

DAILY TRUST NEWSPAPER FRAMING OF POLITICAL PARTIES PRIMARY ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study was carried out to examine how Daily Trust newspaper gave coverage to political parties' primary elections across states in Nigeria, in May 2026. The Daily Trust newspaper was purposively selected because of its wide readership coverage and listing as one of the prominent national dailies in the country. The research employed the Framing Theory as its theoretical justification, and used content analysis approach as a research design. Thus, of the 131 news items found; 98 of them were on news reports, 21 on features, 1 editorials, 4 opinion articles, 1 columns and 6 other forms of writing. This results showed that Thursdays recorded the highest coverage of news items on primary elections, inside page major ranked as the most prominent pages that covers primary elections. It was also found that Daily Trust newspaper gave more prominence and depth to the coverage of primary

elections within the stated period. Based on the findings, the study concluded that the press (Daily Trust) should do more in terms of giving adequate coverage to topical issues of public concern, which political-related activities is among, while recommending the need for Nigerian newspapers to provide in-depth investigation and reportage of issues of importance in the country, especially political matters, rather than brief approach to it, and prioritising the economical implications of these matters.

Keywords: Newspaper, Framing, Election, Political Parties, Prominence.

Introduction

In Nigeria's post-colonial history since 1999, political parties have emerged as the main mode of contestation for elective office. The Fourth Republic is founded on a multiparty system and the Electoral Act and the Constitution of 1999 require that candidates have to come up through party primaries (Musa & Musa, 2023). Primary elections as emphasised by Gambo (2022), are the first crucial step in the electoral process, which set the course for who will represent parties at the general elections. Their purpose is to embed internal democracy, include the people and create credible flag bearers. As averred by Zannu et al., (2024), election primaries in Nigeria have been one of the most controversial activities in the country's democratic process. It also has a dominant party system, which has been dominated by PDP, APC and other emerging parties such as LP, ADC, NNPP, and others. Thus, political parties are supposed to bring together interests, select leaders, and provide information to the population. But they have mostly served as institutions for the contestation of power rather than ideology (Araba & Mary, 2026).

The lack of party structures inside organisations makes it difficult to determine who should win party primary elections by popular vote, not by money, patronage and party leader influence. This according to Gambo (2022) affects the range of candidates 'elected' and, ultimately, the consolidation of democracy. The media no doubt, occupies a strategic position in Nigeria's political process. Newspapers, radio, television and

online media are the Fourth Estate of the realm, agenda-setters, watchdogs and interpreters of political events (Emmanuel & Walter, 2020). Newspapers are influential in the political elite, among opinion leaders and policymakers in a country with high illiteracy and high media penetration. In the electoral process, the media influences the public's attitude towards the candidates and the parties and the credibility of the electoral process especially during election cycles. The reporting of political activities by newspapers thus shapes the public's perception of and their reaction to these events (Ogbodo et al., 2022).

Nigerian newspapers have been playing significant space in party primaries particularly Presidential and Governorship elections. During election cycles, coverage tends to be highest when the parties are gearing up for the next election in 2023, 2019, 2015 and other elections (Musa & Musa, 2023). Extortion of votes, disruption of primary elections, parallel congresses and court cases had been reported. Newspapers have also been given a platform for “anointed” candidates and political godfathers. But researchers have noted that there is sometimes sensational, biased, elite-driven, and limited reporting on the procedural and democratic consequences of bungled primaries. This in the views of Obukoadata et al., (2024), only adds to worries of newspapers in fulfilling their democratic responsibilities.

Nigerian newspapers tend to use framing strategies in reporting political news and other news events, particularly in the headlines and the news reports. Framing according to Komolafe et al., (2019) involves the manner in which media organizations (newspapers) pick out, focus on and shape views on reality to support a specific interpretation. Events are occasionally presented as conflict, strategy, ethnicity, religion, personality, etc. and these are appropriate because they may shape the issues that are emphasized and those that are ignored. In primaries, framing tends to revolve around how the voting process has been conducted, around the candidates themselves, allegations of rigging, or the consequences of the voting results

for party unity. This means that newspapers can either help to promote a democratic sense of responsibility or increase cynicism about the political system.

The Daily Trust is one of the leading national newspapers that currently enjoy strong circulation in the northern region of Nigeria and the nation at large. It was founded in 1998 for its broad political coverage, investigative reporting, governance and elections commentary. With its reach and credibility among political stakeholders, Daily Trust has a significant influence on shaping elite and public discourse on party politics. The northern coverage is especially noteworthy because there is a strong connection between northern politics and national party leadership and presidential candidates. The study is thus important because it throws light on how the Daily Trust newspaper presents election primaries particularly in Nigeria in advance of the next general election in 2027.

Statement of the Problem

Party primaries conducted since 1999 in Nigeria have always been marked by violence, forced selection of candidates, godfatherism, monetisation and manipulation of delegates (Emmanuel & Walter, 2020). As averred by Ogbodo et al. (2022), the ruling and opposition parties have in the past had crises at both governorship, legislative and presidential levels of primary election. The use of direct, indirect and consensus modes of primaries as stipulated in the Electoral Act 2022 did not help. Rather, it has generated new contestations around transparency, inclusiveness, and fairness. Such problems have frequently created defection, factionalisation and post-primary litigation, which have hampered party unity prior to general elections.

However, issues with the process have been reignited at the party primaries in 2022 and 2023, as walkouts, protests and claims of delegate buying with millions occurred at both APC and PDP. There was a lot of news in the newspaper about the statutory delegates, consensus arrangements and

zoning debates (Araba & Mary, 2026). Other prominent themes included youth agitation, women's marginalisation and the impact of money politics. The defections and the presence of third force candidates emanated through post-primary crises. The developments according to Obukoadata et al., (2024), indicate that primary elections are still a hot-button issue for democratic instability in Nigeria and should continue to receive the attention of both the media and academia.

Meanwhile, there are several studies that focus on the coverage of general elections in Nigeria, but only a few of them analyse the frame newspapers use in party primaries (Oyesomi et al., 2019; Musa & Musa, 2023; Ngene & Uzochukwu, 2023; Zannu et al., 2024; Araba & Mary, 2026). Existing research has looked at framing of campaigns, violence, and results, but there is limited empirical work on Daily Trust's framing of intra-party contests. Hence, this gap must be addressed because election primaries are important for selecting quality candidates and strengthening the health of political parties. As such, such a study should be expected to uncover the patterns, tone and dominant frames that are being utilised by Daily Trust newspaper and the implications of these for internal democracy and voter education.

Objectives of the Study

This study is guided by the following objectives:

1. Examine the prominence given to news stories on political parties primary elections in Nigeria by Daily Trust Newspaper;
2. Find out the frequency of reportage of stories on political parties primary elections in Nigeria by Daily Trust Newspaper; and
3. Ascertain the dominant frame used by Daily Trust Newspaper in the coverage of political parties primary elections in Nigeria.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the prominence given to news stories on political parties primary elections in Nigeria by Daily Trust Newspaper?

2. What is the frequency of reportage of stories on political parties primary elections in Nigeria by Daily Trust Newspaper?
3. What is the dominant frame used by Daily Trust Newspaper in the coverage of political parties primary elections in Nigeria?

Review of Related Literature

Newspaper as a Medium of Communication

The word 'newspaper', as now employed, covers so wide a field that it is difficult, if not impossible, to give it a precise definition. According to Mittler (2020), newspaper is any paper containing public news, intelligence, occurrences, or any remarks or observations, therein printed for sale, and published periodically or in parts or numbers at interval not exceeding twenty-six days. Also, Vella (2020) opines that a newspaper as any publication to summarise the wording - printed and published in numbers at intervals of not more than seven days, consisting wholly or in part of political or other news, or critical relating thereto or to other current topics, with or without advertisements. In ordinary practice, the newspaper, as distinguished from other periodicals means the daily or (at most) weekly publications which are principally concerned with reporting and commenting upon general current event (Conboy, 2020).

In the views of Adeeko (2023), newspapers generally contains varied topics of interest which are meant for a broad spectrum of audience among who are school children, youths in their impressionable years, elites and educated adults, semi-illiterates and stark illiterates, etc. They are published in order to disseminate diverse kinds of information that are of interest to the reading public, both young and old. There are different columns in the newspapers devoted to different areas of life. For instance, majority of Nigerian newspapers contain local news column, sports column, entertainment column, arts column, advice column which can be divided into personal, medical, automobile, household, educational, and so on.

Similarly, Akinola cited in Adeeko (2023, p. 19) emphasises that “newspapers relates news, provides information, entertains, provides comments on passing events, makes a critique of current problems, have cartoons, features and advertisements”. Also, Mittler (2020) sees newspaper as the textbook that provides up-to-date information on local, state or provincial, national, and world affairs; the most current analysis and criticism on executive and legislative decision-making; the latest in music, film, television, and the fine arts, and even columns and comics to make people laugh. Newspapers are among the most accessible texts available to the vast majority of people – literate, illiterate, young and old, students, workers, elites and peasants – in any community. This is because every category of reader mentioned above can find something that interest them inside newspaper pages.

Buttressing the above assertions, Balarabe (2019) describes newspaper in a broad sense as an unbounded printed publication, issued at regular interval; that seeks to inform, analyze, influence and entertain. Corroborating this position, Ige (2019) opines that newspaper is a journal that reports daily occurrences, and is published and circulated daily. Today's newspapers use design elements – story placement, typeface, and graphics – to make information easily accessible to the reader. Important stories are usually placed at the top of the page.

Types and Characteristics of Newspaper

There are various types of newspapers, classified according to different criteria, Hynds cited in Balarabe (2019) elaborates nine (9) criteria under which newspaper can be classified which are; frequency of publication. time of publication, format, geography, purpose, circulation, method of production, intended audience, and achievement. However, the most commonly used criteria according to Balarabe (2019), are frequency of publication, format, time of publication and geographical spread. The frequency of publication entails both daily and weekly newspapers, a typical

newspaper should be published at intervals of not more than once a week, bi-weekly, tri-weekly and monthly publication should not really be considered as an ideal newspaper. This is because the contents will obviously lack fundamental criteria of newness and timeliness (Adeeko, 2023). In the same vein, Vella (2020, p. 218) maintained that “an event of public importance which is not reported till after two, three or four weeks of its occurrence can hardly be news thereafter”. On the other hand, Akinrosoye (2018) opines that classification according to format (physical shape and size) can either be tabloid or broadsheet.

The broadsheet is also known as standard size newspaper. Furthermore, Conboy (2020) stresses that tabloids are those newspapers whose size is approximately 12 x 16 inches, with 5 or 6 columns; broadsheets are larger, measuring approximately 14 x 22, with 6 or 7 columns. He emphasized that the description painted shows that most newspaper in Nigeria are tabloids. Under time of publication, newspapers can be classified as either morning newspaper or evening newspaper, depending on the time or day when they become available to the readers.

Geography as a criterion for classifying newspapers, according to Ngene and Uzochukwu (2023) takes into consideration the area of circulation. A newspaper is known as international when such newspaper is available to readers in different countries where it circulates. According to them, there are also national, regional, provincial, community or neighbourhood newspapers in Nigeria. The Guardian, Vanguard, This Day, Punch, Sun, Daily Trust and Nigerian Tribune are some of the national newspaper in circulation. Thus, Akinrosoye (2018) emphasises the various functions a newspaper is expected to perform in the Nigerian society which are: gathering information, news publishing, fostering commerce and industry through Business reports, financial reports and advertisements, education and enlightenment of the public, influencing, leading and giving direction to public opinion, serving as a check on government, and providing

a means of entertainment for the people.

Political Parties and Primary Elections in Nigeria

Political parties in Nigeria are legal political organisations established to run elections and organise people for governance as stipulated under Section 221 of the 1999 Constitution (Araba & Mary, 2026). For instance, the political space has been monopolised since 1999 by various parties including the PDP, the APC, the LP and the NNPP, where recruitment, aggregation of interests, and articulation of policies are carried out. Nigerian parties, however, have been faulted for weak ideology, weak internal democracy and over-reliance on godfathers and money politics. According to Musa and Musa (2023), the primary election is an integral part of party function, as defined in Electoral Act 2022 as the process used by parties to choose candidates for elective offices.

Primaries are likely to be conducted in direct, indirect, or consensus manner, in accordance with the will of party members (Araba & Mary, 2026). They stressed that, Nigerian primaries in reality, have seen the imposition of candidates, buying of votes, violence, parallel congresses and litigation. The difficulties weaken the unity of the party, and the quality of its candidates it presents to voters, as a result, primaries are a critical area to test democratic practice in Nigeria.

Newspaper Coverage of Political Parties in Nigeria

Newspapers in Nigeria serve as important linkage between the political actors and the masses. The national dailies, like Daily Trust, Punch, Vanguard, and This Day, extensively write on party activities, conventions, crises, mergers and electioneering as elite oriented media (Ogbodo et al., 2022). As emphasised by Obukoadata et al., (2024), political parties typically are the subjects of news coverage when they make head-to-head statements, lose members, contest zoning, and squabble among themselves. Several scholars observe that the Nigerian newspapers are personalizing politics, focusing on personalities and power tussle than policy and ideology. The

coverage is heavier during election periods and newspapers become significant agenda-setters, framers of candidates and opinion-formers in the eyes of the elites (Zannu et al., 2024). But, there are worries about bias, sensationalism, and commercialisation in political news reporting. Newspapers, in spite of these problems, have an impact on perceptions by the literate public and political stakeholders of political parties, which can affect party legitimacy and public trust.

Frames and Newspaper Coverage of Primary Elections

One fundamental concept in media and communication studies is that of framing which refers to the selection and emphasis of aspects of reality that media make in the process of promoting a specific interpretation (Komolafe et al., 2019). According to Komolafe et al., (2019), framing involves choosing some elements of a perceived reality and rendering them more salient to foster a certain problem definition and evaluation. The typical frames used in election reporting are conflict, strategy, game, personality, and issue frames. The conflict frame emphasises intra-party conflict, violence and crisis. The strategy frame is about the winners and losers, horse races and calculations. The issue frame is about policies, manifestos and governance. Other frames include the frames of ethnicity, religion and corruption which are salient in the Nigerian context. Frames shape the interpretation of electoral events by focusing readers' attention on some aspects and reducing the salience of others.

However, framing is particularly important in the context of a primary election, as it is less public than a general election and is an intra-party competition (Gambo, 2022). Primary framing in newspapers can make or break the process's democracy. Research reveals that, Nigerian newspapers tend to view primaries as a conflict and strategy game, rather than as a fair process or debates on policies. They tend to emphasise allegations of imposition, monetization and factionalisation. This can lead to greater skepticism regarding party democracy among the public, but also act as a

catalyst to make parties more transparent. The impact of the frame is also determined by the tone, the sources, and the location of stories. Hence, it is important to study the framing of the party primaries in newspapers such as Daily Trust to understand the role of the press in enhancing or challenging intraparty democracy in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Various empirical researches have been carried out on in Nigeria, on newspaper coverage of elections, however, this current study is significant with that of Jinmi-Ahisu and Osah (2021) which investigated the association between media framing of elections and electoral violence in Nigeria's fourth republic. The study adopted a qualitative design to analyse The Punch, This Day and The Guardian newspapers, while findings showed that there was a direct link between media framing and electoral violence in Nigeria. Thus, the study recommended the need for media; specifically newspapers to always ensure positive frames that will not further escalate electoral violence among the people. However, this study differs from the current study because it is tilted towards framing of electoral violence which ensued as aftermath of election, while the current study examines framing of political parties primary elections which is before election.

Also, Elegba, Oloyede and Özad (2021) conducted a study on the foreign media coverage of Nigeria's 2019 general elections. The study's main objective is to assess the dominant frames that embodied by the coverage of the 2019 election by international news media. A quantitative content analysis method was employed with a total of 135 news stories extracted from 10 international news sources. Findings showed that political system frames, human interest/people frames, and violence frames dominated the reports from these international news sources, while the study concluded that international news media coverage of the 2019 election is lopsided. However, this study focused on foreign media coverage of 2019 election in Nigeria, while the current study is tilted towards Daily Trust newspaper (local media)

coverage of primary elections in Nigeria.

Moreover, Oriola and Oluwakemi (2021) evaluated newspaper framing of the 2019 presidential election campaign in Nigeria, with the aim of assessing the prominence, frequency of coverage and direction of stories on 2019 election as reported by five selected newspapers. The study adopted content analysis method, using the content category and coding sheet as instruments, while 480 editions of The Guardian, Daily Sun, The Punch, Vanguard and Nigerian Tribune published between November 18, 2018 and February 21, 2019 formed the sample frame. Findings showed that the newspapers gave frequent and prominent coverage to the campaign, and that the ruling party and the major opposition party dominated the coverage. Thus, the study concluded that the 2019 election was largely presented in the newspapers using conflict frame especially within the context of the horserace between the APC and PDP. However, this study did not align with the current study because the former is aimed towards 5 selected newspapers and how they frame 2019 presidential election, while the latter is aimed at examining Daily Trust newspaper framing of primary elections in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023.

Ntiwunka, Nwaodike and Kupoluyi (2020) studied the role of print media in the electoral process in Nigeria, with the aim of assessing the influence newspapers have in shaping the Nigerian electoral process. The study adopted a mixed method which comprised of content analysis, survey, observation and in-depth interview. Findings showed that print media contributed to creating better perception of the nation's electoral process by international observers. However, print media were found to have engaged in improper reportage and selective coverage wherein they failed to report actual happenings during elections as a result of undue influence by politicians and owners, hence misinforming the people. The study concluded that print media was critical to smooth electoral process during the period under study (1999 – 2019), despite challenges such as inadequate funding

and non-adherence to professional ethics by some journalists. However, the study's aim is to address print media significant role in Nigeria's electoral process, while the current study focused on newspaper framing of primary elections in political parties in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Framing Theory

Gregory Bateson was credited to have firstly worked on framing in 1972, but the concept was put forth in the sociological context by Ervin Goffman in 1974, and it rests on the basic assumptions that:

- i. People interpret and use expectations to make sense of what is going on around their world through their primary framework, (Baran and Dennis, 2009, p.35)
- ii. News content is typically shaped and contextualized by journalists by understanding the words, images phrases and presentation styles used in the media outlet about an issue; thus, the choice of these words depends on the content producers, media outlet and their perception about an issue.
- iii. Media select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular issue.
- iv. How information is presented to the audience (frame) influences the choices people make about how to process that information, (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007).
- v. Media focus attention on certain events and then place them within a field of meaning and interpretation to the masses.
- vi. Frame building is a systematic process that occurs over time, they are reinforced every time they evoked; whether positively or negatively.

However, the theory has widely been criticized, McQuail (2005) argued that framing cannot be seen as a theory on its own, but rather a part of agenda setting theory or better said, framing is just second-level of agenda setting

theory. Thus, he sees it as a repetition of agenda setting theory. Similarly, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) believed that there is a point of convergence and divergence between framing, agenda setting and priming. This implies that framing as a concept is subsumed under the agenda-setting, rather than being a theory on its own.

Thus, this theory is quite relevant to the study under review because, it explains how newspapers covered political parties' primary elections in Nigeria for the period under review, as well as how the coverage shaped the perception of various stakeholders. Therefore, framing theory centers on how the selected newspaper (Daily Trust) draws public attention to the parties' primary elections across States, as it decides what people think about in its selection and presentation, using a particular language, tone and setting to convey certain meanings. No doubt that framing has always been associated with news, conflicts and political discourse- the way news reports are selected and presented is determined by newspapers, thereby influencing the perception of the news reports/issues presented to the readers or audience. The media (newspaper) should therefore 'frame' news stories/ analysis and trendy issues that will suit their audience perception in a way as to 'teach' them to shun electoral malpractice, violence, apathy and irregularities, so that it does not eventually develop as purveyors of acts of electoral upheaval.

Methodology

This study adopts quantitative research design, using content analysis method to determine Daily Trust newspaper framing of political parties primary elections in Nigeria from 2023 till now. Thus, Daily Trust newspaper which was purposively picked serves as the study population. As averred by Ekeanyanwu (2015), content analysis as a research technique entails description of manifest content of communication objectively and systematically. The Daily Trust newspaper was selected because of its penchant for political reports and its wider coverage as listed among prominent national dailies in Nigeria.

Moreover, the universe of study for this research covered all issues of the Daily Trust newspaper published in May 2026 (The period of primary elections across political parties in Nigeria). This was a period of 1 month and this indicates that 31 editions were published for the month, since it is a daily publication. The 31 editions of Daily trust newspaper therefore forms the sample size for the study. Also, the units of analysis include; days, genres of stories, depth of stories, prominence, direction, political parties and frames. As part of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the exact newspaper (Daily Trust), timeframe of 1 month, all contents and all political parties were included in the analysis, while other newspapers, news outside the timeframe, advertorials and non-election contents were excluded from the analysis. The newspaper editions were sourced from the archive of National Library of Nigeria in Kwara State, while

The coding guide and coding sheet were the two major instruments used in data collection, and it was validated through both face and content validity from two senior scholars in the field of media studies. Also, reliability was established through pre-testing of the instruments on a sample of 5 Daily Trust editions. This assisted in identifying inconsistencies and unclear items. To ensure inter-coder reliability, Cohen's Kappa test was conducted on two independent coders, while a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained and considered acceptable. Furthermore, the coders were trained and coding was carried out at the same time and venue. This is in order to minimize the error in coding, as it aligns with the assertions of Wimmer and Dominick (2011) which emphasise careful training of coders as an essential step in any content analysis research. These procedures are necessary to ensure the instruments are accurate, consistent and capable of producing dependable data for the study.

Data Analysis & Discussion of Findings

To achieve the objectives set out in the research, nine (9) editions of the Daily Trust newspaper was selected. These editions which were selected

within the range of nine (9) days made up the sample size of this study. However, data from the newspaper was collected and analysed so as to ascertain the number of news items, the most topical issues or themes as reported by the newspapers, prominence given to the issue, depth of report on the issue, direction as well as the frame of the news contents. Therefore, analysis of the research questions were based on the frequency and percentage distributions as shown in the tables below:

Table 1: Days of Coverage

Days	No of Items	Percentage
Friday, 15 th	7	5.3%
Saturday, 16 th	11	8.4%
Sunday, 17 th	14	10.7%
Monday, 18 th	13	9.9%
Tuesday, 19 th	17	13.0%
Wednesday, 20 th	16	12.2%
Thursday, 21 st	21	16.0%
Friday, 22 nd	15	11.5%
Saturday, 23 rd	17	13.0%
Total	131	100%

Source: *Fieldwork by the researcher, 2026*

The table above shows that, of the 131 items analysed, 21(16.0%) falls on Thursday 21st, while 7(5.3%) falls on Friday, 15th. Therefore, majority of the news items were covered on Thursday 21st.

Table 2: Genres of Stories

Genres	No of Items	Percentage
News	98	74.7%
Features	21	16.0%
Editorial	1	0.8%
Opinion Articles	4	3.1%
Column	1	0.8%
Others	6	4.6%
Total	131	100%

Source: *Fieldwork by the researcher 2026*

From table 2 above, out of the 131 items analysed, 98(74.7%) are news, while 1(0.8%) are columns and editorials. Thus, news constitutes the majority among the genres of stories on primary elections that were covered.

Table 3: Prominence of Stories

Prominence	No of Items	Percentage
Front page major	8	6.0%
Front page minor	19	14.5%
Inside page major	72	55.0%
Inside page minor	31	23.7%
Back page major	1	0.8%
Back page minor	-	0.0%
Total	131	100%

Source: Fieldwork by the researcher, 2026

The table above shows that, of the 131 items analysed, 72(55.0%) of them are in inside page as major stories, while 1(0.8%) are in back page as major news stories. Therefore, majority of the news items were featured on inside page as major news stories.

Table 4: Depth of Stories

Depth	No of Items	Percentage
Below	100	107.6%
100-250 words	51	39.0%
250 words above	70	53.4%
Total	131	100%

From table 4, out of the 131 items analysed, 70(53.4%) were 250 words and above in terms of depth, while 10(7.6%) were below 100 words. This shows that most of the news items were more than 250 words in terms of depth.

Table 5: Direction of Stories

Direction	No of Items	Percentage
Positive	26	19.8%
Negative	37	28.2%
Neutral	68	52.0%
Total	131	100%

Source: Fieldwork by the researcher, 2026

The above table indicates that 68(52.0%) were neutral in direction, while 26(19.8%) were positive in direction. This implies that majority of the news stories were neutral in direction.

Table 6: Political Party

Political Party	No of Items	Percentage
APC	62	47.3%
PDP	41	31.3%
Others	28	21.4%
Total	131	100%

Source: *Fieldwork by the researcher, 2026*

From table 6, out of the 131 items analysed, 62(47.3%) were on APC primaries, while 28(21.4%) are on other political parties' primaries. This shows that most of the news items were on APC primary elections.

Table 7: Frame of Stories

Frame	No of Items	Percentage
Political frame	54	41.2%
Response frame	12	9.2%
Human Interest	15	11.4%
Lawlessness frame	17	13.0%
Ethnicity frame	11	8.4%
Analytical frame	22	16.8%
Total	131	100%

Source: *Fieldwork by the researcher, 2026*

The table above indicates that, out of the 131 items analysed, 54(41.2%) were politically framed, while 11(8.4%) were ethnically framed. Therefore, political frame dominates the news item.

Discussion of Findings

One and hundred and thirty-one (131) news items related to primary elections were generated from the 31 total editions of the Daily Trust newspaper which were content analysed. This is to know the coverage given to political parties' primary elections in Nigeria within the period of May 2026 (1st and 31st of May, 2016). 131 total news items were found related in all the 31 editions of the selected newspaper. The news items as mentioned

above, has 98 News reports, 21 Features, 1 Editorials, 4 Opinion articles, 1 Columns and 6 other forms of writing, as total news items respectively. This news items served as the basis of analysis for this study. Results from the data analysis showed that Thursday, 21st May recorded the highest coverage of news items on primary elections. In discussing prominence in this study, the emphasis is on the placement of primary election stories in the selected newspaper within the selected period; Inside Page major ranked highest with 72(55.0%) of the entire 131 news items.

This means that primary election issues were given maximal prominence by the newspapers since most of the stories appeared in the inside page as major stories, a little below average were placed on the front pages as major and minor stories. Data presented in the table also suggests that Daily Trust newspaper gave more prominence to the coverage of primary elections. On the depth of stories on primary elections, it was revealed that the newspaper gave depth in discussing stories on primary elections with 70(53.4%) of the entire stories possessing more than 250 word counts. In knowing the frame given to the stories, Political Frame recorded the highest with 54(41.2%) of the news stories framed towards the course, while Analytical Frame followed with 22(16.8%) of news stories tilted towards it.

Conclusion

The study examined Daily Trust newspaper framing of political parties' primary elections in Nigeria. Key findings from the research indicated that primary elections were given maximal prominence by the Daily Trust newspaper, since most of the stories in terms of placement appeared in the inside pages as major, front page as major and minor stories, few were placed on the back pages. Therefore, this finding is in tandem with the position of Asemah (2015) which stresses that the mass media as parts of it salience and correlation functions gives adequate attention to issues that are of importance to the society. Also, another key finding showed that the selected newspaper reported issues and events more in form of news stories,

as against other forms of journalistic writing. It means that the newspaper studied actually carried out its surveillance function as ought to be. Concomitantly, Nwosu (2005), and Onwubere (2016) asserts that the press brings to the notice issues of importance; which requires attention to the public.

There is no gainsaying that the media are known to be indispensable in any society because of their potency to shape germane issues and set such issues before the public. It is used to inform both the public and the government, create a particular view in the minds of the people, educate, sensitize and mobilize the people for actions and serve as social regulator. Many aspects of this study as observed from the data collected and analysed have shown that, Daily Trust newspaper content analysed and reported the topic of discussion within the period examined. More so, the data generated have shown that Daily Trust newspaper actually covered the manifest content of primary elections in Nigeria.

From the result of the study, the research showed that out of 9 editions of the newspaper analysed, 131 news items on primary elections of political parties across all states were extracted from the editions. This do not actually commensurate the activities involved during electioneering process. This implies that the press (Daily Trust) need to do more in terms of giving adequate coverage to topical issues of public concern, which political-related activities is part of. Thus, corroborating the views of the proponents of the agenda-setting theory of the press that the public sees as important, what the media tells them. Therefore, the findings from this study points to the fact that the press did fairly well in the coverage of political parties' primary elections. The study concludes, based on the findings of this study that, the selected newspaper during the period of study were both political and analytical in their framing of stories on primary elections, this may be base on its status as a prominent national dailies.

Recommendations

After critical examination and review of literatures, theories, and manifest of the selected newspaper, the following are therefore recommended in line with the key findings of the study:

1. Since so many people rely on media messages there is need for the print media to be more proactive on the interpretative function of the mass media. Newspaper editors of the selected newspaper should endeavour to give prominence to important or controversial national issues by publishing the stories both on the front and back pages since their back and front pages usually carry diverse issues.
2. Print media should correlate part of the society the more; by setting the agenda and subjecting issues of public importance like this to public opinion and debate, to effectively balance their four cardinal points functions.
3. The selected newspaper (Daily Trust) should at all time use frames that will not result to political tension on matters that are of national concern; which political and electioneering issues are part of.
4. The selected Nigeria newspaper should at all times endeavour to provide some level of in-depth investigation and reportage, instead of brief approach to issues that are of importance.

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