Comparative Appraisal of Political News Reporting Techniques of the *Nation* and the *Guardian* Newspapers

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Abstract

This study comparatively appraised the political news reporting techniques of *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers. The study investigated the recurring frames on political news reporting of *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers and examined whether or not these political news reports manifest political sentiments and bias. The study anchored on the Framing and Gatekeeping theories. The population comprised of all 24 national dailies in Nigeria in the first stream and 300 in the second – which comprised 150 editions each of both dailies. Furthermore, the composite week approach was adopted for the sample size. Using the constructed study calendar within the study period of May 2018 to March 2019, a sample size of 42 was determined. The code sheet and coding guide served as the instruments for data collection, while the units of analysis were straight news, editorial, features, cartoons, interviews and letter to the editor. The quantitative data were presented and analysed using frequency distribution tables and simple percentage. Also, the constant comparative technique was used to analyse the qualitative data. The results, therefore, showed that the frequency of political news in *The Nation* newspaper was higher (601 or 51.3%) as against *The Guardian* newspaper (527 or 48.7%). It further showed that the most recurring frames in these political reports in *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers were frames of apprehension. Findings also indicated that political news reports of the newspapers merely created awareness and information and did not "adequately" address nagging issues in the nation's body polity. In this vein, the study concluded that political reports shifted from reinforcing existing volatility and shenanigans that characterize Nigerian political system to engendering political awareness and electorate participation in the political process. It was recommended based on the foregoing that the political news reporting techniques of newspapers should be development driven by focusing on addressing core variables that instigate political violence in the first instance.

Key words: News, Political communication, Techniques, Newspaper

Introduction

Over time, political news reporting has become a permanent feature of the news media. It does appear that the news media were actually designed for and to serve politics (Agbese, 2017). Agbese, observes that politics takes between eighty and ninety percent of the allotted space to news in the average newspaper, daily or weekly, on a given day or week. The biggest news makers are inevitably politicians, in or out of government. They may not always make the news but they are always part of the news (Agbese, 2017). Accordingly, the coverage of political news has made it possible for journalists and indeed the media to bring to the public domain, events and trends in the political scene across the world (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2013, cited in Okon, 2017). News reports as provided by journalists are so crucial to the world we live in today because of societal complexities and the limitations of man. Man truly is limited by time space and ability (Okon, 2015). Essentially political news reporting brings the public up to speed with the prevailing trends and the extent politics and political actors in a particular political space are interfacing and influencing society generally. It is a specialized form of reporting that takes on the toga of political communication. As a sensitive aspect of news reporting, its import and impact is mainly felt when it is taken beyond the normal format of straight news writing.

Imperatively, every aspect of politics and political news reporting requires in-depth analysis. It is this critical shift to understanding the intrigues and nuances by political actors in political news reporting that helps the media unravel the puzzles and clandestine power plays that characterize politics and as such better positioning the citizens on the true state of political trends. The nature of political communication of which political news reporting is an aspect, makes this form of news reporting intrinsic. In essence, political communication bothers on how media report power struggle, their biases and impartial coverage in ensuring sound political process (Olayiwola, 2016). Olayiwola, note that "… the most crucial aspect of it is the analysis of speeches by politicians and those that trying to influence the political opinion through formal and informal conversations among members of the public" (p.1).

Statement of the Problem

Over time, political news reporting is fast gaining notoriety in the mass media space in Nigeria (Brown & Udomisor, 2015). The reason for this is not unconnected to the "symbiotic" relationship that exists between them. News is the life wire of politics and for politics to grow and flow in the right directions; it must be infused with the right blood (Brown & Udomisor, 2015). It does appear that the media are being caught in the intriguing and controversial webs that define politics the world over. This is further buttressed by the manner political news reports tilt. If it is not to conform to the dictates of the owners, who themselves have affiliation and bias for particular political parties, it is engrossed with the ethnic and religious slant that is now a reflection of our national life (Akinfeleye, 2011).

A critical look at any of the political news slants and framing of any media organization in Nigeria could easily betray their bias for one political party, candidates or some ideology. Dukor (1999) regrets that "the media (in Nigeria) hitherto is politically polarized in terms of axis, ethnic loyalty and sectional party and selfish interest" (p.287). Analysts have accused the media in Nigeria of being partisan (see Ezinwa & Onyike, 2015).

This study, therefore, seeks to illuminate the manifest differences that may exist between *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers in their reportage of political news. This is with a view to investigating the extent these factors influences: first the content of the newspapers, and second the public's perception and information/public interest value of the newspaper report.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study appraised political news reporting techniques of *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers. Specifically this study sets out with the following objectives.

1. Identify the frequency of political news reporting by *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers.
2. Investigate the recurring frames in political news reporting of *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers.
3. Appraise the extent political news reporting by *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers address nagging issues confronting Nigeria's body politics.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the following theories: Framing Theory and Gate-Keeping Theory.

Framing Theory

The Framing Theory was propounded by Erving Goffman in 1974 (Ibrahim & Yakubu, 2017). The concept of frame or framing itself has diverse theoretical origins. Other scholars who are credited with the concept include Minsky (1975), Bateson (1972), Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch (1974), Tversky and Kahneman (1981), Takeshita, (1997). Among the scholars listed above, sociologist Goffman and cognitive psychologists Tversky and Kahneman might be ones most referred to by framing researcher in mass communication (Takeshita, 1997). Framing is a pervading communication practice. Frames essentially help message sources to couch their communicated messages in a certain direction and allow receivers of information to gain a certain perspective of a subject (Batta, Ashong & Obot, 2014). The

relevance of the Framing theory to the study is not lost in the fact that newspapers or the media frame political news stories mainly in line with their editorial stance. This editorial stance is usually informed by ownership, house style and political inclination.

Gate-Keeping Theory
The theory was first conceived by David Manning White in 1950 (Ernste, 2014). McQuail (2010) cited in Alawode and Adesanya (2016) describes gate keeping as "the process by which selections are made in media work especially decision on whether or not to allow a particular news report to pass through the gates of a news medium into the news channels" (p.245). The concept is used to explain how news items travelling through a news channel get clearance at certain check points before getting to the news consumer (Nwabueze, 2014). The significance of this theory is not lost in the fact that like every other news stories, political news stories are selected based on certain conditionalities as stipulated by the gatekeeper. However, these conditionalities are predetermined by the various stakeholders in the hierarchy of influence level (see Shoemaker & Reese, 1991 cited in Ernste, 2014). It therefore means that there is usually an interplay among these influencing factors that eventually determine what political news is reported in newspapers as well as the slants they take.

Understanding the Concept of News
Several definitions have been advanced on the concept of news. In fact, it is an extremely complex term that means different things to different people (Itule & Anderson, 2008 cited in Okon 2017). Spencer-Thomas (2005) notes that "news values are general guidelines or criteria used by media outlets, such as newspapers or broadcast media, to determine how much prominence to give a story" (p.1). They are therefore fundamental to understanding news production and the choices that editors and other journalists make when deciding what event is news while another is not (Spencer-Thomas, 2005).

The debates on what constitutes news and in whose interest the media operate have continued to generate debates (Bolstridge, 2008). For instance, Bolstridge (2008) argues that:

> Today's media circus seeks not to serve the interests of the public, but rather, the interests of its funding sources. Throughout the world, these backing forces vary from corporate sponsors to government bodies or government-backed agencies, but the common ground is that the agenda served is that of the bodies in power (p.1).

Understanding Political Communication and Political News
Political communication borders on how media represent power struggle, their biases and impartial coverage in engendering sound political process (Olayiwola, 2016). However, the most cardinal aspects of this form of communication is the analysis of political speeches and those that are trying to influence the political opinion through formal and informal conversations among members of the public. Political communication addresses issues at the base of our democracies (Olayiwola, 2016). Over the years, the media have evolved as the melting pot for political communication. The major consequences for political communications are twofold: first, the development of increasingly non-ideological 'catch-all parties' and second, the transformation of media from essentially a channel of communication to an increasingly autonomous power centre and a major actor in the campaigning process and other political activities (Kirchneimir, 1966 cited in Scammell, 1999).

Consequently, political news has emerged as one of the prominent features of the news media. The news media were actually made for and to serve politics. In fact, journalism is built on reporting government (Fedler, n.d, cited in Agbese, 2017). Politically, the media are an integral part of any political system. In fact there is a thriving relationship between the media and politics (Agbese, 2017; Appah, 2019). Interestingly, media are one of the principal channels for disseminating information about the political institutions and processes in modern societies. They therefore play a crucial role in framing our views of the world and the context within which we decide which issues and problems are significant in the political realm (Hague, 1986; Brookfield, 1986, cited in Brown & Udomisor, 2015).

News Reporting Techniques
Beyond gathering the news is a greater need to inform the public. News reporting, therefore, refers to the whole process of gathering information and writing on timely events adjudged to be newsworthy by a journalist for the audience (Nwabueze, 2014). How to identify a story-rich area, how to understand that an event taking place before you is newsworthy, how to bring out the newsworthy angle of an incident, how to structure a report to make sense and get the message across, all these and more make up the activity called news reporting (Nwabueze, 2014). Again Storall (2005) cited in Nwabueze (2014) notes that "reporting can be seen in the light of understanding information and where it comes from, being persuasive in dealing with sources of information and being honest and forthright in plying your trade" (p.222).

Research Methodology
The content analysis research design was adopted for this study. The justification for this design is that the study sought to appraise the political news reporting techniques of *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers.

The population of this study was in two streams. The first stream comprised all the 24 national dailies in Nigeria. The second stream was all the 300 editions of *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers drawn with a ten month period; spanning from May 1, 2018 to March 31 2019. That is, 150 editions of *The Nation* and *The Guardian* respectively formed the composite population of 300. The sample size of this population was determined by adopting the composite week approach. Using the construct calendar the issues that fell between 1st, 15th and 17th May, 13th and 27th June, 3rd and 19th July, 7th and 19th August, 3rd and 21st September, 17th and 31st October, 7th and 19th November, 11th and 27th December 2018, 5th and 23rd January, 5th, 9th and 19th February, 5th and 23rd March, 2019. Therefore drawing from the constructed study calendar 21 editions each was drawn from the 300 editions of *The Nation* and *The Guardian* respectively. This puts the sample size at 42 editions (*The Nation* – 21 and *The Guardian* – 21 editions).   The purposive sampling technique was used to select all the political reports in *The Nation* and *The Guardian*. The choice of these dailies ensured for balancing with regard to their varying readership targets. All the period of review (May 2018 – March 2019) was both pre-election and election years and was characterized by several political events and reported by the selected dailies. The code sheet and coding guide served as the instrument for data collection. The units of analysis and coding were straight news stories, editorials, features, cartoons, interviews and letters to the editor. Accordingly, the units of analysis were categorized and coded. To this end, the coding guide comprised 14 categories. To determine the validity of the instrument, the coding guide and code sheet were vetted by experts in the field. To ensure reliability, two independent coders were engaged in the coding exercise. The coders were drawn from the Post Graduate class of Mass Communication, Rivers State University. Furthermore, the code sheet was tested through a pilot study to establish inter-coder reliability. Holsti's (1969) cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2011) formula for calculating inter-coder reliability was used. The formula is given as

$$R\ (reliability) = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

Where   M = Number of coding decisions on which two coders agree
N_1 and N_2 = Total number of coding decisions by the first and second coder respectively.

$$\frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2} = \frac{2(11)}{14 + 14} = \frac{22}{24} = 0.92$$

Therefore the coders agreed on 11 categories. This gave us a coefficient of 0.92 using the Holsti's formula.

The qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in presenting and analyzing the research questions used for the study. Frequency tables and simple percentage were used for the quantitative analysis while the Constant Comparative Technique (CCT) was used in the analysis of the frames/themes that emerged in the political news reporting.

Data Presentation and Analysis
Research Question 1: What is the frequency of political news reporting by *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers? The answer is provided by items 4 and 8 in the coding guide. The table is presented below.

Table 1: Frequency of political news reporting by *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers

Month	Category political News (0040)		Total	Percentage
	Nation (0014)	*Guardian* (0016)		
May 2018	40 (60.6%)	26 (39.4%)	66	5.85
June 2018	38 (55.1%)	31 (44.9%)	69	6.1
July 2018	42 (53.8%)	36 (46.2%)	78	6.9
August 2018	48 (53.3%)	42 (46.7%)	90	8.1
September 2018	42 (55.3%)	34 (44.7%)	76	6.7
October 2018	44 (53.0%)	39 (47.1%)	83	7.4
November 2018	51 (52.6%)	46 (47.4%)	97	8.6
December 2018	53 (52.6%)	49 (48.0%)	102	9.0
January 2019	64 (52.0%)	59 (48.1%)	123	10.9
February 2019	101 (51.3%)	96 (48.7%)	197	17.5
March 2019	78 (53.1%)	69 (46.9%)	147	13.0
Total	**601**	**527**	**1128**	**100**

Table 1 above shows the frequency of political news in *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspaper within the study period (May 2018 – March 2019). Political news appeared highest for the newspaper, in February 2019 with *The Nation* recording 101 (51.3%) as against *The Guardian's* 96(48.7%).

Research Question 2: What are the recurring frames in political news reporting by *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers? The answer is provided in item 9 in the coding guide. It is presented in the below.

Table 2: Recurring frames in political news reporting of *The Nation* newspaper

S/N	Date	Newspaper (*The Nation*) 0014	
		News Headlines	Frame

1	March 5	Cross Rivers APC crisis: stakeholders seek Buhari, Tinubu intervention	Apprehension (0091) Party wrangling (0100) Competition (0092)
2	March 5	PDP candidate escapes assassination in Ondo	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094)
3	March 5	Imo: Nwosu, Ihedioha, Uzodinma in epic battle	Competition (0092) Apprehension (0091)
4	March 23	Appeal court affirms Lulu-Briggs as Accord gov candidate in Rivers	Party wrangling (0100) Competition (0092) Victory (0093)
5	March 23	My suspension 'll fuel crisis in Cross Rivers APC – Uguru Usani	Party wrangling (0100) Apprehension (0091)
6	Feb 5	Sokoto commissioners dumps PDP for APC	Party wrangling (0100) Competition (0092)
7	Feb 5	El-Rufai desperate to rig elections, CUPP alleges	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Credible election (0095) Lack of confidence in the electoral system (0099)
8	Feb 5	Atiku cautions security agencies on polls	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Lack of confidence in the electoral system (0099)
9	Feb 5	INEC cautions students against violence during elections	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Credible election (0095)
10	Feb 19	Keyamo, Melaye clash over Buhari's ballot snatching statement	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Credible election (0095)
11	Feb 19	Atiku practically confirmed PDP is working with INEC, says Oshiomhole	Credible election (0095) Lack of confidence in the electoral system (0099)
12	Feb 19	Ogun, APC, PDP and rancorous campaigns	Competition (0092) Apprehension (0091) Voter education (0096)
13	Jan 5	We have no confidence in INEC, PDP cries out	Apprehension (0091) Credible election (0095) Lack of confidence in the electoral system (0099)
14	Jan 5	Boys' brigade pray for crisis free poll in Calabar	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094)
15	Jan 5	2019: Ooni warns politicians against violence	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Credible election (0095)
16	Jan 5	Katsina govt says insecurity may affect 2019 general elections	Apprehension (0091) Voter apathy (0097)
17	Jan 23	2019 election: Ganduje signs peace accord with other guber candidates	Apprehension (0091) Credible election (0095)

18	Jan 23	Stop destroying Sanwo-Olu's posters	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094)
19	Dec 11	We are committed to peaceful election – PDP	Electoral violence (0094) Apprehension (0091)
20	Dec 11	2019: Buhari, Atiku, Others To Sign Peace Accord	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094)
21	Dec 11	Kano PRP candidate seeks issue-based campaign	Voter education (0096) Mobilization (0098)
22	Dec 11	2019: INEC unveils special app to address electoral malpractice	Credible election (0095) Lack of confidence in the electoral system (0099) Voter education (0096)
22	Dec 11	2019: We need adequate security to have a successful election – INEC	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Voter apathy (0097)
23	Nov 7	PDP, APC trade words over attack on Akwa Ibom deputy governor	Electoral violence (0094) Apprehension (0091) Voter apathy (0097)
24	Nov 7	2019: Resist violence for Nigeria's sake	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Voter education (0096) Voter apathy (0097)
25	Nov 19	IGP warns policemen against partisan polities	Credible election (0095) Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Lack of confidence in the electoral system (0099)
26	Nov 19	Thugs invade A'Ibom Assembly as five APC lawmakers lose seat	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094)
27	Nov 19	My plans for Nigeria, by Atiku	Voter education (0096) Competition (0092)
28	Oct 17	2019: APC, PDP engulfed in post-primary crisis	Apprehension (0091) Party wrangling (0100)
29	Oct 17	Fayeme cancels Fayose's education tax, restores free education	Victory (0093) Competition (0092)
30	Oct 31	Ogun PDP crisis: INEC writes Secondus recognizes Kashamn's faction	Party wrangling (0100)

Result from Table 2 above indicates that the recurring frames in *The Nation* newspaper within the period under study is "Apprehension" which account for 68.6% of the political stories selected from *The Nation* newspaper.

Table 3: Recurring frames in political news reporting of *The Guardian* newspaper

S/N	Date	Newspaper (*The Guardian*) 0015	
		News Headlines	**Frame**
1	March 5	CAN worried about alleged plans to scuttle Saturdays' exercise in Taraba	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094)
2	March 5	Divisive intrigues versus APC's gubernatorial chances in states	Party wrangling (0100) Competition (0092)
3	March 5	Guber candidates urge INEC to maintain neutrality in Rivers	Credible election (0095) Lack of confidence in the electoral system (0099) Apprehension (0091)
4	March 5	PDP to petition UN over illegal military killings during presidential pool	Apprehension (0091) Voter apathy (0097) Electoral violence (0094)
5	March 5	Ortom alerts of plot to rig Benue election with military personnel	Apprehension (0091) Voter apathy (0097) Electoral violence (0094) Competition (0092)
6	March 23	PDP celebrate Adeleke's triumph at tribunal, says its victory for democracy	Victory (0093)
7	March 23	Supplementary polls: Dogara alleges plot to unleash violence on Bauchi citizenry	Apprehension (0091) Voter apathy (0097) Electoral violence (0094) Competition (0092)
8	March 23	Be neutral, independent in discharging duties, group urges INEC	Lack of confidence in electoral system (0099) Apprehension (0091) Credible election (0095)
9	March 23	Again Taraba on fire over supplementary election	Apprehension (0091) Competition (0092) Voter apathy (0097) Electoral violence (0094)
10	Feb 5	Ganduje orders closure of Kano stadia ahead of PDP rally	Party wrangling (0100) Competition (0092) Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094)
11	Feb 5	Nasarawa APC guber candidate mulls end to thuggery	Electoral violence (0094) Voter apathy (0097)
12	Feb 5	Conspiracy theories trailing INEC's postponement of presidential election	Lack of confidence in the electoral system (0099) Credible election (0095) Apprehension (0091)
13	Feb 5	Presidential candidate seeks further extension of polls	Credible election (0095) Lack of confidence in the electoral system (0099)
14	Jan 23	Kano municipal crisis festers as Yakassi insists on APC ticket	Apprehension (0091) Competition (0092)

			Electoral violence (0094)
15	Jan 6	PDP, APC at war over billboards in Cross Rivers	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Party wrangling (0100)
16	Jan 6	PDP kicks against appointment of Amina Zakari by INEC	Credible election (0095) Lack of confidence in the electoral system (0099)
17	Dec 11	How Nigerian women will vote the presidency in 2019	Voter education (0096)
18	Dec 11	We have all it takes to win 2019 election, says Saraki	Competition (0092) Victory (0093)
19	Dec 27	PDP 'not an option' in 2019 presidential election, says Oshiomhole	Competition (0092) Party wrangling (0100) Victory (0093)
20	Dec 27	Internal traces revives fear of imminent poll violence in Enugu State APC	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Party wrangling (0100) Competition (0092)
21	Nov 7	Four reps dump APC	Party wrangling (0100)
22	Nov 7	South-South, South East traditional rulers seek security of local communities during 2019 polls	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Voter apathy (0097)
23	Nov 7	AIG reads riot act to politicians in Ebonyi	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Voter apathy (0097) Competition (0092)
24	Nov 19	Nigeria has no future under Buhari, says Atiku's strategist	Competition (0092) Party wrangling (0100)
25	Nov 19	Campaigning against PDP will be easy, says Amaechi	Party wrangling (0100) Competition (0092)
26	Oct 17	Atiku promises 40 percent women, youth inclusion in his govt	Mobilization (0098) Competition (0092) Victory (0093)
27	Oct 31	INEC writes Secondus recognizes Kashamu's faction of Ogun PDP candidates	Party wrangling (0100)
28	Oct 31	Benue PDP aspirants feud over alleged delegates' inducement, intimidation	Apprehension (0091) Electoral violence (0094) Party wrangling (0100) Competition (0092)
29	Sept 3	Aspirants snub consensus option to select PDP presidential standard bearer	Party wrangling (0100) Competition (0092)
30	Sept 3	Al Makura denies receiving N10 billion from guber aspirant	Credible election (0095) Lack of confidence in the electoral system (0099)

Table 3 above shows that the recurring frame in the political news report of *The Guardian* newspaper is Apprehension. This accounts for 50% of the frames in the political news stories of *The Guardian* newspaper.

Research Question 3: To what extent is political news reporting by *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers, address nagging issues confronting Nigeria's body politics? The answer is provided in item 12 in the coding guide. The result is presented in the below.

Table 4: Purpose of political news story of *The Nation* showing extent they address nagging issues in Nigeria's body polity

S/N	Date	Newspaper (*The Nation*) 0014	
		News Headlines	**Purpose**
1	March 5	Cross Rivers APC crisis: stakeholders seek Buhari, Tinubu intervention	Awareness/information/ peace advocacy
2	March 5	PDP candidate escapes assassination in Ondo	Awareness/information (0013b)
3	March 5	Imo: Nwosu, Ihedioha, Uzodinma in epic battle	Awareness/information (0013b)
4	March 23	Appeal court affirms Lulu-Briggs as Accord gov candidate in Rivers	Awareness/information (0013b)
5	March 23	My suspension 'll fuel crisis in Cross Rivers APC – Uguru Usani	Awareness/information (0013b)
6	Feb 5	Sokoto commissioners dumps PDP for APC	Awareness/information (0013b)
7	Feb 5	El-Rufai desperate to rig elections, CUPP alleges	Awareness/information (0013b)
8	Feb 5	Atiku cautions security agencies on polls	Persuasion (0014b), Awareness/information
9	Feb 5	INEC cautions students against violence during elections	Persuasion (0014b), Awareness/information
10	Feb 19	Keyamo, Melaye clash over Buhari's ballot snatching statement	Awareness/information
11	Feb 19	Atiku practically confirmed PDP is working with INEC, says Oshiomhole	Propaganda/falsehood (0014b)
12	Feb 19	Ogun, APC, PDP and rancorous campaigns	Outright attack/ condemnation (0016b)
13	Jan 5	We have no confidence in INEC, PDP cries out	Awareness/information
14	Jan 5	Boys' brigade pray for crisis free poll in Calabar	Awareness/information, Persuasion (0014b), peace advocacy (0017b)
15	Jan 5	2019: Ooni warns politicians against violence	Persuasion (0014)/ peace advocacy
16	Jan 5	Katsina govt says insecurity may affect 2019 general elections	Awareness/information
17	Jan 23	2019 election: Ganduje signs peace accord with other guber candidates	Peace advocacy (0017b)
18	Jan 23	Stop destroying Sanwo-Olu's posters	Outright attack/ condemnation (0016b), Awareness/information
19	Dec 11	We are committed to peaceful election – PDP	Peace advocacy (0017b), Awareness/information

20	Dec 11	2019: Buhari, Atiku, Others To Sign Peace Accord	Peace advocacy (0017b)
21	Dec 11	Kano PRP candidate seeks issue-based campaign	Persuasion, Awareness/ information
22	Dec 11	2019: INEC unveils special app to address electoral malpractice	Awareness/ information
23	Nov 7	PDP, APC trade words over attack on Akwa Ibom deputy governor	Awareness/ information
24	Nov 7	2019: Resist violence for Nigeria's sake	Persuasion (0014b)
25	Nov 19	IGP warns policemen against partisan polities	Awareness/ information
26	Nov 19	Thugs invade A'Ibom Assembly as five APC lawmakers lose seat	Awareness/ information
27	Nov 19	My plans for Nigeria, by Atiku	Awareness/ information
28	Oct 17	2019: APC, PDP engulfed in post-primary crisis	Awareness/ information
29	Oct 17	Fayeme cancels Fayose's education tax, restores free education	Awareness/ information
30	Oct 31	Ogun PDP crisis: INEC writes Secondus recognizes Kashamn's faction	Awareness/ information

Table 4 above indicates that 66.7% of the story selected had purposes of awareness/information dissemination.

Discussion of Findings
Findings in research question one revealed that the frequency of the political news reports in *The Nation* newspaper were more than *The Guardian* newspaper. That is in the period under review, *The Nation* newspaper had 601 political news stories as against *The Guardian* newspaper's 527. In all a total of 1128 political stories were reviewed. The implication of this result is that political news stories formed the highest percentage of news stories by the selected newspapers. This finding corroborates Fedler (n.d) cited in Agbese (2017) to the effect that "political news has emerged as one of the prominent features of the news media, noting, that the news media were actually made for and to serve polities" (p.16).

Meanwhile, result in research question two revealed that the recurring frames in both *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers are frames of "Apprehension". This frame seems to be a reflection of the tensed atmosphere that has characterized the Nigerian political milieu over the years (see Omotola, 2009; Onyemaobi, 2018). A critical look at the headlines further reveals nature and manner of politics in Nigeria. This finding confirms Cheeseman (2015) and Ekeanyanwu (2016) cited in Onyemaobi (2018) that "although democratic elections and term limits are now being upheld in most African countries, political violence and electoral crises have continued to plaque the democratic transformation process in many African countries – including Nigeria" (p.28). These news frames are a reflection of the political realities of Nigeria. Yet the language used in reporting them suggests the extent the media (newspapers) are reinforcing these frames or addressing the core issues that bring about these apprehensions in the first place. In this instance, focus is shifting from the social process or realities to the intent and focus of the writer or reporter as reflected in the linguistic structure of the text (Oyeleye & Osisanwo, 2013).

In research question three, results showed that the extent to which political news reporting by *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers addresses nagging issues confronting Nigeria was minimal. Most of the reports were presented in the straight news format, which does not allow for extensive and critical discourse of the subject matters. Granted that the political issues reported are a reflection of the state of

the nation's politics, the focus however, is that beyond the rhetoric, journalese and the primary purpose of awareness/information how much do these reports critically distill in comprehensible bits the various issues in such ways that address the core factors affecting our body polity. The finding confirms Amadi (2003) who observes political communication in Nigeria does not only "manifest in its ugliest blatant form of buying political consent with money, it manifests by tapping into rabble-rousing diversionary issues like ethnicity, resource control and religion" (p.163).

Conclusion

Over the years political communication has emerged as one of the dominant features in socio-political interactions. Its importance stems largely from the fact that it appears to be the wheel that spins most, if not all of human existence. That is, either directly or indirectly human activities are shaped by politics and by extension political communication.

Interestingly, the media have been consistent in sustaining the supply for political communication by society. However, the nature they have gone about meeting these demands, have thrown up issues as to whether political communication or political news reporting in this instance, has served as an end or a means to an end. It has therefore become imperative to stretch political communication beyond the conventional method of merely reporting activities of government to a corresponding analysis that later position the people on the core implications of these programmes to governance and the public.

The sensitivity of the role of the press in watching the government for the people comes with an expectation that they remain highly a political. This is more against the backdrop of the fact that their non-aligned posture will better buoy their responsibility to fairly hold government to account to the public. It is therefore important that the press better position themselves to living up to the growing demands for critical analysis of the political trends in such ways that end in a win-win for the public and government. That way, they would have effectively performed their cardinal role as purveyors of development in the democratic process.

Recommendations

Drawing from the conclusion above, the following recommendations are here put forward:

1. That political news reporting techniques of newspapers should go beyond presenting the "facts" to an extensive distillation such that the intrigues and complexities of politics are broken into comprehensible bits, leaving the public better informed.
2. That political news reporting techniques by newspapers should be development driven, rather than reinforcing existing status quo, the media can begin to focus more on addressing those core variables that instigate political violence in the first place.
3. That the press must continue to take positions on national and political issues. While such positions must be devoid of bias, ethnic or political sentiments, they must be feasible to the point that they attract consensus positions and provide better alternative to perceived flawed government policies and programmes.

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