newspapers, *El Pais* and *El Mundo*, over fourteen years (1996-2009). *El Pais* is aligned to the right leaning *Partido Popular* (People's Party: PP) and *El Mundo* is favourably disposed to the leftist *Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol* (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party: PSOE). Palau and Davesa (2013) sought to examine the influence of political affiliation on corruption news coverage, the consequence of news on corruption on public opinion, and the impact of corruption news coverage on the public's perception of the economy. They discovered that, in general, news on corruption was portrayed by both newspapers. Predictably, the newspapers tended to give more prominence to news on political corruption where its non-affiliated political party was involved. The tendency highlights the strong ties that exists between the specified media and the respective political parties, as Mancini et al. (2017) also discovered regarding the Italian media and political figures/parties.

Using the Spanish Centre for Sociological Research for their survey, Palau and Davesa discovered that there was generally a strong correlation between public opinion on the challenges confronting the country, and the media's priority of problems facing Spain. This led them to argue that "when the media coverage of corruption scandals increases, so does the number of citizens who consider corruption to be one of the main problems in Spain" (p.118). The correlation, they argued, established strong agenda setting effects of the media. However, concerning the economy, the media had a weaker impact on public opinion. Opinion polls showed a correspondence between the media and the public only when the "percentage of citizens who think that the economic situation is bad or very bad is above 50%" (p.119). This suggests that terribly aggravating levels of an adverse economy may be necessary to secure a uniformity of public opinion on the state of the economy.

In their Nigeria-focused study on corruption-related news, Komolafe, Hitchen and Kalu-Amah (2019) examined six newspapers, four of these were print and two were exclusively online. *The Punch, This Day, Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* were investigated for their print content, whereas online content for *Sahara Reporters* and *Premium Times* were studied. In all 3,626 stories from nineteen months' coverage (January 2018 to July 2019) were analysed to understand the nexus between the media, corruption and Nigeria's 2019 elections, and the impact of such reporting on policy-making or agenda-setting. The study built on an earlier investigation by Komolafe, Nkereuwem and Kalu-Amah (2019) of the same newspapers which also explored the impact of news reporting of malpractice in the months leading up to and shortly after the 2015 elections, and its consequences for policy making, post-election.

Findings from their latest study showed a marked increase in the number of corruption stories, as their earlier study uncovered only nine hundred and sixty-two (962) stories from the six newspapers, albeit over a one-year period (August 2014 to May 2015). They attributed the surge in the number of stories to the deployment of corruption as a strategy to taint political opponents, which is consistent with the position of Palau and Davesa (2013), and a reflection of the incumbent administration's avowal to address malpractice (Komolafe, Hitchen and Kalu-Amah, 2019).

In both of their studies, news on corruption was concentrated in the periods close to and immediately after elections. Further, their investigations discovered that news coverage generally tended to focus on personalities and not institutions, "a reflection of the Nigerian media's penchant for voyeuristic coverage" (Komolafe, Nkereuwem and Kalu-Amah, 2019, p.16). Thus, the work on the 2019 elections supports most of the findings from interrogating news reports on the 2015 voting, particularly that media reporting on corruption is decidedly on political elites and episodic. As such, the media fails to rigorously address democratic governance and "institutional and systemic issues" (Komolafe, Hitchen and Kalu-Amah, 2019, p.24). Additionally, media coverage largely took the form of straight news reports with little context provided. Overall, the online publications, *Premium Times* and *Sahara Reporters* appeared to produce more investigative journalism than their print counterparts, *The Punch, This Day, Vanguard* and *Daily Trust*.

However, there was an apparent divergence between the research of 2015 and that of 2019. The coverage of the 2015 polls showed substantial focus on post-election ballot tampering and other voting irregularities, but media reports of the 2019 elections,

post-voting, was devoid of such depictions (Komolafe, Hitchen and Kalu-Amah, 2019). The authors suggest that the decrease may have been due to editorial decisions discouraging such coverage. Both studies are relevant in highlighting the impact of an election season on the media reporting of corruption, even as they acknowledge the failure of media coverage of corruption in translating to substantive policymaking in the immediate post-election period. Even so, their research piques one's curiosity with respect to how printed newspapers that replicate their corruption coverage online compare with news platforms that exists strictly online, especially considering differing levels of financial requirements for operations. Additionally, their claim of editorial decisions discouraging certain aspects of the coverage on corruption, begs the question: How is it possible to know this simply by examining the content of news reports? It thus seems plausible to suggest that getting the definitive reason behind the reduction in corruption coverage which they highlight would require the need to speak with the reporters and editors who are actually involved in the production of news.

Similarly, in their country-focused research on corruption in Nigeria, Adisa et al. (2018) applied framing theory in examining online versions of three Nigerian newspapers, *Punch, The Guardian,* and *Daily Trust*, over six months (January-June 2016). Their investigation of one hundred and fifty-two (152) news articles concentrated on the period following the election of then new president, Muhammadu Buhari, and his avowal to curb political corruption. These circumstances, they argue, gave impetus to media exposure of official malpractice. They found that while coverage was vitiated by ethnicity, political affinity, commercialisation, ownership, among others, newspapers represented corruption emphatically in terms of financial

loss to the country with adverse impact on infrastructure, unemployment, and poverty. They also discovered that the newspapers placed the responsibility of eradicating political malpractice on responsible governance, rather than constitutional or institutional reforms. Their research draws some parallels with the study by Komolafe, Nkereuwem and Kalu-Amah (2019) in highlighting the strong influence of the actions and declarations of political elites on news reporting.

To discover the agenda-setting function of the media in Nigeria, Ciboh (2010) studied media reporting of political corruption by examining six newspapers, *Punch, Daily Champion, This Day*, *The Guardian, Vanguard,* and *Daily Trust*, over six years (2001-2006). From a corpus of four hundred and ten (410) articles, he found that the volume of news on political corruption was eclipsed by reports on public affairs, the economy, and business news. Additionally, in terms of prominence, most stories on corruption "were buried on inside pages" (p.149), with only a third published on the front pages, and of those on the front pages, only a third were lead stories. Furthermore, relatively few articles on corruption were written as editorials or features that could provide depth in addressing corruption issues extensively. Ciboh also observed that reporters tended to depend overwhelmingly on parliamentary investigations, interviews, press conferences and briefings that privileged political actors in government and opposition political parties, for their news stories. His findings led him to argue that vis-à-vis the level of corruption in the Nigerian state, newspapers under-report corruption, negatively impacting salience on the subject.

Iwokwagh and Batta (2011) also applied agenda-setting theory to study news coverage of corruption in Nigeria. They conducted a content analysis of four (4)

newspapers over eight months (May to December 2010) scrutinising two hundred and sixty (260) articles, coded by four broad categories of corruption: financial corruption, political corruption, legislative corruption, and administrative corruption. The researchers discovered that press reports of financial corruption were the highest in number, followed closely by political corruption, with legislative and administrative malpractice in distant third and fourth places. Moreover, they found, much like Ciboh (2010), that low prominence was accorded corruption stories in terms of positioning in the newspapers investigated. Accordingly, they inferred that the Nigerian media do not assign official corruption the level of coverage required to sufficiently sensitise the public and enable unfavourable popular opinion against it.

Similarly, Edmund and Wilson (2018), employing agenda-setting theory, investigated six months of newspaper coverage of anti-corruption campaigns by the President Buhari-led government in 2016. For their analysis, they worked with three specific categories relating to corruption: Indictment/Prosecution, Recovery, and Arrests. They discovered that stories on “Indictment/Prosecution” were the most reported aspects of corruption, followed by reports on “Arrests”, and finally “Recovery”. This led them to argue that the media report news they perceive as satisfying the interests of their audiences, because stories on indictment and arrests tend to excite readers and are often sensationalised. Additionally, they found, like Ciboh (2010), and Iwokwagh and Batta (2011), that most of the coverage on anti-corruption was presented in news format and located on the inside pages of the newspapers. Further, and consistent with Ciboh (2010), their research indicated that there was a lack of initiative on the part of journalists to conduct investigations on malpractice, and news reports on corruption

failed to provide rich, contextual details and so were devoid of sufficient depth in their presentation.

Yusha'u (2010a) adapting Hallin and Mancini's (2004) media system theory to the Nigerian context, studied the influence of regionalism on the press' depiction of corruption stories based on portrayals in two newspapers, *Daily Trust* and *Punch*. *Daily Trust* is aligned to the country's north and *Punch* to the south. He discovered that reports of political corruption were given substantial coverage regardless of the regional orientation of the publications, but differences existed when the news reports were analysed in terms of their depictions. Each "national" paper's presentation was consequent on the regional affiliation of the politician involved, and inclined to benignity when the political actor had ethnic origins in the same region as the newspaper. Also, clientelism had a significant impact on news on political corruption. Yusha'u also found that while journalists appreciated their function as watchdogs, they were hampered in executing that role owing to inadequate training, poor remunerations, dismal working conditions, and the editorial bias of their news organisations. Journalists interviewed for the study acknowledged that corruption within their ranks impeded vigorous reporting of news. His other findings were similar to those of Ciboh (2010) and Edmund and Wilson (2018), that most stories were on the inside pages, and there was an excessive dependence on press statements by reporters.

Abubakre's (2017) research on political corruption examined online editorials from five newspapers, *The Nation, Punch, The Guardian, Daily Sun,* and *Daily Trust* published on Nigeria's Democracy Day on May 29, 2016. The date marked the occasion of

former President Muhammadu Buhari's one year anniversary since taking office, following his promise, during political campaigns in the preceding election year, to tackle corruption in the country. Employing framing theory, she sought to understand the influence of ethnicity and political ownership on the production of corruption news in the five editorials examined. Three of the five newspapers have obvious political affiliations. *The Nation* is owned by Nigeria's current president, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a politician with the All Progressives Congress (APC). *Daily Sun* is owned by Orji Uzor Kalu, a sitting senator. *The Guardian* was founded by Alex Ibru, who had served in the military administration of General Sani Abacha as Minister of Internal Affairs. *Daily Trust* and *Punch* do not have any clearly observable political affiliations but have clear ethnic orientations, as *Daily Trust* is northern and *Punch* is southern.

Her textual analysis of the editorials revealed the presence of two frames, Uncompromising frame and Witch-hunt frame. The Uncompromising frame, emphasising former President Muhammadu Buhari's non-negotiable stance against corruption was evident in the editorial by *Daily Trust*, which has the same ethnic orientation as the former president, and *The Nation, whose* owner, Nigeria's current president Bola Ahmed Tinubu, belongs to the same party as the president. However, those editorials from *The Guardian, Punch* and *Daily Sun* played up the fight against corruption as a witch-hunt that targeted members of the opposition parties. These newspapers were not affiliated to the same ethnic group nor political party as Buhari. Abubakre (2017) cites the long history of Nigerian newspapers as being ethnically and/or politically affiliated as continuing to influence the portrayal of news on corruption. Her findings are consistent with Yusha'u's (2010a) research on the

influence that ethnicity has on the depiction of news on corruption by newspapers in the country.

Akaeze's (2023) research, like Abubakre's (2017), also focused on understanding the influence of media ownership on the coverage of politics. He examined the language and style of news reports, editorials and opinion columns in three publications, *The Nation, Leadership* and *The News (*now defunct)*.* All the journals have politicians as either owners, as in the case of *The Nation* and *Leadership,* or partial owners as was the case for *The News.* Furthermore, all the publications are affiliated to the All Progressives Congress (APC) party. As already stated, current President Bola Ahmed Tinubu owns *The Nation*, and was a partial owner of *The News*, while *Leadership* was founded by the late Sam Nda-Isaiah, who was also a member of the APC, and contested in the primaries of the political party to run as Nigeria's president.

Specifically, his research covered nine months, July 2014 to March 2015, leading to the 2015 Nigerian presidential elections. He observed that the headlines of stories in these publications appear to be crafted to deliberately highlight the failures of the opposition party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which was the governing party at the time, led by President Goodluck Jonathan. Overall, Akaeze's (2023) findings revealed "the extent certain media houses, with links to politicians, showed partisanship ahead of the 2015 elections, and by so doing became a propaganda tool for the politicians and the party they represent" (p.155). His findings corroborate those of Abubakre (2017) on the use of news publications as platforms to further the political interests of their owners. As seen in both studies, Akaeze's (2023) in the run up to 2015 elections, and Abubakre's (2017) in the post-election year, 2016, the use of

publications as platforms to further the political interests of their owners is consistent across the election and non-election year. This is consistent with the positions of several scholars' that news organisations be seen primarily as business concerns that are typically deployed firstly, for the advantage of their owners (Hampton, 2010; Schudson, 2003; Graber 2003). So, it is rational for such owners to use their publications in support of their preferred political parties.

Suleiman (2017) focused his investigation on front-page news on corruption across four Nigerian newspapers, over twelve years, beginning from Nigeria's current democracy in 1999. Coding for corruption scandals, follow-up stories on corruption, and unsubstantiated reports on corruption, he found that there was a high frequency of stories on corruption. He also observed that almost half of the stories scrutinised were of corruption scandals and offered some details, with the balance of the articles examined comprising follow-up articles and unsubstantiated reports. However, he learnt that of the many front-page revelations, only a tiny fraction resulted from proactive investigative journalism. In the main, commissions of enquiry, anti-corruption agencies and parliamentary investigations, thus politicians, political appointees and institutions, were the privileged sources relied on by journalists. Suleiman (2017) further discovered that the passage of Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) in 2011 had no consequence for investigative journalism as there appeared to be no increase in the coverage of corruption thereafter. Based on his research, Suleiman's (2017) holds that Nigerian journalists have only an academic understanding of investigative journalism with little evidence of actual practice. His findings dovetail with the research of Mancini et al. (2017) on the limited influence of press freedom on the

reporting of political corruption. They similarly advance Ciboh's (2010) position on journalists' dependence upon state actors for news on corruption.

These studies focusing explicitly on political corruption in Nigeria in the single country context are of substantial importance to this research. Such literature is pertinent because they have mapped out the terrain of what has already been researched, and where further study may be useful. However, as already indicated, some of the studies, such as those by Komolafe, Nkereuwem and Kalu-Amah's (2019) and Adisa et al. (2018), show somewhat predictable findings because of their attentiveness to the periods either before, during or closely following elections. This is because political campaigns, and the pronouncements of election outcomes, are as argued by scholars usually characterised by a surfeit of media reporting of accusations and counteraccusations of political corruption by competing political candidates (Tumber and Waisbord, 2004; Palau and Davesa, 2013; Mukhongo, 2010; McNair, 2009). The same argument can hold for Edmund and Wilson's (2018) research examining media coverage of anti-corruption campaigns that focused on arrests and prosecutions at the beginning of Muhammadu Buhari's second year as president. These studies prompt the question of what could be uncovered when the press is not prodded by an election season, or the arrest and prosecution of political elites.

Yusha'u's (2010a) study, although revealing the dichotomous coverage of corruption by the press, further establishes the persistence of long-held polarities between the media in the north and in the south of the country. These differences, as shall be seen in the chapter on Political Corruption and Media Development in Nigeria, were identified decades earlier by Ziegler and Asante (1992), and Bourgault (1995). The

positions of these scholars suggest that a lack of unanimity by the media, due to sectionalism, may be hampering the collective understanding of issues, such as political corruption, that are of national significance. However, these authors had theorised that the shared hardships by citizens could minimise the existing regional differences in the portrayal of issues by the media. Accordingly, a decade after Yusha'u's findings, this study presents the opportunity to re-examine the hypothesis of Ziegler and Asante's, that the existing regional differences in the media could be minimised by shared economic and social problems (p.80). The hypothesis is supported by the findings from Palau and Davesa's (2013) research on Spain that showed that a dire economy enables uniformity of public opinion on political corruption.

The assumption has some relevance for this research in the context that Nigeria has suffered a succession of economic crises in the last thirteen years. The first, caused by the global financial crises of 2007-2008. The second being the 2016 recession, prompted by falling oil prices, and more recently, the economic crisis triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic (Ozili, 2020). These economic downturns have impoverished the body politic regardless of regional orientations. So, a decade after Yusha'u's (2010a) findings, has the Nigerian press evolved beyond parochial regionalism in their reporting on corruption? Considering the time lapse, are there any noteworthy variations, however slight, in the way corruption is reported as Olugboji (2020) found in the portrayal of Africa in the British press? Furthermore, these studies raise the question: are there any variations in findings uncovered by these Nigeria-focused research—large number of stories on the inside pages; lack of investigation; ethnicity

and ownership as limiting the portrayal of news on corruption—when the election year is sharply contrasted with the routine year?

2.6.3 Sub-national research on media and political corruption

In their sub-national study on media coverage of corruption across nine economic sectors in Nigeria, Fadairo, Fadairo, and Aminu (2014), evaluated media coverage by *The Guardian, Nigerian Tribune,* and *The Nation*. Their investigation covered half a decade (2006-2010), scrutinising nine hundred and thirteen (913) articles. They discovered that misappropriation in politics and governance was the most reported news, followed by corruption in the service industry (telecommunications and banking), then malpractice in sports. They also found that corruption in the energy sector was the least reported subject. Their research showed that stories on maladministration grew in number over the years examined, leading them to conclude that the media are efficient in their investigation and reporting of corruption. Some of their findings support certain aspects of the results found by Edmund and Wilson (2018), Iwokwagh and Batta (2011), and Ciboh (2010). For example, that most corruption stories are situated on the inside pages, are frequently presented in direct news format, and lack contextualisation and depth for sufficient understanding by readers.

Also looking to establish the agenda-setting function of the media, Ayodeji-Falade and Osunkunle (2020), examined news coverage of corruption in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. They analysed coverage from four national newspapers over a year (July 2018-June 2019) and attributed the large number of stories criticising corruption in the

sector to the significance of the industry for the country's economy. But like most other studies, their findings showed that many of the reports were in the form of factual news reporting, with very few articles in the style of features or editorials that could have provided depth and context. However, they observed that news on misappropriation received high levels of prominence, as almost half of the stories were on the front and back pages.

Nonetheless, the prominence was vitiated by the typical length of stories on the subject, which were mostly a quarter page long, further suggesting a lack of investigative reporting and depth. Only sixty-eight (68) of all the stories analysed (534 articles in all), occupied a full page. Regardless of the foregoing, they concluded that media coverage of corruption in Nigeria's energy industry proved the effectiveness of the media in playing its watchdog role in the society. Their findings, indicating substantial media coverage of corruption, is somewhat at odds with Fadairo, Fadairo, and Aminu (2014), who had observed that corruption in the energy sector was the least reported subject in the media.

But one possible reason for the discrepancy between the findings from Ayodeji-Falade and Osunkunle (2020) and those of Fadairo, Fadairo, and Aminu's (2014), could be that the latter conducted a comparative investigation of nine sectors while the former's focus was on only one sector. In some respects, the discrepancy shows how single case studies that conduct an in-depth study of a research subject can uncover insights which may be lost or overlooked in comparative studies (Gerring, 2004). Another probable rationale for the disagreement is the eight-year gap between the media reports examined in both studies which could indicate that levels of media reporting of

corruption may have increased in recent times. Nevertheless, the sub-national research on corruption highlight the impact of malpractice on the different sectors of Nigeria's economy. However, these studies are conspicuously differentiated from the focus of this thesis because of the narrow specificity of their scope. Such precision may serve to limit an appreciation of the broader narratives of political corruption which this focused study may unearth.

Furthermore, Ayodeji-Falade and Osunkunle's (2020) research is the most recent work examined in the sub-national category of the studies reviewed. As already discussed, their research points to higher numbers in the media portrayals of corruption, both in the quantity of reports and the prominence given to such stories, albeit in the niche oil and gas industry. As Komolafe and his colleagues showed in their research focusing on Nigeria's 2019 elections, the increased quantity in the stories and prominence accorded corruption stories are replicated in the broader country context of press coverage of political corruption in an election season. But does such coverage extend beyond the election year?

Pierce (2016b) has argued that recency plays a role in evaluating political corruption. He states that the discourse of corruption is often most intense when reviewed in the light of current political dispensations, and not so much when assessing past administrations. Accordingly, the passage of time may blur recollections of misappropriation, and this is one of the reasons past governments of Nigeria are considered less corrupt, and even viewed with some fondness. Moreover, the current high levels of insecurity, poverty, unemployment, failing infrastructure, poor quality education and healthcare delivery (Agbiboa, 2012, 2013; Hope Sr., 2017;

Pierce, 2016b; Oxfam, 2021), provide new dimensions of malpractice that necessitate the investigation of media construction of political corruption in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Yet again, of the many studies on Nigeria examined here, only the works of Olugboji (2020), Adisa et al. (2018), and Abubakre (2017), applied framing theory to guide their research. As shall be shown in the subsequent section, framing has certain distinct characteristics that make it suitable for scrutinising media reporting of political corruption. Of note, and especially as pertains to political corruption which is generally viewed as a problem, is framing theory's bias for defining a problem, identifying the causes, making an evaluation, and suggesting solutions for effectively handling it. Thus, the main contributions of this study will be in the theoretical framework applied in conducting the investigation, the recentness of the study, and the context of drawing a comparison between an election year (2019) and a routine year (2020). Both years have been selected based on convenience as this study began in the final months of 2020, with Nigeria then having held its general elections in 2019. Thus, 2019 was the election year and 2020 the routine year.

2.7 Theoretical framework

There is an array of theories related to mass communication research. Neuman and Guggenheim (2011) for instance, provide a list of twenty-nine theories under six broad categorisations of persuasion theories, active audience theories, social context theories, societal and media theories, interpretive effects theories and new media theories. Scholars exploring the development of mass communication theories for research, typically begin with the magic bullet theory, otherwise referred to as the

hypodermic needle concept. Propounded by Harold Lasswell (Neuman and Guggenheim, 2011), the theory gained prominence in the 1930s and 1940s, and assumed that mass media messages had a huge impact or “powerful effects” on people as an undifferentiated mass who responded in much the same way to communication (McQuail, 1977; Neuman and Guggenheim, 2011).

From here (magic bullet theory/powerful impact or effects), communication theories evolved between the 1940s and 1960s to contradict earlier notions of media potency, illustrating instead, the limited effects of the media, and the influence of various factors working along with the media to determine audience behaviours, attitudes, beliefs and opinions. Or, as McQuail (1977) put it, while research has not totally dismissed the impact of the media on audiences, it has “established the primacy of other social facts and showed the power of the media to be located within the existing structures of social relationships and systems of culture and belief” (p.10). Fortifying this position on the influence of different factors, Simonson (2012) writes that Paul Lazarsfeld’s two-step flow theory evidencing a combination of opinion leaders, personal preferences and beliefs, and selectivity in media information exemplifies the limited effects model as articulated in *The People’s Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign.*

Still, the notion of limited effects of the media was supplanted by the resurgence of the idea that the media had significant effects on audiences (Blumler, 2015; Neuman and Guggenheim, 2011; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). The resurgence coincided with the increase in the use of television, and the significant dependence of politicians and

the public on television and newspapers, for information on politics (McQuail, 1977; Rogers, 2004; Blumler, 2015).

In his own phasing of the development of mass communication theories, Scheufele (1999) delineates four stages. The first, second and third phases, correspond more or less with the preceding tiers sketched out above. Thus, the first stage began “from the turn of the 20th century to the late 1930s” (p.105) with a period of significant effects principally influenced by propaganda of the First World War. The second stage, ending in the later years of the 1960s, saw a reversal of such significant effects to minimal effects, with personal influence emphasised as the reason for attitudinal changes. The third phase, starting in the 1970s, re-established strong effects with a shift from changes in attitude to “cognitive effects of mass media” (p.105).

Scheufele’s (1999) discussion on the fourth stage, suggests that it commenced in the 1980s, having a combination of limited and strong media effects. This stage is premised on social constructivism with the media having substantial impact through actively constructing our social reality, while at the same time, these effects are reduced by the way recipients of media messages process the information they receive. Thus, the fourth stage is a combination of mass media constructed messages, individual experiences, interpersonal and social interactions, and selective use of the media, as tools to validate audiences’ perceptions. However, Blumler (2015) has argued that recently, in the light of “present day conditions of communication abundance” (p.427) there appears to be a return to the era of minimal effects. The era

is characterised by a multiplicity of media channels, audiences wielding greater power in deciding the content of messages and the choice of media channels.

With specific regard to political communication, communication theories are considerably fewer in number. Blumler (2015) identifies three theories, namely, agenda-setting, priming and framing, as the foundational theories of political communication and posits that they enable an understanding of the traditional ways "journalism has organized, interpreted, and shaped portrayals of politics" (p.428). Neuman and Guggenheim (2011) conceive that these theories go beyond proving the impact of the media in terms of learning and behavioural change, to understanding the way information is processed by recipients of media messages. Although related, these theories are distinct and conceived to "have deeply shaped collective understanding of how individuals perceive and respond to their political and social worlds" (Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke, 2016, p.1). Their efficacy, in simple terms, is in the ability of political actors, citizens, and particularly journalists to highlight certain issues and problems that go on to receive the "attention or resources from the public or policy makers" in a democracy (Blumler, 2015, p.428). Beginning with agenda-setting, these three theories are examined below.

2.7.1 Agenda-setting theory

In plain terms, agenda-setting theory examines how the topics prioritised by the media, become the same topics that are considered most important to the media-consuming public. It rests on the premise that the media by emphasising certain issues, people and events frequently and prominently, lead people to assign relevance to those same

issues, people and events (Coleman et al, 2009; Shaw, 1979). The theory derives from research initially conducted by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, published in their *The Agenda Setting Function of the Mass Media*. They examined "how undecided voters in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, used the media in the 1968 presidential election" (Coleman et al, 2009, p.147) leading them to argue that there was a high degree of correlation between the salience given to issues by the media, and those considered by voters to be the most important issues in the election. McCombs and Shaw further confirmed the theory in two subsequent research, "a panel study conducted in Charlotte, North Carolina during the 1972 presidential election" (Coleman et al, 2009, p.148) and a series of interviews conducted on the 1976 elections where they matched results from these interviews with content analyses from the media. The theory has intellectual foundations in Walter Lippman's argument that the media define the way we see the world (Coleman et al, 2009).

Following years of research interest on agenda-setting, scholars have come to delineate the theory as sufficiently established on two levels (Coleman et al, 2009) with a third level considered as relatively new and still emerging (Guo, Vu, and McCombs, 2012). First-level agenda-setting, also called object or basic agenda-setting (Coleman et al, 2009; Guo, Vu, and McCombs, 2012), is dependent on the quantity of coverage given certain issues by the media, causing the transfer of salience or emphasis of these issues from the media to the public. Second-level agenda-setting, otherwise referred to as attribute agenda-setting, which some scholars refer to as framing (Coleman et al, 2009; Guo, Vu, and McCombs, 2012) underscores the attributes or descriptions of the issues, events and people that are the subject of the news, "and the tone of those attributes" (Coleman et al, 2009, p. 149), whether

positive, negative or neutral. Like in the first-level, second-level agenda-setting rests on the proven concept that how the media portrays these attributes is crucial to how the public perceives these characteristics. It is important to state however, that there is some contestation of the relationship between second-level agenda-setting and framing (discussed later). Third-level agenda-setting, otherwise called network agenda setting (NAS) model, postulates that when the media associates or pairs certain objects and/or attributes together, and do this frequently and prominently, those same associations or interrelationships become salient in the public agenda (Guo, Vu, and McCombs, 2012; Vu, Guo, and McCombs, 2014). Thus, at its core, it presupposes that the salience of relatedness of objects or attributes as constructed by the media, are transferred in corresponding measure to the public (Guo, Vu, and McCombs, 2012; Vu, Guo, and McCombs, 2014).

2.7.2 Priming theory

Much like agenda-setting, priming theory appears to confirm the premise of Walter Lippman's argument that the media are influential in the way the public sees the world. Lee (2010) suggests that priming is a consequence of agenda-setting. Intellectually, priming is rooted in the psychological foundations of prominence being an important trigger of previously stored information (Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke, 2016). This piece of now activated information is then applied to interpreting or enabling our understanding, and evaluation of current issues (Iyengar, Peters and Kinder, 1982; Marquis, 2007; Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke, 2016).

As a theory, priming was put forward by Iyengar, Peters and Kinder, in their work *Experimental Demonstration of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs* (1982). The three researchers, beginning in November 1980, carried out two broad experiments where they "manipulated the attention that network news programs devoted to national problems" (Iyengar, Peters and Kinder, 1982, p.849) in news broadcasts shown to residents of New Haven, Connecticut. Their manipulations involved varying the prominence given to eight problems in the news—defence, inflation, energy, drug addiction, corruption, pollution, unemployment and civil rights. The dominance of these issues in participants' discussions, correlated with the prominence accorded these same issues in the news.

The evidence led Iyengar, Peters and Kinder to further establish the validity of agenda-setting theory. Moreover, they also found that levels of political knowledge and involvement are major factors influencing the impact of agenda-setting on the public. Put differently, people who are keenly involved in politics and have prior knowledge of the political issues, referred to as "counterarguers" (p.76) are not as influenced by the media's agenda as those with low levels of political orientation. Additionally, and more pertinent to priming theory, they found that the transfer of salience from the media agenda to the public agenda, was critical in making evaluations about public officials and governments. In other words, politicians' are judged based on their handling of issues given prominence by the media.

Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, and Carpentier (2002) cite Krosnick and Kinder's (1990) study as fortifying the research by Iyengar, Peters and Kinder, to

validate priming as a theory of communication research. Krosnick and Kinder (1990), using data comprising the results of interviews and surveys, had successfully demonstrated that media coverage of the Iran-Contra affair, involving the secretive sale of arms to Iran and use of the proceeds to support the Contras, a rebel group in Nicaragua, influenced the public's evaluation President Ronald Reagan. Their research thus showed that "media coverage of political events can prime people's thoughts and judgments" (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, and Carpentier, 2002, p.100). However, Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke (2016) state that at least four conditions are necessary for priming effects to occur. The first, recency, suggests that the access to information primed is dependent on its proximity to the occurrence of salience promoted by the media. In other words, the tendency for the mind to access information used in making an evaluation is stronger if the salient information referred to, has only recently occurred. Time lag between supply of prominent information and using this insight to make a judgment is therefore consequential to priming effects. To illustrate this point further, Iyengar, Peters and Kinder found that priming effects "survive at substantial levels for at least twenty-four hours" (p.855) after exposure to the broadcast. This implies that there is a brevity to the nature of the effects. But as they have argued, priming is continuous as news broadcast is typically a regular, if not an ongoing process.

The second factor is regularity or frequency of exposure to the salient information. Or simply, the level of repetition. Here, higher levels of repeated exposure to news broadcast lead to easier and stronger accessibility of the values primed for making a judgment or an evaluation. However, Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke (2016) include the caveat that "the exposure to a prime (that is salient information/news) must be sufficiently recent and sufficiently frequent (but not overly so.)" (p.6). The third feature

necessary for priming is described as applicability. In layman's terms, there must be a relationship between the information/news supplied, and the attribute for which an evaluation is to be made. So, for instance, news on a failing economy may enable an evaluation of a president's performance, but would not have as much an impact on the assessment of the president's integrity due to lack of clear relationship or applicability. Simply put, a failing economy is not characteristically associated with a lack of integrity.

The fourth factor is subjective relevance (Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke, 2016). This is distinct from applicability because, beyond the obvious relatedness between the prime and object of evaluation, priming effects require that people can make subjective, value-dependent relationships between the prime and the "given target stimulus" (p.6). Otherwise, they would be unable to make an evaluation. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that beyond these factors, there are a number of other considerations that may be required for priming effects to take place, including political attitudes and discussions, cognitive styles, and as already discussed above, knowledge of politics, attention to news, and involvement in politics (Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke, 2016; Valenzuela, 2009).

Notwithstanding the foregoing, Lenz (2009) has disputed the efficacy of priming theory. He argues that evaluations of politicians, prompted by the media salience of certain issues that scholars attribute to "priming effects" should be more appropriately considered "learning effects". In other words, judgements of political candidates are not triggered by previous exposure to issues in the news. Rather, changes in the opinions of the electorate are simply caused by the presentation of (new) information

on the political party or candidate's position about an issue. He cites four experiments: the issue of European integration in the British election of 1997; the subject of social security in the United States' presidential election of 2000; the case of public works for employment in the 1976 presidential election; and the issue of defence spending in deciding the victory of President Reagan over President Jimmy Carter in the 1980 presidential election. By testing for participants' knowledge of these issues prior to, and after voting, he established that issue salience by the media is subordinated to "informational content of messages" (p.835) in decision-making by the voting public.

Yet, by Lenz's own admission, the lines of delineation between priming effects, and what he terms learning effects, are at best blurry (p.822-823). He also admits that the research on priming theory and effects are reasonably extensive to be adequately contradicted by his own limited work (p.822). Arguing from the perspective of political science, he appears overly concerned with the position that priming effects tends to allocate to the media some inordinate power over the electorate in deciding election outcomes, and this "reflects poorly on democracy" (p.823). He thus prefers that decisions by voters be seen as the outcomes from learning provided through political campaigns and news media coverage, as this would enhance representative government. Nevertheless, his argument suggests that priming as a theory of communications research, like all other theories, would benefit from regular experimentation and broad interdisciplinary acceptance, to ensure its long-term validity.

2.7.3 Framing theory

Generally, scholars suggest that framing has interdisciplinary origins in psychology and sociology (Pan and Kosicki, 1993; Reese, 2001; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; Van Gorp, 2007; Borah, 2011; Vliegenthart, 2012; Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015). Ardèvol-Abreu (2015) for instance describes framing theory as having developed from anthropologist Gregory Bateson's study of cognitive psychology, where an individual's knowledge determined an understanding of events and issues. The theory then expanded to have sociological orientations through the work of sociologist Erving Goffman. Verhoeven (1985) conceives that Goffman through his numerous works, including *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), *Relations in Public Life* (1971), but more distinctly in *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (1974), illustrated that frames are used to define our social reality.

Goffman saw frames as culturally shared and agreed meanings for interpreting occurrences in the world. These frames are "primary" (Goffman, 1974, p.21) or more aptly, subconscious, in the sense that people deploy them to understand happenings in the world without giving much thought to them. Thus, primary frameworks are the basis for coming to terms with occurrences in our lives. Goffman delineated two types of primary frameworks—natural and social. Natural frameworks referred to natural, unguided happenings, where man plays no active role "from start to finish" (Goffman, 1974, p.22). The social frameworks, conversely, has man as a central organising or influential figure. Vliegenthart and van Zoonen (2011) in discussing Goffman's social frameworks assign them as the basis for meaning, allocating priority "to certain actors, issues, or events, and suggest appropriate behaviour" (p.103). These social frameworks provide a backdrop for apprehending events that have been created by

the “controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human being” (p.22). Goffman emphasised that “motive and intent are involved” (p.22) in these social frameworks. Put differently, social frameworks are deliberately manufactured by man.

It is within these social frameworks that journalists operate as constructors of social reality, determining which aspects of information are worth including, then emphasising or de-emphasising these pieces of information, in their representations to the public. For Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) however, while Goffman laid the sociological premise for framing, the psychological foundations for the concept originated from the experimental work of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (p.18). These psychologists demonstrated that varying presentations of similar scenarios led people to make different choices. Nonetheless, the point worth stressing is the psychological and sociological underpinnings of framing as a method of learning, individually and collectively, about society.

There are numerous definitions of framing (Entman, 1993; Gamson, 1989; de Vreese 2005; Reese, 2001; Kitzinger, 2007;Borah, 2011; Vliegenthart, 2012; Brüggemann, 2014; Moy, Tewksbury, and Rinke, 2016; D’Angelo and Shaw, 2018). But perhaps one of the most cited is Entman’s (1993) definition, where framing is the selection of certain aspects of reality and emphasising these aspects in communication messages “to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p.52). Also, Reese (2001) denotes framing as schematics, “socially shared and persistent over time” (p.11) for organising the way communication is conveyed to make meaning of social realities within a specified

culture. It involves how various parties, sources, and communicators, deploy visual and verbal symbols that are understandable within a culture, to make sense of developments in the world.

Still, framing has been simply defined as “placing information in a unique context so that certain elements of the issue get a greater allocation of an individual's cognitive resources” (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, p.57) with one major consequence being that these elements influence the person’s decision-making. It is worth pointing out that despite the seeming disparity in the various definitions of framing, scholars suggest that the commonality among them is the focus on the *how* rather than the *what,* in the presentation of information, and the use of *culture* as a shorthand for easy communication and comprehension of such information (Kitzinger, 2007; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). In effect, framing enables the quick identification of “why an issue matters, who might be responsible, and what should be done” (Nisbet and Mooney, 2007, p.56).

Framing exists in different locations in the communication process. The most obvious of these are the communicator or source of information, the discourse, the receiver or audience, and the culture (Entman,1993; de Vreese, 2005). It is activated when the communicator makes a purposeful selection of facts adapted to his belief system and the media routine guiding his choices (Entman,1993). Likewise, it is evidenced in the text by the inclusion or exclusion of some words, phrases, visuals, and information sources. Audiences deploy pre-conceived frames to understand and draw certain conclusions from the communicator’s message, while culture provides the large-scale inventory of commonly used frames to guide the thinking of people in a society

(Entman, 1993). Indeed, “the most fundamental source of frames is the *culture* and the set of *social norms”* (Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke, 2016, p.8) that guide the exchange between the communicator and the audience.

2.7.4 Framing in news

Regarding media messages, framing is utilised when journalists highlight certain aspects of a discourse about an issue in news reporting, thereby underscoring the importance of these aspects. The salience or emphasis placed through words, symbols, metaphors, stereotypes, and catchphrases, bearing certain connotations and steeped in culture, influences the recipients’ assessment of the issue, and consequently their evaluations and actions. In discussing the importance of salience for framing, Entman (1993) observes that receivers’ responses are significantly influenced by the nature of information that is included or excluded from the communication presented to them. He argues that “this is why exclusion of interpretations by frames is as significant to outcomes as inclusion” (1993, p.54). Pan and Kosicki (1993) also underscore intentionality in the media construction of news in writing that “choices of words and their organization into news stories are not trivial matters. They hold great power in setting the context for debate…and providing the basic tools to discuss the issues at hand” (p.70).

Accordingly, scholars situate journalists and media organisations as among the most important actors to determine a news frame (de Vreese, 2014; Carragee and Roefs, 2004; Brüggemann, 2014). Brüggemann (2014) and de Vreese (2014) have argued that while frame advocates (also news sources) may send out messages to influence the news frames, it is the journalists that actively interpret and decide how to use such

messages in the news stories. Accordingly, “news frames are frames that play a transformative role vis-à-vis frames sponsored by (political) elites. They take as their starting point journalistic discretion and the autonomy of journalists” (de Vreese, 2014, p.137). Certain frames may support the positions of some interests, and simultaneously work against other interests, either overtly or covertly. Nonetheless, journalists’ ability to define a news frame is subject to a complex set of interacting factors that include frame advocates’ cultural and economic resources, knowledge and use of journalistic practices, and political power (Ryan, Carragee, and Meinhofer, 2001; Carragee and Roefs, 2004). Given these considerations, the contest by different actors to frame the news often favour elites who have the resources, position, and capacity to understand and use journalistic practices (Carragee and Roefs, 2004).

Gamson views journalists and more generally, quoted sources of information, as “sponsors of frames” (Gamson, 1989, p.158) with motives that may be conscious and unconscious. His position is consistent with Moy, Tewksbury, and Rinke (2016) who stress that “the news does not write itself” (p.7) and the journalist is an active creator of news stories. Media reports are therefore products of many competing variables. These competing variables include editorial policies, news values, and the interaction that involves journalists, elites, and the wider society which become manifest in news reports (Gamson, 1989; de Vreese, 2005). Taken together, “cultural and social norms, organizational pressures and constraints, and frame advocates” (Moy, Tewksbury, and Rinke, 2016, p.8) are the most influential factors in the development of news frames.

When these news frames interface with audiences' prior cognition and predisposition, they affect how issues and events are interpreted and evaluated, leading to changes in attitude and behaviour on the individual level, and "may contribute to shaping social level processes such as political socialization, decision making, and collective action" (de Vreese, 2014, p.141) on the societal level. Finally, it is important to state that "every news story has a theme" (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, p.58). The theme equates to the cardinal emphasis or overriding meaning of the news, linking the various elements of the story, ranging through actors, quotes, description, and general information. Themes are different from the topic of the news which is simply the headline. Themes, Pan and Kosicki (1993) argue, are frames, and thus restrict the consideration of the news recipients to the perspective being advanced in the news story.

2.7.2 Types of news frames

Scholars classify news frames into two broad types: issue-specific and generic frames (Entman, Matthes and Pellicano, 2009; Vliegenthart, 2012; de Vreese, 2005). Issue-specific frames apply to definite issues or events, typically within a specified time. These frames enable an elaborate examination of the issue in focus, but can be viewed as subjective, and discouraging of wider comparisons and generalisations (Vliegenthart, 2012; de Vreese, 2005). Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) work on the framing of nuclear power in the United States' is widely referenced by scholars as exemplifying issue-specific frames. Their research covered three eras of media coverage of nuclear power: 1945-1960, 1970-1979, and 1979-1986, and identified frames of *progress, energy independence, soft paths, public accountability, not-cost effective, runaway* and *devil's bargain* as specifically related to the news on nuclear power. Nisbet and Mooney (2007) also identify some issue-specific frames associated

with particular topics. For example, frames of *"scientific burden"* and "*economic uncertainty*" related to news on climate change, and those of "*social progress", "economic competitiveness*" and "*playing God*" regarding news on embryonic stem cell research (Nisbet and Mooney, 2007, p.56).

Conversely, generic frames, otherwise called journalistic news frames because of their wide application in the news, cut across a variety of contexts, allow for comparisons, and the development of a theory regarding the subject being analysed (Vliegenthart, 2012; Entman, Matthes, and Pellicano, 2009; de Vreese, 2005, 2014). One of the frequently used generic frames is Iyengar's (1991, 1996) episodic and thematic frames. Episodic frames portray political matters by using individual examples, typically in anecdotal fashion. These frames do not provide broader contextualisation in the form of backgrounds or trends for situating the issues. They therefore lead audiences to arrive at judgements and conclusions, based on the specific circumstances of the single individuals or groups presented in the news. Thematic news frames, on the other hand, provide some context for comprehending political issues. Such context could be in the form of the political, economic, social, or historical background, requiring some degree of analysis which demand subject-area expertise from reporters who write or broadcast the news. Iyengar (1991, 1996) holds that when thematic frames are used to portray information, the public's evaluation about the causes and treatments of political issues will assign more responsibility to political elites. In reality however, due to conditions relating to the news environment, including the competition for space/time, news values of objectivity and balance, and editorial choices, episodic frames have customarily been prioritised over thematic frames. This

has resulted in the protection of “elected officials from policy failures or controversies and thus, strengthen their legitimacy” (Iyengar, 1996, p.62).

Another widely used set of generic frames are those of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). These scholars used a series of simple “yes” or “no” questions, to develop five news frames: attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, human interest and morality. The attribution of responsibility frame presents issues in the news by assigning responsibility for its resolution or cause to either an individual, a group or the government. For this frame, they asked for instance, if the news article suggested that the government or a group or individual had some level of responsibility for the problem, and “does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue?” among other explicit questions. The conflict frame plays up disagreement between institutions, groups or individuals. One of the questions posed to determine the presence of the frame was, “Does the article reflect disagreement between parties/individuals/groups?” (p. 98). The economic consequences frame “reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country” (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p.96). An indication of the presence of this frame was the mention of financial loss or gain. For the human interest frame, emotional aspects are emphasised in the presentation of issues. This could be done by focusing on the personal attributes and circumstances of those involved. Here again, one question to ascertain the presence of the frame was: “Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?” (p.96). Lastly, the morality frame applies religious or moral insights to discuss an issue, and here, they asked if the news contained any moral or religious tenets.

Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study investigated the Dutch media's coverage of political issues including integration, immigration, corruption, and drugs, between May 1 and June 20, 1997. This was the period leading up to and following shortly after political meetings held in Amsterdam on 16 and 17 June, 1997, attended by heads of governments of the different European Union countries, including Tony Blair, Helmut Kohl and Jacques Chirac, to conclude monetary agreements on the European Union. "This event presented an opportunity to study how the national news media covered this major event and the key European issues addressed by the heads of state" (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p.97). They examined almost three thousand stories from three newspapers, and over one thousand five hundred news stories from three television outlets. Their findings revealed that the quality newspapers and serious television outlets used the attribution of responsibility frame the most.

Frequency in the use of the attribution of responsibility frame was followed by the use of the conflict frame. However, when it came to the economic consequences frame, while it was the third most utilised frame for the quality newspapers, there was no clear difference between the serious and sensationalist television outlets in the use of the frame. The human interest frame was the most deployed news frame by the sensationalist television outlets and newspapers. For the morality frame, "there was very little evidence of this frame in any of the Dutch national news outlets, although there was a slight trend for television news to use this frame more often than the press" (p.104)

It is important to highlight that the findings from Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study contradict those of Iyengar's (1991, 1996). Based on Iyengar's study, episodic frames in the news derived from blaming individuals for problems in society. Inversely, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) found that despite the predominance of episodic frames, blame for the problems within Dutch society were attributed to the government. Accordingly, they argued that although "news in many countries may be episodic, the way in which responsibility is framed in the news is influenced by the political culture and social context in which the news is produced" (p.106).

Aside from the aforementioned generic frames, de Vreese (2014) also identifies four commonly used news frames for political issues. These are the episodic and human-interest frames; conflict and competitive frames; economic consequences frames; and strategy and game frames. The episodic and human-interest frames, like Iyengar's episodic frames (1991, 1996) use individual examples and personification to simplify weighty issues and events. These frames often elicit emotional responses with little value for learning about issues and making well-informed judgements. Conflict and competitive framing tend to highlight disagreements and competition between persons, groups, and ideological positions. de Vreese (2014) has argued that this particular framing has high commercial value for news organisations because it is considered as showing the requisite balance demanded of news. For this reason, it is often deployed by journalists in their reporting of politics. The economic consequences frame "reports an event, problem or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically for entities such as groups, organizations or countries" (de Vreese, 2014, p. 145) and, in general, affects people's expectations about the economy. The strategy frame refers to news that centres on political candidates and parties. It is constructed

as a series of deft manoeuvrings to gain political advantage. Finally, the game frame, for its part, presents news on politics as a sport, emphasising winners and losers in elections, approval ratings, and opinion polls.

2.7.6 Inductive and deductive approaches to analysing news frames

Scholars researching news frames have pointed to two main approaches for analysing frames: the inductive approach and the deductive approach (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; de Vreese, 2005; Van Gorp, 2010). The inductive approach explores news frames without any pre-determined indicators and is open to discovering a wide range of frames usually based on “very loosely defined preconceptions of these frames” (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p.94). This approach is labour intensive, typically focuses on a small set of samples, and open to various interpretations of the news frames, making it difficult to replicate the frames. The deductive approach on the other hand, uses pre-defined indicators of news frames to examine the presence or otherwise of frames in news content. “This approach can be easily replicated, can cope with large samples, and is not as labour intensive” (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p.94-95). Also, applying the deductive approach for research, based on a consistent set of clear measurable indicators, accommodates the variations in news that may result from differences in time and countries where the same issues, for instance, political corruption, are examined. Furthermore, as Van Gorp (2010) points out, the deductive approach is useful in “limiting, or even eliminating, subjectivity from the framing analysis” (p.92).

Consequently, scholars like de Vreese (2005) have warned against the use of the inductive approach because of its failure to have pre-determined points of reference,

openness to excessive bias, and the difficulty for replication as expected of any valid empirical exercise. He advocates the deductive method, pointing to scholars like Tankard (2001) as having identified pre-defined and concise framing mechanisms such as headlines, subheadings, photographs, source selection, pull quotes, and concluding paragraphs, for the investigation of framing in news reports. Tankard (2001) has argued for the use of these "focal points for identifying framing" (p.101) and suggests that the deductive approach ensures a certain level of objectivity in research because it is methodical and verifiable. Such an empirical approach provides a sound foundation for building a theory on framing (Tankard, 2001, p.104).

Nevertheless, some scholars have argued for a combination of the inductive and deductive approach in analysing frames because this is accommodating of different cultural contexts (Van Gorp, 2010; D'Angelo, 2017; Brüggemann and D'Angelo, 2018). In the inductive-deductive approach, the peculiar framing devices, that is metaphors, catchphrases, symbols, visuals, actors, etc. relevant to a specific culture are first inductively examined and ascertained as present in an initial, small sample of news frames on the subject of investigation (Van Gorp, 2010; D'Angelo, 2017; Brüggemann and D'Angelo, 2018). Thereafter, in the deductive phase, a strict objective procedure measuring the relationship between these devices in the frames is "followed to take subjectivity out of the identification and to attain acceptable levels of reliability" (Van Gorp, 2010, p.103).

Park (2012) applied framing theory to the study of political corruption in the *Chicago Tribune*. He scrutinised a sample of three hundred articles in a decade's coverage (July 1, 2001, to June 31, 2011). Park deployed Iyengar's (1991, 1996) approach for

framing political issues into generic divisions of either thematic or episodic categorisations. He found, among others, that episodic frames surpassed thematic framing of corruption stories by 62 per cent to 38 per cent. Prosecutorial, court and police sources were the often-quoted sources of news. Experts on corruption cases were scarcely interviewed. He concluded that dramatisation of the stories would likely lead the public to downplay the impact of political corruption, consider it to be insignificant, and confuse people's judgement in assigning responsibility for addressing political malpractice.

Berti (2019) also used framing theory in his comparative investigation of news reporting on political corruption in New Zealand and Italy. He examined one corruption case study per country: the Field Scandal of 2006 in New Zealand and the Expo Scandal of 2014 in Italy. Berti (2019) analysed a corpus of 134 articles from five Italian newspapers and 86 articles in three New Zealand newspapers, focusing on periods coinciding with maximum press coverage for each scandal. He identified issue-specific frames of "Systemic Corruption" in the Italian press, and "Corruption as an Individual Crime" in the New Zealand press. For the "Systemic Corruption" frame, assigning blame to individuals for political malpractice was rare, as evidenced in the anonymity of suspects in news articles. Although the newspapers judged graft in public office as negative, they attributed political corruption to a corrupt political system that was reflective of Italy's wider society. Accordingly, the Italian press recommended emergency measures and the fatalistic acceptance of the status quo as possible ways of dealing with political corruption.

This recommendation was in sharp contrast to the New Zealand press framing of “Corruption as an Individual Crime” where Taito Phillip Field was often pointedly identified as responsible for the crime. The New Zealand press viewed political corruption as morally reprehensible but construed the case as an isolated incident, to be dealt with by legal action and the expulsion of Taito Field from his political party. Berti (2019) suggests that the differences in these frames showed how the press in the respective countries address political malpractice. He goes on to argue that such differences may somewhat explain the long-standing ranking of New Zealand as one of the least corrupt countries in the world, and Italy’s consistent rating as the most corrupt country in Europe by Transparency International.

Here, it is possible to argue that news frames, both issue-specific and generic, regardless of the method of analysis, thus whether inductively or deductively generated, are open to subjectivity without the application of clear measurable indicators to determine the presence of such frames. This is rational, as all researchers carry, consciously or unconsciously, a certain level of bias that vitiates the objective interpretation of data, thus adversely impacting the research. Accordingly, the study of news frames is advanced by the articulation of mutually exclusive variables that distinguish one frame from the other as attempted by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) in their research. Unlike generic frames, however, issue-specific frames, admit to such bias upfront.

Thus, framing is not without its limitations. Among these, as stated above and with other research theories, is the bias of the researcher which opens the study sample to multiple interpretations. Although such bias may be contained to some degree through

the pre-selection of factors for evaluating articles, it nonetheless still exists (de Vreese, 2005; Van Gorp, 2010). Also, Matthes (2009), from his examination of a corpus of 131 studies applying framing theory from 1990 to 2005, observed that Entman's (1993) definition of framing, despite its frequent citing, is rarely applied to the letter by researchers in analysing news frames. Another inadequacy of framing is the lack of precise knowledge on the level of its impact on influencing public opinion (de Vreese, 2005; Vliegenthart, 2012).

2.7.7 Framing versus Agenda-Setting

Framing has been characterised as second-level agenda setting, otherwise called attribute agenda-setting, because of the salience accorded features of an issue or event in news reports (Guo, Vu, and McCombs, 2012; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; Maher, 2007). But as Borah (2011) discovered in her study of a decade's published literature on framing research, very few studies have actually used framing and agenda-setting interchangeably. Thus, there are distinct differences between framing and agenda-setting (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; Maher, 2007).

Firstly, and perhaps distinctive to framing and conspicuously absent from agenda-setting is the fundamental role of culture in understanding the emergence of frames in news reporting (Van Gorp, 2007; Moy, Tewksbury, and Rinke, 2016). Van Gorp (2007) has discussed the extensive function of culture as it relates to framing in news content developed by journalists, and the comprehension of such content by audiences. He suggests that "frames are tied in with shared cultural phenomena" (p.65) to advocate a certain interpretation of the news and are the outcomes of a broader range of factors,

for example, “journalistic routines and extra-media pressures” (p.70) more so than in the case of agenda-setting.

Secondly, framing presupposes that the direction of emphasis in the portrayal of an issue influences audiences’ understanding, but agenda-setting largely locates such emphasis in terms of frequency of coverage and prominence of position (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). An additional distinction lies in the exposure to messages. Where basic exposure, over time, is sufficient to establish agenda-setting effects, framing requires that audiences pay substantial attention to news reports. In other words, active engagement with media reports is required for framing to be understood (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007).

Maher (2007) in his discourse on the differences between agenda-setting and framing notes that framing as conceptualised in the former as attribute-agenda setting is severely limited, and restricted to the attribution given to a subject in the manner of an adjective-to-noun relationship (p.85). Whereas in the latter, it is much broader, running through the entire story, with the journalist as the originator, and perhaps the most active agent. This view is supported by Moy, Tewksbury, and Rinke (2016) who say that “to a much greater extent than is the case with agenda-setting, framing is about the content of the news” (p.7). So, whereas agenda-setting is concerned with *what to think about*, framing theory’s pre-occupation is *how to think about it* (Maher, 2007, p.5). Van Gorp (2007) appears to bolster this position in observing that frames “provide the public not only with information on the event itself but also on how it should be interpreted” (p.65). Related to the preceding argument, scholars such as Maher (2007) and Blumler (2015) view agenda-setting as not concerned with how problems arise,

whereas framing is, as seen in journalists' focus on "the how" and "the why" in their presentations of the reasons behind a problem and suggestions of likely solutions.

Furthermore, Maher (2007) observes that "the most basic rift between agenda setting and framing is how researchers conceptualize the source of frames" (p.88). Many of the studies where framing is conceived as agenda-setting emphasise the centrality of researcher in allocating the frames. This is contrary to the research on framing theory which sees frames as emanating from the journalist's writing and/or editorial decisions (Maher, 2007). The importance of journalists as the main sources of frames has also been advanced by Brüggemann (2014) in his argument that it is reporters who delineate what is at issue in the news.

As seen in the literature review, a good number of studies on media reporting of political corruption adopted agenda-setting theory for their research. Many of these studies sought to explore frequency of coverage and prominence as a basis to establish the media's agenda-setting function. This research is differentiated from such enquiries. It ventures beyond frequency and prominence of media reporting of corruption as an indicator of the priority assigned to the subject, to the in-depth characterisation of media portrayals of political corruption. Thus, the critical distinction of framing theory for this research is in examining the emphasis in news content on political corruption as advocated by journalists who use the agency of a shared culture, but are constrained by factors including news values and the orientation of their media organisations. These emphases, promoted by journalists through the news they produce, have implications for the understanding of political corruption, and by

extension, socio-political developments in a country (Berti, 2019), in this case, Nigeria.

Moreover, and speaking broadly, the other related theories of political communication, specifically agenda-setting and priming, have tended to explore the effect of news coverage on audiences' perception and assessment of issues and politicians. As Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke (2016) have argued, "priming is often understood as closely related to agenda-setting…seen as an outgrowth of the media effects process initiated by agenda-setting" (p.5). Framing, on the other hand, is first and primarily concerned with the factors that shape journalists' presentation of the news in addressing a problem. Much more than both agenda-setting and priming, it explores "how information is presented or framed" (Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar, 2016, p.12) and the mechanisms behind such presentation. It is these distinctions that make framing theory preferred for this study that seeks to understand the content presented as news on political corruption, and the factors that have shaped such presentation.

It is against this backdrop that this research adopts framing theory, described by Blumler (2015) as "more elaborate and potent than other theories" (p.428) related to political communication, for investigating the news content of media reporting on political corruption in Nigeria. Finally, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1a) How are the five frames: attribution of responsibility, human interest, conflict, economic consequences and morality (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; de Vreese and Lecheler, 2012; Gronemeyer and Porath, 2017; Brüggemann and D'Angelo, 2018) used across the newspapers examined in this study?

1b) How do the frames vary when the election year is compared to the routine year?

2a) How are sources used by the different newspapers?

2b) How are sources used when the election year is compared to the routine year?

3a) What are the key considerations influencing news reporting on political corruption?

3b) How do these considerations vary when the election year is compared to the routine year?

It attempts to answer these questions by using a mixed method approach employing quantitative content analysis and qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews with journalists.

Assumption: Given scholars position on the media's capacity to provide information that influences decision-making, particularly in the election year, this study tests the assumption that newspapers will provide more independent, quality reporting on political corruption in the election year than in the non-election year.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the role of the media as the fourth estate and the constraints that appear to limit the proper functioning of the press in that capacity. Related to the examination of the media as the fourth estate, the subject of press freedom and newspapers as a source for acquiring political information, was also discussed. Importantly, the chapter has provided a literature review of the research on the media and political corruption, placing due emphasis on those works that have focused on Nigeria. Furthermore, it has examined framing theory and, considering the frequent use of agenda-setting for the research on media and political corruption in

Nigeria, juxtaposed framing and agenda-setting theories, to establish that there are several clear differences between them. Framing is not agenda-setting. Equally important, this chapter has specified the full set of research questions guiding its investigation on the media reporting on political corruption when the election year is compared to the routine year. The next chapter discusses Nigeria and, crucially, traces its history of political corruption and the development of its media.

Chapter 3

Nigeria, Political Corruption and Media Development

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses Nigeria, the focus of the study. It begins by presenting an overview of the country, discussing the most salient aspects of its history as relevant to the study. It also briefly examines democracy in the context of the Fourth Republic and its elections, before going on to discuss political corruption, tracing its origins and development as well as its scale and impact. Thereafter, the chapter explores the development of the country's media and chronicles its origins and development to the present-day. Following this, the nexus between the media and political corruption is presented as a brief sub-section.

3.2 Nigeria: An overview

Located in West Africa, Nigeria covers an area of over 922,000 square kilometres (more than 356,000 square miles) (Phillips, 2004; United Nations, 2016; Africa Development Bank, 2023). The country sits between the Republic of Benin to its west, Niger to its north and northwest, and Chad to its northeast. It shares its eastern border with Cameroun, and to its south is the Gulf of Guinea leading to the Atlantic Ocean (Adedire and Olanrewaju 2021). With a population of over 200 million people, it has the largest African population in the world and about half of West Africa's total population (World Bank, 2021a, 2023).

It is considered as “one of the most complex states in the modern world and perhaps one of the most complicated countries to govern” (Fashagba, 2021, p.1). This is due partly to its ethnically and religiously diverse population which makes loyalty to the nation-state difficult (Diamond, 1983; Pierce, 2016a, 2016b; Fashagba, 2021). Ethnically, it consists of more than two hundred and fifty distinct entities that speak over a thousand dialects (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 2020a; Kifordu, 2011; Alapiki, 2005; Fashagba, 2021), but as Fashagba (2021) observes, “the total number of ethnic groups in Nigeria has remained a subject of speculation” (p.1). Of these many different ethnicities which include Isoko, Jukun, Ijaw, Tiv, Anaang, Igala, Efik, Urhobo, and Kanuri, three dominate (Diamond, 1983; Pierce, 2016a, 2016b; Fashagba, 2021). These are the Yoruba in the south-west, Igbo in the south-east, and the Hausa-Fulani in the north. Nigerians adhere primarily to two major religions, Islam and Christianity, although there are many who follow a number of traditional religious practices (Babasola, 2017; Alapiki, 2005).

Scholars are quick to point out that the ethnic and religious diversity of the country has its origins in the British colonial government’s desire for convenience in governing the vast territory under its command (Fashagba, 2021; Pierce, 2016a; Afikpo, 1991). This administrative expedience overrode any respectful considerations for maintaining the distinctions in culture, language, ethnicity, and religion of the diverse people that make up Nigeria today. Thus, the union of Nigeria’s various peoples under one nation was done by fiat, and “the interest of the British rather than that of the colony… superseded any other consideration in the amalgamation of the disparate groups” (Fashagba, 2021, p.2). This “coerced” amalgamation of its diverse peoples has been the source of many ethno-religious tensions in the country’s post-independent history (Diamond,

1983; Obi, 2004; Alapiki, 2005; Fashagba, 2021). Perhaps the best example of such tensions was the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) (also Nigeria-Biafra War; Biafran War) between principally the southern Igbo who sought to secede and the northern Hausa-Fulani, who aimed to preserve the unity of the Nigerian state (Pierce, 2016a; Herskovits, 1979; Adedire and Olanrewaju 2021; Gambari, 1975). More recent examples are the current agitations by the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the south-east, and the various communal and religious conflicts which occur sporadically in different parts of the country (Obi, 2004).

Economically, deriving from the British colonialists' focus on the export of raw materials to feed their industries, cash crops and mineral resources were the major revenue earners for Nigeria at independence on 1st October 1960 (Akinkunmi, 2017; Pierce, 2016a; Gambari, 1975). These included crops like cocoa, palm kernel, groundnut, rubber, cotton and minerals such as tin, coal, gold, and petroleum (Ajiola, 2021; Akinkunmi, 2017; Pierce, 2016a; Gambari, 1975). Ajiola (2021) states that agriculture, which employed a majority of the population at the time, contributed seventy per cent of Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP) in the 1960s. However, the sector "collapsed drastically in the wake of the oil boom" (p.53) in the 1970s. Thus, since the discovery of oil in 1956, and beginning in the 1970s with the sharp increase in global oil prices, the country has relied heavily on earnings from oil exploration and export (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023; Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, 2023). Earnings from its oil and gas production currently contributes over eighty-five per cent (85%) to the government's revenues (Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, 2023). Accordingly, based on its current gross

domestic product (GDP) of $390 billion, Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa (World Bank, 2023; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023; International Monetary Fund, 2023).

Politically, Nigeria has had a chequered history. At independence, Nigeria, following after the British, was a parliamentary democracy, described by scholars as the First Republic (1960-1966) which lasted about six years (Pierce, 2016a; Jackson, 1972; Diamond, 1983). This system was replaced on 1st October 1979 by the presidential model of government replicating the design of the United States of America (Diamond, 1990b; Alapiki, 2005; Pierce, 2016a; Fashagba, 2021). However, the country has experienced, beginning with the first coup in 1966, a series of military coups and regime changes (Pierce, 2016a; Jackson, 1972). The succession of military regimes had seen the military return the reins of government to civilian rule on two occasions, the Second Republic (1979-1983) and the very brief Third Republic (August 1993 to November 1993), before these civilian governments were again toppled by military coups. Additionally, during the years since its independence, but specifically between 1963 and 1996, its number of federating units has gradually increased and the Nigerian federation today, broadly divided, comprises thirty-six states and the capital, Abuja (Alapiki, 2005; Pierce, 2016a). (See Maps of Nigeria showing the constituent parts in 1960 and 2023 at end of chapter).

These thirty-six states are sub-divided into six geopolitical zones of north-central, north-east, north-west, south-east, south-south, and south-west, depending on their geographical location in the country, with each zone consisting of six states. Abuja however, is excluded from the zonal categorisation due to its location at the centre of the country, and operates as a semi-autonomous state that is administered by an

appointee of the president (Alapiki, 2005; Pierce, 2016a). One reason behind the expansion into more and more states was the attempt by different governments to assuage the persistent agitations by the various ethnicities competing for recognition of their distinctiveness. Scholars argue that such agitations were in fact to enable the various ethnicities to receive and administer a share of the country's wealth (Alapiki, 2005; Pierce, 2016a; Fashagba, 2021). Nonetheless, after nearly three successive decades of military regimes, Nigeria returned to democracy on May 29, 1999, regarded as its Fourth Republic (Pierce, 2016a).

3.3 "Illiberal democracy" and elections in Nigeria

However, it has been argued that it is perhaps more appropriate to refer to Nigeria as being under civilian rule, or perhaps even a partial democracy, or indeed an illiberal democracy (Plattner, 2020; Aka, 2003; Zakaria, 1997; Bisong and Ekanem, 2020; Lawal and Olukayode, 2012) because the country fails to meet all the essential criteria of being a true democracy. In the strict sense of the term, democracy refers to a system of government that is anchored on the rights and freedoms of citizens (Schmitter and Karl, 1991; Zakaria, 1997; Aka, 2003; Plattner, 2020). Rooted in the Greek expression for people power, Plattner (2020) stresses that democracy as used currently is a shorthand for liberal democracy that combines democracy (people power) with liberalism, derived from the Latin word for free. Democracy is thus the freedom of the people to determine how they are governed by setting limits to the powers of those elected to govern them through an established set of laws (Schmitter and Karl, 1991; Plattner, 2020). Among its essential features are "freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, and the press" (Plattner, 2020, p.7), adherence to the rule of law, checks and

balances, separation of powers, and representation gained through regular competitive elections (Warren, 2015; Zakaria, 1997). Put simply, democracy consists of three crucial, interrelated components (Hamada, Abdel-Salam and Elkilany, 2019). The first is the presence of institutions and the measures they offer citizens to determine their preferred policies and politicians. The second is the respect for established laws that limit the power of the privileged class, and the third is the "guarantee of civil liberties to all citizens in their daily lives" (Hamada, Abdel-Salam and Elkilany, 2019, p.310).

Based on the foregoing, Nigeria hardly qualifies to be called a democracy (Bisong and Ekanem, 2020; Lawal and Olukayode, 2012; Aka, 2003). Bisong and Ekanem (2020) view Nigeria as an authoritarian democracy. They cite a number of inconsistencies in Nigeria's idea of democracy, including the lack of adherence to the laws, absence of equality of all citizens, the weakness of the judiciary, and restrictions on freedom of speech and publication. Lawal and Olukayode (2012) also say "there seems to be no fundamental difference between the so-called democratic rule in Nigeria and the hitherto practiced military rule" (p.452). Indeed, there are numerous instances of disregard for the rule of law by the political elites, and their tendency to want to hold on to power, evident for example in the attempt by former President Olusegun Obasanjo to secure a third term (Lawal and Olukayode, 2012; Agbiboa, 2012, 2013; Posner and Young, 2007; Cockcroft, 2010).

For Aka (2003), Nigeria qualifies as an illiberal democracy because of its poor human rights record. He states that the country's disregard for human rights, including those

guaranteed by its own constitution like the “right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of expression and the press” (p.213) is similar to what obtained during the military era pre-dating the Fourth Republic. His position is consistent with Ogbondah (2011) who states that notwithstanding its constitutional guarantees, several political rallies during Nigeria’s current democracy have been disbanded, reminiscent of the suspension of political assemblies and rallies under General Sani Abacha. Thus, the country is not a democracy in the strict sense of equality of all citizens abiding by the rule of law, separation of powers, and respect for individual rights of free speech and assembly (Bisong and Ekanem, 2020; Lawal and Olukayode, 2012; Aka, 2003). Overall, the prevailing argument is that Nigeria, at best, qualifies as an illiberal democracy. This is essentially a form of democracy characterised primarily by regular elections, which may be free and fair, but is not guided by the separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary nor centred on the well-being of the country’s citizens (Plattner, 2020; Aka, 2003; Zakaria, 1997).

Nevertheless, as Diamond (2003) has asserted, “there is not now and has never been in the modern world of nation-states a perfect democracy” (p.38). Even the so-called liberal democracies of the West, including the United States and Great Britain, often considered the standard, suffer from flaws such as voter apathy and disengagement, as well as restricted access to political power that detract from their quality of democracy (Diamond, 2003). Thus, countries that hold regular elections which are more or less free and fair, are considered more liberal than those that do not (Diamond, 2003; Carbone and Cassani, 2016). Fortifying Diamond’s (2003) position, Carbone and Cassani (2016) point out that “elections are indicators of democratic progress” and, while full democracy “requires political developments that go well beyond

elections, no contemporary nation that does not go to the polls on a regular basis has ever been deemed democratic" (p.36).

Accordingly, they hold that elections in Nigeria meet the quality expected of a progressive democracy. This is because after the founding elections of 1999, elections have held regularly after the expiration of term limits, and have involved the transfer of power either between those in the same political party or to the opposition party. In the case of transfer of power between political elites in the same political party, then out-going President Olusegun Obasanjo had transferred power to in-coming President Umaru Yar'Adua in 2007, after the former had completed his tenure of eight years (Carbone and Cassani, 2016; Pierce, 2016a). Both Obasanjo and Yar'Adua had been members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the governing party at the time. Regarding the transfer of power to the opposition party, then President Goodluck Jonathan, of the PDP, upon losing the presidential elections in 2015, handed over the reins of government to Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) (Owen and Usman, 2015; Carbone and Cassani, 2016; Pierce, 2016a; Hamalai, Egwu, Omotola, 2017). Thus, "in March 2015, the long-standing dominance of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria came to a sudden and somewhat unexpected end" (Carbone and Cassani, 2016, p.40).

Although elections are typically contested by numerous political parties, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was the governing party until the 2015 elections (Owen and Usman, 2015; Carbone and Cassani, 2016; Pierce, 2016a; Hamalai, Egwu, Omotola, 2017) when it was roundly defeated by the opposition, All Progressives Congress

(APC) party. APC consisted of a coalition of several parties, notably the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), led by Bola Tinubu, the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) led by Muhammadu Buhari, the “leadership of the All Nigeria People’s Party, the governors in these parties, and other opposition interests” (Owen and Usman, 2015, p.458), including dissatisfied members of the PDP.

The APC has remained the governing party in Nigeria since 2015, winning the presidency, a majority of seats in the National Assembly, and most of the states in 2019 and most recently, 2023. The elections of 2023 are widely considered to be the most keenly contested polls. Unlike previous contests between the ruling party and one main opposition party, the 2023 election was a three-way contest. The key contenders were the governing APC on the one hand, with the PDP, and the Labour Party (LP) fielding serious contenders (International Crisis Group, 2023; Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room, 2023). Bola Tinubu was declared the winner of the presidential elections by the country’s Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with 36 percent of the vote. His main rivals, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar with the PDP, and Peter Obi, a former governor of Anambra State, who ran on the platform of the Labour Party, got 29 percent and 25 percent of the votes cast respectively (European Union Election Observer Mission, 2023). “Tinubu is the first candidate since 1999 when multi-party politics resumed in Nigeria, to secure the presidency with less than 50 per cent of the tally” (International Crisis Group, 2023). In the National Assembly, APC retained its dominance in both the Senate and the House of Representatives with 59 and 176 seats respectively (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2023; BBC, 2023). It also won in 16 states (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2023; BBC, 2023).

Altogether, since the Fourth Republic's founding elections in 1999, Nigeria has held its general elections every four years. Thus, there have been six such elections. These are the general elections of 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and most recently, 2023, for various political positions at the federal and state levels of government. At the federal level, "the powers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria…are shared among the three organs of government" (Lafenwa and Oluwalogbon, 2021, p.91). These are the executive represented by the President, and the bi-cameral legislature represented by 109 members of the Senate and 360 members of the House of Representatives, all of whom are elected into their positions. At the state level, the executive is the Governor, and the legislature is the House of Assembly, but it is not bi-cameral. However, like at the federal level, members of the state houses of assemblies are all elected.

Generally, however, Nigerian elections have been characterised as do-or-die affairs because their high levels of competitiveness often lead to violence in the bid to gain or maintain political power (Owen and Usman, 2015; Turnbull, 2021). One reason for the strong interest and participation by various parties, and indeed the employment of violence by political actors and their partisans, is "the immense power, resources, influence and perks constitutionally granted" (Owen and Usman, 2015, p.455) to successful politicians. Turnbull (2021) writes that "governors … have wide control over state budgets. Most infamously, they enjoy what is known as a "security vote," a budget item they spend with little transparency or accountability" (p.46). Likewise, Diamond (1991b, 1983) underscores this access to resources in observing that Nigerian politicians are "financed by access to state power" (1991, p.79) which they use primarily for extravagant consumption and maintaining political patronage. In effect,

political power is mostly sought for the purpose of political corruption (Turnbull, 2021; Owen and Usman, 2015; Guichaoua, 2009; Diamond, 1991b, 1983).

3.4 Political corruption in Nigeria

Political corruption as a contentious issue in the Nigerian nation-state, has a long history (Smith, 2007; Hope Sr., 2017; Diamond, 1991b; Pierce, 2006, 2016a, 2016b; Agbiboa, 2012, 2013). It has been widely researched, broadly discussed, and critically analysed by scholars, policymakers and analysts, journalists, corruption watchdog groups, multilateral and government institutions of various persuasions, and its citizens of different extractions (Smith, 2007; Pierce, 2006, 2016b; Ribadu, 2010; Okonjo-Iweala, 2018).

In his discourse on political malpractice in newly formed states, Leys (1965), often referencing Nigeria, attributes corruption to three main causes. The first is the weakness of loyalty to the state because the concept of a nation-state is new, and so it is imperfectly understood by the political elites. The second is the poor perception of state institutions by the people, and the third is that the advantages of being corrupt far outweigh the penalties for being found to be corrupt, particularly in circumstances of prevailing inequality and want. These result, respectively, in a fragile allegiance to the state, perversion of state institutions, and the disregard for state laws, all promoting a tendency for political corruption.

Leys (1965), writing in the era of rapid decolonisation in Africa adds that the essentiality of state for development in many young African nations is one of the chief reasons for the vigorous interest and study of corruption. Agbiboa (2012) describes

this essentiality of state, referenced by Leys (1965), as statism. He characterises statism as a model of development that required the concentration of power and resources in the hands of the governments in many post-colonial African states. The primary objective of such centralisation was the facilitation of rapid development. Statism was meant to ensure the maintenance of law and order, and equity through the efficient and transparent distribution of collective resources to all indigenous people (Agbiboa, 2012). It was intended to counter the European structures of resource exploitation and governance, put in place during colonialism that deliberately disadvantaged Africans while enriching the economies of the foreign dominating powers. According to Agbiboa (2012), several decades after the independence of African countries, statism has only succeeded in promoting the enrichment of the political class. In many respects, Leys' and Agbiboa's positions outlined above, hold true for Nigeria. The robust interest in Nigeria vis-à-vis political corruption identified earlier, is largely because commentators see state corruption as the reason for Nigeria's underdevelopment with adverse impact on its over two hundred million people (World Bank, 2021a, 2023).

The country is viewed as a classic paradox or in the apt words of the late media scholar Bourgault (1995), "Nigeria is a country of enormous contrasts" (p.139). It has an expansive landmass—over 922,000 square kilometres (Phillips, 2004; United Nations, 2016; Africa Development Bank, 2023) — with large swaths suitable for agrarian purposes (Odetola and Etumnu, 2013). However, it suffers food insecurity (World Bank, 2020). It is Africa's largest exporter of oil and gas resources (Guichaoua, 2009; Hope Sr., 2017) and has earned huge inflows of foreign exchange from commercial exploitation beginning from the 1970s (Amundsen, 2017; Pierce, 2016b). Yet, Nigeria

has widespread poverty with almost half its population said to be living on about a dollar per day (Guichaoua, 2009; World Bank, 2020, 2023). Nigeria's economy is Africa's largest (Orji et al., 2021; Terwase, Abdul-Talib and Zengeni, 2014; McKinsey & Company, 2014; World Bank, 2021b, 2023; International Monetary Fund, 2023) and yet, the country is rated as the second poorest in the world (World Bank, 2023). Relatedly, over ninety (90) percent of its population comprise mainly of youths and young adults, within the working age (Reed and Mberu, 2014; United Nations Population Fund, 2020). But at the same time, the country has maintained a persistently high unemployment rate as estimated by its National Bureau of Statistics (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Nigeria also experiences failing infrastructure, poor healthcare delivery, faltering education, and grossly deficient security (Hope Sr., 2017; Pierce, 2016b; Oxfam, 2021), among other inadequacies.

Beyond numerous external sources such as Transparency International (2020, 2021, 2023) that have over the years consistently referred to Nigeria as corrupt, Onyema et al. (2018) reference past and current politicians, and government functionaries, admitting to large-scale political malpractice. For journalism scholars, the high levels of political corruption in Nigeria's the Fourth Republic, that began over two decades ago, should be considered alarming because the country is arguably Africa's most thriving media environment (Olukoyun, 2004; Oso, 2013; Pierce, 2006). Thus, Nigeria contradicts the position of many media scholars (Schudson, 2008; McNair, 2009; Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009; Coronel, 2010; Camaj, 2013; Schauseil 2019) who write that the combination of democracy and a vibrant press, is antithetical to corruption.

McNair (2009) for instance, in discussing journalism and democracy holds that due to the demands of around-the-clock news feed, “political elites have never been held more to account, more closely scrutinized, in both their public roles and their private lives” (p.245). Schudson (2008) referring to the media’s role in a democracy similarly affirms that “the job of the media…is to make powerful people tremble” (p.24). Coronel’s (2010) assessment of the media’s role in addressing corruption in a nascent democracy is even more pertinent to this research. According to her, the press “in many new democracies now poke their noses into the areas of public life from which they had once been barred, exposing corruption and malfeasance in both high and low places” (p.116). Her perspective is fortified by Schauseil (2019) who reasons that despite lower circulation of newspapers in emerging African democracies, the print press is more impactful in combating graft because of its ability to reach the political actors capable of making important decisions.

For Schauseil (2019), the media’s reporting is the “most important source for public awareness and a paramount source of detection of corruption” (p.2). Exposure by the media poses a grave political risk to political elites and hampers misappropriation of public funds because negative publicity could lead to punishment in different forms, including loss of votes. While acknowledging the many challenges posed to the media in the bid to report corruption, including censorship and market pressures, Schauseil (2019) nevertheless observes that in many countries, the media is viewed as a more potent tool than anti-corruption legislation, in the fight against corruption. For the most part, these scholars premise their argument on the fact that the media, operating in an enabling milieu of a liberal government, can act as a competent check on corruption

through their reporting of excess by politicians (Schudson, 2008; McNair, 2009; Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009; Coronel, 2010; Camaj, 2013; Schauseil 2019).

3.5 Definition of political corruption

Although different scholars have offered various definitions of corruption, there appears to be a consensus that it entails the deployment of public office, and its accompanying authority for personal or private-related advantage (Johnston, 1996; Braibanti, 1962; Nye, 1967; Kurer, 2005).

Nye (1967) is widely referenced for his denotation of corruption as:

> …behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence. This includes such behavior as bribery (use of a reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of ascriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding uses) (p.419).

He acknowledges that although the definition is deliberately broad, and adheres primarily to Western standards, it enables him to discuss the costs and benefits of corruption. Nye (1967) discusses political malpractice as it pertains to economic development, national integration, and the capacity of government to function more efficiently, for example, through the funding of political parties that could deepen

democracies. So, for Nye, while corruption and development do not usually co-exist, malpractice could have a beneficial or detrimental impact on society, depending on its application. It is instructive that writing more than half a century ago, Nye, while extolling the value of corrupt proceeds in funding political parties in India and Mexico, singles out political corruption in Nigeria as being detrimental to its development.

Specifically, Nye (1967) identifies the misapplication of funds diverted from the cocoa marketing boards in south-west Nigeria as yielding no benefits for the political development of the Action Group (AG), the region's dominant political party at the time, nor for the country (p.421). Nye's (1967) position of political corruption having certain benefits, however, is contested by Warren (2015), who holds that "more recently, a strong consensus has emerged that political corruption is neither a benefit to democracy nor an insignificant irritant: it corrodes the norms, processes and mechanisms of democracy itself" (p.42). Johnston (1996) similarly accepts that political corruption is an "abuse, according to legal or social standards" (p.331) that distorts the established system by applying public resource or position for personal benefit.

For Amundsen (1999) the state plays a central role in political corruption, otherwise known as grand corruption. It is the perversion of the state-society relationship, where the state as represented by politicians, civil servants, or someone in authority, with powers to allocate scarce collective goods to non-state society (the public) intentionally misapplies such influence for personal gain. Similarly, Agbiboa (2012) emphasises the centrality of the state in discussing corruption, precisely as it relates

to Africa, because everything happens, explicitly or implicitly, as permitted by the government.

In distinguishing between political corruption and bureaucratic corruption, Amundsen (1999) clarifies that “political corruption involves political decision-makers” (p.3) at high levels of government, using their power and position to sustain and grow their wealth, status, and power. He differentiates the foregoing from bureaucratic or petty corruption which is “corruption in public administration, the implementation end of politics” (Amundsen 1999, p.3). Thus, political corruption is high-end, deliberate, involving the distortion of institutions, laws, and regulations for personal or personal-related interests.

There is, however, a basic nexus between political corruption and bureaucratic corruption in that the former is typically underpinned by the latter, although both are mutually reinforcing (Amundsen, 1999; Hope Sr., 2017). Furthermore, Amundsen (1999) holds that grand corruption, which could take various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, fraud, nepotism, extortion, and favouritism, is generally an aberration in democratic state structures because of institutionalised checks and balances. In agreement with Warren (2015), Amundsen (1999) sees corruption as inversely correlated with democracy. He postulates that levels of malpractice will decrease with the strengthening of democracy, its institutions, laws, and application of due process.

Nonetheless, Dobel (1978), drawing from political philosophers such as Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli and Rousseau, wrote of political corruption as the moral delinquency of “citizens to make disinterested moral commitments to actions, symbols

and institutions which benefit the common welfare" (p.960). Dobel believed that all political systems ranging from the worst totalitarianism to the best democracies were susceptible, and could be affected by corruption, simply by individuals abandoning their morals, in favour of avarice. For him, political corruption in a democratic setting is characterised mainly by selective enforcement of the law, with the privileged and well-placed in the society being unaffected. It is also identified by a lack of trust in political discourse that leads to the rejection of debate and reason in solving common problems. Furthermore, political corruption breeds an increase in violence and crime stemming from dissatisfaction with the ruling elite, and increases the desire to acquire power by any means necessary.

Stapenhurst (2000) views corruption "as the abuse of public power for personal gain or for the benefit of a group to which one owes allegiance" (p.1). It has its roots in a nation's socio-cultural history as well as its economic and political development. This position has also been advanced by both Smith (2007) and Pierce (2016a, 2016b) in their chronicling of the origins and growth of corruption in Nigeria. Stapenhurst (2000) argues that when a pattern of corruption is left unchecked, there is a tendency for corruption to grow in scale and become institutionalised, enabling a pervasive, even acceptable culture of illegality.

However, for the purpose of this research, and taking due account of the various foregoing definitions, political corruption is defined simply as the abuse of official authority for the benefit (direct or indirect) of the person wielding such authority. By extension, such benefits may be advantageous for persons or group(s) to which the said official is affiliated, rather than the purposed benefit of the body politic.

3.5.1 Origins of political corruption in Nigeria

Discourse on the roots of political corruption in Nigeria is fraught with many disputations and conflicting accounts. In the main, however, the various positions can be classified into two broadly divergent perspectives. Both perspectives, however, are situated within the context of pre-colonial African society. This seems logical considering that Nigeria as a country in its present geographical and political framework was officially initiated in the early 1900s (Akpan, 1978; Afigbo, 1991). The first body of arguments, advocated by some scholars, derive from a romantic view of Africa as either having negligible forms of political corruption or being devoid of it (Kouassi, 2016; Ezeanya, 2014; Osoba,1996; Mulinge and Lesetedi, 1998; Van den Bersselaar and Decker, 2011). Pre-colonial Africa, so also Nigeria, as argued by these scholars, operated as a society that was bound strictly by traditional mores and norms, undergirded by religion, and fiercely discouraging of political malpractice.

For scholars of this tradition, political corruption in Nigeria is a consequence of the imposition of colonial rule in Nigeria. Specifically, it resulted largely from applying Western monetary systems and taxation. Ezeanya (2014) for example, states that "colonialism introduced systemic corruption on a grand scale across much of sub-Saharan Africa" (p.182). This was done through the rejection of local mores and values, and their replacement with Western systems, practices, and institutions. One such instance was the substitution of the existing trade-by-barter with unfamiliar monetary systems of payment that introduced avenues for corruption. To buttress her position, Ezeanya mentions the 1929 Aba Women's Riot in eastern Nigeria as evidence of the indigenous people's revolt against an oppressive and corrupt tax

system that had been imposed by the British. She states that the police in colonial Africa were tools of suppression and tax collection. She also claims that they were used by foreign authorities to contain and quell anti-colonial revolts, and keep indigenous peoples in line, such that citizens “internalized the art of buying their way off unwarranted harassment” (p.189).

Her argument is bolstered by Mulinge and Lesetedi (1998) who take the view that the establishment of obscure systems and traditions, such as the monetary system and taxation in the colonies, provided fertile grounds for corruption to flourish in sub-Saharan Africa. They reason that tax collection was compulsory to ensure efficient administration of the territories. Accordingly, those Africans charged with the responsibility of collecting tax were pressured to generate as much income as possible by their colonial superintendents, with explicit permission to reserve a certain percentage as *de facto* kickbacks from the authorities.

With specific regard to the preceding arguments, the historical evidence on the extensive use of a currency system (Lovejoy, 1974; Chirikure, 2017; Pierce, 2006) and taxation (Lovejoy, 1974) in pre-colonial Nigeria is instructive. Lovejoy (1974) suggests that by the fifteenth century cowries were widely used as a medium of payment in West Africa, comprising the area now known as Nigeria. He writes that “the quantity of cowrie imports suggests that the impact on the monetary structure of West Africa…was considerable” (p.568). His position is corroborated by Pierce (2016a) whose writing on Nigeria, also based on historical records, indicate that cowries were used as money and taxed, before their replacement by the British sterling in colonial Nigeria beginning in the nineteenth century. The evidence debunks the views of

Ezeanya (2014), Van den Bersselaar and Decker (2011) and, Mulinge and Lesetedi (1998), that Africa lacked a monetary system and a form of efficient taxation prior to being colonised, with the introduction of such systems chiefly responsible for political corruption. It is thus plausible to assume that if the use of a “foreign” monetary currency and taxation contributed to political malpractice, then the use of cowries as currency for exchange and taxation in pre-colonial Nigeria, may have similarly been associated with corruption (Lovejoy, 1974; Chirikure, 2017; Pierce, 2006).

Yet, in contradiction to the argument that political corruption was a foreign concept, introduced by colonialism, several scholars have asserted that its origins are rooted in the pre-colonial Nigerian state (Smith, 2007; Igboin, 2016; Pierce, 2016a, 2016b). Smith (2007) sees political corruption in Nigeria as having its origins in the broader, indigenous, and long-established culture of gift-giving common throughout Africa. According to him, corruption evolved from the traditional patron-client system where exchanges and reciprocity between the elites and the common citizenry were based on mutual obligation and understanding. It was this tacit social contract between the elites and the commoners that put pressure on those in positions of authority to pursue further accumulation of wealth and power. This ancient custom, Smith argues, has developed into modern-day political corruption, with elite politicians and high-ranking government functionaries purposely utilising public resources for self-aggrandisement. To this end, political elites use corrupt proceeds to perpetuate themselves in positions of authority, ensuring their continued provision of access and favours to others in society.

Pierce (2006, 2016a, 2016b) strengthens Smith's position, by drawing examples from the operations of political institutions established in pre-colonial northern Nigeria. He describes, for instance, the pre-colonial tax administrative system as personalistic and arbitrary, burdened with oppressive behaviour, with negotiations usually accompanied by gift-giving. With the introduction in the early twentieth century of British indirect rule, which adopted the established indigenous administrative system for governance, these gifts became bribes to local officials. Such bribes were differentiated from presents given out of respect to those in authority. They were deliberately offered as a quid pro quo by indigenous people to ensure a reduced tax liability, because taxation had taken a more rigidified structure as the British sought a more reliable system of tax collection for efficient administration of the territories.

Consistent with Igboin (2016), Pierce (2016a, 2016b) cites slave raids, embezzlement of administrative funds, and the tyrannical behaviour of political elites as examples of political corruption in pre-colonial Nigeria. He argues that these were cited by Lord Lugard, the British colonial administrator, as justifications for invading and administering the territory later to be known as Nigeria (Pierce, 2016a, p.6). However, Pierce (2016b) notes that with the introduction of colonialism, corruption, previously seen as oppression in pre-colonial times, acquired a formal, reprobatory label for describing wrongdoing by political elites. Precisely, the label of corruption emerged when newly appointed/re-assigned local officials under the indirect rule structure of British administration, facing a lack of funds due to inadequate salaries, used their positions for achieving personal ends. Pierce (2016a, 2016b) provides several examples of political malpractice by local appointees of various ranks in the hierarchy of the British indirect-rule system but observes that the label of corruption was

selectively applied to these abuses of authority. Its discretionary application depended on political expediency that served to advance the efficient administration of Nigeria by the British.

Pierce's (2016a, 2016b) emphasis placed on Nigerians as corrupt figures in the indirect rule system is reinforced by Tignor (1993). Tignor derives his position from reports of investigatory commissions superintended by the British and his study of several confidential documents, official reports, and correspondence between British administrative officials in Nigeria and their counterparts in the United Kingdom. He states that the prevailing view among the British was that the upper echelons of the colonial administration occupied by the British were largely professional, efficient, and without corruption, but its lower levels, ran by Nigerians, applied a *modus operandi* of "corruption, bribery in the courts, arbitrary imprisonment, and forced labour" (p.178). These deleterious practices mirrored the existing tradition of the powerful oppressing the poor in the broader Nigerian society.

According to Tignor, the British, in the twilight years of colonialism, viewed local politicians such as Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo, involved in the nationalist agitation for independence from the British, as invariably self-serving. These Nigerians and the many other political elites involved in the quest for independence were principally interested in securing personal advantages from the political offices they occupied or would occupy. Like Pierce (2016b), Tignor provides various examples of political corruption masterminded by indigenous politicians. He submits, for instance, that a clear example of such corruption was the diversion of funds from the Eastern Regional Finance Corporation, a public entity, to the African

Continental Bank (ACB), under the guise of “investment”. The ACB was privately owned by Nnamdi Azikiwe, a prominent politician whose party, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), controlled the eastern region.

Nonetheless, in the context of arguments and historical evidence presented by Van den Bersselaar and Decker (2011), and Ogunyemi (2016), the characterisation of political malpractice as a lopsided affair, orchestrated solely by Nigerians, seems incomplete, if not intentionally inaccurate. Van den Bersselaar and Decker (2011) argue that the British were as corrupt as the Nigerians. They cite as one instance, the theft of food which caused a shortage of rations leading to the deaths of prisoners across southern Nigeria in the 1910s and 1920s, with British officials suspected of complicity. They also indicate that there were many other cases of thievery, especially in the concluding years of British rule, involving British officers suspected of embezzlement but typically pardoned for such abuses. Their findings are supported by Ogunyemi’s (2016) study that supplies as evidence, detailed financial records showing multiple situations of accounting fraud carried out by British officials in the last decade of colonial rule in Nigeria. Ogunyemi states that because these cases of misappropriation were not duly penalised as required by law, they effectively laid the premise for political corruption with impunity, post-independence.

The arguments of Van den Bersselaar and Decker (2011), and Ogunyemi (2016), are fortified by Scott (1969) in his exposition on corruption. Scott rationalises that colonised territories were considered by the “colonial office…as an investment in an exclusive franchise (and) expected to yield a good return” (p.315). Thus, there was the notion that these protectorates were to be operated as business franchises, by

persons described as “political entrepreneurs” (p.315, p.338), and expected to show a steady revenue, if not a profit, from their administrative activities. These political entrepreneurs, often unsure of the length of their tenure, resorted to different methods, including corrupt practices, to meet the pressing financial obligations that came with administering the domains under their command.

Based on these various accounts, it is probable that political corruption has its roots in pre-colonial Nigeria. It took various forms—embezzlement, bribery, extortion, oppressive behaviour—and was principally the abuse of political authority for personal aggrandisement. With the advent of colonialism, political corruption became the formal label for such abuse of public office. However, depending on the circumstances, and their furtherance of British administration of Nigeria, corruption was either intentionally overlooked or punished. Moreover, it is also plausible to assume that political corruption in Nigeria was perpetrated by both Nigerians and the British, either working individually or in partnership with each other.

3.5.2 Political corruption: Post-independence

Hope Sr. (2017) and Pierce (2016b) assert that post-independence, official corruption in Nigeria assumed an overt, bolder appearance. This was triggered, in part, by two main factors. The first was an expanding public administrative structure. The expansion was principally a strategy to quell the simmering agitations for ethnic independence which had provoked the Nigeria-Biafran Civil War (1967-1970) and required more politicians and administrators. The second factor was the boom in revenue that followed the discovery and lucrative export of oil and gas resources, which made previously inconceivably large sums of money available for

misappropriation. Hope Sr. (2017) further notes that political elites in the country's First Republic (1960-1966) were branded the "10 percenters" (p.126) for their penchant of demanding ten per cent of the value of awarded contracts. He states that it was the prevalence of corruption in the first democratically elected government that led to its overthrow in a coup led by Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu. Pierce (2016a) also submits that the increase in political actors, and the steady flow of revenue from oil and gas resources described above, not only increased the propensity for corruption, but changed substantially, the quantum of the state revenue diverted by politicians.

In general, scholars and commentators agree that all post-colonial Nigerian governments, military or democratic, could be characterised as corrupt. But Osoba (1996), Hope Sr. (2017), Pierce (2016a), and Agbiboa (2013) stress that corruption in public office became an established norm, widely accepted, and reached unprecedented heights during the General Ibrahim Babangida administration (1985-1993). During his regime, pardons were granted to formerly convicted politicians who had been found guilty of unmitigated graft. Moreover, assets of the state, previously seized from jailed corrupt political elites were, as Agbiboa (2013) observes, "returned to their owners" (p.282), the newly released ex-convicts. The Babangida administration restored some of these formerly convicted political actors to their old positions, or gave them new roles in government, or the wider civil service, or indeed, any of the numerous government agencies. In effect, the government turned a blind eye to not only their former, but also their continued misappropriation of state resources.

For his part and in reference to General Babangida, Diamond (1991b) states that “never before in Nigeria has the head of state been so widely suspected of extensive political involvement in corruption” (p.76). Likewise, Osoba (1996) comments that under General Babangida, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) became the Central Bank of the President (CBP). It printed the country’s currency, the naira, at the instance of the head of state rather than with regard for monetary policy stability.

Osoba holds that between 1985 when General Babangida assumed power and his departure in 1993, Nigeria’s money supply had increased ten-fold with ominous implications for inflation and currency devaluation. This resulted in the impoverishment of Nigerians, and a vastly reduced standard of living. Still, new heights of political corruption were attained when General Sani Abacha ousted the civilian government of Ernest Shonekan, the brief Third Republic (August 1993 to November 1993), installed by General Babangida when the latter reluctantly departed office (Agbiboa, 2012). Abacha is said to have kept incredulously large amounts of money, suspected to be the proceeds of corruption, in foreign bank accounts (Kreck, 2019; Agbiboa, 2012; Enweremadu, 2013).

Nevertheless, Nigeria’s return to democracy in 1999, the Fourth Republic, has not changed the adverse course of the nation in tackling corruption, and there are copious examples of profiteering by politicians (Agbiboa, 2013). It is suspected that President Olusegun Obasanjo who assumed power in 1999 at Nigeria’s current re-democratisation, attempting to extend his tenure beyond the allowable two-term limit, bribed certain parliamentarians in a bid to amend the constitution (Lawal and Olukayode, 2012; Agbiboa, 2012, 2013; Posner and Young, 2007; Cockcroft, 2010).

Also, several high-ranking officials in his government were found to have accumulated vast amounts of wealth during their time in office, among other examples of graft (Agbiboa, 2013). Additionally, President Goodluck Jonathan, who governed from 2010 to 2015, pardoned his former ally, an ex-governor “convicted of stealing millions of dollars during his time in office” (Agbiboa, 2013, p.290). Ironically, President Jonathan sacked Nigeria’s Central Bank Governor, Lamido Sanusi, for exposing misappropriation to the tune of about $20 billion, at the state oil parastatal (Kreck, 2019; Owen and Usman, 2015).

The presidency of Muhammadu Buhari, which began in 2015, has similarly been described as rife with misappropriation evidenced in unprincipled political appointees being either sacked without imprisonment or re-assigned to lucrative political slots in the government (Nwozor, at al. 2020; Paul and Ofuebe, 2020; Kreck, 2019; Ekpo, Chime and Enor, 2016). Nwozor et al. (2020) for instance, note the selective prosecution of political corruption cases involving those in the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) while instances of corruption implicating members of President Buhari’s All Progressives Congress (APC) party are ignored. They argue that this has led to a mass exodus of politicians from the PDP to the APC as a strategy to avoid investigation for political corruption by Buhari’s administration.

3.5.3 Scale and impact of political corruption

Scholars, analysts, and commentators, in their attempt to capture the scale of financial loss due to political corruption in Nigeria have advanced different figures (Agbiboa, 2012; Sowunmi, et al., 2010; Stober, 2019; Oxfam, 2021; Amundsen, 2012). The reason for various figures is numerous. Primarily though, it arises because facts about

the sums misappropriated are difficult to uncover. This is understandable, considering that corruption is typically a clandestine activity, involving many, often covert and conniving parties who are keen to remain anonymous and bound to understate or overstate the figures for a variety of subjective reasons. As Page (2018) puts it, “corruption in Nigeria is not always clear cut…rather it is interconnected” (p.1). Or, to paraphrase Scott (1969), corruption is often shrouded in secrecy, with blurry details.

Nonetheless, Stober (2019) cites Nigeria’s National Bureau of Statistics as calculating that some $4.6 billion has been lost to political corruption in a single year, from 2015-2016. This is approximately 40% of the 2016 budgetary allocations for education at the state and federal levels of government (Stober, 2019). Nuhu Ribadu, a former chairman of Nigeria’s anti-corruption body, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) also affirms that the country has lost billions of dollars to political corruption (Ribadu, 2010). He cites several cases involving elected political figures and government appointees, and the repatriation of their corrupt proceeds from European banks to Nigeria to argue that these officials regularly abuse the authority entrusted them. Specifically, he mentions the convictions of Joshua Dariye, a former governor of Plateau State; the late Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, a former governor of Bayelsa State; and Mustafa Balogun, also late, and a past Inspector General of Police, as notable cases of political corruption. Pierce (2016b) also briefly discusses the case of Mustafa Balogun, noting that he was accused of stealing ₦17.7 billion, equating to $130 million in 2005. According to Ribadu (2010), “many governors were treating the states they were supposed to serve as their personal fiefdoms…treating state budgets as their personal bank accounts, buying mansions and personal jets” (p.44) with harmful consequences for the citizenry.

Unsurprisingly, Nigeria's official corruption characteristically affects the most important areas of its human development— healthcare, education, security, and infrastructure, amongst others (Rønning, 2009; Akanle and Adesina, 2015). It undermines the nation-state, and negatively impacts on the quality of life for its over 200 million population (World Bank, 2021a). Page (2018) describes corruption as prevalent in all sectors of the economy. However, he states that it is prevalent in the country's most lucrative and consequently its most crucially impactful sectors— oil and gas, power generation, infrastructure, banking, and finance—and prevents Nigeria "from realizing its great human and economic potential" (p.2).

Buttressing this point with respect to widespread insecurity in Nigeria, Stober (2019) and Banini (2020) highlight several embezzlement cases involving government appointees as detrimental to the country's efforts to combat Islamic insurgency. They are fortified by Page's (2018) position that long years of unchecked corruption in Nigeria's security agencies and military institutions have rendered them incapable of tackling insurgencies by Boko Haram, a militant Islamic sect. The group came to global attention with the kidnap of over 270 Nigerian school girls in 2014 (Tasiu, 2016). It has, through regular incursions, skirmishes, and conflicts with the military, mainly in northeast Nigeria, caused the displacement of over two million Nigerians (Page, 2018).

Additionally, political malpractice has taken a similar toll on infrastructural development. Billions of dollars spent on power generation and supply, road and rail construction, and building of critical facilities like seaports and airports often take

extremely long to yield material benefit for citizens, hampering opportunities for economic growth and development (Agbiboa, 2012; Page, 2018). Agbiboa is incisive in stating that “despite (government) spending more than $2 billion in reconstructing roads and more than one trillion naira on the power sector” (2012, p.118) between 1999 and 2007, the country’s roads and power supply are still in dismal condition. Usman et al. (2015) also reason that some $20 billion spent on resuscitating the power sector is ineffective because contracts were awarded based on nepotism and cronyism, and not merit. Consequently, supposed strategy meetings on improving the nation’s power supply are in actuality, tea parties. Furthermore, misappropriation in the housing construction industry specifically, has had fatal human consequences because buildings, erected with second-rate materials, regularly collapse, killing dozens of people at a time (Page, 2018).

Still, political corruption appears to have had its most devastating impact on Nigeria’s social sectors. Onwujekwe et al. (2018) observe that malpractice, which influences the contracting process, has resulted in low-quality health facilities, the situation of hospitals in locations where they are least required, and the promotion of sub-standard drugs. Furthermore, it has also influenced the distribution of critical health infrastructures in a manner that primarily favours the rich and politically connected. To provide some perspective, research suggests that in some areas, there is one doctor serving some eighty thousand people, and this situation is aggravated in many of the rural areas of the country (Agbiboa, 2012, p.122). Relatedly, in the humanitarian sector, politicians and state agencies routinely divert funds from international donor agencies meant for relief efforts, and “waylay supplies meant for internally displaced persons (IDPs)” (Page, 2018, p.17).

Regarding education specifically, Okoroma (2006) has argued that the diversion of budgeted funds to private purposes has led to the stagnation of growth in the sector. He submits that a former supervising minister had once admitted to bribing some legislators to secure budgetary approval. This claim is fortified by Pierce (2006). Such acts, Okoroma posits, impede policy action at developing education with a ripple effect on broader national development objectives such as literacy and curriculum expansion. Page (2021) also states that illicit funds from political elites in Nigeria have been channelled to secondary schools and universities in the United Kingdom, where these political actors send their wards for education. He notes that when Nigerian political elites send their wards overseas, it detracts from their responsibility to fix Nigeria's ailing educational system. Additionally, government agencies such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), "overseen by political appointees and lacking in transparency" (Page, 2021, p.12) have mismanaged funds earmarked for providing international scholarship to promising Nigerian students, thus working to contradict the country's development efforts.

Yet another factor detrimentally impacting education is Nigeria's failing security apparatus that, as previously discussed, has been made deficient by corruption in the defence sector (Banini, 2020). Specifically, hundreds of teachers have been killed, while thousands of others have been displaced in the northeast due to frequent invasions by Boko Haram (Banini, 2020; United Nations Children's Fund, 2019; Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018). Schools are regularly targeted in the conflict, and frequently used for military purposes. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (2019), "during the most acute phases of the conflict, all schools in

northeastern states were closed from December 2013 to June 2015" sharply affecting literacy levels in the region.

In view of the foregoing, it can be argued that Nigeria's re-democratisation since 1999 has yielded little benefit for the country and its people in terms of addressing political corruption. Graft in public office has rather increased, and has led to higher levels of poverty, failing infrastructure, heightened insecurity, with the result that "quality of life has taken a plunge" (Akanle and Adesina, 2015, p. 422). Equally, in what Page (2020) describes as "the looting of Nigeria by its kleptocratic elites" (p.2), he lists presidency staff, governors, security personnel, and legislators as among the top property investors in Dubai's real estate market. He estimates that funds to the tune of over $400 million have been diverted from the public purse by these politically exposed persons (PEP) for such property investment. The quoted figure of $400 million, according to him, is about two-thirds of the Nigerian army's yearly budget and more than three times the funds allocated annually to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigeria's electoral commission. Page concludes that for Nigeria "to address its worsening poverty rate…(and) many other daunting socioeconomic, governance, and internal security challenges, it needs to curb outflows of cash being embezzled by some of its top office holders and public servants" (Page, 2020, p.6).

In conclusion, Leys (1965) determines that the consequences of political malpractice can be categorised as objective and subjective. The objective impact being the measurable effects of corruption on the democratic political development, the economy, and people of a state. To some extent, these have been detailed above. Conversely, the subjective consequences are the influence that the behaviour and

attitudes of corrupt political actors have on the general population in a country. In effect, the corruption of the political elites has negative connotations for citizens' attitude and ability to pursue honest work. This is more abstract and difficult to measure in concrete terms.

Leys argues that such states "will be apt to forfeit whatever benefits can be derived by the output of effort not solely motivated by the hope of personal gain" (p.229). Guichaoua (2009) takes a similar position in his description of Nigerians as disillusioned about the value of democracy, and increasingly despondent about the future. Leys' and Guichaoua's arguments are bolstered by Egharevba and Chiazor (2013) who allude to political corruption as causing distrust of the Nigerian state by the citizenry. They see this as the most damaging impact of political corruption and indicate that it breeds frustration and despondency.

3.6 Media development in Nigeria

Broadly speaking, the Nigerian media consists of traditional and digital media: newspapers, radio and television, as well as Internet-based media. Historically however, these different forms of the media have, unsurprisingly, different strands of development. Whereas the Internet-based media have more recent beginnings, the origins of the traditional media, can be traced back to pre-independence Nigeria.

3.6.1 The print media: Pre-independence to post-independence

The Nigerian media predates the Nigerian state (Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011). There appears to be a consensus among scholars that *Iwe Irohin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba* (The Newspaper for the Egbas and Yorubas) with circulation beginning in

1859, was the country's first newspaper (Omu, 1967; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Okafor, 2014; Akingbulu, 2010; Yusha'u, 2018). Scholars state that although it started as an organ for Christian proselytisation and education, the publication morphed, over time, into a tool for the dissemination of political information and advocacy. Thus, the media became "a major instrumental actor before the formation of political society and the state" (Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011, p.1). Moreover, it seems that the oppression of the indigenous people, beginning in colonial times, was a key factor in the politicisation of the Nigerian press (Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Yusha'u, 2018; Oboh, 2021). Accordingly, the establishment of several newspapers between 1880 and 1926 was in furtherance of the quest for self-determination by the elites. Some of these publications were the *Lagos Observer* (1882), *The Mirror* (1887), *The Eagle and Lagos Critic* (1883), *The Lagos Daily News* (1925) and *The Pioneer* (1914). Generally, the early Nigerian newspapers were privately owned, and their ideological postures were determined by their owners (Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Yusha'u, 2018; Oboh, 2021).

However, Oton (1958) theorises that it is possible that other publications may have preceded the *Iwe Irohin*. Firstly, missionaries and merchants who arrived at the Nigerian coast in the south, circa 1553, may have published newspapers to keep their fellow clergy and traders in the area updated of happenings. Secondly, in the decades leading up to 1900, Islam had taken root in northern Nigeria and brought with it a tradition of literacy in Arabic, and thus the dissemination of information to the public, laying the foundation for journalism. Consequently, it appears that evangelical proselytisation, whether in the north or south of the country, was an important catalyst giving rise to journalism in Nigeria (Yusha'u, 2018). Based on Oton's narration, the

development of the press up to 1955 followed a logical sequence. It began as the basis for meeting the information needs of merchants and the proselytising ambitions of missionaries, using basic writing skills and formats. From there, it evolved, facilitated by technology, to become a professionally-minded enterprise providing news.

Oton identifies four distinct epochs in the evolution of the press. The first era ends at about 1918, with newspapers described as journals that were of poor quality, carrying superficial news with sparse information. One such newspaper was the *Lagos Weekly Record* produced in 1890 by a group of British expatriates (Ziegler and Asante, 1992). Ojo (2013) also identifies the *Nigerian Chronicle* created in 1908, the *Nigerian Times* in 1910, and the *Nigerian Pioneer* in 1914 as newspapers that may be classified in this era. A notable feature of the publications in this period was "the use of 'Nigerian' in the titles of newspapers" (Ojo, 2013, p.431).

The second phase extended from 1918 to the early 1930s. This period was dominated by the production of "several denominational journals" (Oton, 1958, p.74) aimed at Christianising recently demobilised troops, following the Armistice of 1918. Among the newspapers of this era were *African Church Gleaner* (1917), *African Hope* (1919), and *Nigerian Methodist* (1925), all published by missionaries. There were also secular daily newspapers such as the *Nigerian Daily Times* (1926), as well as vernacular titles, for instance, *Obodom Edem Usak Utin* (*The Voice of the East*). The main features of these newspapers were increased news on politics, local events, and coverage of activities in Britain, mostly as they pertained to Nigeria. The newspapers of this era showed noticeable improvements in their style of writing.

The third era covered the decade between 1937 and 1947 with newspapers of the time distinguished by their unequivocal opposition to the continuation of British rule. Their distinguishing features were an improvement in the quality of news presentation, an "over-indulgence in political news" (Oton, 1958, p.76) and chain ownership of news publications. This period also witnessed the introduction of government newspapers such as the *Nigerian Review* in Lagos. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who owned a group of newspapers including the *West African Pilot*, *Eastern Nigeria Guardian, Nigerian Spokesman*, and *Southern Nigeria Defender* exemplifies the journalism of this period (Ziegler and Asante, 1992; Oton, 1958). The fourth stage, from 1947 to 1955, saw a significant advance in the technical production of newspapers. Oton suggests that this period witnessed the employment of trained journalists in the production of critical news content, and the beginning of pictorial journalism as familiar news forms.

It should be noted that Oton's chronicling of the progression of critical news reporting of politics over the different epochs is not suggestive of a liberal disposition to such criticisms by the British administrators in Nigeria. Ziegler and Asante (1992) assert that any notion that journalists of the pre-independence era were free to upbraid British rule is false as criticisms by the press, "usually landed the editors in trouble with the authorities" (p.20). Nevertheless, our understanding of the Nigerian press from Oton's chronological classification, with insight into the nature of news reporting and ownership, is somewhat enhanced by Grant (1971). Grant (1971) underscores ownership and its influence on newspapers' ideological orientation in categorising newspapers. Her exposition of newspapers from pre-independence to post-independence Nigeria, classifies newspaper ownership into four main groups: political

elites/ parties, government, foreign press affiliation, and overseas-*cum*-political party hybrid.

The newspapers owned by political elites/parties were the earliest. These journals pursued either ethnic or nationalistic idealism, and their editorial stance was patently partisan. Thus, the *West African Pilot*, owned by Nnamdi Azikiwe had its highest circulation in Lagos, and in eastern Nigeria. These locations had a concentration of adherents who were loyal to the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons' (NCNC) political party, and people of Ibo extraction affiliated to the Azikiwe family. Similarly, the *Nigerian Tribune*, established in 1949, and controlled by the Action Group (AG) Party in western Nigeria had its largest circulation in the western region.

The government newspapers were initially established "by the colonial government to provide literature in Nigerian languages and to answer nationalist criticisms" (Grant, 1971, p.97). Grant's perspective is consistent with Pierce (2016a) who depicts *Northern Provinces News* as a government-sponsored newspaper contrived to respond to criticisms from the privately-run *Nigerian Protectorate Ram* (p.75). Therefore, with the formation of regional governments in the western, eastern, and northern sections of the country, newspapers were set-up to articulate the views of the prevailing political party in each region (Grant, 1971; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011). So, the *Nigerian Outlook*, the *Nigerian Citizen* and *Daily Sketch* (which replaced the *Nigerian Tribune* when the Action Group Party lost control of the western region to the Nigerian National Democratic Party) were affiliated with the regional governments of the eastern, northern, and western regional governments, respectively. In the case

of the central, federal government, it controlled the *Nigerian Morning Post* (Grant, 1971; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Edoga-Ugwuoju, 1984).

The government newspapers articulated the views of their respective authorities, rationalising the positions and actions taken on issues and their tone was particularly ethnocentric for the regional governments (Grant, 1971; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011). Expectedly, the readership of the government newspapers was national with respect to the Federal Government, and sectional for the regional governments (Grant, 1971). Thus, in March of 1964, the *Nigerian Morning Post* with national readership had a circulation of 35,390 whereas the eastern region's *Nigerian Outlook* with its circulation of 18,000 was the highest circulating regional newspaper (Grant, 1971, p.97). The *Nigerian Citizen* and *Daily Sketch* for the northern and western regions respectively, had circulations of 8,100 and 2,000 respectively (Grant, 1971, p.7).

Grant (1971) observes that *Daily Times* was the sole representation of foreign press affiliation. Established in 1926, Yusha'u (2018) notes that the *Daily Times* emerged from foreign investments "in alliance with some wealthy Nigerians" (p.57) to counter those newspapers that were fiercely nationalist in outlook, like the *Daily Service,* owned by Herbert Macaulay, a politician/nationalist. Further, the emergence of the *Daily Times* marked the start of commercialisation of the Nigerian press (Yusha'u, 2018). According to Grant (1971), it bore some semblance of the *London Daily Mirror* to which it was associated. It was considered a credible journal but was restrained in its treatment of political matters, "often subjecting itself to self-censorship" (p.101) to enable it to stay above the fray. Thus, although editorially, it evinced no obvious

political affiliation, the *Daily Times* tended to support the Federal Government's stance on issues.

For its part, the overseas-*cum*-political hybrid category of newspapers was a partnership forged between a foreign newspaper and a political group (Grant, 1971). In this hybrid, the political party provided personnel, in-depth information, and scoops on politics with the purpose of influencing political outcomes while the overseas commercial partner contributed technology and business acumen aimed at profitability. The *Daily Express* group of newspapers owned by the Action Group Party and the British Thomson Organisation was an example of this hybrid. Its editorial posture depended to a large extent on the party's ideology, but the newspaper became more independent after the Action Group suffered some internal crises.

Post-independence, the ethnocentric slant of regional newspapers continued, and became more entrenched during the country's civil war (1967-1970) with each regional/ethnic press echoing the views and sentiments of their respective governments (Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Edoga-Ugwuoju, 1984). After the civil war, with the restructuring of the regional governments into state administrations, state governments became involved in the ownership of newspapers. Accordingly, each of the initial twelve states of the country, presumably not wanting to be left out of the media competition, set-up and ran a newspaper to propagate the views of the state government (Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Edoga-Ugwuoju, 1984). Many profit-oriented newspapers, *The Guardian, Punch,* and *Vanguard,* for instance, were also established in the country from the 1970s (Yusha'u, 2018).

However, currently “there is no single government-owned newspaper of any socio-political significance” (Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011, p.10). Inversely, private ownership of the newspapers has led to higher numbers of news publications (Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Edoga-Ugwuoju, 1984). Edoga-Ugwuoju (1984) argues that “the so-called independent newspapers are not so independent. They subject their readers to all kinds of publicity about politics, morals, ideology and perhaps the culture of the owner (p.197)”. Moreover, there exists a north-south divide in the representation of news which reflects Nigeria’s broad regional demarcations and effectively hampers objective, enlightened news coverage, causing a schism in the media when it comes to the discourse of some critical national issues (Ziegler and Asante, 1992; Bourgault, 1995; Olukoyun, 2004; Yusha’u, 2010a, 2010b, 2018; Ojo, 2013). News coverage, therefore, has continued to be shaped by commercial and ethnic interests that throw issues of national significance into lesser relief (Edoga-Ugwuoju, 1984; Olukoyun, 2004; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011). Beyond ethnicity and private ownership as prevailing characteristics of the Nigerian press, another key feature is their concentration in the south, particularly Lagos, the country’s commercial capital (Olukoyun, 2004; Ojo, 2013; Yusha’u’, 2018). (See Table 3.1 below, showing some privately owned newspapers, their founders and regional affiliation).

Table 3.1

List of some privately owned newspapers

Name	Founder	Regional Affiliation	Background
BusinessDay https://businessday.ng/	Frank Aigbogun	South	Journalism
Blueprint https://blueprint.ng.com/	Muhammad Idris	North	Politics
Champion https://championnews.com.ng/	Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu	South	Politics
Daily Trust https://dailytrust.com/	Kabiru Yusuf	North	Journalism
Daily Independent https://independent.ng/	James Ibori	South	Politics
Leadership https://leadership.ng/	Sam Nda-Isaiah	North	Politics
Daily Sun https://sunnewsonline.com/	Orji Uzo Kalu	South	Politics
New Telegraph https://newtelegraphonline.com	(Also) Orji Uzo Kalu	South	Politics
Punch https://punchng.com/	Sam Amuka-Pemu & James Aboderin	South	Journalism
The Guardian https://guardian.ng/	Alex Ibru	South	Business/Politics
The Nation https://thenationonlineng.net/	Bola Tinubu	South	Politics
Nigerian Tribune https://tribuneonlineng.com/	Obafemi Awolowo	South	Politics
This Day https://www.thisdaylive.com/	Nduka Obaigbena	South	Business
Vanguard https://www.vanguardngr.com/	(Also)Sam Amuka-Pemu	South	Journalism

Source: Akaeze (2023), Babasola (2023), Yusha'u (2018), Abubakre (2017) Olukoyun (2004) Akoh et al. (2012)

3.6.2 The broadcast media: Pre-independence to post-independence

Regarding the broadcast media in Nigeria, scholars generally tend to agree that it began in the early 1930s, with the relay of radio service from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Empire Service in Britain (Uche, 1985; Ume-Nwagbo, 1979; Larkin, 2008; Akingbulu, 2010; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Oboh, 2021). Its purpose was "to meet the propaganda and cultural needs of a colonial regime" (Larkin, 2008, p.50) but it progressively became a medium of information and entertainment for the European population, and others exposed to the Western orientation (Ume-Nwagbo, 1979; Udomisor, 2013; Bassey-Duke, 2017). The service was managed by two government departments: technically, by the Post and Telegraph (P&T), and for programming and entertainment, by the Public Relations Office (PRO). It is probable that the reliance on government departments may have laid the foundation for overarching government control of the electronic media.

Nevertheless, the British, seeking ways to maximise the broadcast service, commissioned a study to evaluate opportunities for transmission in West African colonies (Uche, 1985; Ume-Nwagbo, 1979). The resulting Turner-Byron Report led to the creation of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) in 1951, aimed at maintaining "a national profile in its overall programming" (Ume-Nwagbo, 1979; p.818). Ume-Nwagbo (1979) observes that the decentralisation of bureaucratic administration from the unitary government to regional authorities as stipulated, first by the Richards Constitution of 1946, and continued by the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, gave rise to separate but connected broadcast service structures. Lagos became the operational headquarters, with the regional capitals of Ibadan in the west, Kaduna in the north, and Enugu in the east,

simultaneously providing broadcast services. Thus, "the regional stations were required to accommodate specific national programs broadcast (from) or linked to Lagos, intended to stress a sense of national unity" (Ume-Nwagbo, 1979, p.818). Concurrently, they were to encourage ethnic identity through presentations produced and aired at the regional level, typically in the main language of each region.

However, the lack of neutrality, government interference at regional and national levels, complaints by political elites and conflicts relating to access, instigated calls for the abolishment of the NBS (Ume-Nwagbo, 1979; Uche, 1985; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Oboh, 2021). In its place, the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) was created in 1956, as a statutory body, modelled after the BBC in terms of public service and impartiality. The statute establishing the NBC at the federal government level also allowed for regional affiliates under the control of the regional governments, and these were required to give expression to their respective sectional cultures (Uche, 1985). Interestingly, since the federal constitution which gave the NBC authority to carry out its broadcast function did not preclude regional authorities from competing with it, rival regional broadcasting corporations soon emerged. Their emergence resulted from claims of continued partiality by the federal broadcast service and insufficient and unfair representation of the regional governments' activities (Ume-Nwagbo, 1979).

As such, the Western Regional Government created the Western Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation in 1959 for its radio and television operations (Ume-Nwagbo, 1979; Udomisor, 2013; Oboh, 2021). Following suit, the Eastern Regional Government launched the Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Service on October 1, 1960,

coinciding with Nigeria's independence (Ume-Nwagbo,1979; Udomisor, 2013; Oboh, 2021). Also, the Northern Regional Government's broadcasting station, Radio Kaduna Television (RKTV), came on air in 1962, as did a television station set up by the Federal Government (Ume-Nwagbo,1979; Udomisor, 2013; Oboh, 2021). Thus, at independence, the broadcast media which began as "radio only" had developed into radio and television services, albeit under the control of either the federal or regional government (Uche, 1985; Ume-Nwagbo 1979).

As shall be seen subsequently, the Nigerian broadcast media during the post-independence years has been shaped substantially by the civil war of 1967-1970, a failing economy, and long years of military autocracy interspersed by brief periods of civilian rule. Scholars also add that it has been extensively impacted by the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the 1980s (Ume-Nwagbo, 1984; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011). Uche (1985) has observed that due to the exigencies of the civil war, the military appropriated all government-owned broadcasting operations to ensure, firstly, effective propaganda (especially in the civil-war years) and secondly, centralised dissemination of information for national unity and political stability.

It is worth noting that the NBC was converted by military decree to the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) in 1978, which again decentralised radio broadcasting into zones comprising Kaduna in the north, Oyo in the west, and Enugu in the east, with Lagos retained as the operational headquarters. The decree also limited the area of coverage for state radio services by restricting their transmission to medium wave. This constraint was meant "to curtail the political influence of some ambitious and

powerful state governments, and their people, especially in periods of political crises" (Uche, 1985, p.25).

Concerning television broadcast, Ume-Nwagbo (1984) maintains that television stations were nationalised by the military in 1977, subjected to the control of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), and reorganised into six production and dissemination centres. The Federal Government assigned the Very High Frequency (VHF) bandwidth exclusively to the NTA while confining the state government stations to the Ultra High Frequency (UHF). With the return to democratic rule in 1979, and again informed by political calculations, both the state and federal governments set up additional radio and television stations leading to a preponderance of broadcast hubs across Nigeria. However, the growth of broadcast media was again halted with the Major General Muhammadu Buhari-led military coup in 1983 as several radio stations were shut-down due to a lack of government funding. Noteworthy in the foregoing is the extent to which the ebb and flow of the broadcast industry have been shaped by the political disposition of the government in power.

Nonetheless, an important milestone in the development of Nigeria's broadcast media was its liberalisation in the 1990s, precipitated by the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), mandated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 1980s. The programme informed the commercialisation of the broadcast network as radio and television stations, hitherto wholly funded by the government, were required to supplement their budgets with revenue from commercial advertising (Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011). The liberalisation, together with advancements in technology which removed restrictions on the spectrum apportionment, opened

opportunities for private sector involvement in radio and television ownership. As Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja (2011) point out, the monopoly of government control "was broken when the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) was established in 1992 by the Babangida administration as the regulatory authority for the industry" (p.16). The NBC was also empowered to license private broadcasting operations, issuing its first batch of licences in June 1993. Liberalisation has led to a proliferation in the broadcast media industry with increasing numbers of private ownership of radio and television stations (Ariye, 2010; Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Oboh, 2021) (See Table 3.2 below for some of Nigeria's privately owned broadcast stations).

Nevertheless as Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja (2011) have observed, the government-established state and federal broadcast stations "still dominate the airwaves" (p.16), with the independent stations more interested in profit-maximisation, than public service. Accordingly, newspapers focus overwhelmingly on reporting politics while broadcasters tend to concentrate more on entertainment. Additionally, Oboh (2021) observes that newspapers have "a reputation of being more relatively objective" (p.38) in their coverage of issues.

Table 3.2

List of some privately owned broadcast stations

Name	Founder	Regional Affiliation	Background
African Independent Television	Raymond Dopkesi	South	Business
Channels Television	John Momoh	South	Journalism
Silverbird Television	Ben Murray-Bruce	South	Business/Politics
Murhi International TV	Muritala Gbedeyanka	South	Business
Galaxy TV	Steve Ojo	South	Journalism
EbonyLife TV	Mosunmola Abudu	South	Business
Television Continental	Bola Tinubu	South	Politics
Gotel TV	Atiku Abubakar	North	Politics
Radio Continental	(Also) Bola Tinubu	South	Politics
Freedom FM	Bashir Dalhatu	North	Politics
Brilla FM	Larry Izamoje	South	Journalism
Star FM	(Also) Muritala Gbedeyanka	South	Business
Joy FM	David Mark	North	Politics
Cosmos FM	Chimaroke Nnamani	South	Politics
Hot FM	Christiana Anyanwu	South	Business/Politics
Ray Power FM	(Also) Raymond Dopkesi	South	Business
Rhythm FM	(Also) Ben Murray-Bruce	South	Business/Politics
Gotel Radio	(Also) Atiku Abubakar	North	Politics

Source: Olukoyun (2004), Akingbulu (2010), Ariye (2010), Mano and El Mkaouar (2023) Akaeze (2023).

3.6.3 Current traditional news media environment

In Olukoyun's (2004) judgement, the state of the print media in Nigeria is reminiscent of "a militant press ideology dating back to the nineteenth century" (p.71). This is because even as the media plays a central role in keeping politicians, government functionaries and agencies accountable, they continue to be challenged, in the execution of their normative functions, by a host of structural inadequacies and operational deficiencies. These inadequacies and deficiencies relate to state laws,

ownership postures, cost of operations, and working conditions, including long periods of non-payment of salaries (p.75-76). Furthermore, as already discussed, there is inherently an ethnic dichotomy in Nigeria's press, and this is often exploited by corrupt politicians "to divert attention from the public examination of their conduct" (Olukoyun, 2004, p.74).

But these constraints nothwithstanding, scholars and media research bodies have consistently described Nigeria's press community as one of Africa's most vibrant (Grant, 1971; Olukoyun, 2004; Rønning, 2009; BBC, 2017; Reuters, 2021). While there were almost seventy daily and weekly journals in 1964, with a total circulation of more than eight hundred thousand (Grant, 1971), Olukoyun (2004) speaks of more than a hundred and thirty newspapers and magazines with almost a million circulation in 2003. He attributes the disproportionality in circulation to an adverse economy and fierce competition between the publications for readership. More recently, however, Oboh (2021), has suggested that there are "38 national newspaper organisations owned by governments and private proprietors besides weekly magazines" (p.34).

Scholars hold that newspapers continue to have significant influence on policy positions. *Punch* is considered the widest circulating paper and is privately owned (Anyanwu, 2001; Olukoyun, 2004; Ojo and Adebayo, 2013; Newman et al., 2021). Many other newspapers in the country are also privately owned, including *The Guardian, This Day, Vanguard, New Telegraph, Leadership, Daily Sun, The Nation,* and the *Nigerian Tribune* which, as already discussed, was established in the colonial era (Olukoyun, 2004; Yusha'u, 2018; Oboh, 2021). In Nigeria, "publications rise, fall and are sometimes reborn with dizzying regularity" (Olukoyun, 2004, p.75). Also,

while most newspapers are operationally situated in the south-west, proprietorship is spread across the country although southerners preponderate over northerners (Yusha'u, 2018). Akoh et al. (2012) acknowledge that with increasing Internet penetration, newspapers now replicate most of their content online and are accessed by a growing number of people. Their view is supported by Silver and Johnson (2018) who state that growing Internet use has translated to the online search for more political information in Nigeria.

Concerning electronic media, the government's dominance, as in the early days, is still starkly evident (Akingbulu, 2010; Akoh et al; 2012; Olukoyun, 2004). The main national broadcasters are the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), with the Voice of Nigeria (VON) as Nigeria's international radio station. Regarding radio specifically, the Federal Government-owned FRCN has the widest network of stations and expectedly, the broadest reach (Akingbulu, 2010). It functions through an interconnection of thirty-seven broadcasting hubs comprising its headquarters in Abuja, the country's capital, four national stations in Lagos, Kaduna, Enugu, and Ibadan and thirty-two stations spread across the states (Akoh et al., 2012; Radio Nigeria, 2019).

The FRCN broadcasts on frequency modulation (FM), amplitude modulation (AM) and shortwave, in fifteen languages, with a listenership of more than a hundred million (Akoh et al., 2012; Radio Nigeria, 2019). In addition, there are over thirty state government-operated radio houses but these are obligated to connect to the FRCN for national news (Akingbulu, 2010; Oboh, 2021). However, Akoh et al. (2012) insist that the state-owned stations provide a counterbalance to news from the FRCN. This

is especially the case in situations where political loyalties at the state level are at variance with affiliations at the central, federal level of government. Taken together, “Nigeria has over 437 radio stations owned by governments and private proprietors in addition to 117 online radio stations operating in-country” (Oboh, 2021, p.34).

Based on a survey cited by Akoh et al. (2012) the most popular stations are in the urban and semi-urban centres of Nigeria. Among the first private radio stations were *Ray Power FM*, *Minaj Systems Radio*, and *Silverbird 93.7FM* (Ogundimu, 1997; Ariye, 2010; Ajibade and Alabi, 2017). A palpable hindrance to the growth of private stations is the prohibitive cost of licencing for starting operations and licence renewals. Licences for starting operations range between ₦15 million (fifteen million naira) to ₦20 million (twenty million naira), and are determined by location (Akingbulu, 2010; National Broadcasting Commission, 2021). Renewals, which fall due every half-decade, cost between ₦10 million (ten million naira) to ₦12.5 million (twelve and a half million naira) (Akingbulu, 2010).

Categorically for television, the network for coverage broadly reflects the pattern discussed for radio, for both the government and private ownership. The Federal Government-owned network, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), is the national broadcaster and connects with at least eighty-nine functioning stations spread across the country for network programming on news and public-orientation issues (Akingbulu, 2010). “Eight of these stations are designated Zonal Network Centres” (Akingbulu, 2010, p.38) and harmonise the operations of the network of stations in their area. The thirty-six state governments and the capital, Abuja, each own and operate a television station, thereby controlling 37 local stations. The Nigerian

Television Authority in partnership with the Chinese pay-tv, Star Times Group, also provides subscription-based television (Akoh et al., 2012).

Private ownership of television is not as significant as radio but there are over 37 private television stations including those in the pay-television segment (Oboh, 2021; Akingbulu, 2010; Akoh et al., 2012). The twenty-four-hour news cycle supplied by competing international television stations was an important catalyst leading to the introduction of around-the-clock operations for many television stations (Akoh et al., 2012). Thus, private television stations like *Channels TV* and *Africa Independent Television (AIT)*, as well as the government-owned Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) run uninterrupted twenty-four-hour operations.

Like private radio, private television stations pay licence fees ranging from ₦11.25 million to ₦15 million, with locations within/close to commercial centres/cities being more expensive (Akingbulu, 2010; National Broadcasting Commission, 2021). Licence renewal charges, paid every five years, range between ₦10 million and ₦12.5 million (Akingbulu, 2010). Furthermore, each private television is levied a two and half per cent charge of its annual turnover. Private television stations provide a diet of mainly news and entertainment consisting of sports, drama, and game shows, and as Akingbulu (2010) notes, are rapidly increasing their market share of audiences.

But Olukoyun (2004) and Akoh et al. (2012) describe the American broadcasting company, *Cable News Network (CNN),* the United States-funded *Voice of America (VOA),* the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)* and Qatar's state-funded *Al Jazeera*, as posing some stiff competition for Nigerian broadcast media. These

networks are trusted news sources, and their twenty-four-hour news coverage is well-liked. Furthermore, surveys show that the *BBC Hausa Service* is “the most listened to radio station” (Akoh et al., 2012, p.23) in the country’s north, largely due to the BBC’s transmission in the widely spoken Hausa language of the region.

3.6.4 Digitalisation of the media in Nigeria

Due to its huge population, Nigeria is Africa’s biggest telecommunications market, with twenty-six per cent of its population accessing the Internet in 2016 and the number increasing apace (International Telecommunication Union, 2021; Nigerian Communications Commission, 2021). Mobile phone subscription in the country has grown from about thirty thousand (30,000) in 2000 to almost a hundred and forty million in 2021 (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2021). Media digitalisation in the country emerged due to competition and innovation, precipitated by the liberalisation of the media environment, with increasing access to the Internet and growing use of mobile phones as critical enablers (Yusha’u, 2014). The now defunct *Post Express*, a newspaper, is generally credited with being the first news organisation to produce its online version between 1996 and 1997 (Kperogi, 2011, 2020; Akoh et al., 2012).

As previously indicated, Akoh et al. (2012) acknowledge that the Internet has led to the replication of newspapers online. They are corroborated by the position of Yusha’u (2014) that “all key newspapers in Nigeria like *The Guardian, Daily Trust, Punch*, and *Vanguard* have an online presence” (p.216). Moreover, numerous wholly online publications and blogging sites have also emerged, with *The Cable, Premium Times*, and *Sahara Reporters*, considered as among the most influential producers of news content (Akoh et al., 2012; Yusha’u, 2014, 2018; Onumah, 2019; Kperogi, 2020;

Newman et al., 2021). Some of these wholly online media platforms, *The Cable* and *Premium Times* for instance, are operated by trained journalists, while many others, including *Sahara Reporters*, are run by people with little or no journalistic training (Akoh et al., 2012; Kperogi, 2020). (See Table 3.3 at the end of this section for some of the strictly online newspapers).

The broadcast sector has also been influenced by growing access to the Internet and mobile phone usage (Yusha'u, 2014; Akoh et al., 2012; Newman et al., 2021). Yusha'u (2014) writes that the private-sector *Channels Television*, hosts around-the-clock news transmission on the web, whereas Akoh et al. (2012) say that the federal government radio, *Voice of Nigeria,* similarly provides online streaming. Thus, although several broadcasters such as *Television Continental (TVC), Plus TV Africa*, and *Arise News Network* exist online, it is possible that digital broadcast licences required for online streaming may be discouraging expansion into the online sector of the broadcast media (Akoh et al., 2012).

In discussing online journalism in West Africa, scholars attribute its growth, beyond Internet and mobile phone accessibility, to a growing crop of educated Africans living in the diaspora (Yusha'u 2014; Kperogi, 2020). Yusha'u (2014) suggests that they are particularly well-versed in information and communication technology, and so deploy their knowledge to "develop a web presence for online discussion groups or even newspapers that are based online" (p.215). Further, their desire for news and to stay informed about developments on the continent, cause them to pressure media owners into having an online presence (Yusha'u 2014; Kperogi, 2020). These factors can logically be applied to the Nigerian context as reasons supporting the gradual

proliferation of digital news media. However, it should be noted that the digitalisation of Nigeria's media comes with advantages and disadvantages (Kperogi, 2020; Akoh et al.,2012). Some of the advantages are the speed of disseminating information and its accompanying broad reach, based on the Internet's penetration level. Regarding political communication, media digitalisation has supported political campaigning and a more robust engagement and interaction between political elites and the citizenry. Additionally, digital media has enabled closer monitoring and reporting of elections in a country where electoral fraud is a common occurrence.

Concerning corruption, online journalism has also emboldened journalists and citizens to report instances of bribery, fraud, and misappropriation (Kperogi, 2020). News on political corruption that would otherwise have been relegated as unimportant or edited out of traditional news media, has been given an alternative platform where they can be published, exposing the corrupt actors. A key enabler of such reporting is the nature of a typical mobile device. Being portable and high-definition, it is easy to carry about and capture clear, irrefutable evidence of corruption. Moreover, for a country like Nigeria, where only three of over 250 ethnic groups dominate in almost all spheres of existence (Fashagba, 2021; Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 2020a; Kifordu, 2011; Alapiki, 2005) digital media has provided a platform for minority groups to air their positions, grievances, and concerns on national issues. This is in sharp contrast with an environment under the absolute control of traditional media. This was the situation prior, where the dominant views privileged in the media typically reflected the politically-correct stance of news media organisations in alignment with the dominant ethnic power structures, particularly for reasons of market share, among others.

For the disadvantages, Kperogi (2020) and Akoh et al. (2012) stress a rise in the plagiarism of news stories. They suggest that journalists working with extremely tight deadlines to meet the unprecedented speed of news production, routinely duplicate stories from other news sources, without giving due credit. Also, news supplied on many of the online news platforms, particularly those from non-conventional media, lack the requisite journalistic rigour of checks, and objectivity, expected of the media in producing news content. More incisively, Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja (2011) take the view that the Internet, while expanding opportunities for the media in Nigeria, has also introduced new challenges to the growth and professionalism of journalism. They point out, for instance, that the entrance of citizen-journalists has coincided with the packaging and dissemination of unauthenticated information disguised as news and valid commentary. Thus, the Internet has exacerbated the existing deficiencies in the operations of the media, caused by a lack of proper training, ethnic affinity, operational difficulties and commercialisation, among others.

Table 3.3

List of some exclusively online newspapers in Nigeria

Name	Founder	Regional Affiliation	Background
The Cable https://www.thecable.ng/	Simon Kolawole	South	Journalism
Premium Times https://www.premiumtimesng.com/	Dapo Olorunyomi	South	Journalism
Sahara Reporters https://saharareporters.com/	Omoyele Sowore	South	Social Activism
Daily Nigerian https://dailynigerian.com/	Jaafar Jaafar	North	Journalism
Elendu Reports https://www.elendureportsonline.com/	Jonathan Elendu	South	Journalism
Point Blank News https://pointblanknews.com/pbn/	Jackson Ude	South	Journalism
Huhu Online https://huhuonline.com/	Emmanuel Asiwe	South	Journalism

Source: Akoh et al. (2012) Yusha'u (2018) Kperogi (2020)

3.7 Media and political corruption

Several scholars maintain that the Nigerian press have performed laudably in their watchdog role of holding political elites and public officials accountable by reporting their wrong-doings (Daramola, 2017; Alemoh and Ukwela, 2019; Jibo and Okoosi-Simbine, 2003; Okafor, 2014; Chama, 2019; Ojo, 2003; Ogbondah, 2011). They list as examples, the stoppage of the tenure elongation proposed by President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2006, and the high-profile resignations of some political elites. For instance, the resignations of Speaker of the House of Representative Salisu Buhari, and Senate President Evans Enwerem, which followed the media exposure of their academic and age falsifications respectively. They also highlight the sack of Senate President, Chuba Okadigbo, on allegations of corruption.

Ojo (2003) for instance holds that with re-democratisation in 1999, there has been a resurgence of the Nigerian media, and a renewed vigour in executing its watchdog function in the society. His argument is fortified by Ogbondah (2011) who emphasises that despite the continued operationalisation of outdated anti-media laws and brutality against journalists by the state, there has been an improvement in relations between the state and the press since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999. This has caused the media to be relentless in investigating and exposing corruption by political elites.

However, other scholars such as Akanle and Adesina (2015), and Rønning (2009), take a contrary view. For them, Nigeria is one of most corrupt nations in the world, and although its press has a long tradition of exposing corruption by elites, investigative reports by the Nigerian media are generally lacking in the quality of reportage. This is because they are badly sourced, highly sensationalised, poorly researched, are often over-reliant on a sole informant, and based on rumours, rather than hard, indisputable facts, thus discrediting such news. Still, some other scholars posit that corruption within the media (acceptance of bribes by journalists), alignments to political figures/parties, commercialisation of the media, a lack of professionalism and ethics, continue to inhibit journalism in the fight against political corruption (Komolafe, Hitchen and Kalu-Amah, 2019; Adibe, 2016; Akinwale, 2010; Ukonu, 2005; Ibbi, 2016). Ojo and Adebayo (2013) specifically stress that the media is more focused on politicians and personalities, than on issues of development and addressing the social needs of the population. They suggest that profit maximisation has a strong influence on which stories are published or discarded.

In sum, ownership of the Nigerian media across both the press and broadcast media comprises a diversity of journalists, politicians, business figures, and the government. This has facilitated a level of camaraderie between the political class, media proprietors and editors/journalists that some argue, has caused the characteristic journalistic objectivity and cynicism necessary for incisive news reporting to be relegated to the background, if not abandoned altogether. This perspective has also been advanced by Ribadu's (2010) view of political figures using their respective media organisations or relationship with the media to derail investigations into political corruption.

Regionalism within the media also detracts from the quality of news production (Yusha'u, 2010a, 2010b, 2018; Bourgault, 1995; Ziegler and Asante, 1992). Owing to its peculiar historical development, the media mirrors, broadly speaking, the north-south polarity in its reporting of news (Yusha'u, 2010a, 2010b, 2018; Bourgault, 1995). Bourgault (1995), describing the country's media scene decades ago, stressed that regionalism in the Nigerian media is entrenched to the point that even songs from the country's south, globally acknowledged for its prolific music industry, are scarcely ever played in the north. Her perspective is strengthened by Ziegler and Asante (1992), who reference Aboaba (1979), in writing that the Nigerian media establishment have spoken in unison only "in two major collective emergency experiences: Nigerian independence and the civil war" (p.80). Here, it should be stressed that the view of a united media against the Nigerian civil war is disputed by some scholars (Oso, Odunlami, and Adaja, 2011; Edoga-Ugwuoju, 1984). Nevertheless, Ziegler and Asante (1992) believe that although the press had originally and for a long time developed along ethno-regional lines, their differences "are being minimized by the

increasing similarity of economic and social problems being faced by the population" (1992, p.80) as a whole.

Furthermore, the working conditions of the typical Nigerian journalist are for the most part deplorable, as reporters and editors contend with a host of everyday work-related challenges in executing their tasks (Olukoyun, 2004; Olutokun, 2017). It is not uncommon for newsrooms to have an inadequate number of computers, nor is it abnormal for journalists to go many months without being paid their salaries which, in terms of the amount, is considered low and not in keeping with the prevailing inflation rates (Olutokun, 2017; Adibe, 2016; Ibbi, 2016; Olukoyun, 2004). Concerning delayed and insufficient pay, both Olukoyun (2004) and Olutokun (2017) see these as the primary reasons behind corruption within the press. Additionally, there are external infrastructural challenges, such as unreliable power supply, common to all enterprises in the country that militate against journalists' optimum performance, and the efficient production of news.

3.8 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has presented an overview of Nigeria, its return to democracy with the Fourth Republic beginning on May 29, 1999, and its consistency in holding elections. In view of the lack of certain freedoms, Nigeria falls short of an ideal democracy. However, the regularity of its elections and the transfer of power between civilian governments are indicators of democratic progress. Additionally, this chapter has examined political corruption. With origins in pre-colonial Nigeria, political malpractice has grown in scale and impact since the country's independence, and has adversely affected key areas of the country's development.

The chapter has also traced the origins and development of Nigeria's media beginning with the print media and its use for proselytisation and, later, nationalist' agitations. In the case of electronic broadcasting, it has highlighted its beginnings with the British colonial government's use of radio to achieve propaganda and cultural purposes. Although, in general, the media is vexed with several challenges including regionalism, ownership, and lack of proper investigations, the print media, due to its historical development, is more incisive in its criticism of the government and by extension, political corruption. The next chapter discusses the methodology of this study with regard to its employment of mixed methods for the research. Primarily, the chapter discusses content analysis of the four newspapers selected for the study to uncover the news frames on political corruption, and the use of interviews with experienced journalists to unveil the considerations that influence the news frames uncovered by content analysis.

Map of Nigeria in 1960: 3 regions

Figure 3.1 Source: History of Nigeria - Nigeria as a colony | Britannica
Available at: www.britannica.com (Accessed: 18 December 2023)

Map of Nigeria in 2023: 36 states and Abuja, the capital

Figure 3.2 Source: Nigeria - Politics, Economy, Society | Britannica
Available at: www.britannica.com (Accessed: 18 December 2023)

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods employed to examine the framing of news concerning political corruption in Nigeria. Specifically, the chapter examines the use of content analysis and qualitative interviews for the research, the rationale for their use, the sampling decisions including the sampling procedure, sample size, and the data collection process and analysis. It also discusses the significant challenges faced in conducting the research including the ethical considerations, and how the Covid-19 pandemic influenced some of the decisions taken.

4.2 Mixed methods for framing study

As expected with using mixed methods in a study, combining both methods enabled this research to capitalise on the strengths of the individual methods while minimising their shortcomings to produce integrated, rich, and comprehensive results (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Rose, Spinks and Canhoto, 2014; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Indeed, Mondak (1995) has suggested that “confidence in findings often grows only when there is an accumulation of corroborating results” (p.515) obtained from different research methods. That was the case in this research where the results generated from the content analysis were confirmed and explained by results from the semi-structure interviews with journalists.

Scholars have argued for the empirical examination of media content as crucial for defining frames in the news (Tankard, 2001; Borah, 2011). Tankard (2001), for example, has pointed out that early studies in framing research employed qualitative tools, and suggests the need for an empirical method to study framing to encourage reliability and validity. Reliability, a necessary condition for validity, is indicated by precision in the measurement of variables that constitute a frame, establishing their presence or absence in the news (Matthes, 2009).

Borah's (2011) examination of a decade's research on framing established content analysis as the most widely used method, describing it as "fundamental to understanding framing" (p.255). But she is quick to add that for an appreciation of the production process that leads to the emergence of frames, it is important to conduct interviews with journalists. Her position is fortified by Brüggemann (2014) who sees content analysis alone as inadequate for the study of framing because it only provides "indirect inferences on the practices and contexts" (2014, p.74) that lead to framing.

Content analysis is quantitative whereas the interview method is qualitative. The methods derive from the positivist and interpretivist philosophical approaches. Positivism emphasises objectivity and the neutral position of the researcher in observing the data in question. It tends towards, without being entirely reliant upon, quantitative methods that seek to establish measurable patterns in the subject of inquiry (Irshaidat, 2022; Rose, Spinks & Canhoto, 2014). Interpretivism, by contrast, accommodates subjectivity. "People actively interpret the world around them and do so within a specific socio-cultural context" (Rose, Spinks & Canhoto, 2014, p.17). Based on this approach, the views and considerations of the people who are part of

the phenomenon under investigation are crucial in gaining an understanding of the subject, with the researcher as a "respectful listener or observer of other peoples' worlds" (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p. 23). Thus, I began with a content analysis of the selected newspapers (discussed subsequently), then proceeded to qualitative interviews with journalists to gain an understanding of the important considerations that influence the emergence of the news frames on political corruption.

4.3 Content analysis: Sampling of newspapers

As already indicated in the preceding chapter, Nigeria has long had a vibrant press culture with a wide range of newspapers spread across the country's broad geographical divide of north and south (Ziegler and Asante, 1992; Bourgault, 1995; Yusha'u, 2018, 2010a, 2010b). This divide shapes the way news of national importance, including political corruption, is portrayed in the media. Considering the range of newspapers to choose from, this research selected four newspapers. Specifically, these were *Punch, This Day, Daily Trust* and *Leadership,* based on four criteria: accessibility of the newspapers, regional representation, circulation, and propensity to report on politics.

First, the selected newspapers had well-maintained archives that were accessible, making it possible to retrieve, at a cost, their print editions for the years studied. Second, to ensure a fair representation of the news on political corruption, the newspapers were drawn from Nigeria's two main regions of north and south that scholars say influence the portrayal of news on important national issues. *Punch* and *This Day* are seen as southern publications because they are owned by southerners.

Daily Trust and *Leadership* are viewed as northern newspapers and are owned by northerners (Ikiebe, 2017; Yusha'u, 2018; Babasola, 2023; Akaeze, 2023).

A third consideration for the selection of the newspapers was their levels of circulation. As there is no recognised body such as the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) to provide accurate figures on the circulation of Nigerian newspapers, my decision was based on the literature concerning the Nigerian press. *Punch* is considered the widest circulating paper in the country (Anyanwu, 2001; Olukoyun, 2004; Ojo and Adebayo, 2013; Newman et al., 2021). *Daily Trust* is also seen as the most popular newspaper in the north while *Leadership* is viewed as the second most popular newspaper in the region (Ikiebe, 2017).

The fourth consideration is that scholars have stated that newspapers are more independent than radio and television which are more strictly regulated by the government-run National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) (Dare, 1997; Olukoyun, 2004; Akoh et. al., 2012). This has made newspapers more outspoken in addressing political corruption in their coverage of political news. Indeed, several journalists who have worked for newspapers, for example *This Day,* have ventured into political roles ranging from commissioners of information to media advisers to elected political elites who were either state governors or presidents. Some of these journalists return to the newspaper at the end of their appointment using their network to access and feed political news to the newspapers. For example, Olusegun Adeniyi was Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to late President Musa Yar'Adua, and returned at the end of his appointment to chair the newspaper's editorial board. Also, Yusuph Olaniyonu, has held various positions with *This Day*, including political editor and group news editor.

He left the publication to become commissioner of information for Ogun State, and later media adviser to the senate president and has, on occasion, written columns in the newspaper.

I used systematic random sampling to generate the samples examined in this study. This sampling procedure is a probability sampling technique that applies a scheme of random sampling to give a fair chance of selection to each unit of the population. It is particularly suited for addressing issues that can be "generalized to the population" (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011, p.90). Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2014) also observe that probability sampling ensures a degree of representativeness for making inferences to the population. The systematic random sampling method has been described as accurate, representative, and inexpensive (Neuendorf, 2002; Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). It can be the best type of sampling depending on two conditions (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011).

First, the entire population of the newspapers from which the samples are retrieved is available. Second, there is no particular arrangement of dates/intervals, also known as periodicity, which could introduce some bias to the selection of dates. Both stipulations were met in this study. Firstly, the complete population of the selected newspapers was available. Secondly, news reporting of political corruption in the years researched, an election year (2019) and a routine year (2020), did not follow any special arrangement in the dates published.

The first randomly chosen date was the 5th of January 2019, with intervals of 6 thereafter. Thus, the dates thereafter were 11th, 17th, 23rd 29th in January, and 4th,

10th, 16th, 22th, 28th in February, and 6th, 12th, 18th, 24th, 30th in March for 2019. (Appendix 1: Full list of dates, shows all the dates generated using this sampling technique for each month across the two years examined). The sampling method generated three hundred and sixty-two (*n*=362) articles for 2019. This comprised *Punch* (*n*=107), *This Day* (*n*=83), *Daily Trust* (*n*=76) and *Leadership* (*n*=96). For 2020, it produced two hundred and ninety-nine (*n*=299) articles consisting of *Punch* (*n*=99), *This Day* (*n*=73), *Daily Trust* (*n*=61) and *Leadership* (*n*=66). In sum, a total of six hundred and sixty-one (*N*=661) articles were examined. These were hard news stories on political corruption. Hard news provides readers with a hierarchical presentation of objective information, based on the newspaper's consideration of the importance of facts (Wyatt and Badger, 1993).

As already discussed, the years identified represent an election year (2019) and a non-election year (2020). The year 2019 consisted of the election campaign season in the run-up to the presidential and federal parliamentary elections initially planned for 16th February, as well as gubernatorial and state parliamentary elections scheduled for 2nd March. However, voting was postponed one week by the electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in the last hours before balloting. Thus, the presidential and federal parliamentary elections were held on 23rd February whereas the gubernatorial and state parliamentary elections were held on 9th March (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2019a) respectively.

Furthermore, some elections were not held on the re-scheduled dates above. These comprised off-cycle gubernatorial elections for four of Nigeria's thirty-six states. These states were Bayelsa and Kogi states which held their elections on 16th November

2019; Edo State on 19th September 2020; and Ondo State on 10th October 2020. There were also several court-ordered re-run elections for seats in both the state and federal parliaments (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2019b). However, 2019 was the definitive election year in Nigeria as declared by the country's Independent National Election Commission (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2019a).

4.3.1 Online vs print versions of newspapers

I examined the print versions of these newspapers. The print version rather than the online version makes it possible and easier to account for editorial prompts such as position of article, size of pictures, and the length of story in the context of a page. These features suggest the salience accorded a frame and the importance of a story as assigned by editors (Tewksbury and Althaus, 2000; Van Gorp, 2010). Also, although many Nigerian newspapers host a version of their print editions on their websites (Yusha'u, 2014; Akoh et al., 2012), online content changes constantly because it is regularly updated with new information and breaking news. Compared with the print version, these online versions are markedly different in terms of the length and number of stories published. Furthermore, online versions are inadequate for determining the prominence of the story (Tewksbury and Althaus, 2000).

4.3.2 Defining frames and the coding procedure

To investigate framing using content analysis, I used the inductive-deductive approach in analysing the newspaper articles on political corruption. The inductive phase comprised reading a selection of newspaper articles from January and February 2019, and December 2020. The rationale for these dates was that news coverage from these

periods was most representative of an election year and a non-election year in Nigeria. This is because campaigns by political elites were most intense in the weeks leading up to crucial presidential and legislative assembly elections scheduled for February 2019. Contrastingly, there were no campaigns in the month of December 2020 because there were no elections after 5th December 2020 when some federal and local assembly bye-elections were held in some states of the country. I also acquainted myself with information from websites of anti-corruption bodies, political parties, and a range of divergent news on political corruption across different media, comprising newspapers, television, and social media. This is because frames are part of the wider culture and can be found in public discourse without necessarily being used in the news media. As such, it is important for a researcher to become acquainted with a diverse array of academic and non-academic sources for the issue under investigation (Hertog and McLeod, 2001; Van Gorp, 2007, 2010).

An important indication of a frame is the selection of sources used as these sources can influence the nature of information presented in a news text (Hertog and McLeod, 2001; Carragee and Roefs, 2004). Thus, I classified the narratives into distinct categories based on the similarities and differences in the use of sources. The inductive analysis showed that the narratives in the news on political corruption were developed around a wide range of sources, ranging from local politicians, civil society, traditional rulers, religious leaders, and citizens, to foreign businesses, governments, and international development organisations. The main themes in the narratives were the responsibility for addressing/committing political corruption, and the economic impact of political corruption.

I found that the frames in the news reports concerning political corruption were adaptable to Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five frames: attribution of responsibility, human interest, conflict, economic consequences and morality. As discussed in Chapter 2, their study explored the framing of several political themes including corruption in the Dutch press and television. The attribution of responsibility frame discusses political corruption by assigning responsibility for its causation or solution to a political party, an institution, group, or individual (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; de Vreese and Lecheler, 2012; Vliegenthart, 2012; Gronemeyer and Porath, 2017). For example, "PDP Claims N14tn Stolen Under Buhari" (*Punch*, 29 April 2019, Page 26). The human interest frame emphasises the emotional aspect of the problem and investigates the personal lives of individuals or groups, in order to discuss political corruption (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; de Vreese and Lecheler, 2012; Vliegenthart, 2012; Gronemeyer and Porath, 2017; Brüggemann and D'Angelo, 2018). For instance, "Malabu Oil Probe: I've Ulcer, Glaucoma, Hypertension, Others, Adoke Tells Court" (*Punch*, 18 January 2020, Page 46).

The conflict frame reflects disagreement between parties, institutions, groups, or individuals regarding the assignment of blame for political corruption (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; de Vreese and Lecheler, 2012; Vliegenthart, 2012; Gronemeyer and Porath, 2017; Brüggemann and D'Angelo, 2018). For example, "Jime, Ortom Trade Words over Benue Inconclusive Poll" (*Daily Trust*, 18 March 2019, Page 14). The economic consequences frame highlights the economic cost/benefits of political corruption by referring to the financial loss or gain due to corruption that affects a region, institution, group or country (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; de Vreese and Lecheler, 2012; Vliegenthart, 2012; Gronemeyer and Porath, 2017; Brüggemann and

D'Angelo, 2018) e.g. "17 Firms Jostle to Monitor Utilisation of $312m Abacha Loot" (*This Day*, 29 May 2020, Page 44). Finally, the morality frame discusses political corruption in the context of religion, moral or social values (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; de Vreese and Lecheler, 2012; Vliegenthart, 2012; Gronemeyer and Porath, 2017; Brüggemann and D'Angelo, 2018). For example, "Don't Be Desperate for Power, Sultan, CAN Warn Politicians" (*Leadership*, 17 January 2019, Page 5). (See Appendix 2 for a list of sample headlines categorised by frames)

Drawing from the four newspapers, below is a list of twenty corruption stories comprising ten stories from each of the years analysed. The list is followed by two case studies, the attribution of responsibility frame and the conflict frame, to highlight the use of sources in these frames.

2019 (Election Year)

1. Buhari Using Govt Funds for Campaigns, Says Atiku ***Punch, 11.1.2019***
2. I Will Expose Kwankwaso's Financial Atrocities, Says Ganduje ***This Day, 11.1.2019***
3. Tinubu's Bullion Vans: EFCC Manhandles Journalists as Activists Submit Petition ***Punch, 26.10.2019***
4. Drama, as Onnoghen is Forced to Take Pleas in the Dock ***This Day, 16.2.2019***
5. Amina Zakari Not Blood Relation of Buhari -Presidency ***Daily Trust, 5.1.2019***
6. Jubilation as Bogoro Resumes at TETFund ***Leadership, 23.1.2019***
7. Governors Stealing Public Funds Need Deliverance, Says Nasarawa Gov ***This Day,14.10.2019***
8. Cherubim & Seraphim Church to Buhari: Nigeria Needs You, Don't Overstretch Yourself ***Daily Trust, 5.1.2019***
9. Presidency, PDP At Loggerheads Over $1bn ECA Security Fund ***Leadership, 22.7.2019***

10. PMB Blames Corruption, Poor Investment In Education For Insecurity ***Leadership, 9.8.2019***

2020 (Non-Election Year)

1. Cleric Charges Nigerian Leaders To Embrace God ***Leadership, 23.2.2020***

2. Return Our Stolen Resources, APC Tells PDP Leaders ***This Day, 6.1.2020***

3. PDP Urges N/Assembly to Probe Presidency ***Daily Trust, 23.2.2020***

4. I Didn't Benefit from Any Funds to Justice Ministry ***Daily Trust, 11.2.2020***

5. I Can Recover $10bn Stolen Pension Fund in 30 Days- Maina ***Leadership, 2.10.2020***

6. Senate, NDDC Spar over N3.14bn Palliatives to Staff, Police ***Daily Trust, 10.7.2020***

7. Edo 2020: Presidency Hits Back at PDP ***Leadership, 9.8.2020***

8. Akpabio Replies Nunieh, Denies Alleged Harassment, Corruption ***This Day,16.7.2020***

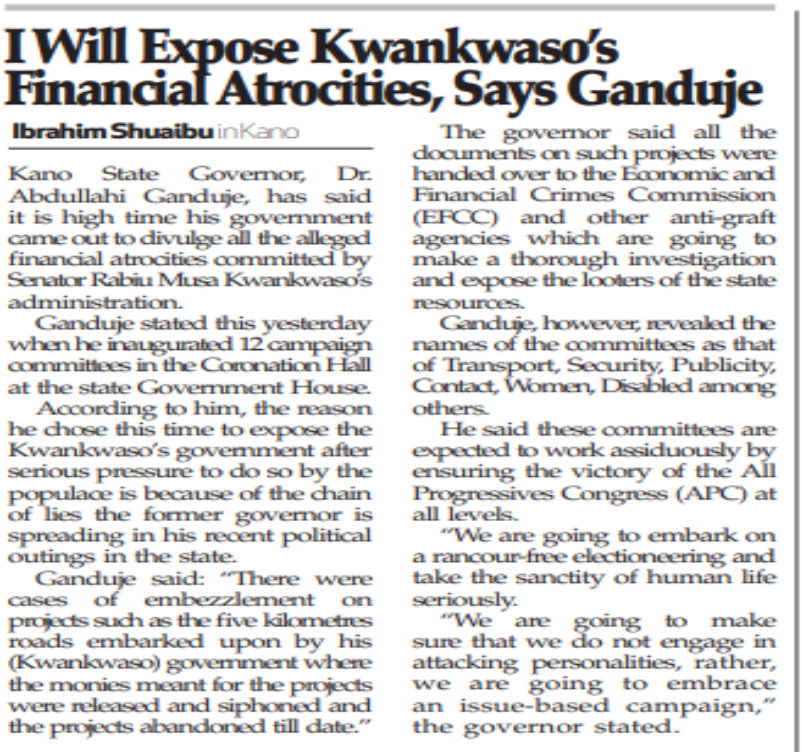
9. Lawan Seeks World Bank's Help on Nigeria's Looted Funds ***This Day, 18.3.2020***

10. US to Nigeria:You'll Repay Abacha Loot If Re-Stolen ***Daily Trust, 5.2.2020***

Case study 1

Attribution of responsibility frame in the election year, 2019 (No.2 on the election year list)

Leadership Newspaper 11.1.2019, Page 12



I Will Expose Kwankwaso's Financial Atrocities, Says Ganduje

Ibrahim Shuaibu inKano

Kano State Governor, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje, has said it is high time his government came out to divulge all the alleged financial atrocities committed by Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso's administration.

Ganduje stated this yesterday when he inaugurated 12 campaign committees in the Coronation Hall at the state Government House.

According to him, the reason he chose this time to expose the Kwankwaso's government after serious pressure to do so by the populace is because of the chain of lies the former governor is spreading in his recent political outings in the state.

Ganduje said: "There were cases of embezzlement on projects such as the five kilometres roads embarked upon by his (Kwankwaso) government where the monies meant for the projects were released and siphoned and the projects abandoned till date."

The governor said all the documents on such projects were handed over to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and other anti-graft agencies which are going to make a thorough investigation and expose the looters of the state resources.

Ganduje, however, revealed the names of the committees as that of Transport, Security, Publicity, Contact, Women, Disabled among others.

He said these committees are expected to work assiduously by ensuring the victory of the All Progressives Congress (APC) at all levels.

"We are going to embark on a rancour-free electioneering and take the sanctity of human life seriously.

"We are going to make sure that we do not engage in attacking personalities, rather, we are going to embrace an issue-based campaign," the governor stated.

The headline establishes Kano State Governor, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje as the newspaper's source for assigning blame for corruption to his predecessor, Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso. The publication, in the fourth paragraph, provides a direct quote from Ganduje which states, "There were cases of embezzlement on projects such as the five kilometres roads embarked upon by his (Kwankwaso) government where the monies meant for the projects were released and siphoned and the projects abandoned till date." The story then goes on to describe, in the closing paragraphs, how Governor Ganduje will work with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and other anti-graft agencies to expose corruption and ultimately ensure victory for his party, the All Progressives Congress in the 2019 elections.

Case study 2

Conflict frame in the non-election year, 2020 (No. 5 on the non-election year list)

Daily Trust Newspaper 10.7.2020, Page 5

DAILY TRUST, Friday, July 10, 2020

Senate, NDDC spar over N3.14bn palliatives to staff, police

By Abdullateef Salau, Abbas Jimoh, Muideen Adeniyi (Abuja), Victor Edozie (Port Harcourt), Usman Bello (Benin), Willie Bassey (Yenagoa), Iniabasi Umo (Uyo), Linus Effiong (Umuahia), Bola Ojuola (Akure) & Eyo Charles (Calabar)

The Senate and the Interim Management Committee (IMC) of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) engaged in a verbal war yesterday with the former accusing the latter of sharing N3.14 billion to staff and the police as COVID-19 relief package.

The upper chamber is probing allegations of misappropriation of N40 billion by the IMC of the commission.

At the commencement of public hearing in Abuja, the Chairman of the Senate Ad hoc Committee on Investigation of Alleged Financial Recklessness in the NDDC, Senator Olubunmi Adetumbi, gave the breakdown of how N3.14billion was shared.

"From the financial statements or documents forwarded to this committee from your office (IMC) as regards expenditure carried out between October 29, 2019 and May 31, 2020, monies expended on COVID-19 pandemic relief are mind-boggling.

"Out of the total expenditure of N81.495 billion spent by both the IMC led by Mrs Gbene Nunieh as Managing Director between October 29, 2019 and February 18, 2020, and the current IMC led by Professor Pondei between February 19, 2020 and May 31, N1.3 billion; condolences, N122 million; consultancy, N83.8 million; COVID-19 intervention, N3.14 billion; Duty Tour Allowance (DTA) N486 million; Imprest N790.9 million; Lassa fever, N1.956 billion; legal fees, N906 million; logistics, N61 million, maintenance; N61 million and medicals, N2.6 billion.

'Our agency hijacked by legislators for self-help'

But in his submission at the hearing, the NDDC's acting Deputy Director, Projects, Cairo Ojougboh, said the allegation that the IMC had misapplied the sum of N40 billion since inception was unfounded.

He said the IMC had not initiated any new projects that formed the basis of any payments other than the Emergency Intervention on COVID-19 that was ordered and approved by President Muhammadu Buhari.

The IMC, he said, inherited a debt profile of about N3 trillion out of which the sum of N156, 986,545,802.68 had been processed and ready for payment by previous management.

He said "the budgets of the commission have always been hijacked by the leadership of the committee on NDCC from both chambers for their personal gain."

According to him, "The budget(s) of the NNDC from 2001 till date have always been hijacked by the two chairmen of the committee; the chairman in

■ Senate President Ahmad Lawan

have not given us the record of how the money was spent," he said.

The spokesman of the Nigeria Police Force, DCP Frank Mba, did not respond to a request for comment on the statement by the NNDC management that the police got N475m to buy face mask and hand sanitisers.

Mixed reactions in Niger Delta

Daily Trust reports that there were mixed reactions from the Niger Delta states yesterday over how the affairs of the NDCC were carried out in respect of touching the lives of the people at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were allegations that officials of the NDDC took care of themselves more with the monies set aside to support the vulnerable.

Our reporters could not establish the actual amount released to be used as COVID-19 palliatives.

However, some residents of 77 cartons of sanitiser, 93 cartons of Dettol, 1,164 cartons of toilet roll, 46 cartons of toothpaste, 25 cartons of toothbrush, 155 pieces of inhaler, 42 sets of crutches and 42 sets of wheel chair.

Three people in Uyo and two others in Abak said they received some support.

Ukeme Samuel who is a trader said she got rice and spaghetti, while a taxi driver who gave his name as Ndifrike said he got garri.

In Abia, Mr Gospel Adiele, a community leader in Ukwa, one of the oil producing communities in the state said they only heard of the intervention for the first time.

And in Ondo State, a widow, Mrs Victoria Aderemi Ilesanmi, said she hasn't received anything from the state government, NDDC or private organisations.

Mr Aniedi Imoh, a barber who lives on Mbukpa Road, in Calabar, said nobody told him anything about palliatives from NDDC.

be cleared upon assumption of office."

Daily Trust recalled that since the appointment of the interim management committee by President Buhari, the NDDC had remained in the media with some leaders from the Niger Delta trading blames, a development that partly resulted in the decision of the National Assembly to wade into the matter.

For instance, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Niger Delta Affairs, Senator Peter Nwaoboshi (PDP, Delta North) had alleged that Senator Godswill Akpabio had collected contracts worth N500 million from NDDC in 2017 without executing them, despite receiving full payment.

On his part, Akpabio had through the interim committee alleged that Nwaoboshi similarly collected N3.6 billion worth of contracts from the commission in 2016, without any execution.

CSOs task National Assembly on equity

The Head, Environment and Conservation, Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD), Dr Kabari Sam, told *Daily Trust* that there was nothing wrong with the National Assembly initiating a probe of the NDDC or any other agency.

According to him, "Any probe ordered by Mr. President or initiated by the National Assembly is in order. However, we should go beyond the probes and ensure that whoever is

The headline in this story suggests that the frame involves the exchange of accusations and counter-accusations between the Senate and Interim Management Committee (IMC) of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), described by the newspaper as engaging in "a verbal war" in the lead paragraph. The story uses different sources, including politicians, political appointees at the NDDC, and representatives of civil society organisations to give conflicting positions on the use of funds by the NDDC. Among these sources are the Chairman of the Senate Ad Hoc

Committee on Investigation of Alleged Financial Recklessness, Senator Olubunmi Adetumbi; the NDDC's Acting Deputy Director, Projects, Cairo Ojougboh; and the Head, Environment and Conservation, Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD), a civil society organisation, Dr. Kabari Sam. The second and third paragraphs in the last column of the news give further evidence to support the use of the conflict frame in stating that, "For instance, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Niger Delta Affairs, Senator Peter Nwaoboshi (PDP, Delta North) had alleged that Senator Godswill Akpabio had collected contracts worth N500 million from the NDDC in 2017, without executing them, despite receiving full payment. On his part, Akpabio, had through the interim committee alleged that Nwaoboshi similarly collected N3.6 billion worth of contracts from the commission in 2016, without any execution". (See Appendix 8 for an in-depth analysis of the five frames used in the study).

The advantage of adapting Semetko and Valkenburg's five frames' method was its facility for the identification of frames by acknowledging the presence or absence of certain variables through the use of simple yes/no questions (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p.98-99; de Vreese, 2005, pp.57; Van Gorp, 2010, p. 99; Brüggemann and D'Angelo, 2018). This simplicity supports reliability and validity in content analysis because it minimises the need for coders to subjectively interpret the text, and thus enhances objectivity (Van Gorp, 2010). Additionally, the human-interest frame also supported the coding for visuals. It was important to code for visuals because Nigerian newspapers frequently use pictures in depicting news about political corruption. The neglect of pictures in content analysis can limit the understanding of news frames (Matthes, 2009, p.360).

For the finalised codebook, variables were developed based on the identified frames and the news sources used by these frames to discuss political corruption (See Appendix 3 for more detailed information on Scott's Pi for each variable including the definitions of variables and their examples). All variables in the codebook were defined in clear and simple terms and were mutually exclusive (Neuendorf, 2002). Almost all the variables applied dichotomous measurements, except those identifying the specific newspaper and prominence of story. The variables were deductively coded in the coding process with nominal measurements. Furthermore, dates were written in day-month-year (dd-mm-yyyy) format, and the length of a story was measured in the actual word count.

I conducted a pilot study of one hundred articles, comprising fifty articles from each of the years investigated. Thus, fifty articles from 2019 and fifty articles from 2020. Each article was read in its entirety and coded manually. If more than one frame was found in an article, the dominant frame and associated variables receiving the most space within each story was chosen as the coded frame. This approach is in line with Hertog and McLeod's (2001) guidance that the frequency of certain categories related to the frame and "column inches devoted to a particular source or source category" (p.153) assist in determining the frame utilised. Results from the pilot study were used to develop some of the questions in the topic guide for interviews (discussed later). After this initial study, all the remaining articles were coded. The entire data was subsequently analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). I had been taught how to use the software by one of my thesis' supervisors.

4.3.3 Intercoder reliability

Following the development of the codebook, a social science graduate in Nigeria was recruited and trained. Van Gorp (2010) has pointed out the usefulness of having a coder that is familiar with the culture, because "frames are part of the culture… (and the coder) is needed as an agent to make a connection between a text and the cultural stock of frames" (p.89). The training consisted of providing a background on the literature on political corruption in Nigeria, a sample of five articles, each exemplifying the five different frames of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and discussing Tankard's (2001) list of framing mechanisms to facilitate the identification of frames. The five articles were subsequently coded and discussed, leading to the fine-tuning of definitions for some of the variables to enhance clarity.

After pilot testing, we coded an initial sample of 67 articles independently, achieving intercoder reliability on all but three variables. After further discussions and clarification, we re-coded the articles, adding five new articles. This second round of coding achieved an acceptable level of intercoder reliability for all variables, ranging from .84 to 1.0 based on Scott's Pi. The independently coded sample was slightly over ten percent of the total sample analysed (See Appendix 4 for the first attempt at achieving intercoder reliability for all variables; and Appendix 5 for the second attempt at achieving intercoder reliability which was successful for all variables).

4.3.4 Limitations

Employing content analysis to investigate framing is not a novel concept. Indeed, both Matthes (2009) and Borah (2011) have discussed the frequency of its application to investigate framing. The works of Olugboji (2020) and Adisa et al. (2018) reviewed in

Chapter 2 employed content analysis to examine news frames in their studies on Nigeria. Yet, despite its wide application, content analysis of news frames, has certain limitations.

The first is that content analysis places a strong emphasis on manifest content (Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 2014), which makes it difficult to measure media frames that are, by their nature, abstract (Van Gorp, 2010). I have attempted to contain this limitation by applying simple, clear, and specific codes that indicate the presence of a particular frame in newspaper articles. This specificity in turn supports reliability and validity (Van Gorp, 2010; Matthes 2009). The second concern is that media content "is itself a consequence of a variety of other antecedent conditions or processes that may have led to or shaped its construction" (Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 2014, p.8) and these are not captured by content analysis. This perspective is shared by Borah (2011) and Brüggemann (2014) who call for interviews with journalists as a way of gaining an insight into circumstances that lead to the emergence of frames.

Borah's (2011) study of 379 peer-reviewed journal articles led her to emphasise that studies on framing have tended to employ content analysis overwhelmingly without a commensurate focus on the production process that is responsible for the emergence of frames. Accordingly, Borah calls for interviews with journalists to gather valuable insight into framing in news content. This is because "although frames in communication and their influence on the audience are equally important, understanding the origin of the frames is essential for a more complete picture of framing" (Borah, 2011, p.256).

Brüggemann (2014) also sees content analysis alone as inadequate for the study of framing because it only provides “indirect inferences on the practices and contexts” (2014, p.74) that lead to framing. Thus, he encourages a comprehensive approach that includes interviews with journalists to explain the frames in media content. As already stated, this research addressed the limitations of content analysis by conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with journalists (discussed subsequently).

4.4 Interviews

As discussed above, scholars have urged that qualitative interviews with journalists be employed as a complementary method to investigate the production of frames (D’Angelo and Shaw, 2018; Brüggemann, 2014; Borah, 2011). Brüggemann (2014), for example, sees qualitative interviews with journalists as “the most appropriate way of gathering data” (p.76) to aid our knowledge of the production of frames. Likewise, D’Angelo and Shaw (2018) are persuasive in calling for interviews and other qualitative methods to investigate the production of frames. They argue that the principal role played by journalists in the context of various determinants, within and outside the news organisation, make research techniques such as interviews “an indispensable complement to findings from…content analyses” (p.224).

To illustrate, journalists, as part of their professional routines, are assigned beats, giving them access to particular sources of information. These professional routines combined with the editorial policies of news organisations, the cultural, political, and socio-economic environment where the media is situated, interact and contend with the journalist’s values and beliefs to inform the manner of news presentation (D’Angelo

and Shaw, 2018; Brüggemann, 2014). Put simply, journalists are central actors in the production of news frames and have to contend with several influences. Thus, scholars submit that interviews with journalists, comprising reporters and editors, are necessary for understanding the production of frames in the news.

The qualitative interview as a tool for research originated from conversations between people to gain knowledge about a phenomenon. Brinkmann (2018) observes that "the interview is as old as humanity" (p.1008) because people have always utilised conversation for the purpose of gaining knowledge. Notwithstanding its origins in human conversation, researchers make a clear distinction between in-depth interviews and conversations. Qualitative in-depth interviews, unlike conversations, have a defined purpose and are directed at answering specific research questions (Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020). These interviews are one-on-one discussions, with the interviewer posing most of the questions and the interviewee, usually an expert on the subject, providing the answers. Additionally, in-depth interviews explore a single topic in detail "rather than skipping around from one matter to another" (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p.5). This allows the researcher to gain a rich contextual insight from the perspective of participants.

The in-depth interview as a research method has several strengths. For this study, it helped the researcher to explore the sensitive topic of illegal behaviour that people would rather prefer was hidden. It also facilitated the investigation of the news production process which is not easily accessible. These reasons justified the use of one-on-one, in-depth interviews, with current and former reporters and editors to understand the framing of news on malpractice by politicians, and those connected to

them. Despite its strengths and the benefits it yielded for this research by supplying rich context to explore the reporting on political corruption, the in-depth interview is not without its challenges (Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020).

For one, transcription of interviews is a time-consuming activity, particularly with verbatim transcription as done in this study. This entailed having to playback the interviews several times to ensure nothing was missed. Secondly, interviews may be subject to bias from both the interviewer who hears what he wants, and the participants who may say what they consider as appropriate (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011; Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013). To limit this bias on the part of the participants, the study recruited a variety of journalists to gain a diversity of perspectives on the same subject: news reporting on political corruption. The journalists recruited for the study were not exclusively from the four newspapers examined in this study but other Nigerian newspapers as well. Thus, they offered a broad range of perspectives based on their individual experiences. Also, in discussing their views, I have used their direct quotations to accurately reflect what they said. Regarding bias on my part, I tried to contain such bias by staying conscious and alert to my own preconceived notions throughout the interview and data analysis process.

The in-depth interview begins by building rapport and trust between the participant and the interviewer (Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020). It then follows with posing open-ended questions in a clear and determined way, and encouraging the interviewee to offer answers using a semi-structured interview format. This format enables the interviewer to probe for details to ensure clarity and understanding in relation to the research question (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020;

McIntosh and Morse, 2015). McIntosh and Morse (2015) conceive of the semi-structured format as rooted in communication research. They state that it evolved from the focused interview format conducted to explain the statistical data from studies on the effects of mass communication. The semi-structured pattern is situated between the structured format that is considered too rigid, and the unstructured type of interviewing which is viewed as too loose. As such, it is the semi-structured interview that is considered the most knowledge-producing form of interviewing. This is because questions are directed at the participant to obtain specific in-depth information to be used in the interpretation of "the described phenomena" (Brinkmann, 2018, p.287).

4.4.1 Sampling: Purposive and Snowballing

In total, I interviewed 24 journalists. 14 of these journalists were purposefully sampled, comprising 5 from *Leadership*, 4 from *Punch,* 3 from *Daily Trust* and 2 from *This Day.* The purposefully sampled journalists from *Leadership* consisted of editors and reporters on the politics desk who had written or edited stories on political corruption in the years investigated in this study. Journalists from *Punch* comprised a reporter on the politics desk, two editors and a former news editor. The journalists from *Daily Trust* comprised a politics reporter and two editors. Similarly, for *This Day*, I interviewed a politics reporter and a former editor. For these purposefully sampled journalists, I posed the questions in the topic guide with reference to their reports on political corruption as evidence, and they responded accordingly.

I contacted these journalists using the numbers provided by either their newspapers or through my personal contacts in the media. Thus, their recruitment was deliberate and was essential to gain a rich insight into the factors that influence the framing of

news on political corruption in the years examined. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2020) describe the purposeful recruitment of information-rich participants as beneficial for gaining depth and a diversity of perspectives on the issues being investigated. However, I also used the snowballing sampling method to recruit ten additional participants that were interviewed for the study. These journalists consisted of 3 from *Daily Trust*, 2 from *This Day*, 2 from *The Guardian* and 1 each from *Daily Independent*, *BusinessDay* and *The Vanguard* (See Appendix 7 for the complete list of interviewees showing their positions, gender and experience).

Some of these aforementioned journalists were referred to me by those who were purposefully recruited and interviewed in the initial stages. The others, I became acquainted with during a very brief spell when I worked as a journalist, and in the course of my career in media and public relations. Both purposive and snow-balling sampling methods are non-probability sampling techniques for recruiting participants based on specific characteristics (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020, p.92, p.104; Brooks, Horrocks and King, 2019, p.62). Moreover, combining both sampling methods ensured that the participants interviewed were qualified and willing to speak on the subject, the latter being an important ethical requirement. Thus, beyond its usefulness for providing depth and context based on knowledge and experience, this sampling strategy helped me adhere to the ethical stipulation that participation in the study must be voluntary.

Altogether, the participants comprised twenty males and four female journalists who work(ed) as newspaper editors, news editors, and reporters covering politics, business, and other sectors. Former journalists, unencumbered by their job roles,

responsibilities, and loyalties to employers were quite expressive in their perspectives about news reporting on political corruption. Furthermore, journalists from other sectors enriched the study with their perspectives because as already discussed in Chapter 3, political corruption often involves a complex maze of actors in government and business institutions. However, it needs to be stated that all the journalists interviewed have, in the course of their careers, either written or edited stories on politics.

4.4.2 Telephone interviews

I conducted the interviews by telephone. Certain factors support the use of the telephone for in-depth semi-structured interviews (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004; McIntosh and Morse, 2015; Block and Erskine, 2012). These include the safety of interviewer and interviewee, cost, access to participants, and convenience for discussing a sensitive topic. These considerations informed my decision to use the telephone in conducting the interviews. Safety was applicable within the context of the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19), with people preferring to meet remotely instead of in-person. Although restrictions had been eased at the time of conducting the research, caution was still recommended to avoid infection. Cost and access to the participants were applicable because of the limited resources available for the research and the diverse locations of the different participants in their offices and homes situated in various parts of Lagos and Abuja. As such, conducting the interviews by phone made it easier and less expensive to reach the participants.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that journalists are typically pressed for time because of the urgency associated with sourcing and writing news stories to a strict deadline. It is

difficult, with this time constraint, to sit down for a face-to-face interview. So, the convenience of having the discussions over the phone provided added rationale for the telephone as the preferred option, especially because discussing political corruption where suspected or convicted actors are named is a sensitive topic. A final consideration supporting the efficacy of the telephone for interviews is the normality of mobile phones in Nigeria for discussions (Silver and Johnson, 2018). However, it should be stated that McIntosh and Morse (2015) observe that studies conducted by phone could be compromised if participants are made to pay for call charges, but this was not applicable to this study, as calls were paid for by the researcher.

Still, some scholars have stressed that an essential feature of in-depth interviews is that they must be conducted with the interviewer and participant physically present in the same location (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020; Galletta, 2013). Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2020) cite this attribute as the golden rule of in-depth interviews. According to them, the in-person element of the interview supports the establishment of rapport and trust, allows the interviewer to "probe and hear the story of the interviewee, observe the body language and notice changes in language and tone" (p.133). They have argued that these add to the richness of the discussion. They suggest that interviews conducted remotely, by phone or over the internet, lack these qualities and as such, cannot be considered as being in-depth. However, as Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) have demonstrated in their widely cited research comparing face-to-face to telephone interviews, both modes of interviewing are capable of producing rich data. They stress that verbal cues like sighs and hesitation can be detected during telephone conversations and are adequate for replacing visual cues in face-to-face

interviewing. As such, the use of either format should depend on the particular circumstances of the research.

Ahead of each interview, I had called to schedule a convenient time for holding the interview with the participants, discussed the background of the research, and provided *Participant Information* and *Informed Consent* documents. The implications of these documents were again touched on briefly before commencing the actual interview. I followed the recommendation by scholars and started our discussions by making a personal introduction, establishing rapport with the journalists at the beginning of our interactions, and again providing a background to the research (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2020). I also requested information about them in terms of previously assigned beats and particularly, their years of experience reporting on politics, and in journalism generally. Furthermore, I invited any questions or concerns they had about the interview and gave assurances about the anonymity of their identities. I used a list of questions (see Appendix 6: Interview Questions) to conduct the interviews, which I recorded. I also took notes during our discussions.

The interviews, starting with the pilot study, were conducted between 7 June 2022 and 8 September 2022. They were conducted continuously until saturation was achieved. I reached saturation after speaking with, and transcribing the interviews from, twenty participants. By this point, I had gained a full understanding of the issues discussed and many of these issues became repetitive. Saunder et al. (2017) have suggested that the replication of data, accompanied by ample examples to discuss the subject examined, indicates the achievement of saturation. But Morse (1995) insists that

saturation goes beyond repetition, and entails the researcher having a comprehensive understanding of the issues discussed. Saturation, therefore, was achieved when issues were repeated across the data, supported by several examples, leading to my full understanding of the factors influencing news on political corruption. After saturation, the additional interviews did not provide new substantive information. Nonetheless, I conducted all the twenty-four scheduled interviews, completed the full verbatim transcription of our conversations, and used the data to further consolidate the results. Although the four interviews conducted after saturation did not produce new codes/themes on the subject, they were useful in further confirming the existing codes/themes. In all, the interviews averaged 46 minutes, with the longest being one hour and twenty-five minutes.

Discussions with the journalists took place against a background of relevant national and international news coverage on politics and corruption. Some of these events were the political party conventions of Nigeria's two main parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) held on various dates in May and June 2022; the arrest in Nigeria of the Accountant General of the Federation on charges of corruption on 16th May 2022; the arrest of Senator Ike Ekweremadu and his wife for organ harvesting on 23rd June 2022 in London; the sentencing of Senator Peter Nwaoboshi for money laundering on 1st July 2022; off-cycle gubernatorial elections in Ekiti and Osun states of the country on 18th June and 16th July 2022 respectively; the occupation of Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's official residence on 9th July 2022, by citizens protesting against a poor economy due to corruption; and the search of President Donald Trump's private residence by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for unlawful storage of classified documents on

8th August 2022. The journalists drew liberally from these events to provide context to the discussions.

4.4.3 Data analysis

I carried out a thematic analysis of the interviews based on Braun and Clarke's (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015) six-phase approach to coding and theme development. The thematic analysis focused on the explicit meanings attached to obvious ideas communicated by the participants based on their interpretation of their experiences (Clarke, Braun, and Hayfield, 2015). Thus, I used the six phases that began with familiarising myself with the interviews, coding the data, creating themes, reviewing these themes, defining and naming the themes, and writing up the results. Each stage of the analysis lays the foundation for the subsequent stages that follow (Clarke, Braun, and Hayfield, 2015).

Rubin and Rubin (2012) observe that "qualitative analysis requires attention to variation, to differences in emphasis, to shades of meaning that go beyond mere counts" (p.192). They point out that although computer programmes may be useful in retrieving information, they are inadequate in appreciating the rich context with which the interviewee provided such information. Their position is strengthened by Hennink, Hutter and Bailey's (2020) view that "software cannot read the text, reflect on its meaning" (p.219) to make sense of the information provided by the interviewees. These views informed my decision to analyse the data manually.

Familiarising myself with the data began with the process of data collection during the pilot interviews with two journalists from the *Daily Trust* (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield,

2015; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2020). The first was a former journalist and the second was in active employment with the newspaper. After conducting each interview, I carried out a verbatim transcription as recommended by Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2020). This enabled me to check for clarity and comprehension of the topic guide, noting aspects of both the questions and responses that required further clarification and elaboration from myself or the participants. It also helped me to note the salient issues raised while the discussions were still fresh in my mind, which I brought up in subsequent interviews for discussion in greater detail and so received more clarification.

As argued by Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2020, p.212) qualitative data analysis requires the researcher to be immersed in the data to appreciate the unique position of the respondents. Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015) state that the process of familiarisation which entails multiple readings of the transcribed interviews, listening to the recordings repeatedly, and asking questions of the text, enables the researcher to gain deeper insight into the issue. Accordingly, immersing myself in the narratives shared by the journalists through multiple readings as well as replaying the interviews enabled me to understand their positions and actions, and the consequences for news reporting on political corruption.

Thus, the analysis began with the data collection, the verbatim transcription of the interviews, reflection on the answers provided by the journalists in the transcripts and subsequently, the taking of relevant notes (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015). Initially, I selected 10 of the transcribed interviews for code development. These were two each from *Punch*, *This Day*, *Daily Trust* and *Leadership,* the four newspapers with content

analysed in this study. I also included one from *The Guardian* and another from *The Vanguard*. I made sure my selection reflected the diverse range of participants in terms of gender, experience, and position.

I found it more efficient to print out copies of the transcribed interviews in order to read, mark with a highlighter and pen, scrutinise, and compare the views of the different participants. I reflected on them in the light of our discussions and the notes I had made, particularly the relevant areas in terms of similarities and differences of the participants' experiences and responses to my questions, which I had highlighted. Some of the issues that were repeated across the data became writ large across the transcripts. I took careful note of the examples the participants gave, based on the narration of their individual experiences reporting on political corruption. I was also cognisant of catchy phrases which I had highlighted, for example, "need to survive", "need to keep body and soul together", "take care of my family", "on your own", "your organisation will abandon you", "your office will not defend you" and other quotes used by the participants to convey meaning and context in the discussions (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015; Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

Codes were derived from this process of synthesising the data from the interview transcripts with my knowledge of the literature on political corruption, the theoretical framework of the study, and the research questions for the study that informed the topic guide. Thus, the codes were generated through an inductive-deductive process (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020). "A code identifies and labels something of interest in the data in relation to the research question" (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015, p.234). As such, codes are concise phrases that symbolise the issues, ideas, and

topics that describe the event or experience which are present in the data and should illuminate the research question well (Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015). Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2020) go beyond the relevance to the research, to stress the need for codes to be repeated across and within transcripts for their validation.

By linking related codes derived from the analysis, I came up with potential themes. For instance, the following codes: *need to sell newspaper, public good, readers want news on political candidates, opportunity to make money,* and *journalist's responsibility to voters/Nigerians*, led to the theme, "Journalistic obligation and readers' expectation". Clarke, Braun, and Hayfield (2015) advocate that a theme should have a coherence of codes that represent a central issue. In the fourth phase, I reviewed these potential themes, first, to ensure they were representative of the constituent codes and second, to check that the themes relate together in addressing the "research question and reflects the content of the data" (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015; p.238). As such, this phase of the analysis ensures that the identified themes and the overall analysis represent the essence of the data collected.

For the fifth phase of the analysis, defining and naming themes, I identified appropriate names for each identified theme. These were: Sources and access to information; Journalistic obligation and readers' expectation (already stated above); Ownership interests; Risks on reporting corruption; Corruption among journalists; and Lack of resources for investigation. As Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, (2015) observe, "good theme names capture the essence of each theme" (p.240). I also provided a short description of the essence of each theme to distinguish it from the other themes, thus

making each theme distinctive. These finalised themes provided the “road map for the final write-up” (Clarke, Braun, and Hayfield, 2015, p.230) which is the sixth phase of the thematic analysis.

4.5 Ethics and challenges of research

Before undertaking this research, I had sought and received approval (ETH2021-2086) from the Ethics Committee of the Department of Journalism at City, University of London (See Appendix 7: Approved Ethics Application ETH2021-2086). The approval provided the guidelines that I employed in conducting the interviews. The guidelines included the voluntary participation of those interviewed for the study, my responsibility to be transparent and honest in providing background information on the research, and seeking participants’ consent before recording our discussions. It also stated that their personal information would be anonymised to conceal their identity.

Throughout the process of recruiting the participants, conducting the interviews, and writing this research, I made sure to adhere strictly to these guidelines. As an illustration, in one instance, during a discussion with an editor, he asked me to switch off the recorder. To buttress the point he was making, he wanted to provide some sensitive information. I promptly switched off the recorder on this occasion. He subsequently mentioned the names of political elites and amounts of money stolen in relation to political corruption that he was privy to. After he had finished, and with his explicit permission, I re-commenced recording the interview.

Also, in the initial stages of recruiting participants, I faced some challenges in sourcing willing participants, as some journalists expressed scepticism when initially contacted

to participate. Others refused to be interviewed altogether. Again, to illustrate, one journalist asked that I send her the documents relating to the research and call her a day later to confirm her participation. However, when I later called, she answered to say that she had to decline because she was uncomfortable with participating in the research. Two other journalists on the politics desk I intended to recruit for interviews did not return my calls or respond to the messages sent. This led me to use the combined sampling strategy discussed in the section on sampling. As such, I ensured that all the journalists interviewed for this research were willing participants. None requested nor were offered money for their participation. A number of them insisted that their identities should not be revealed, and in line with the ethical requirements, I have taken due care to anonymise their identities in all responses represented in this research.

Beyond these, other challenges encountered fell into two broad categories. These were scheduling and keeping appointments by the journalists on the one hand, and background noises due to the location of a few journalists. The first, the scheduling and keeping of appointments, would occur when the participants proposed a time for the interview but were unable to keep this appointment, by not answering their phones when I called at the scheduled time. In these cases, I would call or message the journalist, ranging from minutes after the scheduled appointment to a couple of days later, in order to reschedule the interview. In all cases, I attempted to negotiate a time convenient for the journalist but with a preference for the mornings when he/she would be at home. This was to ensure that they would be relaxed and free to speak without inhibitions posed by being surrounded by colleagues at work. However, I was not always successful in getting the journalists to agree to a time when they would be at

home. One interview had to be rescheduled five times because of the busy schedule of the journalist, an editor with one of the newspapers examined, and even then, we had to break our discussions into two sessions over the course of two days.

The second challenge was background noise, and occurred when a participant was in a noisy place at the time of our discussions. This was always successfully handled by a suggestion from the journalist or I, to relocate to a quieter place for our discussions to be completely clear. For instance, during an interview with a journalist who was in the newsroom, discussions in the background among her colleagues led her to suggest that I call her back in a few minutes because she wanted to relocate to a more peaceful place. Once she had relocated, we were able to complete the interview without any further interruption. In another example, a journalist had to move to his bedroom from the sitting room because his family members were having a lively debate about football. Thus, the journalists interviewed were either at home or at work, in either Lagos or Abuja. For my part, most of the interviews took place during the summer vacation of City University when students were away from school. So, it was quite easy for me to book any of the study rooms in the Northampton Square Library or find unoccupied lecture theatres to have the discussions undisturbed.

4.6 Subjectivity and positionality

Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2020) state that a researcher's characteristics and self-portrayal during interviews can influence an interviewee's perceptions, and thus the quality of the data collected. Throughout the interviews, I presented myself simply as a Nigerian who was conducting research on media reporting of political corruption to attain a doctorate. Some of the journalists I interviewed could relate to me because

they had previously participated in research on journalism in Nigeria or knew of colleagues who had participated. Many of them had post-graduate degrees in journalism or other fields in the humanities. One had a doctorate, and another was in the process of attaining it. Thus, they were able to relate to me and the research I was undertaking.

However, in selecting participants to be interviewed, I had used not only the list of contacts supplied by fellow journalists and in some cases their news organisations, but contacts from acquaintances and friends I had cultivated during a career in public/media relations or the very brief period I had worked as a journalist. These acquaintances and friends referred me to a couple of journalists. In these instances, I made sure to emphasise that the research was an academic pursuit and was not work-related. Nevertheless, it is possible that participants' answers, particularly at the beginning stages of our discussions, may have contained some level of bias. In such cases, I would ensure to return to the initial questions before rounding up the discussions. Thus, I tried to remain conscious of any bias so that it did not hinder the depth and quality of our discussions. But it is not improbable that some level of subjectivity may have filtered through. Tracy (2019) notes that a researcher's experience, values and perspectives can be either wisdom or baggage, depending on its deployment. I have tried to ensure that mine were used advantageously to further an understanding of media reporting on political corruption.

4.7 Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been the methods applied to examine the news frames on political corruption within the context of an election year and a non-election year, specifically 2019 and 2020. The methods used were content analysis and in-depth interviews with journalists. Both methods have been advocated by scholars for helping to understand how frames are produced in the news. This is because inferences made from content analysis can be confirmed or debunked by probing the journalists who are actually involved in the news production on political corruption.

Nearly seven hundred articles comprising hard news from *Daily Trust, Leadership, Punch* and *This Day* were content analysed. The analysis established the frames used by the newspapers to discuss political corruption, showed the frequency of sources quoted, and how these frames and sources vary when the election year of 2019 is compared with the routine year of 2020. The chapter also presented the sampling methods employed to recruit journalists, first from the newspapers examined, and augmented with journalists from other publications to ensure a variety of participants. This was a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods to provide a broad range of perspectives that enriched the data generated. The journalists interviewed provided the considerations that informed the choices they made in choosing how to present the news, in the light of multiple contending factors. In the course of interviewing these journalists, I encountered some challenges but these were overcome with patience and persistence.

Altogether, in-depth interviews with journalists took me beyond the surface content and provided rich, contextual insight and a comprehensive understanding of the

unseen, complex considerations that journalists face in writing the news. The data proved useful for appreciating the production of news frames on political corruption and its variations when an election year is compared to a routine year.

Chapter 5

Content Analysis: Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the content analysis of hard news articles in the four newspapers selected for this study: *Punch, This Day, Daily Trust,* and *Leadership*. As such, the findings relate directly to the four research questions answered using content analysis. Specifically, six hundred and sixty-one (*N* = 661) news articles generated by the systematic random sampling method were examined in the two years selected for this study. These were the election year, 2019, and the non-election year, 2020. The articles were examined to determine the frames and sources used by the newspapers for their reporting on political corruption, and the variation of these frames and sources when the two years identified above are compared with each other. As discussed in Chapter 4, the frames examined in the news reports on political corruption were adapted from Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five frames: attribution of responsibility, human interest, conflict, economic consequences, and morality. The chapter begins with a brief summary of the key findings before proceeding to provide the details in greater depth.

5.2 Summary of key findings

Comparing an exciting election year with a relatively dull routine year is significant because the election year is a keenly contested affair. Politicians and their supporters actively seek to use the media to promote their preferred arguments to win elections to public offices that give them influence and, in some cases, direct access to vast state resources (Owen and Usman, 2015; Turnbull, 2021; Akaeze, 2023). However,

one striking feature of the findings is the overwhelming dominance of the attribution of responsibility frame with politicians and government appointees as the privileged sources in both the election year and the routine year. This was the case in all the newspapers. Also instructive, is the hundred-fold increase in the use of civil society organisations (CSOs) as sources in the routine year, coming from their poor deployment in the voting year, revealing a stronger dependence on them by the newspapers in the routine year, 2020, than in the election year, 2019. Furthermore, of the foreign sources, foreign governments were the most dominant, and their level of use as sources remained the same across both years.

Regarding the news frames, there is also a hundred-fold increase in the use of the human interest frames in the routine coming from its low utility in discussing political corruption in the voting year, whereas the other frames remained more or less the same in both years. These findings are discussed using graphical illustrations with percentages rounded up to the nearest whole number. The graphs are presented first, in answer to each question, and are then supported by a more detailed analysis produced by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) which was used to run a number of tests.

5.3 RQ1a: How are the five frames (attribution of responsibility, human interest, conflict, economic consequences, and morality) used across the four newspapers?

The first research question (RQ1a) asked how the five frames in the study were used in the four newspapers. As seen in Figure 5.1 below, the results show a dominance of the attribution of responsibility frame across the newspapers. *Punch* and *Daily Trust,*

used this frame the most at 73% and 70% respectively while the frame's employment in *This Day* and *Leadership* were at 66% and 63% respectively.

Also evident from Figure 5.1, *Leadership* and *Daily Trust* use the conflict frame to the same degree at 19% each, whereas *This Day* and *Punch* are more closely aligned in applying the frame at 17% and 15%. So, it can be argued that all the newspapers use both the attribution of responsibility and conflict frames to a similar degree, without any significant differentiation between them.

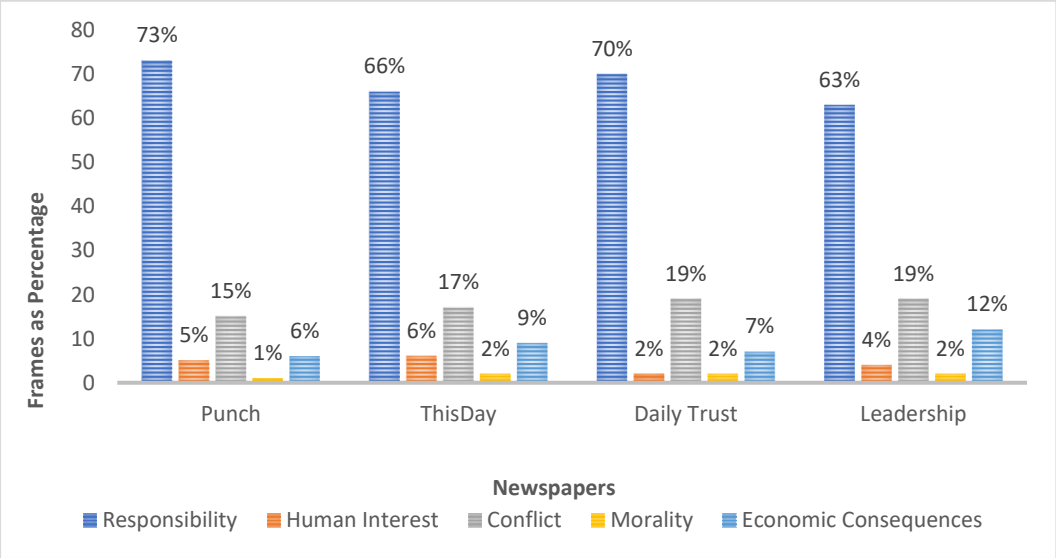


Figure 5.1 Use of frames by each newspaper as percentages

In contrast, the human interest and morality frames were less frequently employed for news on political corruption. However, the use of the human interest frame at 6%, 5%, 4% and 2% for *This Day*, *Punch*, *Leadership* and *Daily Trust* respectively, surpassed the use of the morality frame which stood at 2%, 1%, 2% and 2% for these newspapers, with *Punch* using the morality frame the least.

Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to answer the research question, the first calculations were a one-way analysis of variance tests (One-Way ANOVA) between the frames and the newspapers. This resulted in statistical significance for only the attribution of responsibility frame, $F(3,657) = 8.33$, $p < .001$, and the economic consequences frame $F(3,657) = 5.19$, $p < .002$. Table 5.1 below shows the values for mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) for each of the newspapers.

Table 5.1

Mean and standard deviation scores for the frames in the newspapers.

Frames	*F*	*Punch*		*This Day*		*Daily Trust*		*Leadership*	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Responsibility	8.33**	.27	.17	.35	.20	.28	.17	.33	.19
Human Interest	1.42	.03	.14	.06	.17	.04	.12	.05	.15
Conflict	1.35	.15	.28	.17	.28	.20	.30	.15	.26
Morality	.77	.01	.10	.03	.14	.01	.10	.02	.13
Economic Consequences	5.185*	.07	.20	.16	.24	.11	.21	.15	.24

Note: M = Mean. SD =Standard Deviation

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. *df=3*

Examining the Bonferroni post-hoc, comparisons reveal that the use of responsibility frame was statistically different for the newspapers. Both *Punch* and *Daily Trust* show

similar usage of this frame but differ from *This Day* and *Leadership* as seen in the values for mean and standard deviation when comparisons are made between the four newspapers.

Much like the attribution of responsibility frame, Bonferroni post-hoc also showed that the use of the economic consequences frame was statistically different for the newspapers. *This Day* and *Leadership* newspapers use the frame more than *Daily Trust* and *Punch* that are both closely aligned in their use of the frame. Thus, the use of economic consequences frame for *Punch* and *Daily Trust* was statistically different from the frame's utility in *This Day* and *Leadership* as seen in their values for mean and standard deviation. So, it is plausible to state that the discreetly politically aligned newspapers, *Punch* and *Daily Trust,* use the responsibility frame more for news on political corruption, blaming political elites for maladministration or holding them responsible for solving the problem. By contrast, the obviously politically aligned newspapers, *This Day* and *Leadership,* tend towards using the economic consequences frame, choosing to underscore the financial costs involved rather than assigning blame/responsibility for corruption in their reports. The values in Table 5.1 correspond with percentages in Figure 5.1 that illustrate the use of the frames across the newspapers.

Based on these findings for the first research question, the frames for discussing political corruption in the newspapers, in descending order of frequency, are: attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, human interest, and morality. However, both the responsibility and economic consequences frames show the greatest differentiation among the newspapers, suggestive of some level of

intentionality or constraint by the publications, requiring their use of these frames to discuss political corruption.

5.3.1 RQ1b: How do the frames vary when the election year is compared to the routine year?

The second part of the first research question (RQ1b) sought to compare the use of the five frames when the election year is compared to the routine year. As seen in Figure 5.2 below, the two frames that change significantly going from the election year to the routine year is the human interest and morality frames which show a doubling of their use. In the case of the human interest frame, it goes from three percentage points to six percentage points (3%, election year; 6%, routine year) while the morality frame goes from one percentage point to two percentage points (1%, election year; 2% routine year). However, the change in the human interest frame is more significant than that observed in the morality news frame. All the other frames remain more or less the same in their use by the newspapers, proceeding from the voting year to the non-voting year. The responsibility frame (70%, election year; 66%, routine year) drops by four percentages from the voting year to the routine year. The remaining two frames, conflict (18%, election year; 17%, routine year) and economic consequences (8%, election year; 9%, routine year) change by only a single digit percentage between the years investigated.

Futhermore, combining the data exposes the extent to which attribution of responsibility and conflict frames, featuring mainly politicians as sources, dominate the news reports. These frames take up 88% (responsibility at 70%, and conflict at 18%) of the frames in the voting year of 2019, and 83% (responsibility at 66%, and conflict

at 17%) in the routine year, 2020. This leaves the three frames of human interest, economic consequences and morality at a combined 12% in an election year, and 17% in a routine year.

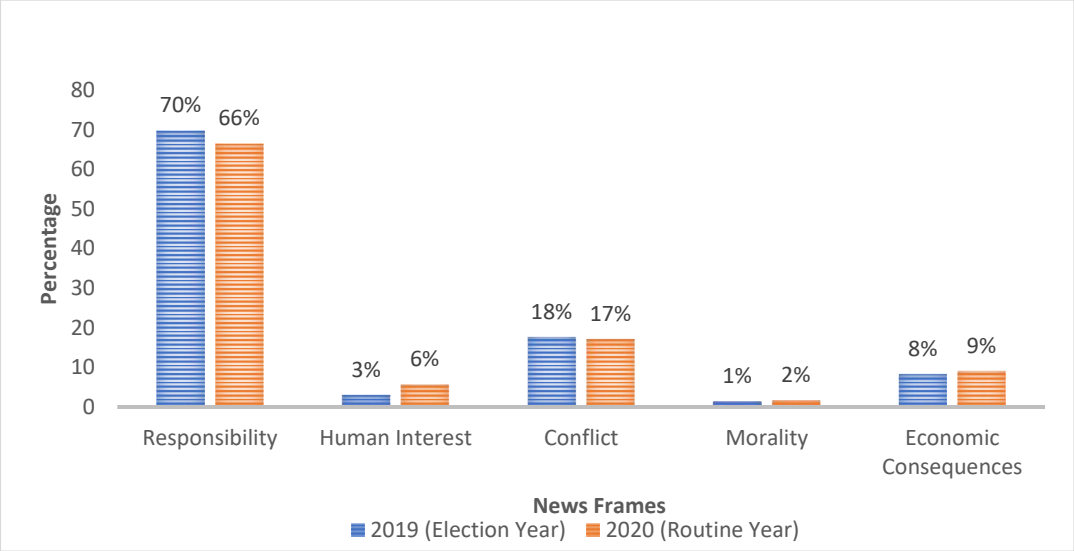


Figure 5.2 Use of frames in election and routine years as percentages

For SPSS, an independent t-test was run to determine if there were differences in the use of the five frames when the election year was compared to the routine year. Table 5.2 below shows the values for the mean and standard deviation for each of the years, as well as the figures for t-test and p-values for each of the frames. Accordingly, there was no significant difference between the mean scores for any of the frames when the election year is compared to the routine year. The scores correspond with percentages in the graphs in Figure 5.2 showing the lack of significant change in the use of the frames when the voting year is compared with the routine year.

Table 5.2

Independent t-test showing values for frames in the election and routine years

Frames	Election Year (2019)		Routine Year (2020)			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*-test	p
Responsibility	.32	.18	.30	.19	1.04	.299
Human Interest	.05	.13	.05	.16	-.10	.918
Conflict	.17	.28	.15	.28	.98	.326
Morality	.02	.10	.02	.14	-.51	.326
Economic Consequences	.12	.22	.13	.23	-.47	.642

Note: M = Mean. SD =Standard Deviation

5.4 RQ2a: How are sources used by the different newspapers?

The second research question (RQ2) sought to unveil how the sources in the news on political corruption were used by the different newspapers. Figure 5.3 on page 196 illustrates the indistinct use of sources by the different newspapers. *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* newspapers made the most frequent utility of politicians from the governing All Progressives Congress (APC) party, at 34% and 30% respectively. *This Day* and *Punch* followed at 29% and 26%. Conversely however, *Punch* quoted or paraphrased opposition politicians the most, at 22%. Thus, politicians from the rival political parties, primarily those from the Peoples Democratic Party, but also others from the Social Democratic Party, All Progressives Grand Alliance, etc. were quoted

or paraphrased by *Punch*. However, the use of opposition politicians by *Punch* was not markedly different from their deployment by *Daily Trust*, *This Day* and *Leadership* which were at 21%, 19% and 18%.

Next to these elite political actors in terms of the frequency of quote attribution, but to a considerably lesser extent of usage, were the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nigerian civil society organisations (CSOs), for example, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), and the Nigerian law authorities for example, the Court of Appeal. All three aforementioned sources, the EFCC, Nigerian civil society organisations and Nigerian law authorities were below 15%. It is noteworthy that *Leadership'*s use of government institutions at 6%, equates to the combined use of these institutions as sources for the other three newspapers, although this was not statistically different. This may be indicative of *Leadership's* uncommon access to government institutions, underscoring its political connections.

Of the sources in the foreign category, foreign governments, for instance, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, were the most quoted or paraphrased sources. They were applied almost evenly for all the newspapers at 2%, with *Daily Trust* the exception, at 1%. Also, all the newspapers used foreign businesses as sources in a similar fashion, with *Punch* at 2%, *This Day*, *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* each at 1%. However, only *Punch* and *This Day* used Nigerian businesses as sources, and these were at 1% each. Inversely, *This Day* and *Daily Trust* were the only newspapers that used foreign citizens as sources at 1% each. Moreover, *Daily Trust* was evidently the outlier in being the only newspaper to use the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) as a source.

Combining the percentages for politicians used as sources (i.e. APC and opposition politicians), it is obvious that political elites dominate the narrative on political corruption presented in the news. The combined figures for politicians as sources for each newspaper was 48%, except for *Daily Trust* that was 55%. As such, the preferred arguments of the political class define how political corruption is presented in the media.

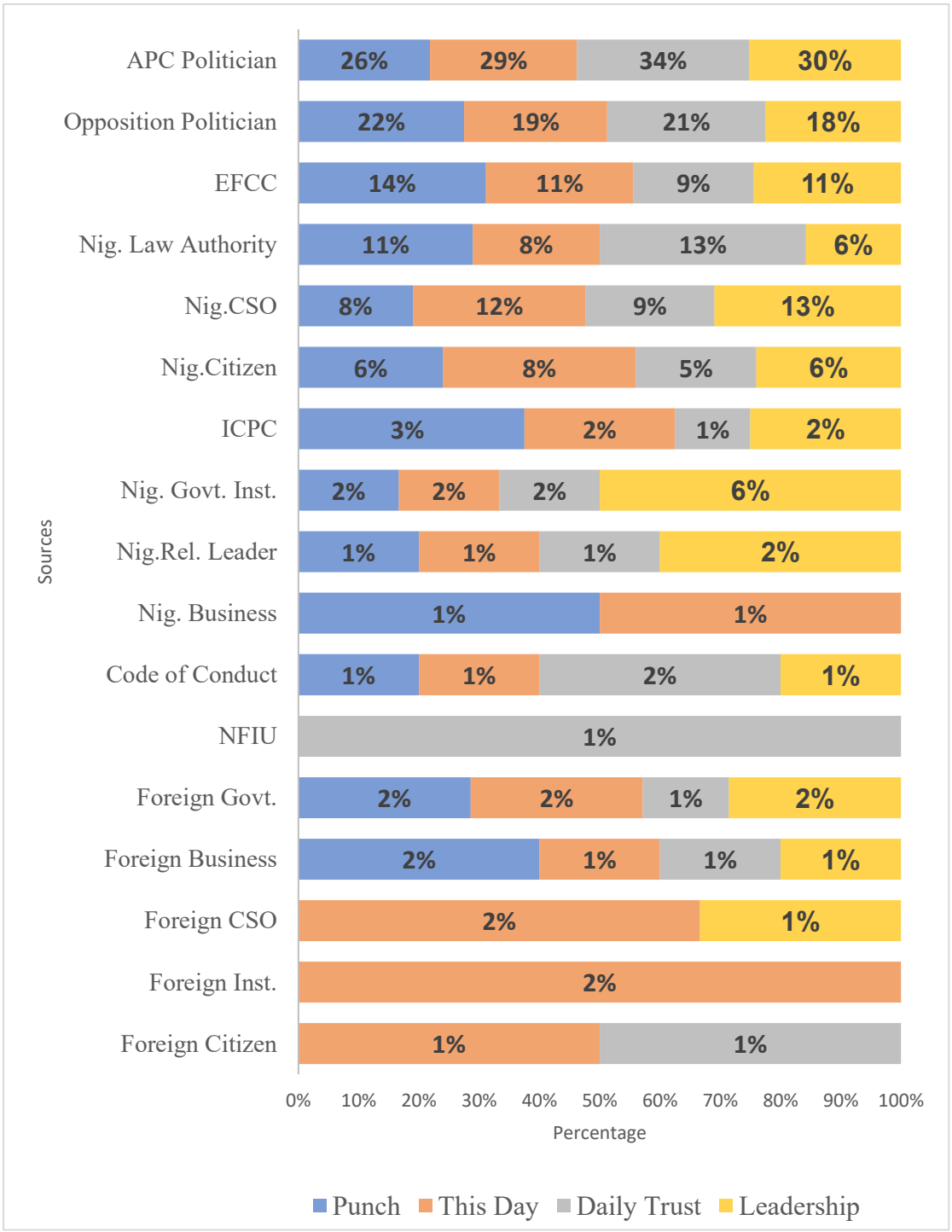


Figure 5.3 Percentage use of sources by newspaper

Using the SPSS for analysis, chi-square tests were run between the sources and the newspapers with the results shown in Table 5.3 below. The relationship between all the sources and their use in the four different newspapers was not statistically significant. This suggests that all the sources were used by the newspapers in a similar manner for their reporting on political corruption.

Consistent with the graphs in Figure 5.3, the SPSS results in Table 5.3 show the dominance of politicians from the governing party, All Progressives Congress, as sources for news. They were followed by politicians from the opposition political parties. Next in frequency as sources were the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Nigerian civil society organisations, and the Nigerian law authorities. Foreign sources were the least utilised. However, among the foreign sources, foreign governments dominated.

In sum, the percentages in the graphs in Figure 5.3 representing the proportional use of each source when the entire range of sources quoted or paraphrased by each newspaper is calculated, correspond to the numbers in the chi-square in Table 5.3 below. Altogether, the largely undifferentiated use of sources by the four newspapers is suggestive of the procurement of news from a similar point of access, for example, a news beat, press conference or press statements.

Table 5.3

Chi-square values showing the relationship between sources and the frequency of their use in each of the newspapers.

Sources	X^2	*Punch*	*This Day*	*DT*	*Leadership*
APC Politician	1.43	66	54	51	51
Oppo. Politician	4.36	58	35	31	31
EFCC	5.79	37	21	13	19
Nig. Law Authority	6.78	29	15	20	11
Nig. CSO	2.09	21	22	14	22
Nig. Citizen	2.36	15	16	8	11
ICPC	1.53	7	3	2	4
Nig. Govt Inst.	5.43	5	4	3	10
Nig. Rel. Leader	.71	3	2	1	3
Nig. Business	4.30	3	1	0	0
CCB	.96	2	2	3	2
NFIU	3.83	0	0	1	0
Foreign Govt.	1.61	5	4	1	4
Foreign Business	3.71	5	1	1	1
Foreign CSO	6.57	1	4	0	1
Foreign Inst.	6.37	1	3	0	0
Foreign Citizen	4.27	0	2	1	0

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. *df = 1 (p=p value; df=degree of difference)*

5.4.1 RQ2b: How are sources used when the election year is compared to the routine year?

The second part of the second research question (RQ2b) asked how sources were used when the election year, 2019, is compared to the routine year, 2020. Figure 5.4 below shows the graphical illustration of the proportional use of sources in percentages when the voting year is juxtaposed with the non-voting year. As seen in the graph, there is a significant change for only three sources. In the first case, the use of Nigerian civil society organisations doubles from 7% in the election year to 14% in the routine year. By contrast, going from the election year to the routine year, the use of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and Code of Conduct Bureau as sources fall from 13% to 10%, and from 2% to 0% respectively.

For the Code of Conduct Bureau, its complete irrelevance as a news source in the routine year, 2020, suggests its very limited utility to discuss political corruption only in the election year, 2019. Also evident in Figure 5.4, is the dominance of political elites from the governing All Progressives Congress. These elite actors have the highest voice share in both the election year (27%) and routine year (31%) compared to opposition politicians (21% in the election year, and 19% in the routine year) with regard to discussions about political corruption.

Beyond the politicians in the All Progressive Congress (APC) and Nigerian civil society organisations, whose views are quoted with increasing frequency when proceeding from the election year to the routine year (APC: 27%, election year to 31%, routine year; Nigerian civil society organisations: 7%, election year to 14%, routine year) only the Nigerian law authorities and Nigerian businesses evidence

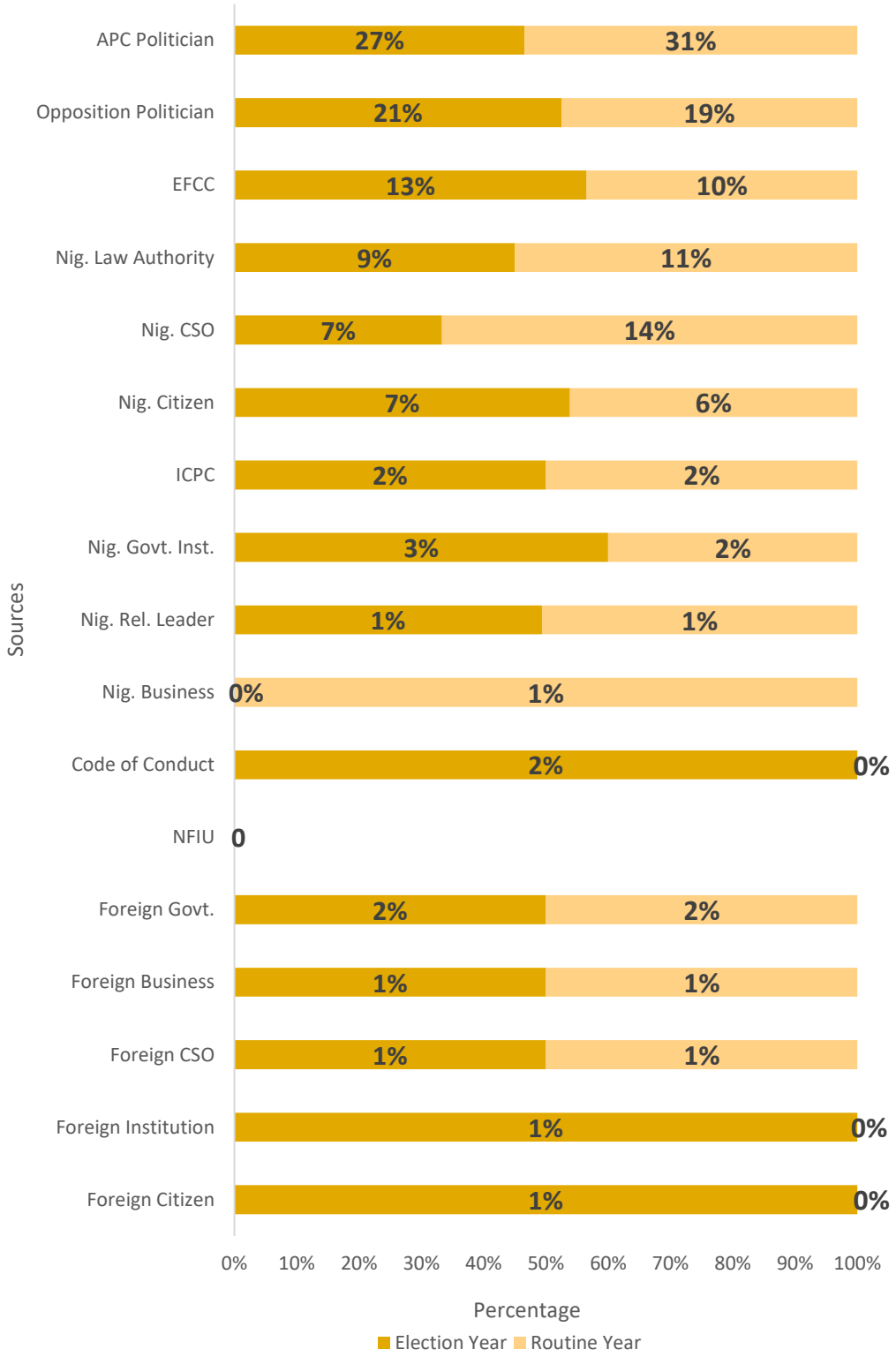


Figure 5.4 Use of sources by year as percentages

an increase in the use of their perspectives for news in the non-voting year. These are, however, only slight increases of 2% and 1% respectively going from the election year to the routine year for these sources.

The views of all the other political actors in the publications, for example, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Nigerian citizens, either remain at the same level or fall in their deployment as sources when the election year is juxtaposed with the routine year. Of important note, is the stark absence of the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) in proportion to other sources in both the election and non-election years. Furthermore, as seen in Figure 5.4, the perspectives of political actors in the broader foreign segment of sources, specifically the foreign governments, foreign business, foreign civil society organisations, foreign institutions and foreign citizens, were only marginally featured in news reports in both the election year and the routine year. Their infrequent utility by the press suggests that their perspectives were not seen as crucial for discussing political corruption.

For the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) analysis, chi-square tests were run to see how the sources were used when the election year, 2019, is compared to the routine year, 2020. As seen from the results in Table 5.4 below, the relationship between the use of sources in the election year, 2019, compared to the routine year, 2020, was statistically significant for only three of the sources, as already discussed: the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB); and the Nigerian civil society organisations. The results from the SPSS analysis further confirm the percentages in the graphs on the frequent use of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the Code of Conduct Bureau as

sources to report on political corruption in the voting year, 2019, but not in the routine year, 2020. In comparison, Nigerian civil society organisations (CSOs) were used far less often in the election year, 2019, but more frequently deployed as sources in the routine year, 2020.

Accordingly, as presented in Table 5.4, politicians remained the most used sources in both the election and the routine years. Firstly, those from the governing party, the All Progressives Congress, followed by politicians from opposition parties. Also, except for the foreign governments, the statistics show that all the other foreign sources consisting foreign businesses, foreign civil society organisations, foreign citizens, and foreign institutions such as the United Nations (UN) were used more in the voting year, than in the routine year. However, the foreign governments were the most used sources quoted/paraphrased in the news on political corruption and their deployment remained at the same level regardless of the year examined.

Viewed collectively, the Nigerian political class consisting of the governing and opposition parties when combined, dominated as sources in both the election year and the routine year at 48% and 50% respectively. So, roughly half of all quotations used in either year were those of elite political actors, with their arguments privileged to construct the narrative on political corruption in the press. Put differently, they were pivotal in defining the terms for discussing political corruption. However, the more frequent use of political elites from the governing APC (31%) than opposition politicians (19%) in the routine year suggests the newspapers' preference for official government sources to discuss malpractice in the non-voting year.

Table 5.4

Chi-square values for sources and their use in election and routine years

Sources	X^2	Election Year (2019) Frequency as Source	Routine Year (2020) Frequency as Source
APC Politician	.42	118	104
Opposition Politician	.81	90	65
EFCC	3.82*	58	32
Nig. Law Authority	.29	39	36
Nig. CSO	7.53**	32	47
Nig. Citizen	1.10	31	19
ICPC	.38	10	6
Nig. Govt Inst.	.29	14	8
Nig. Religious Leader	.00	5	4
Nig. Business	.03	2	2
CCB	7.49**	9	0
NFIU	.822	1	0
Foreign Govt.	.14	7	7
Foreign Business	.18	5	3
Foreign CSO	.338	4	2
Foreign Inst.	.656	3	1
Foreign Citizen	2.47	3	0

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. *df = 1 (p=p value; df=degree of difference)*

Generally however, and beyond these findings pertaining specifically to the research questions, content analysis revealed that of the three hundred and sixty-two stories published in the election year, one hundred and eight (108) were front page stories. Thus, only about a third of the stories on political corruption were given prominence. The remainder of two hundred and fifty four (254) stories, approximately seventy per cent of all the stories, were on the inside pages of the newspapers analysed. *Punch* had the highest number of front page stories with forty-three (43) articles given front page positions, and sixty-four (64) stories on the inside pages during the election year. Both *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* followed in frequency. In each of these publications, twenty-three (23) stories were assigned to the cover pages. Inversely, fifty-three (53) stories in *Daily Trust* were on inside pages, and for *Leadership*, seventy-three (73) were located in the inside pages. *This Day* had the least amount of front page articles in 2019 with only eighteen (18) stories. Sixty-five (65) of the publication's stories were placed on the inside pages.

For 2020, the routine year, only ninety-four (94) of the entire two hundred and ninety-nine articles were on the front pages. The outstanding two hundred and five (205) articles were put on the inside pages. Thus, similar to the election year, approximately thirty per cent of the stories were given front page prominence and about seventy per cent of political corruption articles put on the inside pages of the newspapers interrogated. Like in the election year, *Punch* had the highest number of front page articles in the routine year. Thirty-five (35) of its stories were cover page articles and sixty-four (64) were assigned positions inside the paper. *Leadership* followed in frequency and had twenty four (24) articles as front page news, whereas forty-two (42) stories were put on the inside pages. *Daily Trust* placed nineteen (19) articles on its

front pages, and forty-two (42) of its political corruption stories were located on the inside pages. *This Day,* as in the election year, had the least amount of front page stories in the routine year with only sixteen (16) articles. Fifty-seven (57) stories were on the inside pages.

Also, the typical length of stories in the election year, 2019, was approximately four hundred and eighty-five (485) words, and slightly less, at four hundred and fifty-two (452) words, in 2020, the routine year. Articles in *This Day* tended to run longer than those in other newspapers with the publication's stories averaging five hundred and eighty-two (582) words in the election year but only five hundred and twenty (520) words in the non-election year. *Punch* articles averaged five hundred and twenty-seven (527) and four hundred and forty-seven (447) words in 2019 and 2020 respectively. Stories on political corruption in *Leadership*, on average, consisted of four hundred and sixty-eight (468) words in the election year, but four hundred and seventy-six (476) words in the routine year. Of the four publications, *Daily Trust,* used the least amount of words in the election and routine years, with three hundred and forty-one (341) and three hundred and fifty-two (352) words, respectively.

Thus, from the foregoing, except for *Leadership,* the publications had more front page stories in the election year than the routine year, indicating greater prominence given to discussing malpractice in the election year than the routine year. Additionally, and somewhat contrastingly, both *Leadership* and *Daily Trust,* showed a tendency to use more words to discuss corruption in 2020, suggesting the provision of more details in both newspapers in the routine year than the election year.

Finally, it is noteworthy that only fourteen (14) of the three hundred and sixty-two (362) news stories on political corruption featured in the newspapers in the election year continued to receive coverage in the routine year. Overwhelmingly, these were articles related to either politicians or political appointees. These comprised nine of the fourteen stories. For example, fraud investigations on the suspended Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Winifred Oyo-Ita featured in *This Day* on 27 August 2019 *(EFCC: Abba Kyari Did Not Influence Probe of Oyo-Ita)* and in *Daily Trust* on 24 March 2020 (*Alleged Fraud: Oyo-Ita Arraigned, Granted N100m Bail).* Also, the story on the investigations relating to fraud by the former Ekiti State Governor, Ayodele Fayose, carried by *Punch,* on 26 October 2019 *(N2.2bn case: Fayose threatened, compromised our witness, says EFCC)* and on the newspaper's 20 March 2020 edition *(N2.2bn Fraud: Banker Narrates Money Flow in Fayose's Trial)* .

The remainder five stories were either on government ministries, departments and agencies, or fraudulent transactions in such agencies. For instance, allegations of fraud in the Ministry of Power, which featured in *Punch* as *SERAP Sues Fashola for Failing to Name Runaway Contractors* on 4 February 2019, and in *This Day* of 19 November 2020 as *PDP Urges Fashola to Speak Out on Alleged N4.6bn Fraud in Power Ministry*. Similarly, the probe of malpractice at the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), carried by *Daily Trust* as *Niger Delta governors demanded forensic audit of NDDC – Wike* on 7 November 2019 and *House Uncovers N81bn Spent by NDDC in Five Months* featured in *This Day* on 16 July 2020.

5.5 Conclusion

Using both graphical illustrations and results from the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), this chapter has presented the findings from the content analysis of news reports on political corruption. The results were answers to four research questions:

1a) How are the five frames: attribution of responsibility, human interest, conflict, economic consequences, and morality, used across the four newspapers?

1b) How do the frames vary when the election year is compared to the routine year?

2a) How are sources used by the different newspapers?

2b) How are sources used when the election year is compared to the routine year?

The salient point to note from the findings is the dominance of the attribution of responsibility frame to discuss political corruption in the news in both the election and routine years. Furthermore, the results show that the use of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the Code of Conduct Bureau as sources were statistically significant when the election year of 2019 was compared to the routine year of 2020. By contrast, Nigerian civil society organisations as sources for news on political corruption were significant in the routine year 2020, compared to the election year, 2019. Overall, in both years, the main sources used in the news on political corruption were political elites, principally those from the governing All Progressives Congress Party, being the privileged voices that defined the terms for discussing political corruption in the newspapers.

Chapter 6

Individual Interviews: Results

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results from semi-structured, in-depth interviews with journalists. The journalists interviewed for the study have all, at one time or another, reported on political corruption and thus, have a first-hand knowledge of the subject. Their average experience is 14 years and their academic qualifications ranged from bachelor to doctoral degrees. Of the twenty-four journalists interviewed, twenty were actively employed by their newspapers. The remaining four, who had resigned as print journalists, had previously reported or edited political corruption news stories for newspapers.

Fourteen (14) of these current or former journalists were purposively sampled from the newspapers examined in this study: *Punch, This Day, Daily Trust,* and *Leadership*. These purposefully sampled set were augmented with ten (10) journalists who were also either formerly or currently newspaper editors or reporters. Although majorly politics reporters, they were also from various other sections of the newspapers: business, health, energy, and information technology from the four newspapers examined, as well as three other newspapers, and provided an expansive perspective on news reporting of political corruption. Specifically, the three newspapers are *Vanguard, Business Day*, and *The Guardian*. Consequently, the results presented here are from a variety of participants. All of them were well-qualified to answer the questions asked, based on their rich store of personal experience working as journalists. The questions were derived in part, from chapters 2 and 3, which explored

the theoretical framework and, political corruption and the media, as well as follow-up questions to understand the important factors that influence news reporting in both an election year and a routine year (See Appendix 6 for full list of questions). Their responses provided answers to the third set of research questions: 3a) What are the key considerations influencing news reporting on political corruption? 3b) How do these considerations vary when the election year is compared to the routine year?

The findings are divided into six themes derived from a thematic analysis of the interviews. These themes are discussed in the following order: Sources and access to information; Journalistic obligation and readers' expectation; Risks on reporting corruption; Ownership interests; Corruption among journalists; and Lack of resources for investigation. Taken together these themes represent the constellation of key factors that influence the framing of news on malpractice and are examined in terms of their variation when the election year is juxtaposed with the routine year.

6.2 Sources and access to information

All the respondents identified a wide variety of sources they used for their reporting on political corruption, ranging from unofficial to official sources. These included street hawkers, kiosk operators, websites, documentary evidence from court proceedings, research papers, chauffeurs to political elites, civil society organisations, official documents from government agencies and institutions, politicians and their relatives, bureaucrats, and political appointees. However, as indicated in the comments of the journalists below, there is a preference for the courts, and highly placed government sources. Essentially, these are political appointees and the anti-

graft agencies, and are preferred because these have the legal backing or are considered authoritative in determining who can be viewed as corrupt:

> *"The typical news sources are the leading politicians in the country because they make the news. They are the authorities that you can cite. If you have a story from a senator, a governor … these are the people you rely on for good stories" (Politics Reporter, Male).*

> *"Like any other news story, sources could be official or unofficial. It could be documentary. In the case of the reporting of corruption, official sources are important. Principally, the anti-graft agencies. This is because they are the body* (sic) *mandated by law. Because they have the facts, the details… so they have a great deal of information" (Group Business Editor/Deputy Editor Sunday, Male).*

Nevertheless, as one of the participants noted, the most authoritative source for political corruption are the courts. According to him,

> *"…this is because of the law of libel. If somebody says that a person is corrupt, until the court says that person is corrupt, even if you have your story, you can only do so much. It is the court of the land that has the final say on who is corrupt" (Former Editor, Male).*

These responses show the delicate nature of news reporting on political corruption and the importance of dependable, irrefutable, and most important, authoritative sources, to establish the grounds for such reporting. Thus, the authoritative sources on political corruption are the government established anti-corruption agencies, political elites, and the courts. This is because accusations of being politically corrupt, even when substantiated by hard evidence can have catastrophically punitive consequences, such as libel or slander charges brought by those accused of political corruption against journalists and their news organisations (Schudson, 2003; Freedom House, 2023). These consequences can extend to the loss of business patronage from powerful, well-connected elites.

According to several of the participants, in some extreme cases, such charges, particularly if unsubstantiated from these authoritative sources, could lead to the firing of the journalist who reported the news. As one political reporter with a decade's experience put it, *"I think between you and their patronage, the company (news organisation) values their patronage one hundred percent more. They can fire you and get a hundred others who will do your work*". The probability of punishment makes journalists cautious, and to a large extent constrained in the use of sources for their authoritative reporting of news on malpractice. One respondent cited news reports on political corruption relating to Peter Nwaoboshi, a politician, who was convicted of money-laundering by the Appeal Court on July 1, 2022. The respondent noted that "*before now, some journalists had done some reporting on him, and he had threatened to take them to court, causing them to soft-pedal on further publications*." So, to avoid sanctions from their news organisations, the journalists generally acknowledged their overwhelming reliance on anti-corruption government agencies, political elites and particularly, the courts.

In the non-election year, access to these political elites and their surrogates, and the crucial information they possess is difficult, because these elites are reluctant to speak to the press. As one participant put it, *"…the politicians, once they get into power, the ones that are lucky to get into power, they won't grant access to the media so much"*. The inaccessibility of political elites and the authoritative information they supply, limits the reporting on corruption in the routine year. By contrast, in a competitive election year, politicians actively search out and relentlessly court the press to discuss political corruption. They do this deliberately to undermine their political opponents while simultaneously burnishing their own credentials so that they

are seen as honest, with the aim that the voters consider them suitable for public office and support them at the ballot. As the Group Business Editor/Deputy Editor, cited above noted*, "While they are still trying to get into power and are campaigning, during electioneering, they want the media to portray them in good light and their opponents in bad light".* Another journalist with long experience as a crime and judiciary reporter noted that,

> *"During this period (election cycle/campaigns) you'll see all sorts of documents flying around and you begin to wonder where are all these documents coming from? It is politicians releasing those documents to journalists because they are looking for a way to damage the other candidate beyond repair" (Crime and Judiciary Reporter, Male).*

In discussing the use of sources for political corruption, the journalists drew a sharp contrast in the willingness and availability of political elites in the election season compared to the reticence of these same elites in the routine year. One female journalist noted that the reticence of political elites in the non-voting year led to the use of other sources, especially the civil society organisations. She answered thus:

> *"In election season, they (politicians) are more inclined to speaking and it's a welcome development. But after election season, they are not, because they have nothing to gain, so rather than making the page dry, we make do with civil society organisations. Civil societies are ready all the time. The truth is that civil society and experts are ready all seasons (sic) to talk so you make do with them" (Health Editor, Female)*.

Her point of having to *"make do with them"* reveals that civil society organisations are considered substitutes by journalists who find political elites inaccessible in the routine year. All the journalists interviewed painted a similar picture of the scenario when the election year is contrasted with the routine year. As indicated above, several of them admitted to being inundated with documents that evidence corruption by competing politicians, while other respondents noted the sharp increase in phone calls from politicians and their supporters in the election year. However, many of the journalists

acknowledged that they were often cynical about the sudden upswing of interest and attention shown to the media by politicians in the election year. Furthermore, several of them doubted the veracity of the claims these politicians make, as captured in the view of the journalist below who used candidates in the 2023 presidential election to buttress her position:

> *"I would say that whatever a politician is saying should be taken with a pinch of salt because he is saying it because he needs to pull down his opponent. In fact, anything a politician says, I have to double-check. Like now, anything Atiku is saying about BAT (Bola Ahmed Tinubu) is a lie, and anything BAT is saying about Atiku is a lie. Anything both of them come together and say about Peter Obi, is a lie. Even if they make a hundred statements, only one will be true… "(Managing Editor, Female).*

The cynicism of journalists when dealing with political elites in the election season is consistent with Schudson's (2003) view that during political campaign seasons, journalists are wont to attribute the actions of political elites to their ambition to win elections (p.92).

Additionally, Schudson (2008) sees such healthy cynicism as exhibited by the above journalist as one of the virtues of good journalism, arguing that it is important for journalists to question the obvious. He is bolstered by McNair's (2009) perspective that political journalists take for granted that political elites are engaged in publicity and spin, so reporters are deliberate in trying to dissect the public utterances of elites to expose "a deeper level of truth" (p.245). Nevertheless, as seen in the above response from the participant that "e*ven if they make a hundred statements, only one will be true,"* journalists do not reject altogether the information provided by political elites. This is because these authoritative figures are important sources of news, particularly in the election year. In a bid to synthesize and follow the journalistic convention of balance, it is plausible to argue that journalists present the information

from these contending politicians as conflict between two or more candidates. This is consistent with Van Gorp's position that "sources make the news, perhaps particularly so when they disagree" (Van Gorp, 2010, p.102).

In sum, the views of the respondents suggest that, although there are diverse sources of information, consisting of official and unofficial sources that supply credible evidence for reporting on political corruption, journalists prefer established government sources and institutions. These are primarily the anti-corruption agencies, the courts, and political elites. Use of these authoritative sources safeguard journalists and their news organisations against punitive consequences, for example legal cases in the form of slander and libel from the elites identified and suspected as corrupt, but not necessarily convicted as such. Furthermore, an important distinction between the routine year and the election year when it comes to sources and the access to information, is the easy access to politicians in the voting year vis-à-vis their unavailability in the routine year. However, the access to political figures who actively seek out journalists in the election year and the information they provide, lead journalists to look with added scrutiny at such information.

6.3 Journalistic obligation and readers' expectation

All the respondents gave several reasons for reporting on political corruption. Many stated that an important consideration behind news reporting on political corruption was a desire to perform their journalistic obligation to hold politicians to account, and keep readers informed of developments in society. This was the most recurring rational given for news on political corruption. For some of them, the desire stemmed from a passion to do good and serve the society as a way of building a better Nigeria.

Three journalists specifically identified this obligation as consistent with their function as the *"fourth estate of the realm"*.

One experienced politics reporter with *Daily Trust* commented that, *"we have a responsibility to the society as the fourth estate of the realm. The work of a journalist is to afflict the comforted and comfort the afflicted."* Another experienced journalist, observed that *"we as journalists, we are the fourth estate of the realm, so we do our job in line with the constitution, and report on corruption conscientiously, and leave the readers to decide on what to do."* Their views suggest that they see reporting on political corruption as both an obligation to hold political elites accountable and a way to keep their readers informed of developments in the society to enable rational choice. Thus, their positions align with the traditional expectations of journalists to scrutinise elites and provide information to citizens in a democracy (Schudson, 2008; McNair, 2009).

However, under normal circumstances (the routine year), news reporting on political corruption faces what Schudson (2003) describes as "competitive pressures not to miss a hot story" (p.40). This is a situation where other newsworthy events taking place in the country compete with political corruption stories for space and, particularly, prominence. This quote from one of the journalists typifies some of the considerations that influence reporting on political corruption in the newspapers in the routine year:

> *"As a newspaper, we gauge the pulse of our readers. If we have been talking about political corruption and written and written and written about it, as the fourth estate, we have done our job. We have exposed corruption … You look at one story and look at its direct human impact. Someone has burnt another human being alive…Somebody invaded a church three days ago. Madness…Some stories will shake the world. Will make even the Queen of England say: what is happening?" (Energy Editor/Former Assistant News Editor, Male)*

As seen in the above comment by the journalist, news on political corruption competes with other newsworthy stories that are also considered relevant to readers. According to him, newspapers *"gauge the pulse"* of their readers and, depending on a range of factors, try to strike a balance in the kind of stories published. Such factors may include currency of the news, its direct relevance to readers, and the impact of such news locally and internationally.

In the above perspective, the journalist situated the news on political corruption in the context of other newsworthy incidents that frequently take place in Nigeria. Essentially, he was saying that in the routine year, newspapers will report on political corruption up to a point and then have to shift the focus to other issues that perhaps have a more direct bearing on readers, in this case Nigeria's poor security situation. Specifically, at the time of our conversation, the other newsworthy events he cited were the attack by terrorists on a Catholic church in Owo, Ondo State, on June 5, 2022, where a number of the congregation were killed during mass; and the killing of Deborah Samuels, a Christian undergraduate who was burnt alive in the northern state of Sokoto on May 12, 2022, for what was described as her blasphemous utterances. His reference to a shift in stories with *"direct human impact*" is also supportive of research cited by Schudson (2003) of the media showing "an increase in sensationalism, human interest reporting and crime and disaster news" (p.99) in order not to lose the interests and patronage of their readers.

But in the election year, the sense of journalistic obligation to hold elites accountable and the responsibility of providing information to the readers for rational choice is given added emphasis in the news. Many of the respondents saw reporting on political corruption as supporting the achievement of three primary purposes: meeting their obligation to hold political elites to account; helping the voting public make an informed, rational choice between contesting political elites; and promoting newspaper sales. One newspaper editor with a considerable experience reporting on politics described the election year thus:

> *"The election season…requires you to do more than you would normally do, to inform the electorate, to correct and chastise people in government and to generally, keep everyone on their toes. So, the newspapers will shift focus from other critical areas of our governance, of the economy, to elections. So, it does have a very significant impact on reportage" (Editor, Male).*

His perspective on the importance of reporting political corruption in the election year was representative of those shared by numerous other journalists.

One politics reporter also noted that, *"activities revolve around them (politicians). The society wants to know what is happening to these people. They want to know those who are contesting. They want to have as much information on them"*. He added that because of the election year, news on political corruption as it relates to political elites was *"a natural phenomenon because it is their season, the fixation is on them".* Another male journalist, also a politics reporter, stated that *"the newspapers know what the public wants at that time. They know that their public is expecting news on politicians during an election year… If any of them has even a cough, it will sell, to say nothing of their involvement in corruption."*

Yet another participant, a male politics reporter with *Punch*, further confirmed the centrality of reporting on political corruption in the election year, noting that *"… you forget the other things that are even more important. Now we have security challenges. But because this is an election season, it will overshadow the important issues on security."* Finally, according to another journalist, the election year is different from the routine year because, *"even people who do not read the newspaper begin to find their way to the news-stands. You have to understand that the newspaper isn't published primarily to give information to the general public. It is published for business also."* Their positions support Schudson's (2003) apt description of newspapers as short-lived bestsellers with a brief shelf-life because of their dependence on the currency of information to make sales.

Evident in the foregoing is that in the voting year, the newspapers see their reporting on political corruption as being in alignment with their seemingly altruistic public interest goals of holding political elites to account with the intention of helping citizens make rational decisions on who to vote for. However, such reporting also has the added advantage of driving sales to generate larger income because of the public's increased appetite for news on the candidates competing for public office. Scholars have stated that the essence of commercial newspapers, like other profit-making businesses, is the maximisation of profit (Schudson, 2003; McManus, 2009). As such, it would be erroneous to view newspapers (and by extension journalism) as solely a public trust without considering their profit orientation (Schudson, 2003).

In sum, in both the non-election and the election years, news on political corruption is considered relevant news. However, the election year is differentiated from the routine

year because journalists (and the newspapers) show an increased focused on corruption news. This focus stems from the expectation of news readers who look to the newspapers for information on politicians to guide them in voting and journalists' own sense of obligation to supply such information. Newspapers combine these expectations into an opportunity for profit, particularly in the election year.

6.4 Risks on reporting corruption

Another common theme that emerged from the interviews, shared by all the journalists, is what they perceived as the obvious threats to their lives or at least the fear of intimidation that may arise from their reporting on political corruption. Many of the journalists described politicians as people who could act with impunity and had no scruples about causing harm to reporters who are intent on writing about political corruption. This was particularly the case in situations where such reporting could hinder their political ambitions. The journalists articulated these threats and fears in numerous ways. According to one female journalist, the threat to reporters typically arises because *"somebody, somewhere, knows too much of what he's expected to know and there's the fear that what he knows will get into the public domain… So, there's fear of uncertainty, fear of being killed. A lot of fear."*

Several journalists also noted that such threats may extend to their families, as captured in the view of this politics reporter who said*, "First of all, there are threats and fear that journalists have for their lives and the life (sic) of their families. If I do this (report on corruption), will somebody come after me? What is going to happen to my family?"* A former editor suggested that these threats and intimidation are part of the long struggle by journalists to ensure transparency in governance. He saw them as

retaliatory measures employed by political elites, some of whom had previously used subtle means to stop journalists from publishing stories implicating these elites in corrupt activities. The failure of these political elites to dissuade journalists through subtle means, leads these elites to apply lethal measures to ensure that news on political corruption is not published. According to him,

> *"First of all, they will try to persuade you or to corral you to come to their side. They would like to make you to stop fighting them by inducing you financially or otherwise. But if you persist in fighting them, they may even kill you…It involves so much effort on the part of those accused of corruption to really stop the world from knowing how corrupt they are" (Former Editor, Male).*

The former editor's perspective of the willingness of political elites to take lethal actions to stop journalists from exposing their corrupt deeds is supported by the following comments from an editor in one of the newspapers examined in this study:

> *"Don't forget that the people behind corruption in Nigeria are very powerful people. These are people who can kill anybody. When you look at all of that and weigh your options, do you really want to put yourself in a problematic situation, or do you want to be careful? But I can tell you that as a practitioner… Nigerian journalists are some of the most hardworking people you can find anywhere in the world. If we had a conducive environment like journalists in the United States have, we will do better. Because, despite the current situation, many of us are still doing very courageous journalism… But for me, security matters (and I) am not going to risk my life for any story. I have (my) family to take care of" (Editor, Male)*.

Evident in his response is an acknowledgement that Nigerian political elites can use their position of influence to kill journalists when they see reports as threatening their ambitions. Also, by comparing the practice of journalism in Nigeria to what obtains in the United States of America, this editor introduces an element of society, and thus, culture/context. He sees Nigerian journalists *as "some of the most hardworking people you can find anywhere in the world"* and makes it clear that the Nigerian environment presents a major deterrent to the reporting on political corruption and more broadly,

the practice of journalism as a profession. It is clear from his position that Nigerian journalists are confronted with a difficult choice when considering a story on political corruption. The choice involves either putting themselves in a problematic situation or being careful because those behind corruption are *"very powerful people…who can kill anybody"* with perhaps little or no consequences for their actions. His explicit choice would be to toe the line of caution because reporting political corruption is not worth risking his life, because of his obligation to take care of his family.

Several of the respondents cited the death of Dele Giwa, a journalist killed under suspicious circumstances during the Babangida-era of military rule. One politics reporter mentioned the recent death of Yomi Kareem, a member of the press corps at INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission), as suspicious. Furthermore, the respondents pointed out that the families of deceased journalists were typically not given any support from the news organisations. They also highlighted the lack of integrity on the part of security agencies tasked with investigating suspicious deaths involving journalists. For them, these were good reasons to be cautious when reporting on political corruption.

The respondents noted that in the election year, the threats to their lives from political elites are more serious and imminent than in the routine year. According to them, in addition to the elites who pose such threats, the public who have a vested interest in seeing certain political elites win in the elections pose an additional risk to their reporting. The following comment by a senior journalist with over ten years' experience is an apt summary of the responses given by journalists on the risks on reporting in

the election year posed by members of the public who have a vested interest in election outcomes:

> *"…it is the delegates that will come after you, not even the key political actors. It is because they believe this is the only time they will get something and keep something for themselves for the next four years, because these people that will get into power may not knock on their doors nor seek for them for the next four years. So, they believe it is at this point that they have to get some dollars and set aside for themselves… People you work for, that is the public— they are the ones that will get to you and cause harm, whether bodily or otherwise. The delegates are your next-door neighbours so they can get to you, they can get to your family and for what?" (Deputy News Editor, Male).*

In the above response, the respondent suggests that because elections are once every four years, the delegates/public, who have been paid (bribed) to support a particular politician see their earnings from such support as rare. Particularly as such payments are in dollars and has great value (one American dollar translates to many hundreds of Nigerian naira). They may build houses or buy cars with the money, according to the journalist. Thus, they are willing to cause harm, not only to the reporter but to his/her family. The threat is clear and present, even from those considered to be neighbours to the journalists. Another journalist, a former politics reporter, recounted his experience of having his life threatened by the public in his attempt to report corruption in the election year. He stated that he had gone to a polling booth to report on the elections but *"When they saw my name and the organisation I work for. They tagged me as a PDP (Peoples Democratic Party) reporter, and of course, Lagos is an APC (All Progressives Congress) state. I was almost lynched that day…"*

Based on the foregoing responses, in the election year, the public who are partisans of certain political elites, pose an added level of threat to journalists who report on political corruption. This is because members of the public have probably been bribed

by such elites and see journalists who report on malpractice as scuttling their chances of making monetary gains by giving their support to these elites.

So, in general, journalists are advisedly cautious in their reporting because of the risks to themselves and their families. These threats could be fatal, and they know from previous experience, such as the death of Dele Giwa and other journalists killed in the course of their jobs, that security agencies will probably not uncover the perpetrators, nor will their families be adequately compensated by their news organisations. These threats are heightened, more imminent, and substantial in the election year compared to the routine year.

6.5 Ownership interests

The responses of all but two of the journalists, one from *Punch* and the other from *Daily Trust*, suggest that the political leanings of the publishers and their close friendship with politicians has a major influence on the way political corruption is reported in the newspapers. To some extent, such relations determine whether corruption stories get reported at all. Even the two journalists, both holding editorial positions, who stated that ownership was not a factor in the reporting on political corruption were contradicted by other journalists working in their news organisations who were emphatic that ownership was indeed a factor.

Several of the participants were quick to use the shorthand expression “he who pays the piper dictates the tune” to succinctly convey the power that newspaper proprietors wield on corruption-related news published in the pages of their publications. One

reporter who had over a decade's experience and had worked with three other publications before his current role with *Leadership* stated that:

> *"…the biggest problem is the ownership structure. I won't say that all the media is owned by politically exposed people, but I will say because media practice is also a capitalist venture, they are out there to make money. So, the quest to make money and keeping themselves afloat plays a major role in what they report. So, that is the biggest problem influencing the reporting on corruption. You can go and do your investigative journalism from here to the moon, but if you don't have anywhere to publish it, there's nothing you can do" (Crime and Judiciary Reporter, Male).*

Another journalist admitted to having to tone down and play up stories so that the *"flavour"* of the report supports the publisher's political interest and calculations, and a senior journalist stressed that, *"You have to consider the interests of your employer. No matter how independent-minded you may be, that is the platform (newspaper) you are working with, and if that platform doesn't exist you may not be able to publish."*

Nevertheless, some of these interests, although advantageous to the owner, may not always be clearly spelt out or stated by the newspaper or its publisher, and so require journalists to orient themselves accordingly. An experienced politics reporter with *The Vanguard* commented that, *"Ownership is a very limiting factor. There are no-go areas. Nobody will tell you. But as a reporter, if you spend two years in the newsroom, you will begin to understand the no-go areas."* Thus, according to almost all the journalists, the owner's preferences, political interests and/or aspirations are paramount in determining if certain stories are even presented in the newspapers in the first place. Furthermore, these preferences and alignments affect the tone of the stories that are ultimately published.

This suggests that however much a journalist may want to write a story on political corruption, he/she is constrained by the vested interests of the publisher. Journalists who attempt to cross these boundaries, which are often tacit, could be sanctioned for their ignorance or impertinence. One female respondent spoke of how writing a corruption-related story on someone with close ties to her newspaper got her into trouble with *"the management"* who were surprised that she did not know that *"That man is our man. Don't say anything negative about him. It is because of him that we are able to pay your salary."* According to her, the story was ultimately discarded because its publication could have led to the withdrawal of patronage from the elite.

Also, according to many of the participants, ethnic and religious considerations, are closely related to the ownership interests of the newspaper. One experienced politics reporter commented that northern newspapers were established because their owners wanted an avenue for expressing their ethnic and religious interests, which they felt were not being adequately represented in the southern newspapers. He observed that ethnic and religious sentiments, deriving from the ownership of newspapers, often blinded the judgements of journalists to the glaring factual details of a corruption story. Accordingly, this leads reporters to see stories from the standpoint of ethnic or religious persecution, before all else. As he put it: *"cataract is the third biggest cause of blindness in Nigeria. Ethnicity and religion, remain the first two."*

Many of the participants saw the impact of ethnicity and religion as a reflection of the wider Nigerian society. The following comment by a senior correspondent typifies the societal influences of ethnicity and religion on the news reporting on political corruption:

> *"If you study the Nigerian environment, everything is tainted by ethnicity, religion... Even the public, when there is a story on corruption, you'll see people coming out to say, it is because the person is Yoruba, Ijaw, Hausa, Fulani. When this other Igbo man stole something, why didn't people say anything? So those kinds of sentiments come to play. And these things are reflected in the media houses because of the ownership" (Senior Business Correspondent/Male).*

Another journalist stated:

> *"I try to avoid it. I avoid ethnicity, I avoid religion… I don't like them. I am a Nigerian and if anything happens to a Nigerian and the person is a thief, let the person be tried as a Nigerian, not a Hausa or Igbo man. That is what we should be preaching in the society. An Igbo man will not allow you to publish anything against Peter Obi in the Sun Newspaper. You go to The Nation, you know you can't see anything bad about Tinubu. If you come to The Vanguard Newspaper, the south-south politicians are protected" (Politics Reporter/Male).*

In the above statement, the journalist is referring to the relationship between two of the candidates in Nigeria's last presidential elections and their portrayals in the newspapers. He suggests the deployment of newspapers in the election season for the prejudicial support of these political candidates. Peter Obi is Igbo and *The Sun Newspaper* he is referring to, is owned by Orji Uzo Kalu who is also Igbo (Yusha'u, 2018; Akaeze, 2023; Babasola, 2023). *The Nation* is owned by Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the owner of *The Vanguard*, Sam Amuka, is from the south-south zone of Nigeria (Yusha'u, 2018; Akaeze, 2023; Babasola, 2023). So, the form of reporting on political corruption is closely tied to the ethnicity of the owner of the newspaper.

Scholars identified the founding owner of *Leadership Newspaper,* the late Sam Nda-Isaiah, as a politician who had contested to be the presidential flagbearer of the All-Progressives Congress (APC) (Yusha'u, 2018; Akaeze, 2023; Babasola, 2023). Their position was corroborated by a senior journalist with *Leadership* who spoke of the relationship between owners and their politician friends. The journalist suggests that

newspaper ownership becomes a lucrative tool for deliberate and active promotion of the publisher's interest in an election year:

> *"Nduka Obaigbena (owner) of This Day is not interested in becoming president like the late Sam Nda-Isaiah (who established Leadership) but he sits with the movers and shakers… and he is the doyen of the media industry. He mingles with opinion-leaders and there was a point that it was rumoured that he spearheaded a group of private business owners who wanted to push a political candidate for presidency with the hope that this man will work with and for them" (Deputy News Editor, Male).*

Based on the forgoing views, it is plausible to argue that in the normal course of business, publishers influence the reporting on political corruption where this advances their interests and alliances with politicians. Such influence could take the form of choosing not to publish a story on political corruption. It further appears that these interests are closely related to the ethnic and religious orientation of the owners. However, in the election year, the variables of ownership and political alliances based on ethnicity and religion are intensified. This is because publishers use their newspapers as platforms to actively promote those candidates they support, often ethnically or religiously affiliated to them, or indeed, in cases where they nurse political ambitions, promote their own candidacy.

6.6 Corruption among journalists

All the journalists acknowledged that in the normal course of events (the routine year), there was corruption in their ranks. They saw its existence as deriving from poor welfare/remuneration, the irregular payment of salaries, and a reflection of the corruption in the wider Nigerian society. The respondents suggested that every news organisation had its fair share of corrupt journalists because journalists, like other members of the society, were human and contended with a number of financial challenges on a regular basis. These challenges often forced them to act

in unprincipled ways, at odds with the ethics of their profession. As one journalist put it:

> *"The issue of remuneration, which is salary… a lot of journalists are not well-paid. Some are not paid at all. Apart from Daily Trust, Punch, Premium Times, and maybe The Nation, I don't know of any newspaper house that pays its salary on time… I won't deny it (corruption among journalists). It has to do with remuneration. It's the economic factor. For some of us, it's not that we want to be corrupt. But the need to keep body and soul together… (journalists) want to feed their families. They want to survive too. So, if any politician approaches you … and you'll get paid for it, you'll want to do that because they have to survive." (Information Technology Reporter/Male)*

Another journalist, corroborated the above position in stating that,

> *"If you look at reporters in Punch, they can report on politically corruption effectively because their salaries are attractive. They receive more remuneration… but when you spend a month working without your salary being paid, it discourages you. People see it as an opportunity to say that since you have an ID (identity) card…, you should use it to make money. So that in itself (the non-payment of salaries), encourages corruption."* (Group Editor/Male)

From the above comments, it is evident that there is a tendency for corruption to thrive in the ranks of journalists from news organisation where payment of salary is not regular and one's identity as a journalist in such news organisations is seen as a tool for making money. Generally, and as already indicated, the respondents saw the corruption among journalists as a recourse to tackling the everyday pressures of survival that they face, as further exemplified in the positions of the respondents:

> *"I have been receiving my salary regularly, but I know some journalists who haven't been paid for two years. So how do you expect such journalists to function without being corrupt? Do you know the kind of pressure you'll be under as a man? You need to pay school fees. The long holiday will soon be over, and children will be returning to school… Imagine an editor with three children in school and he hasn't been paid, he'll have to resort to self-help. He'll be running around, begging for adverts…so you get the commissions to pay your children's school fees, (so) you cannot tell it the way it is … So, it is a cause-and-effect thing. Journalists who are well paid will do their jobs with confidence, but if you are not well-paid you will fall for anything. If you're a typical African man,*

and you have a wife and children to feed, what will you tell them? … So, the welfare thing is a general problem" (Editor, Male).

"Yes, we are (corrupt). But some of us will not be too comfortable with the generalisation of journalists as a whole...We all know that in some media houses, journalists are owed for months and even years, and we need to keep body and soul together... So, it's only normal that in the course of doing your job, one thing or the other may come up and you find yourself compromising" (Politics Reporter, Female).

These responses give a sense of journalists' rationalisation of their corruption. It is seen as *"self-help"* and as a last resort because journalists are often owed their salaries "for months and even years", and yet have to meet certain obligations to their families, as expected by the society, and so use bribes as a means of tiding themselves over.

One avenue for corruption among journalists according to a female journalist, is the beat. *"Every beat has a cabal and if you're new to the beat, we won't allow you to penetrate our sources and get your news stories because of what we are benefitting from that beat,"* she said. She stated that newcomers to the beat were required to pay a certain amount of money to become members of the cabal of journalists covering the beat. The payment gives them easy access to sources of information. Furthermore, stories emanating from the beat are deliberately tailored to portray the political appointee in a good light in all publications about the office because of bribes regularly dispensed by the elite to the reporters on that beat.

However, as one former deputy news editor argued, the ability of such corruption to influence the reporting on malpractice was severely limited to stories that were not yet in the public domain. From his perspective, politicians can only bribe journalists to influence reporting when the story is still in the elementary stages of fact-finding

as opposed to a story supported by unassailable facts and proven to be accurate by the anti-corrupt agencies. According to him, "… *at the end of the day, a story that breaks will be reported (but) at the early stages when a story is evolving, some knee-jerk reactions from those involved will see them throwing money at journalists to bury the story."*

For context, he further stated that, with the proliferation of online news platforms, the opportunities for reporting corruption had vastly increased and it would be impossible for politicians to totally prevent the publication of a story by bribing journalists in every media outlet across the entire country. *"How many of the media outlets can you bribe?"* he asked rhetorically. Thus, there is a level to which corruption among journalists can actually influence the publication of a story because politicians cannot possibly bribe journalists on all the platforms just to *"bury a story".*

The above position, to some extent, accounts for the continued publication of news on corruption, despite the existence of corruption among journalists. As already discussed in Chapter 3, the proliferation of Internet-based media platforms has led to an increase in the publication of news on corruption (Kperogi, 2020; Akoh et al., 2012). This is especially the case for stories that have become common knowledge due to being publicised by anti-corruption agencies, senior government officials or have become a *cause célèbre* arising from the reporting of court proceedings involving politicians or government appointees. Another respondent, a former newspaper editor, insisted that in spite of corruption in the ranks of journalists, *"the*

media remains the bastion of democracy. It remains the bastion in the fight against corruption. It remains the bastion of the campaign against injustice".

Regarding the election year, one editor described it as *"the Olympics for the media"* and another politics reporter saw it as *"the best time for corruption reporting"*. Yet again, an experienced male reporter observed that the election year is essentially a season to *"make money from politicians".* This is because political candidates', eager for positive stories to support their campaigns, often offer big *"incentives"* to journalists for such publications. An experienced politics reporter with *The Vanguard* described the election year as an opportunity for journalists to get their proverbial pound of flesh from political elites, *"who don't pick their calls, and all of a sudden some of them are calling you by midnight…the reporters will tell them that some of the things they are asking for, have to be paid for."* Here, he was referring frankly to the pecuniary nature of what a journalist demands of a politician, in the circumstance where a politician requests something and must offer something in return (possibly a bribe or an inflated commission, etc.). This could happen in the case of positive coverage, desiring a negative story be toned down, or in order to secure a particular position of prominence in the newspaper. As a further example, a deputy news editor spoke of a meeting with a politician in the election year, where he could easily have demanded money to fix his car which had recently broken down, but he did not do so because his religious beliefs meant he stood against corruption.

In general, the journalists presented scenarios where the election year offers multiple opportunities for journalists to enrich themselves by corrupt means. This is

because of their increased access to politicians who frequently make various requests for favourable publicity or some other transaction to bolster their chances of winning at the polls. Thus, and in sum, in the non-election year, journalists are bribed to influence the reporting of a story, either by "burying" it, toning down its negativity, or deliberately writing favourable stories that put political office holders and their actions in a positive light. They may even be at the beck and call of political elites because of their dire conditions and poor welfare. By contrast, in the voting year, the increased demands on journalists from politicians seeking to use the media to enhance their chances of winning at the polls, presents more opportunities for corruption in the ranks of journalists. Journalists tend to capitalise on these opportunities. Moreover, journalists appear to have the upper hand in negotiating the financial rewards they expect from rendering the services requested by politicians in the election year. These rewards are often inflated, and under the table, and hence themselves a result of corruption.

6.7 Lack of resources for investigation

Many of the respondents gave qualified answers to the question: *To what extent is reporting on political corruption supported by investigative journalism?* According to their accounts, investigative journalism utilised to uncover political corruption is limited, hampered by scarce financial resources, fear of reprisal, and inadequate and untrained manpower. This long quote from an editor of one of the newspapers examined for this study captures the economic situation and thinking with regard to investigative journalism:

> *"...how many newspapers, can actually fund investigation? I had told you that I met with three investigative desks in three newspapers in the United States, where they spend as much as between ninety thousand dollars and one hundred and twenty thousand dollars on just one investigation. In a country (Nigeria)*

where you have to spend so much money on diesel to run your operations… we import paper reels that we use for our newspapers, we import the ink, we use foreign experts to service our machinery, so how much can you really spend on investigation? We try our best, but it is a challenging environment. So, we need to put things in perspective" (Editor, Male).

From the context provided by the editor, it is obvious that weighed against the scale of numerous other challenges that newspapers as profit-oriented businesses must contend with to stay afloat in Nigeria, —from power generation to run the news organisation, importation of crucial components for operations, and meeting obligations to staff— investigative journalism does not rank high on the list of priorities.

Schudson (2003) has stated that like other corporate enterprises, "privately owned news media seek profit, and they will cut corners to get it. They will seek to reduce costs even at the risk of limiting the quality of journalism" (p.127). Oso (2013) is more specific in writing that media organisations in Nigeria often make steep cuts to crucial areas of the business, including investigative journalism, just to stay afloat. As seen in the editor's comments, he highlights the sharp contrast of investigative reporting when the economic realities of Nigerian newspapers are compared to those in the United States of America. By comparing the Nigerian situation with what obtains in the United States of America, he makes it clear that Nigerian newspapers do not have the resources to conduct investigations like American newspapers because of the challenges of operating in Nigeria.

Added to this financial deterrent is the quality and number of personnel required for undertaking investigative assignments. Another editor with a different newspaper also examined in this study observed that, *"We have so many things breaking at the*

moment in Nigeria, so you just yank the reporter off the investigative work and reassign him to that thing that's happening at the moment". Yet another senior journalist noted that journalism has become an all-comers affair and *"some of them are not adequately equipped to carry out investigative reporting (because) they are not well trained*". The preceding perspective is consistent with Coronel's (2003) position on the lack of properly trained reporters for investigative reporting. She writes that many journalists "have neither the skills nor the training that investigative reporting requires" (p.11).

A number of participants also stated that fear of reprisals from corrupt political elites was a further discouragement that weighs against conducting any thorough, albeit infrequent, investigative work to be undertaken for news reports, as seen in the quote from this journalist:

> *"It's rare (investigative reporting). It is only a very few that do that because of fear. Even your office will not defend you when you are thrown in prison. The same office that sent you out to report the story will not come out and defend you. They won't fight for you. They will leave you to rot in jail. So, everybody is running away from it, including me. Someone wrote an investigative story recently and included my name in the by-line, I warned him never to do such a thing again" (Politics Reporter, Female).*

Evident from her decision for her name to be excluded from the investigative report is her sense of self-preservation rather than any measure of self-effacement. The fear of being thrown in prison by the implicated political elite and subsequently abandoned by her news organisation, leads her to caution her colleague against extending any credit for the investigative report to her. Thus, as seen in the foregoing, the combination of scarce financial and human resources for conducting investigations, and the likely abandonment by the news organisations because of associated costs of defending journalists in situations where political elites decide to take legal action, inhibits the commitment required for investigative work.

Conversely, the election year presents many opportunities to investigate corruption without the need to invest so heavily in financial and human resources. Some journalists stated that these opportunities resulted from the conspicuous display of money at the hands of political elites, offering financial rewards to the public in exchange for their votes. In the experience of a deputy news editor who drew from developments in the 2023 election cycle to buttress his argument:

> *"You know it happens, but not at the crazy level that we are witnessing ahead of the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. It was done openly. It was done brazenly. It was done without any regard to ethics…These days, you don't need to pray and fast before news falls into your lap. Unlike in the past when things were done with decorum, and you have to go the nine yards (to investigate). These days you can just sit down and the news falls into your lap. You may only dig to give more credence to your report…. In the past, you'd hear of how monies are shared to delegates in their hotel rooms, and you have to go and investigate, book a room days ahead of the convention in the same hotel, and stay there to find out. Now you don't need it". (Deputy News Editor, Male)*

His comment illustrates how easier it is for journalists to investigate and report corruption during an election year because of the abundance of irrefutable evidence when compared to the scarcity of evidence in the non-election year and the resources required to unearth the evidence.

Overall, the participants' responses show that investigative journalism is rarely employed to uncover political corruption. The principal reason being the dearth of resources, financial and human, to support investigations by the newspapers. However, in the election year, the desperation for votes by political elites who go all out, openly offering bribes and perhaps committing other illegal acts, to win elective positions, makes it easier and less costly to investigate political corruption than in the routine year.

6.8 Conclusion

Based on the interviews with journalists, all of whom have reported on political corruption, this chapter has presented the set of significant constraints and opportunities influencing the production of news frames on political corruption, and how these considerations vary when the election year is compared with the routine year. The considerations examined were sources and access to information, journalistic obligation and readers' expectation, risks on reporting corruption, ownership interests, corruption among journalists, and lack of resources for investigation. Overall, these considerations work together to determine the presentation of political corruption news that emerges as content in the newspapers.

Chapter 7

Discussion and Implications

7.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the key findings from both content analysis and in-depth interviews employed to understand the news frames on political corruption in the newspapers examined. Accordingly, the chapter discusses the findings in relation to the dominance of the responsibility frame, use of sources, ownership interests, impact of fear, and corruption among journalists. These key findings are examined in terms of their convergence with and divergence from the broader literature on media and political corruption, and framing theory. In the same vein, the chapter also explores the implications of these findings for understanding media coverage of political corruption in Nigeria.

7.2 Dominance of attribution of responsibility frame

The results show an overwhelming dominance of the attribution of responsibility frame in both the election year of 2019 (70%) and the non-election year, 2020 (66%). All the newspapers examined preferred this news frame (*Punch (*73%), *This Day* (66%), *Daily Trust* (70%) and *Leadership* (63%)) for the portrayal of corruption in their reports and used it more than any of the other frames for their corruption news. Hence, regardless of the year and the newspaper, attribution of responsibility was the most frequently employed frame with the news emphasising the issue as a problem to be solved or one for which certain politicians or political parties were to be held accountable, because they were complicit.

In the election year, the news often featured the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) typically blaming the previous civilian administrations which had been led by the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), for corruption. Separately, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were also featured blaming the All Progressives Congress (APC) for corruption during the first term (2015-2019) of President Muhammadu Buhari and asking voters to expel them from government. The use of the attribution of responsibility frame continued in the routine year, often with the PDP holding the re-elected APC government responsible for the continuing political corruption.

Overall, the prevalence of the frame in the four newspapers examined indicated the strong reliance on the government for solutions to the problems of corruption bedevilling the country. The focus on the government for solutions or responsibility for the problem is consistent with the literature because, as previously discussed, in Nigeria and indeed Africa in general, government plays a central role in development and is seen as responsible for either causing or solving societal problems (Leys, 1965; Ogundiya, 2009; Agbiboa, 2012). This is largely because it is the government that wields power and controls most, if not all the important resources in the country.

Following in frequency, although to a far lesser degree, in the years examined, was the conflict frame (18% in the election year, and 17% in the non-voting year). All the newspapers utilised the frame to a similar degree (*Punch*, 15%; *This Day*, 17%; *Daily Trust*, 19%; *Leadership*, 19%). Thus, political corruption news when not portrayed as

assignment of blame, was often depicted as accusations and counter-accusations or disagreements between two or more parties, persons, institutions, etc.

The frequency of the conflict frame is not entirely surprising, because conflict meets an important criterion qualifying stories as political news. Essentially, political news often portrays politics and political contest as being inherently about opposing viewpoints, and the need to adhere to journalistic standards of balance in presenting news necessitates the inclusion of such divergent perspectives (Van Gorp, 2010; de Vreese, 2005, 2014). Following after the responsibility and conflict frames, were the economic consequences and human-interest frames, with the morality frame being the least used frame in the years and newspapers examined.

A probable explanation for the similarity in framing by the different newspapers may be the reliance of journalists from these news organisations on the same sources of information for news, for example, news beats, press conferences or releases (Van Gorp, 2007; Brüggemann, 2014; D'Angelo and Shaw, 2018). Journalists may also be subjected to similar pressures and constraints (Moy, Tewksbury, and Rinke, 2016), and of course, they all operate within the same broader societal culture (Entman, 1993; Reese, 2001; Van Gorp, 2007) requiring them to privilege certain sources. However, in contradiction to Brüggemann's (2014) warning that "it would be wrong to speak of journalists as if they were a homogenous group with respect to framing practices" (p.62) because of differences in the operations of news organisations, the similarity observed in the deployment of frames is suggestive of a lack of any significant differentiation among journalists from the four different news organisations.

Overall, these findings on the dominance of the responsibility frame, followed by conflict, economic consequences, human interest and morality frames in the newspapers is consistent with the results from Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) research. Their study of the framing of European politics in the Dutch national news media found a similar pattern of dominance in their investigation of three national television stations and four national newspapers. Their research showed that the most frequently used frame was responsibility, followed by conflict, economic consequences, human interest, then morality frames. This led them to conclude that the centrality of the Dutch government for solving social problems appeared to have strong influence on news framing on an array of political issues, including corruption.

However, this result showing a similarity in the use of frames is in contradiction to the position long held by scholars that the regional orientation of the newspapers causes a dissimilarity in the portrayal of significant national issues including corruption (Ziegler and Asante, 1992; Bourgault, 1995; Yusha'u, 2010a, 2010b, 2018). This is because although *Punch* and *This Day* are from the south, and *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* are from the north, they all showed a similarity in their deployment of the different frames to discuss malpractice.

Yet, it must be said that Ziegler and Asante (1992) had theorised that broadly shared economic and social problems in Nigeria could minimise the regional differences they observed in the news on important national issues. So, it is possible that their theory of shared economic and social hardship leading to similar presentation of news may be one reason for the high level of similarity seen in the way the different newspapers discuss malpractice. This is more so in light of the World Bank's (2023) assertion that

economic hardship for Nigerians has been on the rise, and it is expected that many more Nigerians are expected to fall into poverty between 2019 and 2025. In addition, as seen in the percentages above, the newspapers that are discreetly politically aligned, *Punch* and *Daily Trust,* frame political corruption in a similar way as did those that are obviously politically aligned, *Leadership* and *This Day.* This suggests that political alignments may be a stronger influence than regional orientation when it comes to portrayals of political corruption in the newspapers.

7.3 Use of sources

In terms of the use of sources, the findings showed a strong reliance on politicians and government appointees or officials as sources for news. Although the reliance on this class of sources can be seen in both the election and non-election years, the use of politicians and government appointees was greater in the election year than in the non-voting year. For politicians, they were firstly those from the governing All Progressives Congress party (APC), then the opposition politicians, predominantly those from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). For government officials, these sources were primarily from Nigeria's main anti-corruption agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the judiciary. Although officials from the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) and the Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) were also used as sources, they were only relevant in the election year.

These findings are in consonance with the perspectives of framing scholars that it is the arguments by politicians and official government sources that are privileged in political news (Carragee and Roefs, 2004; Lawrence, 2010). These political elites have easier access to the media because they possess the economic resources, knowledge

of the subject, power to influence the issue, and are preferred by journalists because they are often authoritative (Carragee and Roefs, 2004; Lawrence, 2010). The need for the authoritativeness provided by these sources is further emphasised when it comes to corruption news because as Schudson (2003) notes, running unsubstantiated reports that accuse politicians of malpractice can have punitive legal consequences for the journalists and the newspapers they write for.

Furthermore, the use of politicians and government officials as sources is closely related to dominance of the attribution of responsibility and conflict frames because these sources were frequently used to assign blame or responsibility for solving corruption, or engaged in accusations and counter-accusations. This is consistent with the position of scholars on the centrality of sources for the production and understanding of news frames (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Carragee and Roefs, 2004; Van Gorp, 2010; Brüggemann, 2014; D'Angelo and Shaw, 2018). Van Gorp (2010) is perhaps the most concise in declaring that "sources make the news, perhaps particularly so when they disagree" (p.102).

But in stark contrast to the use of politicians and government appointees that were preferred as sources in the election year more so than in the non-election year, the scenario for the use of Nigerian civil society organisations (CSOs) as sources was reversed. Nigerian CSOs were utilised more frequently as sources in the non-voting year, 2020, at 14%, than the preceding election year at only 7%. This is despite their efficacy for distilling complex information to provide simplified, dispassionate insights (Schudson, 2008) that could guide citizens in making rational political choices in a decisive election year. The hundred percent increase in the use of Nigerian civil

society organisations in the non-voting year relative to their low use in the election year is telling. On the one hand, and as confirmed by journalists, it indicates the ready availability of CSOs for use as sources in both the election year and the routine year, while on the other hand, it highlights the negligence of journalists to use them for news on political corruption, especially in the election year.

The situation is aggravated by journalists' own admission that politicians deliberately make themselves inaccessible in the routine year, "because of their egos", but become eagerly available in the election year because of their desire to use the press for political advantage. As such, even in a crucial election year, when the views of civil society organisations could have provided a good counter-balance to those of politicians and their appointees, and held these elites up to scrutiny, news reports were still dominated by the positions of politicians. Schudson (2017) has stated that civil society organisations (CSOs) are part of a growing network of agencies that play an important and effective monitoring role because they scrutinise the actions of elites and the government. They also have expertise and credibility in discussing the issue. He suggests that the media ought to work with these organisations because they "monitor the performance of government, society, and the economy on a daily, ongoing basis" (p.96). Moreover, Schudson (2017) has observed that with the ever-increasing size of government in democracies around the world, it is impossible for the media alone to effectively perform its watchdog function. His position is relevant for news reporting on political corruption in Nigeria because as indicated in the literature on the country's political development, there has been an extensive expansion in government administration since the country's independence in 1960 (Alapiki, 2005; Pierce, 2016b).

To buttress Schudson's point, Nigeria had only three regions as its main federating units in 1960, consisting of Northern, Western and Eastern regions (Alapiki, 2005; Pierce, 2016b). A fourth region, the Mid-Western Region, was added in 1963 (Alapiki, 2005; Pierce, 2016b). Today, the number of federating units has vastly increased to the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, and thirty-six states that are comprised of seven hundred and seventy-four local government areas, all prone to political corruption (Alapiki, 2005; Pierce, 2016b). The media cannot police the actions of political elites in all these places. So, partnering with civil society organisations offers the media an effective way of performing its watchdog function.

Yet again, the inadequate use of Nigerian CSOs as sources becomes apparent in the context of the findings that suggest that the constraints of time, manpower and especially capital, has severely limited the use of investigative journalism to support news reporting on political corruption. Journalists admit that these constraints have led them (and the newspapers) to substitute the dirt dug up by political elites to tarnish their rivals for proper investigative journalism, particularly in the election year. Such effortless substitution lends strong credence to the assertion that "much of what is presented as investigative journalism in Africa is based on poorly sourced material, often only one source, which has not been properly checked" (Rønning 2009, p.166).

Moreover, scholars have observed that democracy benefits from the broad participation of diverse actors in discussing political issues (Schudson, 1995; Graber, 1994, 2004; Merritt, 1999). According to Schudson (1995), news on politics should be more accommodating of the arguments that go beyond those of politicians and

appointed public officials, however authoritative these elites may be as sources. This would promote a wider spectrum of ideas and involvement in politics necessary for a robust democracy.

This argument is also relevant in the light of the findings that show Nigerian citizens were among the sources with poor representation in the news, ranking 7% in the crucial election year, 2019, and 6% in the routine year, 2020. Graber's (1994, 2004) research has indicated that citizens relate more easily to politics when the issues are depicted by them than when it is framed by journalists (Graber, 1994, 2004). In essence, citizens become more interested in political issues and particularly voting when their views are taken into considerations in debates on future policies, and when they engage directly with the candidates seeking office (Graber, 1994, 2004). Graber's position is fortified by Merritt's (1999) view that one reason for the failure of the media to solve important societal problems is that news "is framed by both politicians and journalists as black-and-white contests…Each framer has a stake in continuing the argument; none has a stake in resolving it" (p.371). He goes on to argue that "those who do have such a stake—average citizens—are frustrated" (p.371) because there is no place for them in the conversation. Thus, it is possible that the poor representation of citizens' voices in the news could be a contributing factor to the persistence of political corruption in Nigeria.

7.4 Ownership interests

Transcripts of the interviews with journalists showed their frequent use of the idiom "he who pays the piper, dictates the tune". A few journalists were also pointed in their admission of having had to "colour" their reports on corruption news to ensure their alignment with the newspaper proprietor's stance on the issue. Furthermore, some of the journalists told of "no-go areas" and punitive "sanctions" for reporting on the corrupt behaviours of some political elites, considered to be sacred cows by their news organisations. Thus, results from this research concur with Yusha'u's (2018) findings on corruption reporting in Nigeria that similarly drew on interviews with journalists. Among his findings were evidence that loyalty to certain affiliations and the benefits derived from them, such as access to resources through lucrative government contracts, for instance, leads newspapers to either ignore corruption stories outright or dampen the severity of their reporting.

Moreover, the study corroborates the position of Abubakre (2017) and Yusha'u (2018) on the way ownership interests necessitates the distortion of corruption news presentation in different forms. Some of these forms of distortion include the purposeful omission of information in the reports; playing up less important stories as more relevant issues to divert the attention of readers; and as one journalist observed, the "burying" altogether of news on political corruption. The evidence from this research is also supported by the positions of various media scholars and anti-corruption officials that have long pointed to the very cosy relationship between the owners of newspapers and the country's political elites as detracting from objective reporting on political corruption (Olukoyun, 2004; Ribadu, 2010; Apuke, 2016; Ibbi, 2016; Abubakre, 2017; Babasola, 2023).

Taken together, comments from the journalists revealed how newspapers are used to support the proprietor's political, ethnic, religious, and commercial interests in both the non-voting and election years. However, in the election year, these interests become more intensified either by promoting the owner's preferred political candidate or maximising profit by generating higher sales from featuring corruption news on the candidates. One explanation for increased sales is the robust interest of readers who look to newspapers as sources of credible information on the candidates to determine which candidate deserves their votes. Hence, the views of journalists illustrate that newspaper proprietors see their publications as platforms to pursue their personal interests more than avenues to fulfil the media's obligation to function as the fourth estate of the realm, reporting on the activities of political elites and holding them accountable for wrong-doing.

Babasola's (2023) discussion on ownership of newspapers in Nigeria is instructive concerning the impact of Nigeria's weak economy on the fortunes of the newspaper business. He states that the weak exchange rate between the Nigerian naira to United States' dollar makes the newspaper business unprofitable because most of the requirements for newspaper production from newsprint to equipment are imported. This has induced newspaper owners to strengthen their ties to political and economic elites for the sake of patronage, with the result that they are more likely to seek to please these elites, rather than hold them to account. According to Babasola (2023), all the newspapers examined in this study are affiliated to either one or the other of Nigeria's two main political parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). *Punch, Leadership* and *Daily Trust* are affiliated to

the former while *This Day* is affiliated to the latter (Babasola, 2023; Demarest and Langer, 2019) and their owners routinely lobby for lucrative positions in government parastatals (Babasola, 2023). His view is consistent with Mano and El Mkaouar's (2023) description of some African media owners as "well-connected political and economic elites who implement controls of the media in ways that leverage their power and impact on professionalism of journalists" (p.4).

Finally, Ekpu (1990) and Schudson (2008, 2017) have stated that journalism that holds value for the public in a democracy is not partisan, but committed to objective reporting rooted in professionalism. Ekpu (1990) draws from his experience as one of the co-owners of *Newswatch,* a Nigerian magazine, now defunct, to insist that for independent reporting to thrive, it must be unencumbered by indebtedness, financial or otherwise, that leads reporting to kowtow to the dictates of big corporations, wealthy elites, and powerful political figures. Otherwise, it is difficult for reporting to be guided by professional standards, to remain objective in providing the quality of information that supports democracy, and to report on these elites when they are complicit in corruption (Ekpu, 1990; Babasola, 2023). In deliberately covering up or misrepresenting political corruption for the sake of profit or personal affiliation, owners of news organisations abuse the public's trust for their own personal gain (Ekpu, 1990).

7.5 Impact of fear

A common thread emerging from the discussions with all the journalists was the palpable apprehension they must contend with when reporting on corrupt but powerful political figures. The journalists were explicit in their admission of this fear. Their sense

of foreboding understandably arises from the intimidation and threats they face for daring to report on politicians' unscrupulous misuse of public office for private gain. Moreover, as they see it, their fears are also grounded in past and current instances where similar threats by political notables have resulted in harassment, injury, detention, and even the deaths of colleagues, with no consequence for those elites considered suspects. Unsurprisingly, such fear discourages journalists from reporting on the delicate subject of malpractice, and even when they dare to do so, their sense of apprehension restricts the quality of news reporting.

This is consistent with the literature on the Nigerian media that has discussed the many instances of newspapers and journalists being intimidated and harassed for reporting on powerful political figures or news that runs contrary to the government's stance on an issue (Ekpu, 1990; Ogbondah, 2011; Suleiman, 2017; Mano and El Mkaouar, 2023). For instance, *Daily Trust*, was harassed by state security forces in early 2019, the election year, for its perceived support of popular protests in Nigeria (Mano and El Mkaouar, 2023). Also, Freedom House (2023) submits that "officials restrict press freedom by publicly criticizing, harassing, and arresting journalists, especially when they cover corruption". The attacks and intimidation can sometimes become personal and even deadly. This is particularly the case when such reports are considered to be capable of causing the loss of an election or have become a source of embarrassment for political elites, leading these figures to take punitive actions (Ogbondah, 2011).

But beyond journalists being the primary targets, the evidence from the accounts of several journalists show that these threats also extend to members of their families,

with their loved ones' becoming collateral damage for corruption reporting. The potential for harm is real, potent and even imminent, in both the voting year and the non-voting year. However, the evidence shows that the tendency for harm looms large in the election year because the voting public, some of whom are blind supporters, become willing enforcers for politicians vying for public office because of the bribes received from these elites in exchange for votes.

Moreover, it would appear that the Nigerian state, although constitutionally responsible for protecting its citizens, fails to protect journalists from these threats, thus giving tacit endorsement to, or condoning the attacks on journalists. This situation is further aggravated by the absence of support from some of the news organisations that neglect to stand by their journalists in defence of the stories published in the newspapers, because they fear losing the patronage of the elites involved. For instance, one journalist had noted that,

> *you have to mind the way you write on such people because if you write something bad, they withdraw their patronage from your company…I think between you and their patronage, the company (news organisation) values their patronage one hundred percent more. They can fire you and get a hundred others who will do your work, but if they take their patronage, where will they get another patron?*

Another journalist, an experienced political reporter, had suggested that despite having published a corruption story based on credible evidence, the newspaper retracted the story and tendered an apology to avoid becoming entangled in the costly

legal proceedings threatened by the politician that was the subject of the story. Thus, journalists are often caught between a rock and a hard place in their reporting on political corruption, leading them to effectively bear all the risks for their reporting alone. In this context, it is useful to note that although Nigeria's 1999 Constitution guarantees freedom of expression (Section 39) and the media's position to hold government accountable (Section 22), thus supporting news reporting, it does not offer any protective guarantees to the press (Apuke, 2016; Suleiman, 2017; Government of Nigeria, 2023). Hence, while freedom of expression may be encouraged as inscribed in the Nigerian constitution, protection after such expression is not guaranteed (Apuke, 2016).

Undoubtedly, the lack of constitutional protection for journalists inhibits news reporting on malpractice. Schudson (2017) writes that for news to be consequential in a democracy, it is essential for the press to be free. He argues that the quality of news reporting deteriorates, "if journalists fear for their lives or livelihood when they publish truthful accounts" (p.103). Heyns and Srinivasan (2013) cite research from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) showing that journalists who report on politics and corruption in newspapers are the most likely targets of attacks from a range of sources including political groups, government officials, and local residents. Their discussion presents a persuasive argument on the need to protect journalists from intimidation and attacks for their reporting. Furthermore, they state that these attacks on journalists and their relatives or close associates are the most extreme kind of censorship with repercussions for the journalist and the wider society. Such attacks, they argue, discourage news reporting, free speech, and the robust exchange of ideas,

but simultaneously, encourage “ignorance, superstition, and rumor, while the actions of the powerful go unchecked” (p.305).

Put simply, news reporting on politics and corruption is to some extent, dependent on the enforcement of laws, that both foster such reporting, and designate journalists as a special class of professionals that require protection in the society (Heyns and Srinivasan, 2013). In the absence of such laws and their enforcement, as in the Nigerian case, the backlash for journalists, citizens, and the well-being of the society can be extreme and take various forms. These may include dull reporting on the mundane affairs of the state, restrained debate by citizens, and limited participation in politics in both the voting and non-voting years.

7.6 Corruption among journalists

As previously stated in Chapter 6, all the journalists interviewed for the study admitted to corruption in their ranks and its adverse effects of detracting from the quality and quantity of news reporting on political corruption. Hence, evidence from this study corroborates the position of various scholars that corruption is prevalent in the ranks of journalists (Schudson, 2003; Rønning, 2009; Yusha’u’, 2010a; Nwabueze, 2010). Schudson (2003), in situating the corruption among journalists globally, discusses the *gacetilla* system in Mexico (p.149) and red envelopes in China (p.144) to show the ways political elites advance bribes, favours, and adverts, to deliberately influence the news reporting by journalists.

Writing about the influence of corruption on news reporting in Africa, Rønning (2009) describes “the brown-envelope syndrome” (p.168) in reference to bribes given in

envelopes by elites to poorly paid African reporters and editors to distort their reporting on corruption. However, as Ibbi (2016) notes “though the name is brown envelope, such monies could be given in white envelopes and even in bank accounts of the reporters or they could translate into things like parcels of land, automobiles,” (p.4) or gifts in other forms. Furthermore, as stated by both journalists and scholars, corruption in the ranks of journalists proceeds from their general poor welfare, or as one journalist chose to rationalise it in this research, “my take home pay cannot take me half-way home”.

Corruption among journalists also results from cultural pressures and expectations from the wider society that come in the form of financial obligations related to providing for their families, marriages, childbirths, support for relatives and burial ceremonies, among others (Ibbi, 2016; Deputy News Editor, 2022). A journalist with one of the newspapers examined in this study noted that corruption, “flows from the top”, suggesting that corruption by newspaper proprietors and the wider society had led to the malfeasance in the ranks of journalists.

Consistent with the foregoing, Yusha’u (2010a, 2018) and Ibbi’s (2016) discussion situates corruption among Nigerian journalists as an unethical practice that is caused by a number of factors within and outside the news organisation. These include the poor remuneration of journalists, completely at odds with current economic realities in the country, and, aggravating their circumstances even further, the non-payment of salaries for months at a time. An editor with one of the newspapers examined observed that this causes journalists to resort to “self-help” in meeting personal and family obligations.

Smith (2008) writes that at the barest minimum, corruption in the ranks of journalists presents a conflict of interest because it is aimed at influencing the judgement of reporters in presenting the news. “Even the most naïve reporters soon figure out that…politicians and other newsmakers do not buy dinners or pay travel expenses because they think reporters are such nice people” (Smith, 2008, p.300). In essence, irrespective of the name or form it takes, or indeed the reasons for it, corruption of journalists by elites is deliberate and aimed at manipulating the news. According to Smith (2008), fraudulent politicians understand that negative coverage puts them in a bad light, whereas positive news is a stamp of approval on their actions. Furthermore, and as encapsulated in this response from one of the experienced political reporters, “When you have received money from someone, as a human being you won’t want to do anything bad against that person. So, it has an enormous impact on the reports on political corruption”.

The corruption among journalists prevails in spite of some newspapers having statements in their publications to discourage it, as is the case with *Daily Trust* and *Punch*. *Daily Trust* (03.01. 2020) policy against the corruption of journalists as featured on its Page 2, states that:

> Media Trust Limited journalists have pledged to uphold the Company’s policy of not asking or taking a gift by whatever name, from those they encounter in the course of their work. Please assist us by not seeking to influence our reporters and editors with your favours. Where they can, our journalists are expected to graciously decline a gift. When it is pressed on them, they are expected to declare it. The Company will write a letter

> thanking the giver and donating the amount to charity. Report anyone who claims to be our staff but engages in unethical conduct. To blow the whistle, send an SMS to 08035896941, 08055497449 or an email to whistleblower@dailytrust.com

Punch's own stance against corrupting its journalists is placed on its back page and reads:

> We, Punch Nigeria Limited, do not accept gifts or gratification to publish articles or photographs, neither do our journalists. Therefore, we implore you not to offer any to our journalists. In the event that a PUNCH (sic) journalist demands such, please send your complaint(s) to ethics@punchng.com or 08168214977. (*Punch*, December 1, 2020)

Nonetheless, as Nwabueze (2010) has observed, there are no effective ways of monitoring the compliance of such anti-corruption policies by the newspapers.

It is logical then to assume that the impact of corruption in the ranks of journalists on news reporting is likely to be felt more in the election year when desperate politicians actively seek out journalists, who then capitalise on such desperation for personal gain. However, regardless of the voting year or the routine year, corruption in the ranks of journalists adversely affects news reporting on political corruption. Thus, similar to the argument made earlier on ownership interests, corruption among journalists equates to the abuse of public trust in the media. It has deleterious consequences for the public that rely on journalists and their newspapers for quality information to aid them in their decision-making on political elites (Ekpu, 1990; Schudson, 2003).

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the key findings from the mixed methods of content analysis of news articles and semi-structured in-depth interviews with journalists who have written on political corruption. The findings have been discussed under their distinct features, thus, dominance of responsibility frames, use of sources, ownership interests, impact of fear, and corruption among journalists. Furthermore, the chapter has established the convergence or divergence of these findings as they relate to the broader literature on the media and political corruption, and framing theory. For instance, the existence of corruption among journalists and its adverse impact on the reporting of political corruption, highlighted in previous scholarly research, and the dependence on authoritative, mostly official sources for news, identified by framing scholars. It has also explored the implications of the findings for the practice of journalism and its obligation to serve the public interest, and found both the practice and obligation wanting.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter of the thesis summarises the entire study. It begins in the next section by underscoring the value of framing theory for this research, and related to the use of framing theory, briefly reiterates the methods employed and key findings of the research. Thereafter, and in the light of the thesis' findings and their implications, the chapter proffers a modest practical recommendation to support newspapers in their reporting on political corruption, highlights the main contributions of the research and points out its limitations. It concludes by making suggestions on areas for future research where framing theory, described as "elaborate and potent" (Blumler, 2015, p.428) for understanding political communications could be applied to further an understanding of the media and the portrayal of political issues.

8.2 Value of framing theory for the study

"Framing is as central a concept there is in the study of news" (Schudson, 2003, p. 35). The theory goes beyond simply seeking to understand what is presented and examines not only how it is presented, but also the important considerations that have influenced journalists' decisions to produce the content presented as news (D'Angelo and Shaw, 2018; Brüggemann, 2014; Borah, 2011; Kitzinger, 2007). To investigate the reporting on corruption in Nigeria, this research applied framing theory to examine news on political malpractice. Previous studies had mostly applied the agenda-setting theory to investigate media coverage of political corruption to examine the prominence

accorded such reports. Framing enabled this study to unveil the direction of the arguments on political corruption, and importantly, the sources used by journalists to make these arguments.

Given the nature of Nigerian newspapers, particularly their greater independence to discuss politics, the research focused on four privately-owned newspapers, *Punch, This Day, Daily Trust,* and *Leadership*, and compared news in the election year of 2019 with the non-voting year of 2020. The four newspapers were evenly divided across the broad regional divisions of north and south that scholars say influence the reporting on issues of national significance in Nigeria. So, two publications, *Punch,* and *This Day,* were selected from southern Nigeria and the other two, *Daily Trust* and *Leadership,* from northern Nigeria. Furthermore, the study was guided by a clear set of research questions and employed the mixed methods approach of content analysis and interviews advocated by framing scholars (D'Angelo and Shaw, 2018; Brüggemann, 2014; Borah, 2011) to explore hard news on political corruption.

Content analysis supported the investigation of political corruption news presented in the publications. In all, the study examined 661 news stories comprising 362 stories in the election year and 299 stories in the routine year. Additionally, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 journalists. 14 of these journalists were purposefully sampled from the newspapers examined in this study because of their published news reports on political corruption or editorial positions editing and making consequential decisions about such reports. The remaining 10 of the journalists were referred to the researcher because of their expertise and experience writing or editing corruption stories. As such, all the journalists interviewed were either reporters or

editors, with their years of experience ranging from 6 to 20 years. Educationally, they possessed either bachelor, master, or doctoral degrees. So, these journalists were not novices. They were well-versed in the craft of reporting and editing news on politics and corruption. Interviews with these journalists averaged 46 minutes and were illuminating, providing rich contextual insight into the covert considerations that informed the actual content presented as news in the newspapers.

The research produced a number of salient findings. For instance, it found that the dominant frame was attribution of responsibility. Following in prevalence was the conflict frame characterised by accusations and counter-accusations made by opposing politicians, parties, and institutions, sourced by journalists to discuss the news on corruption. The prevalence of these frames to portray the news on corruption was regardless of the year or the newspapers examined. Correlatively, this study also found that the main sources for the news on malpractice were politicians, principally these were politicians from the governing All Progressives Congress (APC), followed by those in the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Again these sources dominated across the voting and non-voting year.

Of note in the findings was that there were a range of discreet considerations that inhibited the quality of news reporting on malpractice. Principal among these considerations were ownership interests, access to information, and risks for reporting on political corruption. Ownership interests was an especially strong limitation. In discussing the importance of ownership, one journalist noted that *"You can go and do your investigative journalism from here to the moon, but if you don't have anywhere to publish it, there's nothing you can do."* Fundamentally, the research revealed that

newspaper proprietors considered their newspapers as platforms for achieving their personal objectives. In the normal course of business, the routine year, these interests could be financial, ethnic, religious and/or, political, and when these interests were at odds with serving the public, they were often prioritised over serving the public interest. In the election year, owners typically used their newspapers as platforms to support their preferred political candidates. Hence, these owners could be aptly described as "well-connected political and economic elites who implement controls of the media in ways that leverage their power and impact on professionalism of journalists" (Mano and El Mkaouar, 2023, p.4). This finding was consistent with much of the literature by various scholars on the influence of ownership on news reporting (Mano and El Mkaouar, 2023; Yusha'u, 2018; Oso, Odunlami and Adaja, 2011; Schudson, 2003).

Another limiting factor was the fear that journalists felt for their safety and those of their loved ones when reporting on malpractice, and this translated to a grave risk detracting from reporting corruption. In the non-voting year, journalists confirmed that they were fearful of reporting on corrupt political elites because such reports could lead to actionable threats from these political actors. In the election year, however, these threats were intensified, with supporters of political actors viewed as potential enforcers that could carry through on these threats to journalists and their families.

Furthermore, because of the sensitivity around making allegations against political elites suspected of corruption, access to authoritative sources was another important factor limiting the quality of corruption news. These authoritative sources, often either appointed officials or contesting politicians, were typically unavailable in the non-voting

year, but eager to speak to the press during the election year. According to the journalists, both their unavailability in the routine year and eagerness in the voting year were deliberate actions taken to give them an advantage and advance their interests. In spite of their full knowledge of politicians' intentional disposition to avoid the press, journalists were often wary of turning to experts in civil society organisations to discuss corruption, because these organisations were not deemed sufficiently authoritative to speak on the subject.

Finally, evidence from the research revealed that the constraints on news reporting on political corruption have been exacerbated by cost of operations and news production. These costs have severely limited the use of investigative journalism to uncover political corruption and impacted on journalists' remuneration as well as other aspects of their welfare and indeed the practice of the profession. As one editor interviewed for this research observed, "*how much can a newspaper spend on an investigation when you have salaries to pay, you have pensions to pay, you have allowances to pay, you have to run your operations, and you have to service your machines".* It is these costs that have probably further necessitated the cultivation of a close relationship with the political and economic elite for the economic benefits such relationships offer. Overall, the hindrances to reporting on corruption uncovered by this research begged the question: How is it even possible to report on political corruption in an environment riddled with these many constraints? And yet, as seen in the nearly 700 reports examined in this study, corruption reporting is not an uncommon feature in the newspapers.

Also, the thesis sought to test the assumption that coverage of political corruption in an election year tends to more independent, and so provide voters with a higher quality of reporting for decision-making than in the non-election year (Strömbäck and Kaid, 2009; Schauseil, 2019). However, based on the findings unveiled in this study, there appears to be little differentiation between both years. For instance, although there is greater use of politicians and political appointees as sources in the election year than the non-election year and these offer authoritative information, there are also more opportunities for politicians to influence corruption reporting by incentivising journalists in the election year, thus limiting the quality of reporting. Further, as already discussed, the upswing in the use of dispassionate civil society organisations as sources seen in the non-election year, suggests that media reports in the non-election year may, to some extent, be more independent than in the election year.

In all, findings from the study suggest that Nigeria's return to democracy, although an important, even a necessary condition for the press to address corruption through its reporting, it is insufficient. Put differently, democracy by itself, is not adequate to support the reporting of political malpractice. Indeed, from the positions of several scholars on the criteria required for the proper functioning of the press in a democracy, financial viability and independence, free access to information, absence of fear of any kind, and enabling laws that protect journalists, among others, are equally important factors (Coronel, 2010; Norris, 2008; Schudson, 2003; Stapenhurst, 2000). Where these are lacking, as in the Nigerian situation, it would be difficult for the press to carry out any sort of impactful reporting on political malpractice.

Therefore, with due consideration to all the above, it can be argued that although Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, the environment for media reporting on political corruption is perhaps only marginally better than what obtained during the era of military dictatorships. This perhaps explains why some of the comments on press reporting of corruption in the military era is strikingly similar to the perspective on their reporting in the current democracy. Oso, Odunlami and Adaja (2011) describe the relationship between the press and the military during the years of military autocracy as being marked by repressive laws against reporting on corruption, open intimidation of journalists, and the co-opting of newspapers such as *Daily Times* to control its reportage. Their position is not too different from the description of the press by Freedom House (2023) in Nigeria's current democracy, when the organisation says that "the vibrant media landscape is impeded by criminal defamation laws, as well as the frequent harassment and arrests of journalists who cover politically sensitive topics".

In light of the above, it is reasonable to reach a similar conclusion to the position taken by Dare (1997, p.460) in the final years of military rule leading to Nigeria's return to democracy that:

> The newspaper press in Nigeria has remained a diverse, outspoken institution, regardless of whether an elected government or a military regime is in power. It has sought to act as a check on those in authority, but its effectiveness has sometimes been vitiated by governmental legislation, by ethnic, religious, and political influences, by its own economic vulnerability, and by the inadequacies of the men and women who report and comment on the news.

8.3 Practical recommendation

Considering the findings from this research, particularly the consequential impact of funding for the efficient operations of newspapers, and by extension their independence to report on political corruption, this thesis recommends the funding of newspapers by public spirited philanthropies. The philanthropic organisations could be charitable foundations or other non-profit bodies that are more interested in good governance than profit. Schmalbeck (2010), in his discussion supporting this recommendation has argued that newspapers and some charitable organisations have similar objectives, for example, the promotion of good governance, improving social welfare, and education of the populace.

So, were funding to be directed to critical areas of newspaper operations including investigative reporting, staff training, remuneration and general welfare such as life and health insurance, it would go some distance in supporting news reporting on political corruption. Such funding would bolster the independence necessary for newspapers to report on political corruption and equip journalists with the skills to undertake research for producing evidence of corruption by politicians. It would also make these journalists confident to withstand the financial pressures that cause them to succumb to inducements from elites, and reinforce their ability to uphold both their personal and professional integrity. As Schultz (1998) has noted, whereas financial pressures can cause media owners to sell their independence and integrity to the highest bidder, financial independence “can insulate a news organisation from the demands of politicians, lobbyists, advertisers and merchants.” (p.5)

This practical recommendation is proffered with the full knowledge that other suggestions, such as enacting laws to support journalism and the provision of government subsidies, although possible, may not be easy to achieve in the Nigerian context. For example, it is hard to imagine a situation where politicians support the enactment and application of laws that encourage news reporting aimed at holding them accountable for their involvement in malpractice. This much is evident in the use of Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) that became law as of May 28, 2011 (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 2020b; Central Bank of Nigeria, 2011). According to scholars like Suleiman (2017) and some journalists interviewed for this research, the Act has had little consequence for facilitating journalists' access to information for news reporting on corruption because of the bureaucracy associated with securing approvals. One journalist was emphatic in stating that the FoIA was a *"mere paper policy".*

Also, as in the case of passing laws to support the investigation of corrupt elites, it would be difficult to imagine an independent press that is subsidised by the Nigerian government as has been suggested by Babasola (2023). Notwithstanding that government subsidies have been successfully applied to support the sustenance of newspapers in countries such as Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, without limiting their criticisms of the governments in those countries (Allern and Blach-Ørsten, 2011; Schudson, 2003), Nigeria may pose challenges that inhibit such success. Indeed, Akaeze's (2023) research is indicative of what can be expected in the news on corruption were newspapers to be funded by government subsidies. His examination of newspapers owned by political elites, some of whom hold positions in the

government, showed that these publications do not report on the misdeeds of their owners and cannot be trusted to be objective, especially in the election year.

8.4 Research contribution

Regarding the contribution of this research, it is first important to state that this study has benefitted from several scholars' earlier work on framing theory, especially the seminal research by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) on the framing of European politics and corruption. Their research used a clear set of simple yes or no questions to establish the presence or absence of the five frames in reports in Dutch television networks and newspapers (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; Van Gorp, 2010; Gronemeyer and Porath, 2017; Brüggemann and D'Angelo, 2018). The establishment of a transparent and effective criteria for measuring news frames is vital in the light of scholars' call for clear, empirical criteria to ensure validity and reliability (Van Gorp, 2007, 2010; Tankard, 2001; Hertog and McLeod, 2001). The research has also benefitted from the extensive body of work by numerous scholars who have examined media coverage on political corruption, especially those relating to Nigeria. Their various works have been useful not only because of the substantial body of knowledge produced, but in revealing the gap in literature.

Thus, this study is distinct from previous studies on news coverage on political corruption in Nigeria and contributes to the literature in two main respects. Firstly, it has explored media coverage on political corruption in Nigeria in the strict context of comparing a full election year to a non-election year to reveal the findings unveiled in this research. Particularly noteworthy, is the striking similarity in the depiction of corruption in all the newspapers examined. The similarity is irrespective of the regional

affiliation of the newspapers and goes against the grain of the position long held by some scholars that news on significant national issues could be differentiated by the regional affinity of the newspaper (Yusha'u, 2018, 2010a, 2010b; Bourgault, 1995; Ziegler and Asante, 1992).

For its second contribution, only a few studies have applied framing theory to guide their examination of news on political corruption in Nigeria. Adisa et al.'s (2018) work, perhaps comes remotely close to this study. They employed framing theory to analyse news on corruption in Nigeria in the six-month period (January to June 2016) following the election of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. However, by adapting Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) five generic news frames, the study has extended the use of these generic news frames to the study of political corruption in Nigeria. Scholars have long and consistently insisted that a crucial advantage of using generic frames to study an issue, in this case political corruption, is the opportunity offered for comparisons to be made across different contexts based on standardised empirical evidence. As de Vreese (2005) and Vliegenthart (2012) point out, the use of generic news frames to understand the framing of an issue supports theory building. In layman's terms, and as relates to this study, the generic frames afford an explanation of the combination of factors, the *hows* and *whys,* necessary for making predictions on the production of the news frames on political corruption.

Still, another advantage of framing theory for this study is its facility to unpack the variety of local and international political actors used as sources in producing the news on political corruption in Nigeria. As revealed in Chapter 5, these actors are many and varied. They ranged from the usual suspects, politicians, or in Leys' (1965) apt

description, political entrepreneurs, to the least expected ones, religious bodies and their leaders, deployed to achieve political ends that are often narrow and selfish. Furthermore, for some of these actors, like the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) and Nigerian civil society organisations (CSOs), the frequency of their use as sources fluctuates markedly when the election year is compared to the non-election year.

This is instructive because as several scholars of framing have emphasised, knowledge of sources is important for understanding the contextually driven factors that trigger the production of certain news frames (D'Angelo and Shaw, 2018; Brüggemann, 2014; Van Gorp, 2010; Carragee and Roefs, 2004). Carragee and Roefs (2004) for instance, have observed that the use of political elites as sources in the news is an indication of their political and economic power which gives them access to the media. To elaborate, political elites have an advantage over other sources that appear in news stories largely because political institutions are regarded as effective beats where the journalists are posted to, so reporters can gather credible, authoritative information. On the economic side, politicians often have well-paid media aides, experienced and equipped with journalistic skills, to promote their preferred arguments on an issue.

8.5 Limitations of the study

Despite its significant contributions, the study has certain limitations that must be acknowledged. Essentially, these relate to the methods applied and the type of media investigated. As such, the study must be seen primarily from the context of using content analysis on hard news and semi-structured interviews with journalists to examine news frames in four privately-owned newspapers: *Punch, This Day, Daily*

Trust and *Leadership.* Analysing other newspapers, for instance, those owned by politicians, or other types of articles, for example, features and columns that discuss political corruption in a subjective manner may have yielded different results.

Also, newsroom observations and focus group interviews with journalists may have facilitated the identification of a broader range of considerations influencing the news frames on malpractice. This would have afforded a more contextualised understanding of the different factors that inform news reporting on malpractice than only individual in-depth interviews (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020). Also, interviewing political elites featured in the news as convicted or suspected of political corruption, or those used as sources may have provided a different set of information altogether. Additionally, the study was very specific in its period of focus. It compared news frames in these newspapers in the election year, 2019, to the non-voting year, 2020. As such, focusing on a different period of time may produce distinct findings.

Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that the research was bound by constraints on time, money and the sole effort of the researcher and despite its limitations, the contributions of this research remain valuable. Its examination of news reporting on political corruption has provided an extensive list of sources privileged and disadvantaged in the popular, privately-owned newspapers, and the variations of their use when the election year is compared to the non-voting year. Further still, the research has established the generic news frames used to discuss political corruption. This supports theory development on the subject. As far as is known to this researcher, no research prior to this study, had unpacked the comprehensive list of political actors

used to discuss political corruption in the newspapers and their variation of use in the context explored in this study.

8.6 Suggestions for future research

Although the preceding limitations are indications of the avenues for future research, there are further opportunities to expand the frontiers of knowledge on the media and its coverage of political corruption, using framing theory. For instance, methods employing discourse analysis to explore the language used in framing political corruption in Nigeria could shed light on culturally relevant words and phrases such as metaphors used to discuss malpractice and the implications of their use. This is valuable because of the cultural significance of language (Van Gorp, 2010; Pan and Kosicki, 1993; van Dijk, 1991).

Scholars have observed that the language used in communication is often at the heart of political issues, and correspondingly, words and their manner of presentation in news stories are not random. They are deliberately chosen to convey particular meanings situated in culture as can be seen, for instance, in the headlines, leads, and the conclusions of news reports (Pan and Kosicki, 1993; van Dijk, 1991). Words, Pan and Kosicki (1993) observe, “hold great power in setting the context for debate, defining issues under consideration, summoning a variety of mental representations, and providing the basic tools to discuss the issues at hand” (p.70). Furthermore, culturally embedded frames using metaphors, catchphrases, or everyday depictions common to a culture, have greater power in portraying an issue because they are taken for granted, and so are unconsciously accepted by audiences (Van Gorp, 2010).

As previously indicated, newspapers owned by politicians may offer a different perspective on the news framing on political corruption. So, newspapers like *The Nation* owned by Nigeria's current president, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, *The Sun* and *The New Telegraph,* belonging to Orji Uzor Kalu, a serving senator, and *Daily Independent* owned by a former governor, James Ibori (Yusha'u, 2018; Kperogi, 2020; Akaeze, 2023) could be explored in the context of elections. They may yield a distinct set of considerations that lead to the production of generic news frames. Furthermore, it is possible that examining those newspapers that are exclusively online, such as *Sahara Reporters*, *The Cable,* and *Premium Times,* that some scholars say are more ardent in their investigation and reporting on corruption (Kperogi, 2020; Komolafe, Hitchen and Kalu-Amah, 2019; Suleiman 2017; Akoh et al., 2012) could have generated data that would have resulted in findings distinct from this research. This is more so because when compared to print newspapers, online media do not require as much resources for their operations and so may not be as beholden to certain affiliations. However, as Suleiman (2017) has noted, these online media are not known to maintain a database that would support research.

Overall, applying any of the foregoing methods to explore the media, outside those newspapers examined in this thesis, could offer useful insights into news frames on political corruption when the election year is compared to the non-election year. Furthermore, whereas this research has compared the election year, 2019, to the non-election year, 2020, it is possible that juxtaposing the routine year of 2018 to the election year, 2019, could have produced a different set of findings. This is because the year prior to elections typically hosts keenly contested primaries for the political

parties with the aspirants using the media to define themselves, their opposition, and political issues in the press (Komolafe, Hitchens, and Kalu-Amah, 2019).

Furthermore, initial reports from primary sources on Nigeria's 2023 election say that it was perhaps the most keenly contested election since the country's return to democracy on May 29, 1999. Unlike the usual two-party contests in previous elections, the 2023 elections had three to four political parties, All Progressives Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Labour Party (LP) and New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP), in serious contention for the presidency and various public offices (Babalola, 2023; Egbejule and Olurunbi, 2023; Hassan and Vines, 2023). Moreover, because the incumbent, President Muhammadu Buhari, was not running for re-election, it was devoid, to some extent, of the power of incumbency, as traditional media usually advantages the sitting president (Mano and El Mkaouar, 2023). Hence, it would be interesting to examine how newspapers used political actors in these four different political parties. Thus, future research, building on this thesis, could compare the non-voting year of 2022 to the voting year of 2023 to reveal the use of political actors as sources, or indeed compare the framing of the 2019 elections to the 2023 elections. These would offer useful insights and expand the knowledge on framing and elections even further.

Finally, Nigeria ranks as one the countries in Africa having the highest number of people using social media platforms to access and share political information (Kperogi, 2020; Silver and Johnson, 2018; Olabamiji, 2014). So, studies could examine political news on election campaigning, policy debates, and discussions for the framing of

political corruption on Facebook or X (formerly known as Twitter) considered as among the popular social media platforms in the country (Silver and Johnson, 2018).

Unlike traditional media, these networks offer more opportunities for engagement by a multiplicity of actors, especially citizens that are often disadvantaged or overlooked by traditional media that has been held hostage by political and economic forces (Mano and Ndlela, 2020). Moreover, the two-way communication encouraged by social media networks allow political elites, utilising their verified accounts on these platforms to speak directly to voters and receive feedback, thus by-passing traditional media to frame issues (Hemphill, Culotta, and Heston, 2013; Oboh, 2021). Studies analysing the texts, for example hashtags, that direct attention and emphasis to certain aspects of the topic could reveal how politicians and citizens, rather than the media/journalists, frame issues, because these hashtags are deliberate and used to place emphasis on certain aspects of the subject.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Dates generated from systematic sampling technique.

J 2019	F 2019	M 2019	AP 2019	MY 2019	J 2019	JL 2019	AU 2019	S 2019	O 2019	N 2019	D 2019
5	4	6	5	5	4	4	3	2	2	1	1
11	10	12	11	11	10	10	9	8	8	7	7
17	16	18	17	17	16	16	15	14	14	13	13
23	22	24	23	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	19
29	28	30	29	29	28	28	27	26	26	25	25
											31

J 2020	F 2020	M 2020	AP 2020	MY 2020	J 2020	JL 2020	AU 2020	S 2020	O 2020	N 2020	D 2020
6	5	6	5	5	4	4	3	2	2	1	1
12	11	12	11	11	10	10	9	8	8	7	7
18	17	18	17	17	16	16	15	14	14	13	13
24	23	24	23	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	19
30	29	30	29	29	28	28	27	26	26	25	25
											31

Appendix 2

Sample headlines categorised by frames in study.

2019 (Election Year)

Attribution of Responsibility Frame

- Buhari Using Govt Funds for Campaigns, Says Atiku ***Punch, 11.1.2019***
- I Will Expose Kwankwaso's Financial Atrocities, Says Ganduje ***This Day, 11.1.2019***
- It's Not Easy to Recover Loots -ICPC Chairman ***Daily Trust, 4.2.2019***
- Politicians Planning to Write Election Results in Hotel-INEC ***Leadership, 29.1.2019***

Human Interest Frame

- Tinubu's Bullion Vans: EFCC Manhandles Journalists as Activists Submit Petition ***Punch, 26.10.2019***
- Drama, as Onnoghen is Forced to Take Pleas in the Dock ***This Day, 16.2.2019***
- Amina Zakari Not Blood Relation of Buhari Presidency ***Daily Trust, 5.1.2019***
- Jubilation as Bogoro Resumes at TETFund ***Leadership, 23.1.2019***

Conflict Frame

- Ortom, APC candidate trade blame over inconclusive gov election ***Punch, 18.3.2019***
- PDP, APC Disagree over Plan to Rig Adamawa Council Election ***This Day, 20.10.2019***
- $9.6bn judgment: FG, P&ID head for showdown ***Daily Trust, 20.9.2019***
- Presidency, PDP At Loggerheads Over $1bn ECA Security Fund ***Leadership, 22.7.2019***

Economic Consequences Frame

- $217bn Taken out of Nigeria Illegally in 38 Years –EFCC ***Punch, 17.1.2019***
- 2019 Elections Between the Rich, Poor, Says Amaechi ***This Day, 5.1.2019***
- Niger Delta governors demanded forensic audit of NDDC – Wike ***Daily Trust, 7.11.2019***
- PMB Blames Corruption, Poor Investment In Education For Insecurity ***Leadership, 9.8.2019***

Morality Frame

- Governors Stealing Public Funds Need Deliverance, Says Nasarawa Gov ***This Day,14.10.2019***
- Cherubim & Seraphim Church to Buhari: Nigeria Needs You, Don't Overstretch Yourself ***Daily Trust, 5.1.2019***
- CAN, PFN Task Politicians on Good Governance ***Leadership, 11.1.2019***
- Don't Be Desperate for Power, Sultan, CAN Warn Politicians ***Leadership, 17.1.2019***

2020 (Non-Election Year)

Attribution of Responsibility Frame

- Auditor General report indicts NBET boss for N517m contract violations, others ***Punch, 12.1.2020***
- Return Our Stolen Resources, APC Tells PDP Leaders ***This Day, 6.1.2020***
- PDP Urges N/Assembly to Probe Presidency ***Daily Trust, 23.2.2020***
- Makinde Threatens To Drag Former Public Office Holders Before ICPC ***Leadership, 29.2.2020***

Human Interest Frame

- Malabu oil probe: I've ulcer, glaucoma, hypertension, others, Adoke tells court ***Punch, 18.1.2020***
- P&ID: Lukman's Family Demands Apology over Malami's Bribery Allegation ***This Day, 2.9.2020***
- I Didn't Benefit from Any Funds to Justice Ministry ***Daily Trust, 11.2.2020***
- I Can Recover $10bn Stolen Pension Fund in 30 Days- Maina ***Leadership, 2.10.2020***

Conflict Frame

- PDP, APC Allege Plot To Rig A' Ibom Senatorial Re-run ***Punch, 24.1.2020***
- Akpabio Replies Nunieh, Denies Alleged Harassment, Corruption ***This Day,16.7.2020***
- Senate, NDDC Spar over N3.14bn Palliatives to Staff, Police ***Daily Trust, 10.7.2020***
- Edo 2020: Presidency Hits Back at PDP ***Leadership, 9.8.2020***

Economic Consequences Frame

- Nigeria to repatriate fresh $321m Abacha loot ***Punch, 30.1.2020***
- Lawan Seeks World Bank's Help on Nigeria's Looted Funds ***This Day, 18.3.2020***
- US to Nigeria:You'll Repay Abacha Loot If Re-Stolen ***Daily Trust, 5.2.2020***
- FG Approves CSO To Monitor Projects Executed With $311m Recovered Loot ***Leadership, 25.12.2020***

Morality Frame

- Cleric warns against greed, lust for wealth ***Punch, 16.7.2020***
- Kaduna CAN Accuses Govt Officials of Hiding Palliatives Meant for Citizens ***This Day 26.10.2020***
- FCT Minister Warns Against Diversion of Palliatives ***Daily Trust, 23.4.2020***
- Cleric Charges Nigerian Leaders To Embrace God ***Leadership, 23.2.2020***

Appendix 3

Variables, definitions and examples of headlines and results of coding based on Scott's Pi.

Variable	Definition	Example	α
Mentions corruption in headline	Mentions corruption or its synonym e.g. fraud, bribery, looting, money-laundering, misappropriation, embezzlement	They say I'm corrupt because I'm successful-Atiku (*The Punch*, 16 February 2019)	.97
Politician in APC (All Progressives Congress)	Includes quote or paraphrase from APC politician	The APC National Publicity Secretary, Malam Lanre Issa-Onilu (*Daily Trust*, 22 February 2019)	.91
Politician in non-governing party	Includes quote or paraphrase from non-APC politician	Atiku Better than Buhari, Obasanjo Insists (*This Day*, 23 January, 2019)	.96
Nigerian law adjudicating or enforcement institution (or representative)	Includes quote or paraphrase from Nigerian law adjudicating or enforcement institution (or representative)	Alleged Fraud: Court Grants Adoke Bail (*Leadership*, 11 February 2020)	.84
Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)	Includes quote or paraphrase from the EFCC	EFCC Launches manhunt for Illicit Funds Across Africa (*Leadership*, 17 January 2019)	1.0
Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC)	Includes quote or paraphrase from the ICPC	ICPC Warns Against Vote-Buying (*Leadership*, 23 January 2019)	1.0
Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB)	Includes quote or paraphrase from the CCB	CCT Rejects Court Orders Stopping Onnoghen's Trial (*The Punch,* 23 January 2019)	1.0
Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU)	Includes quote or paraphrase from the NFIU	No Respite for CJN as FG Asks NFIU to Freeze His Accounts (*This Day,* 17 January, 2019)	1.0
Nigerian civil society organisation	Includes quote or paraphrase from a civil society organisation	FG Approves CSO To Monitor Projects Executed With $311m Recovered Loot (*Leadership*, 25 December 2020)	1.0
Nigerian religious leader/organisation	Includes quote or paraphrase from Nigerian religious leader/organisation	Cleric warns against greed, lust for wealth (*The Punch*, 16 July 2020)	.89
Nigerian citizen	Includes quote or paraphrase from Nigerian citizen	Knocks as Buhari's daughter uses presidential jet for personal engagement (*The Punch*, 12 January, 2020)	1.0
Foreign government/representative /politician	Includes quote or paraphrase from a foreign government/representative/politician	UK to Nigeria: We Determine Who Gets Our Visa (*This Day*, 26 September, 2020)	.89

Foreign institution/representative	Includes quote or paraphrase from a foreign institution	Lawan Seeks World Bank's Help on Nigeria's Looted Funds (*This Day*, 18 March, 2020)	1.0
Foreign civil society/interest group or their representative	Includes quote or paraphrase from a foreign civil society/interest group or their representative	CSOs Ask Buhari to Investigate Malami over Alleged Corruption (*This Day*, 3 August 2020)	1.0
Foreign citizen	Includes quote or paraphrase from a foreign national	Malabu Bribery Claim: Russian Middleman Recants, Says No Evidence against Jonathan (*This Day,* 26 June 2019)	.88
Attribution of Responsibility Frame	Does the story suggest that some level of government can alleviate the problem?	he would privatise the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation if elected, (*The Punch*, 17 January, 2019)	.88
	Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem?	the various toll gates in government are a problem (*The Punch*, 17 January, 2019)	.94
	Does the story suggest that an individual (or group of people in society) is responsible for the issue-problem?	ordered a former Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Adesola Amosu (retd)… the funds were proceeds of criminal activities (*The Punch,* 17 January, 2019)	.91
	Does the story suggest solution (s) to the problem?	The number is with the poor and the poor must rise to vote on that day. (*The Punch,* 5 January, 2019)	.93
	Does the story suggest the problem requires urgent action?	The PDP candidate demanded that INEC should issue a 'cease and desist order' (*The Punch,* 11 January, 2019)	.91
Human Interest Frame	Does the story provide a human example or "human face" on the issue?	He added that he voluntarily returned to the country to face the Malabu Oil scam charges (*The Punch*, 18 January, 2019)	.88
	Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?	needs to be released from detention to enable him to attend to his failing health. (*The Punch,* 18 January, 2019)	.88
	Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?	think about what you've done to the Rilwanu Lukman's family you	.91

		owe us an apology (*This Day,* 2 September 2020)	
	Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors?	medical report …showing "backache, gastric ulcer, glaucoma, hyperlipidemia, hypertension, shortsightedness, urinary track infection and Vitamin D deficiency" (*The Punch*, 18 January, 2019)	1.0
	Does the story contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy caring, sympathy, or compassion	Visual/picture	.91
Conflict Frame	Does the story reflect disagreement between individuals/parties/groups?	the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) – are at daggers-drawn (*Daily Trust*, 22 July 2020)	.88
	Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?	PDP's criticism of the Buhari administration … accused Minister of Niger Delta Affairs Godswill Akpabio ….But APC in another statement… said PDP was "dead-scared" of the outcome of the 2001 to 2019 forensic audit and legislative inquests of the NDDC operations. (*Daily Trust,* 22 July 2020)	.88
	Does the story refer to winners and losers?	INEC had yesterday, declared the incumbent governor, Benedict Ayade of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as the winner of Saturday's election. According to INEC, Ayade polled 381,484 votes as against 131,161 polled by Sen. John Owan-Enoh, the governorship candidate of APC. (*Leadership*, 12 March 2019)	.90
Morality Frame	Does the story contain any moral message?	Urged…the political leaders of the country to reassess their lifestyle, their passion for greed,	1.0

		materialism, ethnicity and distaste for patriotism (*Leadership,* 23 February 2020)	
	Does the story refer to morality, God, and other religious tenets?	A Muslim Cleric, Sheikh Abubakar Sadiq Umar, has urged Nigerian leaders to stop their materialistic …so as to avert the looming anger of God on the nation. (*Leadership*, 23 February 2020)	1.0
	Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?	urged Nigerians not to lose faith, saying that there is no country in the world, which does not have problem (*This Day,* 25-26 December, 2019	1.0
Economic Consequences Frame	Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the past or the future?	to monitor the spending of funds looted by the late Head of State, Gen. Sani Abacha (*The Punch,* 29 May 2020)	.94
	Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?	the last tranche of repatriated $311m (*The Punch*, 29 May 2020)	.85
	Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?	has already been designated to be spent on three ongoing projects: the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, the Abuja-Kano expressway and the Second Niger Bridge (*The Punch*, 29 May 2020).	.88

Appendix 6

Interview questions

1. What are the factors encouraging the reporting of political corruption?
2. What are the factors discouraging the reporting of political corruption?
3. Does ethnicity, religion and ownership have any impact on the reporting on political corruption?
4. To what extent does ethnicity, religion and ownership influence the reporting on political corruption?
5. What do you see as the impact of an election season on the reporting on political corruption?
6. Who are the news sources you depend on for reporting on political corruption?
7. A pilot study I have conducted suggests that in an election year, the main sources are politicians, and in a non-election year, the sources are Nigerian civil society organisations (CSOs). Why would this be the case?
8. What prominence should be given to news on political corruption in the newspaper?
9. A pilot study I have conducted suggests that in an election year, there's more prominence given to political corruption than in a non-election year. Why would this be the case?
10. Research suggests that corruption within the ranks of journalists inhibits the reporting on political corruption, is this true?
11. How widespread is the corruption among journalists?
12. To what extent do you think corruption within the ranks of journalists influences news reporting of political corruption?

13. Is news reporting on political corruption supported by investigative journalism?
14. To what extent is news reporting on political corruption supported by investigative journalism?
15. Culturally speaking, what do you think is the disposition of Nigerians to corruption by political elites?
16. Any other thing you would like to add on news reporting of political corruption?
17. Would it possible to recommend a couple of reporters for interviews based on their experience reporting on political corruption?

Appendix 7

List of Interviewees, positions, gender and years of experience

IDENTITY	POSITION	GENDER	EXPERIENCE
Participant 1	Editor Weekend, and Member, Editorial Board	Male	20 years
Participant 2	Editor, Member of Editorial Board	Male	16 years
Participant 3	Managing Editor	Female	15 years
Participant 4	Deputy Editor, Weekend	Male	20 years
Participant 5	Former Editor and Member of Editorial Board	Male	20 years
Participant 6	Group News Editor	Male	15 years
Participant 7	Deputy News Editor/Online News Editor	Male	14 years
Participant 8	Former News Editor	Male	20 years
Participant 9	Former Deputy News Editor	Male	17 years
Participant 10	Lagos Bureau Chief	Male	9 years
Participant 11	Politics Reporter	Male	15 years
Participant 12	Politics Reporter	Male	13 years
Participant 13	Politics Reporter	Female	12 years
Participant 14	Politics Reporter	Male	10 years
Participant 15	Politics Reporter	Male	10 years
Participant 16	Politics Reporter	Female	9 years
Participant 17	Politics Reporter	Male	6 years
Participant 18	Former Politics Reporter	Male	6 years
Participant 19	Crime and Judiciary Reporter	Male	15 years
Participant 20	Group Business Editor/Deputy Editor, Sunday	Male	15 years
Participant 21	Energy Editor (Former Assistant News Editor)	Male	17 years
Participant 22	Health Editor	Female	14 years
Participant 23	Senior Business Correspondent	Male	10 years
Participant 24	Information, Communication and Technology Reporter	Male	15 years

Appendix 8

Sample analysis of the five frames used in the study

1. Attribution of Responsibility Frame

Indicators of Attribution of Responsibility Frame

1. Does the story suggest that some level of government has the ability to alleviate the problem?

2. Does the story suggest that some level of government is responsible for the issue/problem?

3. Does the story suggest that an individual (or group of people in society) is responsible for the issue-problem?

4. Does the story suggest the problem requires urgent action?

Example: Buhari using govt funds for campaigns, says Atiku *(Punch, 11 January 2019)*

(Headline shows Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) assigning blame to President Buhari for the use of government funds for political campaigns)

The presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party, Atiku Abubakar, has accused President Muhammadu Buhari and the All Progressives Congress of violating the constitution and the Electoral Act 2010, by their alleged deployment of state resources and apparatuses for the 2019 presidential campaign.

(Lead paragraph again reiterates the assignment of blame to President Buhari and the All Progressives Congress in violation of the constitution and Electoral Act 2010 for their benefit)

Atiku, in a statement on Thursday by his media adviser, Paul Ibe, said the alleged action was contrary to the claims of Buhari and the APC of not abusing state resources.

He said the National Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, had in December 2018 warned incumbent office holders against using state resources for campaigns, or deploying same against opponents.

Atiku, however, noted that the Buhari administration and the APC had allegedly been illegally using state resources to their advantages for the election.

(Preceding paragraphs identify Atiku's media adviser, Paul Ibe as source of the statement in which Atiku assigned blame to Buhari and the APC)

He said, "We wish to remind President Buhari and the APC that the use of state videos released by the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture is illegal under the Electoral Act 2010 as amended.

"The media is awash with advertisements with the hashtag #PMBDIDIT and signed by the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture and referencing so-called achievements of the APC administration in the states of Abia, Kwara, Lagos, Ebonyi, Delta and Kano, among others. These are without doubt 2019 presidential campaign materials produced by the Ministry of Information and Culture using state resources and apparatuses to benefit President Buhari."

(Preceding paragraph gives a direct quote by Atiku pointedly accusing Buhari and APC as the group of people responsible for political corruption.)

The PDP candidate demanded that INEC should issue a 'cease and desist order' to the Ministry of Information and Culture and the broadcast channels running the materials.

(Preceding paragraph suggests the need for urgent action as Atiku demands that INEC issues a "cease and desist order"to stop the illegal deployment of state resources for Buhari/APC political campaigns)

Atiku said, "We also insist that INEC register the funds spent on the materials as part of the APC's total N1bn campaign spend limit.

"INEC is alert to this danger and had warned the ruling party to refrain from such conduct. Now that Buhari and the party have clearly flouted the law, we urge that INEC sanctions them accordingly."

THE END

2. Human Interest Frame

Indicators of Human Interest Frame

1. Does the story provide a human example or "human face" on the issue?
2. Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?
3. Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?
4. Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors?
5. Does the story contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy, caring, sympathy, or compassion?

Example: *Drama, As Onnoghen is Forced to Take Plea in the Dock*

(This Day, 16 February 2019)

- ***Suspended CJN refuses to sit down, gets bail***
- ***CCT vacates arrest order***

(Headline and sub-heading describe the arraignment of the former Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Walter Onnoghen as a "drama" and indicates the use coercion on him to ensure he takes his plea in the dock as a measure to humiliate him. They also elaborate on the drama in stating that "Suspended CJN refuses to sit down")

The suspended Chief Justice of Nigeria, (CJN), Justice Walter Onnoghen, was eventually arraigned at the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT) yesterday on six count charge of refusal to declare his assets as required by the provisions of the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) Act for public officers in the country.

Onnoghen was originally billed for arraignment at the Tribunal on January 14 but had refused to appear in court on the grounds that the Tribunal lacked jurisdiction to entertain the matter. He also challenged the jurisdiction of the Tribunal both at the CCT and the Court of Appeal in Abuja.

However, following the CCT's order to the Inspector General of Police and the Director General of the Department of State Services (DSS) to arrest Onnoghen and produce him in court on February 15, for his arraignment, Onnoghen finally appeared before the Tribunal.

He drove into the premises in a convoy with some of his personal aides around 9.40am and was received by a team of his lawyers, including Chief Chris Uche SAN, Paul Erokoro SAN, Ogwu Onoja SAN, among others.

(Preceding paragraphs give a background to the "drama" that preceded the appearance of Onnoghen in court, and goes into personal details of his arrival in court "in a convoy with some of his personal aides around 9.40am and was received by a team of his lawyers")

Shortly after Onnoghen entered the courtroom at exactly 10.20am, members of the CCT, led by the Chairman, Danladi Umar, entered also and commenced sitting with Umar apologising to counsel for starting proceedings some minutes before the scheduled time of 10am.

While counsel to the federal government, Ibrahim Musa informed the Tribunal that the issue of the day was the arraignment of the defendant, Onnoghen's lawyer, Chris Uche SAN, stood up to request that the CJN takes his plea outside the box but Umar declined, pointing to the dock and asked Onnoghen to enter into the dock for the charges to be read to him.

Onnoghen obliged him and beaming with smiles entered the dock. He, however, refused to seat when the CCT Chairman asked him to, insisting that he was okay and would only make use of the seat if and when the need arose.Consequently, Umar directed that the charges be read to him to which he pleaded not guilty.

(Preceding paragraphs give further context of the drama and uses vignettes to capture what ensued, including the apology by the Chairman of the Code of Conduct Tribunal, Danladi Umar, for his late arrival, his insistence that Onnoghen take the plea in the dock against the appeal of Onnoghen's lawyer, and Onnoghen's smile and subsequent refusal to sit down)

Between the reading of the first charge and the 6th, there were several stops occasioned by the need of the Chairman and another member of the Tribunal, Juli Anabor to settle on how to proceed. Following his plea of not guilty, Onnoghen's lawyer asked the Tribunal to release the defendant on bail on self-recognition, which was immediately granted. Uche, similarly prayed the Tribunal to discharge his client from the bench warrant issued against him since he voluntarily made himself available to the Tribunal for his arraignment.

Responding, Umar, accordingly held that the bench warrant issued on February 13 for Onnoghen's arrest, either by the Inspector General of Police or the Director General of the Department of State Services, (DSS), is vacated and set aside. He added a caveat that the defendant must make himself available throughout the trial.

Following the setting aside of the bench warrant, the defendant applied for an adjournment in the hearing of all the pending motions in view of the elections coming up February 16 and March 2.

Drama, however, ensued when the Tribunal Chairman unilaterally fixed February 21 as the adjourned date. Umar rebuffed all appeals by defence counsel to change the

date, for not just being inconvenient for the parties but also that the matter was coming up at the Court of Appeal on that day.
Uche also impressed upon the Tribunal that both the defence and prosecution had earlier agreed on either March 11 or 18, but Umar was adamant, insisting that what he had written he cannot erase.It took the intervention of the second member of the Tribunal, Anabor to make Umar change his mind and adjourned till March 11, 2019, for the hearing of all pending applications.

(Preceding paragraphs give yet more context to the drama, using vignettes and adjectives: describes Umar as "adamant", and "rebuffed all appeals" insisting on the date, necessitating the "intervention of the second member of the Tribunal")

Speaking with newsmen shortly after the adjournment, Onnoghen's lawyer said, "Today, February 15, is a sad day for Nigeria, a sad day for the Judiciary and a sad day for the rule of law", lamenting that it was unfortunate for Onnoghen to be treated in flagrant disregard to due process of law.
Uche told newsmen that Onnoghen had been made to suffer indignity with the way he was made to take his plea in the charges against him.
He said that the struggle by concerned lawyers in the country is for the maintenance of the rule of law, separation of powers and survival of the Judiciary.
"The world will soon know the truth that there is more to the trial of Onnoghen before this Tribunal", he said.

Also speaking, counsel to the Federal government, Ibrahim Musa, agreed that February 15 is a sad day for the legal profession but said that the law must take its course.

(Preceding paragraphs feature a direct quote from Onnoghen's lawyer, using more emotive adjectives to describe the day as a "sad day for Nigeria, a sad day for the Judiciary" and the story suggest how Onnoghen is unfortunate and has been made to suffer an indignity.)

THE END

3. **Conflict Frame**

Indicators of Conflict Frame

1. Does the story reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries?
2. Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another?
3. Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?
4. Does the story refer to winners and losers?

Example: Edo Gov'ship: APC, PDP in Verbal War Over Alleged Plot To Rig Poll (*Leadership, 4 July 2020)*

(Headline describes the APC and the PDP as engaged in a "verbal war" suggesting a disagreement between both parties regarding the integrity of impending elections)

The governing All Progressives Congress (APC) and the major opposition party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), yesterday engaged in a verbal scuffle over allegations of plot to rig the September 19 governorship election in Edo State.

The two major political parties accused each other of plotting to rig the forthcoming poll in which Governor Godwin Obaseki is the PDP candidate, while Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu is the APC candidate for the election. PDP fired the first salvo yesterday when it alleged plots by APC to use the trio of Governors Abdullahi Ganduje of Kano State, Hope Uzodinma of Imo State and Yahaya Bello of Kogi State to derail the governorship election.

(Preceding lead paragraphs elaborates on the disagreement—"verbal scuffle"— between both parties, identifying Governor Godwin Obaseki of the PDP and Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyanmu of the APC as contestants in the forthcoming elections. It also suggests that the PDP was first to reproach the APC for planning to rig the elections, using three governors to execute such plans)

The national publicity secretary of PDP, Kola Ologbondiyan, in a statement, claimed that his party and the people of Edo State were already aware that the trio were selected by the APC to lead its campaign so as to "force a combined formula of Kano and Kogi electoral violence as well as Imo state mandate robbery to subvert the will of the people of Edo state in the governorship election."

The opposition party further said it was pathetic that the APC only has a person "who has become a butt of international shame after being seen in a viral video stuffing his robe with gratification, in foreign currency, to serve as chairman of its Edo state governorship campaign council. The statement noted: "It is equally contemptuous that such a person is being deputized by another individual, who has become a metaphor of electoral manipulation, after being so docketed by a judgment of the Supreme Court.

"It is also disgusting that a governor who deployed a Police helicopter to scare voters on election day has been mandated to deploy thugs and dangerous weapons

through the northern borderlines of Edo State ahead of the election. “Part of APC’s plot is to import election mercenaries as observers to attempt to scare the people of Edo state, suppress them and steal their mandate. “It is however not surprising that such is the drift of the APC campaign, given that it has neither messages nor plans for the people of Edo state, especially, with a candidate like Osagie Ize-Iyamu, who has also been declared by his former APC National Chairman, Adams Oshiomhole, as a person of questionable character, a fake pastor, treasury looter, rusticated student who is only fit for “night meetings” and should never be entrusted with the office of the governor of Edo state.

“Whereas our candidate, Governor Godwin Obaseki, enjoys the overwhelming support of the Edo people due to his enthusing track record of personal character and performance in office for which even APC leaders have praises for him, the APC candidate has nothing to present to the people. “With its defective nomination process, an ailing campaign council and a dented governorship candidate, it is clear that the APC is not preparing for issue-based and people oriented campaign, but for process manipulation and ballot robbery. “Our party, in the strongest terms, cautions the APC to note that the “Gandollar,” “Supreme Court Governor” and “helicopter shooting” formulas cannot work in this election as the people of Edo state have never been intimidated, suppressed, subjugated or overpowered by external political influences. “The APC should also note that the people of Edo state will spare nothing within the law in firmly resisting any attempt by anybody to import violence or try to manipulate the Edo election in any way,” PDP noted.

(Preceding paragraphs give direct quotations from a statement by Kola Ologbondiyan, the PDP’s spokesman, pointedly reproaching APC and its candidate for political corruption.)

But hitting back at the PDP, the governing APC knocked the opposition party for questioning the integrity of its national campaign council for the Edo State governorship election, even as it urged the opposition party to concentrate on its “deadbeat campaigns”. The APC further said it was not interested in rolling in the mud with the PDP, adding that it is now obvious that the party is up to its usual, diversionary, baseless and theatrical allegations. The ruling party however added that Edo State was not dubbed the heartbeat of the nation for nothing, insisting that the Edo electorate is sensible, sophisticated and progressive.

In a statement by its deputy national publicity secretary, Yekini Nabena, APC said, “We understand the PDP is intimidated by the quality, depth and political sagacity of the APC National Campaign Council deployed by the Governor Mai Mala Buni-led Caretaker/Extra-Ordinary National Convention Planning Committee to organise a formidable campaign structure to ensure success of the APC and our candidate, Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu during the election.

“The APC has no interest in rolling in the mud with the PDP and engaging them in their senseless and drunken tirade. “The focus of the APC is to display to the Edo electorate our pro-people credentials, infrastructure/ development track records, social investments, wealth creation initiatives among others which is being replicated across APC states. “APC is a party that fiercely advocates, practices and defends the principle of ‘One person, one vote’. Come September 19 every valid vote must count. “We urge the PDP to concentrate on their deadbeat and empty campaign instead of the comic it has turned itself to. Edo is proudly an APC state”.

(In the preceding three paragraphs, the APC presents its own version of the issues. The story supplies a response from the APC's deputy national publicity secretary, Yekini Nabena, which it describes as "hitting back" denigrating the PDP and its "deadbeat campaigns" .)

Wike Leads Obaseki's Campaign

Meanwhile, PDP has appointed Rivers State governor, Nyesom Wike to lead its campaign for the governorship election in Edo State. The party's national spokesman, Ologbondiyan, who disclosed this on his twitter handled, also revealed that Governor Ahmadu Fintri of Adamawa State will serve as Wike's deputy for the campaign. Wike's leadership of the election campaign team comes barely two weeks after he openly disassociated himself from PDP's reconciliation process which enabled Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki, emerge the consensus candidate of the party.

PDP Screening Panel Disqualifies Two Ondo Aspirants

In a related development, PDP's screening committee for the Ondo State governorship election has disqualified two aspirants from participating in the party's primaries scheduled for July 22 this year.

The chairman of the screening committee, former speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Yakubu Dogara, who spoke with newsmen after the exercise yesterday evening, refused to divulge the names of the disqualified aspirants. Aspirants screened for the July 22 governorship primaries include Eyitayo Jegede; Sen Boluwaji Kunlere; deputy governor of the state, Agboola Ajayi and Dr. Eddy Olafeso. Others are Ben Banji Okunomo, Bode Ayorinde, Otunba Bamidele Akingboye, Godday Erewa and Sola Ebiseni.

However, sources at the party headquarters said one of the disqualified aspirants was faulted by the panel because of inconsistencies on the certificates he tendered before the committee. Speaking however, Dogara stated that the committee analytically looked at all the claims made on all the documents submitted to them. He added that the provisional certificate of clearance has been signed by the committee, stressing that distribution of the certificates to candidates have commenced.

The former speaker while noting that two aspirants failed the test noted: "That's not to say that they have been disqualified because we don't have the powers to disqualify anybody. There's still the opportunity of redress at the appeal panel, which will sit on Monday. "So if any of the two candidates that didn't pass screening feel that maybe some kind of miscarriage of Justice was done, like we have the opportunity to of appeal in the court, he is entitled to launch that appeal from now onwards". Dogara stated that the appeal panel is expected to get their report on Monday.

(Concluding paragraph provides a direct quotation from a politician with the PDP, former speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Yakubu Dogara on the screening of governorship candidates ahead of the Ondo state elections.)

THE END

4. Economic Consequences Frame

Indicators of Economic Consequences Frame

1. Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?
2. Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?
3. Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?

Example: FG Receives $311m Abacha Loot From US (*Daily Trust, 5 May 2020)*

(Headline mentions the amount of funds received from the United States relating to past political corruption of late General Sani Abacha)

The Attorney-General of Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, on Monday announced the Federal Government's confirmation of receipt of $311 million of third tranche of General Sani Abacha loot from the United States. Malami said the funds received from the US Island of Bailiwick of Jersey, which was $311, 797, 866.11, increased significantly due to the interest that accrued from February 3, 2020 to April 28, 2020 when the fund was transferred to the Central Bank of Nigeria.

(Preceding paragraph indicate economic gains on the looted funds due to interest application by the Central Bank of Nigeria)

The AGF, in a statement by the media aide, Umar Gwandu, noted that the litigation process for the return of the assets titled "Abacha III" commenced in 2014; while the diplomatic process that culminated into the signing of the Asset Return Agreement on 3rd February, 2020 by the Governments of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, United States of America and the Bailiwick of Jersey commenced in 2018.

"This agreement is based on international law and cooperation measures that sets out the procedures for the repatriation, transfer, disposition and management of the assets," he said.

The statement further said the "recovery effort further consolidates on the established record of the administration of president Muhammadu Buhari-led Federal Government which has a history of recovery of $322m from Switzerland in 2018 which is being transparently and judiciously deployed in supporting indigent Nigerians as specified in the agreement signed with the Switzerland and the World Bank."

"In line with the 2020 Asset Return Agreement, the fund has been transferred to a Central Bank of Nigeria Asset Recovery designated account and would be paid to the National Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) within the next fourteen days. The NSIA is responsible for the management and execution of the projects to which the funds will be applied," he stated.

(Preceding paragraphs identify the Attorney General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, as source of information and presents excerpts of direct quotations from him suggesting the judicious use of funds to support "indigent Nigerians as specified in the agreement signed with Switzerland and the World Bank".)

Malami said the government of Nigeria had committed that the assets would support and assist in expediting the construction of three major infrastructure projects across Nigeria, namely: The Lagos – Ibadan Expressway, Abuja – Kano Road, and The Second Niger Bridge.

(Preceding paragraphs continue in showing the government's plans for applying the proceeds from past political corruption for developmental projects)

He said the Federal Republic of Nigeria was in the process of establishing a Project Monitoring Team to oversee the implementation of the projects and report regularly on progress made to the public.

"To ensure transparent management of the returned assets, the Nigerian government will also engage a civil society organisation, who has combined expertise in substantial infrastructure projects, civil engineering, anti-corruption compliance, anti-human trafficking compliance, and procurement to provide additional monitoring and oversight.

The process for the engagement of the CSO monitor has already commenced with the adverts placed in two Nigeria newspapers – *Daily Trust* and the Punch (4th March, 2020 and a Notice of Extension on 17th April, 2020), the Federal Tender Journal (9th and 23rd March,2020), the Economist (14th March, 2020). The advert can also be found on the website of the Federal Ministry of Justice – www.justice.gov.ng

Malami called for greater cooperation and mutual respect amongst countries in the implementation of expeditious cooperation measures already set out in the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and in the implementation of the Global Forum on Asset Recovery (GFAR) principles on the repatriation of stolen assets.

He further assured Nigerians that the Federal Government would ensure that the returned assets were transparently managed.

"Information regarding the implementation of this project can be obtained by sending an email to: asset.project@justice.gov.ng"

THE END

5. Morality Frame

Indicators of Morality Frame

1. Does the story contain any moral message
2. Does the story make reference to morality, God, and other religious tenets?
3. Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?

Example: CAN, PFN Task Politicians on Good Governance ***(Leadership, 11 January 2019)***

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) yesterday, urged politicians to ensure that they provide dividends of democracy for the people when voted into office in the forthcoming general elections.

Speaking at the "Stakeholders Summit With Political Parties, Candidates" held in Lagos, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Lagos State chapter, Professor Alexander Bamgbola said the church in the country will no-longer maintain what he called ' sidon look' attitude and watch the system derail.

("Sidon look" attitude is Nigerian pidgin English for "just sitting down and observing" without taking necessary action.Thus, Christian leaders are making it clear they will not simply allow politicians to act as they please when in political office)

He charged politicians to be God fearing and live above board in the discharge of their duties when voted into the offices they are vying for.

(Preceding paragraphs refer to God and offer a moral message: the charge to politicians to be God fearing and live above board. The source pointedly identified as giving this moral prescription of behaviour is Bishop Olushola Ore, Chairman of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria)

In his address the chairman Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, Lagos State chapter, Bishop Olushola Ore noted that the politicians and church must collaborate to achieve social progress.

Ore who urged the Christians to register and vote massively during the election said, "We are committed to setting up strategic initiatives to encourage young men and women to engage in politics and advocacy. We are always ready to partner with government and different strategic institutions to ensure that all hands are on deck to achieve a peaceful election as well as holding our leaders accountable.''

He warned that it would no longer be business as usual for politicians adding that the era when politicians go into office and amass wealth without listening to the yearnings of the people is over. He said that any politician that engages in such act would be 'prayed out of office'.

(Bishop Ore goes further to indicate that politicians engaging in corruption will be prayed out of office)

Addressing the congregation, the governorship candidate of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) in Lagos, Chief Owolabi Salis said he was on a rescue mission in the state.

Salis pointed out that Lagos residents do not have access to the basic needs of life, alleging that the wealth of the state was being controlled by individuals.

He said," I have a lot to offer the people in education, power generation, agriculture and healthcare sectors. I want to be able to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor in basic needs of life and that is very vital.

THE END

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