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TRIPARTITE RELATION OF GOVERNMENT, MEDIA AND CITIZENS IN ELECTIONS

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Abstract
This paper examines the tripartite relation between government, media and citizens in the conduct of elections. Much has been written distinctively on media, elections and citizens. But there has been rarely much effort to identify the interplay between government, media and citizens in elections. So, the rationale for the study is on what the media and citizens could do differently to hold governments and election authorities accountable for the conduct of elections in Nigeria. The paper reviewed previous studies on press and politics, and used the normative press theories to explains ways in which the nature of a country's political system could influence the structure and operations of its media organisations. The study adopted content analysis approach and used Mann-Whitney U Test Analysis to evaluate media reports of the 2023 Nigerian elections. This study found that the media gave adequate coverage to the elections and also drew the government's attention to the need for free and credible elections in the country. The media further suggested ways in which the Independent National Electoral Commission could enhance public confidence in the conduct of elections notwithstanding the claims and objections which later arose from the conduct and the results of the 2023 elections. The paper therefore, recommends ways the government, election authorities and the media can work together more closely to ensure the conduct of free and fair elections in Nigeria.
KEYWORDS: Government, election, citizens, media & Independent National Electoral Commission.

Introduction

Media reports and editorials are written on the major events, issues and incidents that happened in society to keep the public abreast of the occurrences in their environments. There is however, a symbiotic relationship between media and politics. Despite the difficulties associated with politics, the cynic attitude towards governance is apolitical. It does not provide an alternative to the present way in which journalists and citizens challenge the status-quo of ineptitude and lack of concern by the political elite toward the interests and welfare of citizens (Curran, 2015). Citizens have the right to know about issues on governance, especially the decisions of government that affect the lives of its citizens. It is the duty of the media to inform citizens of the actions of government and to provide the platforms for people to express their opinions and feelings on the impact of government's policies on the living condition of people (Msughter, 2019). Yet, there is no perfect form of democracy anywhere in the world, which was why Kurt Lewin advised social scientists to support in firming up the increasingly frail abstraction of a democratic polity (Lezaun and Calvillo, 2014).

Democracy however, requires a constant review of its practice in the countries or societies where it is being practiced. "From the outset the modern human rights movement has relied on the press and media as an essential partner in its work to hold governments accountable for human rights violations" Winston and Pollock (2016, p.1). So, it is the extent to which a government upholds the rights of its citizens that determines the level of support the government receives from the media and the members of the public. Media system nonetheless,

is distinctive in nature when compared to other institutions of analysis and reflection. Unlike science, art and religion, media are the common denominators of culture and society in democratic countries (Jensen, 2022). It is unconventional therefore for media to play the role of an advocate in favour of government, except in times of international crisis that journalists suspend their traditional sceptical views of government's actions and align with the moves by government to alleviate the negative impact of the crisis on citizens (Patching and Hirst 2022). Journalists, teachers, social workers and other members of social institutions have similar commitment and objectives in society. For example, the role of a good teacher is not necessarily to impact knowledge as much as being able to incite the sense of enquiry of students to crave for knowledge on their own and also able to use the knowledge to solve their own problems and those of the society. The concept of learning is flexible. The openness which learning offers can be considered as a strength since conceptual examination of learning sharpens the analytical perception of the phenomenon of learning. So, despite the different approaches to learning, experience has been identified as the basis of learning (Kergel, 2022). Socrates argues that knowledge must have an object, and that if one claimed to know something, the thing that one knows must exist (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2011). Many academics and teachers are rarely satisfied with the class performance of their students until the students sat and passed a prescribed examination for the particular level of learning.

Similarly, journalists should not be satisfied by merely drawing public attention to issues and events in society; they should also identify ways in which governments and citizens can work together for the peace and development of society. There is a link between media agenda and public space (McComb and Shaw, 1972). This perhaps is why a trained journalist would rather use a thousand of word to offer constructive criticism than use a sentence to offer commendations on what a particular government may have done well. Therefore, media analysis of issues should cut across politics, economics and social cultural boundaries. Media reports and editorials are parts of the channels through which journalists keep the public abreast of events and issues in society. So, there is a link between media, election and the desire by citizens to live a better life. Citizens, social movements and events are different types of entities, and to focus on one entity modes-say protest-is myopic and may distort public understanding of politics in democratic nations (Knoke, Diani, Hollway and Christopoulos 2022). Communication, media and ICTs are important tools in achieving social change, but each of these facilities has its own functions and implications on the growth and development of society (Servaes, 2013); thus, justifies why journalists need to assist society to strengthen the bond of unity between a government and its citizens. The news media for example, have been the sounding board of Indian politics. Indian public opinion space has made itself felt in the struggle over the partition of Bengal (Herman, 2009), and even very much so today.

Given that media play a major role in gatekeeping process based on their news values, norms, and practices, the relationship between advocacy groups publicity organizations and the media requires an intermittent review to determine how much of these groups' efforts can be substantiated in media coverage (Min and Kim, 2012). Media reports of events enables society to determine the level of commitment by government to its citizens. Lippman (1995 cited in Chapman and Nick, 2011) opined that there can be no liberty for a community that lacks the information by which to detect lies. Mediated political information gives the public more access to interpersonal political discussions which have the capacity to alter people's interests in politics, and consequently affect their evaluation of democracy in the country concerned (Chang, 2018).

There seems to be a convergence between press and politics when evaluated from the perspective of public trust in both institutions in some democratic countries. The media system

in African countries would normally take the clips and photographs of the projects and services executed by political office holders and present them to citizens as the personal achievements of the politicians as though they were elected into governments and parliaments by citizens to do something else in office. The media often do not report on the amount of money local government councils, states/provinces and central government receive monthly from the Federation Account in addition to the money they got from Internally Generated Revenues when journalists are reporting on the performance of political office holders in the African region. The press tends to use fewer objective criteria in its assessment of governments in many African countries, including Nigeria, ignoring that public relies on media reports for its assessment of government's policies and decisions. Messages, organisations, and leaders who do not have adequate presence and visibility in the media space, according to (Castell, 2009), do not exist in public mind. It is easy to know when a government is doing well by the attention it gives to meeting the needs of its citizens. It might be helpful for journalists to stress constantly on the need for government to first identify the needs of its citizens before it goes ahead to implement measures to meeting public needs. Even with the advent of the new media, the old problems and concerns regarding political communications are yet to be resolved. Despite the interconnection between media and society, few research works have explored public perceptions of journalism from both audience and journalists' perspectives (Kenix, 2015), thus justifies the relevance of the review of media coverage of elections alongside the viewpoints of journalists on the conduct and results of the 2023 Nigerian elections.

Theoretical Perspectives

Media and communication theories are parts of the intellectual constructs that provide the perspectives from which researchers and scholars assess ways in which media facilities could be deployed more effectively toward enhancing the growth and development of society. The Four Normative Press Theories by Siebert, Peterson & Schramm (1956) revised in (1984). The theories formed the basis of the theoretical framework for the study and provide a clear understanding on ways and how the nature of the political system of a society could influence the activities and operations of journalists. Communication and media theories provide the perspectives from which the public assesses the capacity of the media to sustain positive social change in any given aspect of human experience. Studies have shown that media take on the form and colouration of the society in which they operate given the dynamic in nature of the institutions. Media organisations have the ability to function differently depending on the nature of the political system under which a particular media system finds itself. Unlike the traditional media, new media are more flexible and have a lot of benefits for users. They provide greater access for citizens to participate in democratic process and create their own content on issues to guide the government towards aligning its policies and programmes with public needs and expectations (Dhiman, 2023). "Social media have functional value to society. They provide avenues for citizens to question the benefits of government policies that tend to disregard public interests. They also provide avenues for citizens to share their own narratives and perspectives on how society should be governed" (Oboh, 2022, p.37a). In the early centuries, journalists were disallowed from reporting on certain issues under authoritarian regime. Therefore, communication scholars used the authoritarian media theory to explain ways in which traditional monarchies and despotic political leaders expected journalists to report about issues and events in society. Then, media were perceived as ally of the state. Churches and political leaders expected journalists to support the government to implement its policies and programmes, which was why governments frowned on media reports that were critical of public policies. Even now, emerging democratic nations and some parts of the Arab

world do not only restrict public access to information but they also censor media content and sanction journalists who report on issues which the government would have preferred to keep away from public notice (Appelgren, Linden and Dalen, 2019).

Soviet-Communist Media Theory on the other hand provides the perspective from which society assesses the relationship between communist parties and journalists. The Soviet press focuses on selective dissemination of news, or aspects of information, where the interest of the Communist Party takes precedence over other considerations in governance (Yang, 2012). Unlike authoritarian press which seeks to protect government, soviet-communist media theory is designed to empower socialist and communist parties in promoting and sustaining the sovereignty of the proletariats (working class). The Marxist Theory, according to McQuails (2005, p. 95), posits that "there is a relationship between economic ownership and the dissemination of messages, which affirms the legitimacy and the value of the working." The argument of the communist nations is that since the media are parts and parcel of the state, it would be illogical therefore for journalists to constantly criticise government's policies and decisions which were formulated in the interest of the state and its citizens. Media criticisms therefore are perceived as being unproductive by communist countries. Journalists who work for a communist media organisation are advised by this theory to support government's position on issues instead of them to dissipate their efforts stressing on the need for equity and justice in society. In the communist nations, media organisations are public property. It is only the experienced and competent party members that are given the opportunity to serve in managerial positions in the media industry in the socialist and communist blocs.

Conversely, journalists who work for media organisations in democratic countries report on issues from the perspective of libertarian media theory. The model stresses on the need for a free press in society that is capable of holding governments accountable for their actions and decisions, which explains why it has become imperative for journalists to have an unhindered access to public information. Milton's principle of the self-rightening process of the free market-place of ideas does not imply that truth will always prevail over falsehood. Milton's argument is that all kinds of views-good and bad-should be allowed in the public space and be permitted to clash freely without any hinderance (Mansell and Raboy, 2011). It was the concern of society towards ensuring that journalists are accountable for their actions and reports that led to the debate which culminated in social responsibility press theory. Since the media are corporate citizens, they too as other citizens should be held accountable for their actions and reports. The theory advises journalists to always preview the implication of their reports on the peace and development of society before presenting the reports to the public (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1984). It is essential for government and journalists to work together for the peace and development of society.

> Without a two-way flow between participants in the process, without the existence of multiple information sources permitting wider selection, without more opportunity for each individual to reach decisions based on a broad awareness of divergent facts and viewpoints, without increased participation by readers, viewers and listeners in the decision-making and programming activities of the media-true democratisation will not become a reality (MacBride, 1980 cited in Supadhiloke, 2013, pp. 204).

This review has thrown more light on the need for journalists to adequately report on the conduct and results of elections. It is the responsibility of the media to create awareness on the activities of the Independent National Electoral Commission; provide information on political parties and their candidates; report on election campaign, voting and election results as well as monitor the surveillance role of the law

enforcement agencies assigned to protect the integrity of election processes in Nigeria (Oboh, 2023, p.14). The role the media in elections as presented in this section offers new understanding on ways societies could influence media reports depending on degree of the freedom society offers journalists to reports on issues, including elections.

Nigerian Political Landscape

The ethnic configurations of a society could largely determine the relationship between a government and its citizens. Yet, there is no clarity as to what a race is, or what it is not, given its functional and dysfunctional implication in contemporary societies. There is a consensus however, that race has implication for how people of different tribes are susceptible to certain diseases, like diabetic. Race has become a part of the criteria for identifying, classifying and explaining ways in which people of different cultural backgrounds are likely to act more similarly as citizens (Goodman, 2013). Much of the social conflict in the world has it root in ethnicity. A lot of racially embedded crisis would have been avoided if the factional leaders and sponsors of ethnic violence were able to imagine the scope of the harvest attached to racial conflicts (Oboh & Hudson, 2022). Notwithstanding, political power and sovereignty have under gone different stages of development in the effort towards redressing the negative impact of cultural politics. Sovereignty in particular has long ceased be in the same form it was immediately after the peace accord at the Westphalia Conference of 1648. The first major change in sovereignty was the emergence of populism. The doctrine was based on the claim that a government must derive its legitimacy from its own citizens. It was critical for government to do so because if citizens constitute the source of a government's legitimacy, then the people can take it away given a due process of a free and fair election (Shimko, 2016). Unfortunately, elections are rarely free and fair in many emerging democratic countries such as Nigeria. The elite domination of politics cuts across the world; the degree of freedom available to citizens in every nation is a function of the perception of the government (Ramaswamy, 2015).

African democracy tends to strive more on exclusionism; whereby a government deliberately creates ideological blocs to divide its own citizens into different categories of people, ranging from the preferred group of citizens to the least preferred group of people. Identity politics has implication for ethnic minority rights, in that once a government consistently places the interests and welfare of a particular ethnic group or religion above other considerations, such preferences automatically create room for agitations by the members of other ethnic nationalities. The negative use of cultural politics by the political elite seems to be more pronounced in the less-developed countries of the world. Otherwise, the United States, Great Britain, Canada and Australia are examples of pluralistic countries. The governments and citizens of these nations have learned to live together despite the intermittent cases of the racial battles that occur in Europe and North America. Rao (2010) observes that states would normally make effort to eliminate pluralities of cultures, not only in the course of crafting official nationalism to give themselves legitimacy, but also to be seen by the public as being in the business of becoming global actors.

There are no new problems in Nigerian politics outside the unresolved issues regarding ethnic minority rights and religious bigotry. Indubitably, ethnicity has implications for elections, in that the population of a local government council, state or region determines its number of seats in the parliaments. In the US presidential election for example, citizens vote directly to elect their president and also vote indirectly through the Electoral College. Presidential candidates in the US usually focus more attention to win elections in swing states, like California. In the US election history, swing states have swung back and forth between the

Democrats and the Republicans. States that have high population density are referred to as swing states. A presidential candidate contesting election in the US is expected to poll a minimum of 270 votes in the Electoral College to win a presidential election in addition to other considerations.

Paradoxically, Nigeria is yet to have very reliable figures of its population. The Nigerian government relies on the 1963 and 2006 census to make projections of its population. The 1963 census was disputed by the stakeholders of Nigerian politics. Each region was allegedly assumed to have inflated its census results despite census being a major element for determining the share of seats of each region in parliaments. Former Nigerian Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, decided to order for a verification of the results. After the exercise, an additional 8.5 million people were found in the north, which made the population of the Northern Region 31 million people, while the entire Nigerian population was 56 million. The results of the 1963 census caused a rift between the northern and the southern political elite (Siollun, 2009). It has become necessary for the federal government to conduct census to determine the accurate population of Nigerians as a lot depends on census in the conduct good elections in modern societies. "Despite governments knowing their role in elections, yet some government officials still make effort to rig elections in favour of certain candidates in the elections" (Oboh, 2022, p.26, b), which perhaps would not have happened assuming there were accurate data of the population of Nigerian citizens in each ward, constituency or senatorial zone in the country.

Press Freedom and Election

The media have a role to play in elections. Recent experiences have shown that some media organizations seem to be operating under an extreme difficult circumstance. "In December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by a vote of 48 to 0, with eight abstentions" (Buba, 2016, p. 56). The freedom of expression and the right of journalists to report on issues and events are parts of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The structure of media domain and its institutional characteristics in India for example, has been heavily influenced by state and public policy. There is the tendency by government to view journalists as ally of the state being a part of colonial history (Buba, 2016, p. 60). Similarly, the Nigerian government does not make distinction between the public and the private media. The government expects the private media to play the same role as the public media whose primary goal is to create awareness on government policies and policies. When private media organizations become critical of government's actions and decisions, the Nigerian government deploys media regulatory agencies to pressure journalists to stop criticizing government. It is pertinent to note that the Sub-Committee of the Constitutional Drafting Committee of 1977 recommended to the House Committee on media to include press freedom in the 1979 Nigerian Constitution. The recommendation was rejected by the house committee on media on the ground that having a separate freedom for journalists would have implication for the quality of freedom that would be available to citizens. It is worth noting that the same provisions on press freedom in the 1979 Nigerian Constitution was repeated in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, except that the provisions on press freedom were captured in section 36 in the 1979 Nigerian Constitution, while it is contained in section 39 in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution ((Uvieghara, 1989, pp.375-376). The lack of a specific press law for Nigerian journalists was the reason why journalism profession was later registered under the Trade Union Act of 1978 in Nigeria. Today, journalism is more of a trade than a profession, thus justifies why it is not enlisted among the orthodox professions in Nigeria as medicine, law, accounting, engineering, and among others.

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The 1999 Nigerian Constitution, Section 39, Sub-Section 1, states that "every person shall be entitled to the freedom of expression, including the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference." Whereas, section 39, Sub-Section 3 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, states "that nothing in section 39 shall invalidate any law in the constitution that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Among the Laws which are referred to as being reasonably justifiable in the Nigerian Constitution, include: Libel, Slander, Sedition, Contempt of Court, Official Secret Act, Classified Documents, State Security, Obscenity, and among others. Hume (2012, p.3), observes that "without the freedom to think, to say something, write, publish, read, hear, love, and to choose; other freedoms would be impossible to imagine." The commitment by journalists to obey all the appendices on press freedom has implication for a free press. For instance, a journalist in Nigeria may be charged for contempt of court when he or she refuses to disclose the source of an information that could assist the court to deliver justice on a case under a judicial review. Whereas, it is unethical for journalists to disclose the sources of media reports under whatever disguise.

Conversely, the Revised US Constitution of 1789 maintains that the Congress shall make no law abridging the rights of the press and the freedom of religion, and the right of citizens to gather and peacefully protest against a government (Uvieghara, 1989). The provisions of press freedom are mutually beneficial to both governments and citizens in democratic countries. In mid-August 1348, King Eward 111 asked the Archbishop of Canterbury to organize prayers, and many bishops wrote letters for priests to read out in Churches to help people cope with what was about to hit them. The British government perhaps would not have been able to manage the plague of 1348 assuming the king had decided to keep the information away from the public (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013). Today, some political leaders see their fellow citizens as subjects, which partly explains why governments select the items of information to bring to the attention of the public. The media however have their priorities in the selection of news. Political stories receive more prominent coverage than stories of heroism, while disaster and crime stories get greater attention than social or civic problems (Waseem, 2016). Among the elements of a liberal democracy is the freedom of expression it entrusts upon the public. Press freedom gives citizens access to information on the issues and events that affect the interests and welfare of society.

Moreover, it is the duty of the media to report on elections to enable citizens play their roles in electoral processes. It is the information which the media provided on elections that makes it easier for citizens to identify and vote for the more deserving parties and candidates in the elections. Much of the media awareness on election campaign in Nigeria seems to be one-sided communication process, as it does not offer citizens the opportunity to ask questions during an election campaign. It will be helpful that journalists develop a template which allows citizens to ask questions during an election campaign. The question-and-answer time would enable the public previews the level of commitment of the candidates who have expressed their interests to serve in governments and parliaments. The present practice by the Nigerian media whereby candidates are invited to media houses to discuss their manifestoes and ideologies is commendable. The media should also create the opportunity for citizens to ask questions after each candidate has presented his or her manifestoes to the public on a media platform. Arise Television, African Independent Television, Independent Television and Channels Television are among the media houses in Nigeria that provide platforms for politicians to solicit public support to win elections in the country.

Method

The study used content analysis approach and Mann-Whitney U Test Analysis to review the manifest content of the print media reports of the 2023 Nigerian Elections. Four national newspapers constituted the elements for the study sample. They were selected for the study on the basis of their national dispositions to the coverage of issues and events in the country. The unit of analysis of the study were the media reports on elections/politics as represented by 'A' Report on the tables (blue symbol) and the media reports of other issues represented by 'B' Report (red symbol). The scope of the study was limited to the stories published in January, February and March, 2023 being the period of the campaign, voting and post-election period.

Inter-Coder Reliability

Independent researchers assisted in reviewing each of the coding instrument used for determining the content categories of the frequency as well as the major issues the print media reported on the 2023 Nigerian elections being the unit of analysis of the study. Inter-Coder Reliability is the degree of consensus among independent observers regarding the meanings researchers imposed on the codes or symbols used in representing the manifest content of communications, including media reports. The simple percentage agreement used in the study is the most widely acceptable technique for determining reliability test in the social sciences (Lombard, Snyder-Duch and Bracken, 2002).

Data Analysis and Results

The analysis of the data collected, its interpretations and discussions are divided into sections as presented below. Section A deals with the research questions and testing of the hypotheses, while the section B deals with the discussion of findings.

Section A: Answers to the Research Questions and Testing of Hypotheses

Research Question One

Is there a difference in the volume of newspapers reports on elections and other non-election issues before the electioneering process?

Table 1: Percentage Response of Difference in the Volume of Newspapers Reports on Elections and other Non-Election Issues before the Electioneering Process

Print Media Reports	Group	N	Frequency	(%)	Decision
VANGUARD	Election issues	65	13	20.00	
	Non - election issues	33	10	30.30	Not Same
THISDAY	Election issues	65	22	33.85	
	Non - election issues	33	6	18.18	Not Same
GUARDIAN	Election issues	65	14	21.54	
	Non - election issues	33	9	27.27	Not Same
PUNCH	Election issues	65	16	24.62	
	Non - election issues	33	8	24.24	Same

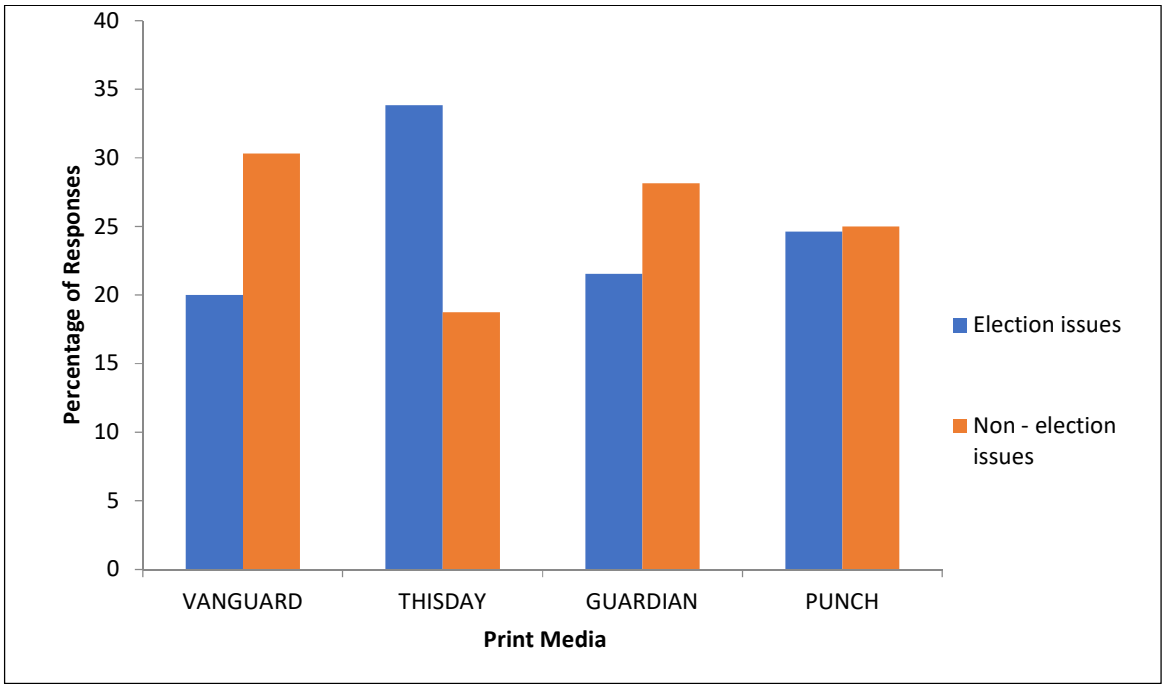


Figure 1: Difference in the Volume of Newspaper Reports on Elections and Other Non-Election Issues before the Electioneering Process

Data in table 1 showed the percentage of differences in the volume of newspapers reports on elections and other non-election issues prior to the election. It revealed that for VANGUARD Newspaper, election issues and non-election issues had 20.00% and 30.30% respectively; for THISDAY Newspaper, 33.85% and 18.18% respectively; for GUARDIAN, 21.54% and 27.27% respectively, while for PUNCH Newspaper was 24.62% and 24.24% respectively. Figure 1 also showed that the volume of newspapers reports on elections and other non-election issues before the electioneering process differs with respect to VANGUARD, THISDAY and GUARDIAN Newspaper only.

Research Question Two

Is there a difference in the volume of newspapers reports on elections and other non-election issues after the electioneering process?

Table 2: Percentage Response of Difference in the Volume of Newspapers Reports on Elections and Other Non-Election Issues after the Electioneering Process

Print Media Reports	Group	N	Frequency	(%)	Decision
VANGUARD	Election issues	89	15	16.85	
	Non - election issues	17	8	47.06	Not Same
THISDAY	Election issues	89	30	33.71	
	Non - election issues	17	1	5.88	Not Same
GUARDIAN	Election issues	89	24	26.97	
	Non - election issues	17	4	23.53	Not Same
PUNCH	Election issues	89	20	22.47	
	Non - election issues	17	4	23.53	Same

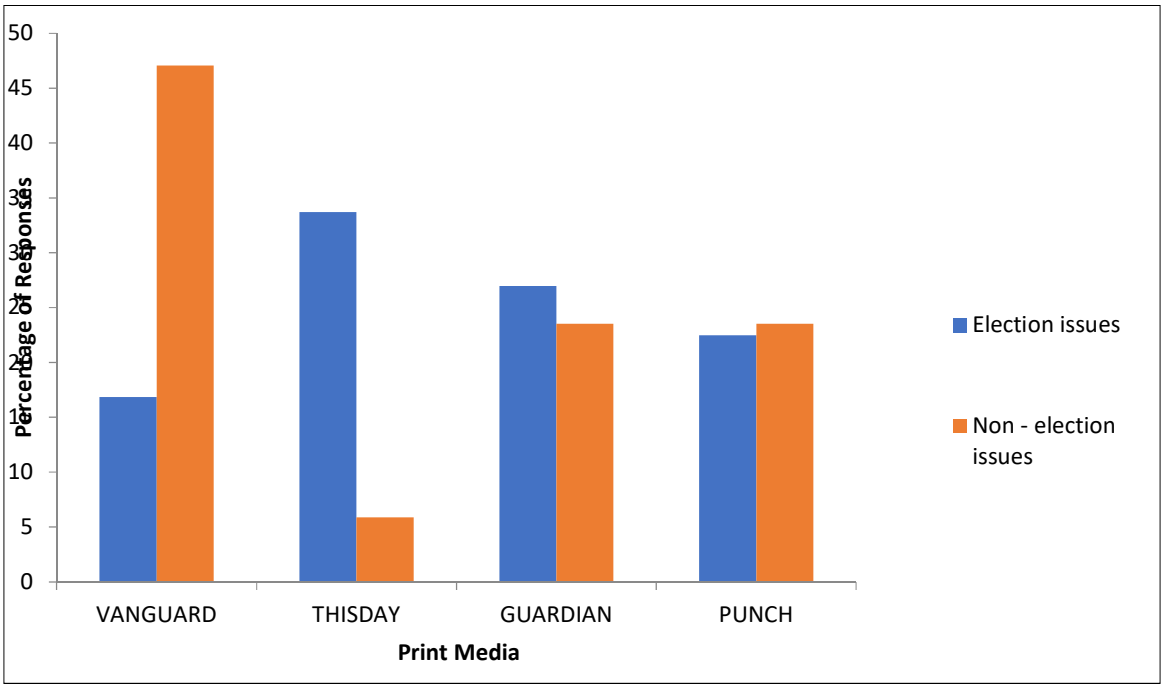


Figure 1: Difference in the Volume of Newspapers Reports on Elections and Other Non-Election Issues after the Electioneering Process

Data in table 2 showed the percentage responses of difference in the volume of newspapers reports on elections and other non-election issues after the electioneering process. It revealed that for VANGUARD Newspaper, election issues and non-election issues had 16.85% and 47.06%; for THISDAY Newspaper, 33.71% and 5.88%; for GUARDIAN, 26.97% and 23.53%, while for PUNCH Newspaper was 22.47% and 23.53% respectively. Figure 2 also showed that the volume of newspapers reports on elections and other non-election issues after the electioneering process differs with respect to VANGUARD, THISDAY and GUARDIAN Newspaper only.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the volume of newspapers reports on elections and other non-election issues before the electioneering process.

Table 1: Mann-Whitney U Test Analysis of Difference in the Volume of Newspapers Reports on Elections and Other Non-election Issues before the Electioneering Process

Group of Newspaper	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank	Z score	Mann-Whitney U	Alpha	Sig. (2 - tailed)	Decision
Elections issues	4	2.50	10.00	-2.309	.000	0.05	0.021	Significant
Non-Elections issues	4	6.50	26.00					
Total	8							

Data in table 1 showed a Z score of -2.309 and a Mann-Whitney U value of.000 at 0.05 level of significance. The P value of 0.021 was less than the alpha value of 0.05. Thus, the result was

significant. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the volume of newspapers reports on elections and other non-election issues before the electioneering process.

Hypothesis Two
There is no significant difference in the volume of newspapers reports on elections and other non-election issues after the electioneering process.

Table 2: Mann-Whitney U Test Analysis of Difference in the Volume of Newspapers Reports on Elections and Other Non-election Issues after the Electioneering Process

Group of Newspaper	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank	Z score	Mann-Whitney U	Alpha	Sig. (2 - tailed)	Decision
Elections issues	4	2.50	10.00	-2.323	.000	0.05	0.020	Significant
Non-Elections issues	4	6.50	26.00					
Total	8							

Data in table 2 showed a Z score of -2.323 and a Mann-Whitney U value of.000 at 0.05 level of significance. The P value of 0.020 was less than the alpha value of 0.05. Thus, the result was significant. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the volume of newspapers reports on elections and other non-election issues after the electioneering process.

Newspaper Editorials on the 2023 Nigerian Elections

Campaign
Vanguard Newspaper editorials of Tuesday 16 and Wednesday 17 January 2023, entitled: INEC should rein its staff by ensuring that they are ready to conduct the elections. While the *Nigerian Guardian* Monday 9 January 2023 entitled: Violent attacks on INEC and elections, drew the federal government's attention to the destruction of INEC's property and advised the government on ways it could resolve the problem. *Punch* editorial of Thursday 19 January 2023 entitled: Address security concerns on 2023 elections.

Synthesis: three newspapers (*Guardian, Punch* and *Vanguard*) drew the federal government's attention to the problem of violence and destruction of the INEC's property in some parts of the country prior to the elections.

Voting
The Nigerian Guardian wrote three editorials on the elections in February 2023. (1) Election and fear of releasing repentant terrorists, published on Monday 13 February; (2) Towards free, fair and credible elections 2023, Friday 24 February, (3) Presidential Poll: A time for restraints, Tuesday 28 February. *Punch* wrote three editorials in February, entitled: (1) Upsurge in pre-election violence worrisome, Monday 13 February, (2) Doubts swirls over 2023 general elections, Wednesday 15 February, (3) 2023 elections: for INEC, Buhari, history beckons, Wednesday 23 February. *Vanguard* wrote seven

editorials in February, entitled: (1) The sanctity of February 25, 2023 Election, Thursday 9 February, (2) Let's protest only with our votes, Tuesday 7 February, (3) Buhari's election security assurance, Wednesday 22 February, (4) Let us vote wisely, Friday 24, February, (5) The need for INEC and scourge of underage voters, Thursday 23 February,(6) Arson attacks on INEC facilities, Thursday 16 February, (7) Presidential Poll: A time for restraints, Tuesday 28, February 2023.

Synthesis: Three newspapers (*Guardian, Punch,* and *Vanguard*) further stressed on the need for free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria. The newspapers frowned on the violence that marred the 25th February 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election in some parts of the country.

Post-Election Results

The Nigerian Guardian wrote seven editorials on the elections in March 2023: (1) INEC and the Gubernatorial Poll, Sunday 5 March, (2) Presidential and National Assembly elections: Matters arising, Monday 6 March, (3) Imperative to prosecute election offenders and violators, Tuesday 7 March, (4) Obasanjo, the Message, Messager and Presidential Election, Wednesday 8 March (5) Governorship Election and Lessons of Postponement, Friday 10 March (6) Resolving Osun governorship election dispute, Wednesday 1st; March (7) Governance: After the election, Sunday 19 March 2023. *Punch* reported five editorials, entitled: (1) INEC's election postponement fiasco, Friday 10 March, (2) Security agencies should make election safer, Tuesday 28 March, (3) Nigeria's electoral show of shame, Wednesday 12 March, (4) Don't give up, Nigerians go out and vote, Friday 17 March, (5) Police, INEC must prosecute electoral offenders, Tuesday 21 March 2023; *Vanguard* wrote seven editorials on the elections, entitled: (1) Need to visit Uwais' Report, Thursday 30 March, (2) Interrogating the 2023 elections, Monday 20 March, (3) Please, remain peaceful during voting, Friday 17 March, (4), A call for calm, Thursday March, 2, (5) Still on the 2023 elections, Wednesday 22 March, (6) Promises INEC Chairman did not keep, Tuesday 7 March, (7) INEC and accountability question, Thursday 16 March 2023.

Synthesis: Three newspapers (*Guardian, Punch* and *Vanguard*), Three newspapers felt the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission should have kept to its promise and upload the results of the 2023 elections; as such practices could have enhanced public confidence in the conduct and the results of the elections. The press, however, advised the aggrieved candidates in the elections to seek redress in the court of law and avoid post-election violence in Nigeria.

Research findings

Findings revealed that the media gave adequate coverage to the issues on elections/politics more than the attention they gave to the other issues the newspapers reported during the elections. The commitment demonstrated by the journalists toward the 2023 Nigerian elections affirmed the prepositions of social responsibility media theory by Siebert, Peterson & Schramm (1956) discussed in the paper. The theory urges the media to always raise conflicts to the plane of discussion as evident in the editorials written by journalists to draw the federal government's attention to need for free and fair elections in the country notwithstanding the violence which later marred the conduct of the elections in some parts of the country. Mann-Whitney U Test Analysis showed that the pattern of media coverage of the 2023 elections was a perfect negative

correlation, meaning that as one variable goes up, the other variable goes down. In this case, as the media publications of elections/politics increased, the publications of other issues and events during the elections decreased with a preponderant of much of the attention being given the issues regarding elections. When media coverage of the elections is measured on the basis of frequency of media reports, one would will notice that the media gave an average of 65% to the issues and events on elections/politics, and 35% to the other issues and events the press reported during the elections.

Since the media were expected to give adequate coverage to the elections without ignoring the other issues that happened during the elections, one will conclude that journalists gave adequate coverage to the elections. The analyses of the editorials on the elections shown that journalists made efforts to impress upon the federal government, election authorities and citizens the need for free, fair and credible elections in the country notwithstanding what later became the outcome of the elections. The media consequently advised the aggrieved candidates who contested the elections to seek redress in the court of law and avoid post-election violence in Nigeria, thus depicting the manner in which conflicts and disagreements are resolved in democratic countries as discussed in the study. There is need for media to be more inclusive in their coverage of elections to avoid the tendency whereby some parties and candidates get media support while others are ignored by journalists; thus, collaborating the view by Castell, (2009) discussed earlier in the paper that leaders who do not have adequate presence and visibility in the media space, do not exist in public mind.

Recommendations

- The Nigerian media are advised to be more inclusive in their coverage of election processes by given equal attention to the parties and candidates contesting elections.
- The Independent National Electoral Commission should collaborate with the media and be more open to citizens, explaining the challenges confronting the commission in its efforts to conduct free and credible elections in Nigeria.
- The Nigerian electoral commission should constantly educate the public on the basis and criteria which determine the validity of an election results. Majority of the public is yet to know the implication of virtual election results on the approved election results signed by party agents at the polling-booths.
- Journalists should avoid writing screaming headlines on election matters that are capable of raising public anxiety regarding the likely winners and losers of a particular election process.
- Editorials on elections should contain both the thesis and the anti-thesis of the issues which formed the subject of a given editorial writing. Some of the editorials on the 2023 Nigerian elections were slanted in favour certain parties and candidates in the elections.

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Appendices

```
GET
  FILE='C:\Users\accer\Documents\Prof Oboh-Volume of Newspaper Data.sav'.
DATASET NAME DataSet1 WINDOW=FRONT.
NPAR TESTS
  /M-W= Volume1 BY Groupb(0 1)
  /MISSING ANALYSIS.
```

NPar Tests

Notes

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	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	8
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each test are based on all cases with valid data for the variable(s) used in that test.
Syntax		NPAR TESTS /M-W= Volume1 BY Groupb(0 1) /MISSING ANALYSIS.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.03
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.06
	Number of Cases Allowed[a]	112347

a. Based on availability of workspace memory.

[DataSet1] C:\Users\accer\Documents\Prof Oboh-Volume of Newspaper Data.sav

Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

	Group of Newspaper Reports (Before)	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Volume of Newspaper Reports (Before)	Non election issues	4	2.50	10.00
	Election issues	4	6.50	26.00
	Total	8		

Test Statistics[a]

	Volume of Newspaper Reports (Before)
Mann-Whitney U	.000
Wilcoxon W	10.000
Z	-2.309
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.021
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.029[b]

a. Grouping Variable: Group of Newspaper Reports (Before)
b. Not corrected for ties.

```
NPAR TESTS
  /M-W= Volume2 BY Groupa(0 1)
  /MISSING ANALYSIS.
```

NPar Tests

Notes

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	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	8
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each test are based on all cases with valid data for the variable(s) used in that test.
Syntax		NPAR TESTS /M-W= Volume2 BY Groupa(0 1) /MISSING ANALYSIS.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.00
	Number of Cases Allowed[a]	112347

a. Based on availability of workspace memory.

Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

	Group of Newspaper Reports (After)	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks

Volume of Newspaper Reports (After)	Non election issues	4	2.50	10.00
	election issues	4	6.50	26.00
	Total	8		

Test Statistics[a]

	Volume of Newspaper Reports (After)
Mann-Whitney U	.000
Wilcoxon W	10.000
Z	-2.323
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.020
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.029[b]

a. Grouping Variable: Group of Newspaper Reports (After)
b. Not corrected for ties.