

Press Coverage of Corruption Scandal in Nigeria

Eric Msughter Aondover, Idris Mohammed, Omolara Oluwabusayo Akin-Odukoya, Omotola Ogunbola



Abstract: Corruption scandals as reported by the selected papers, both news stories and feature articles were considered as the units of analysis. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the newspapers while stratified random sampling by days of the week to select the editions which amounted to 120 stories in the three newspapers. Moreover, the Issue-Attention Cycle Theory was used as the theoretical framework. The findings of the study indicated that Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian newspapers had given prominence forming, 82.5% on the inside page of Daily Trust, 70% on the front page of The Nation, and 85% on the inside page of The Guardian. The study concluded that Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian newspapers have substantially covered stories on corruption scandals within the period under review.

Keywords: Corruption, Scandals, Anti-Corruption, Commissions, Media Coverage and Newspapers

I. INTRODUCTION

An important issue that is popular in public and policy discourses is the issue of corruption. It has been observed that the massive corruption allegations that characterized President Goodluck Jonathan's administration in Nigeria from 2010-2015 prompted President Muhammadu Buhari to declare in his inaugural speech that "he belongs to nobody and he belongs to everybody". The President vowed to combat corruption in Nigeria [1]. His perceived stand by Nigerians as a strong character made his victory and that of his party possible in the 2015 general election as the then President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was accused of a lack of will to solve Nigeria's problems, especially corruption. The Nigerian Constitution of 1999, sections 88 and 89 empowered the National Assembly to expose corruption, inefficiency, and waste in government through probes and investigations. In addition, the constitution of the ruling party - All Progressives Congress (APC), in item No.4 takes a clear position to fight corruption in Nigeria.

As such, corruption has become a global phenomenon

attracting reactions from different quarters of the world. Bresson in states that before the 1990s international community did not give much concern to anti-corruption campaigns seeing it as a national issue, but the end of the Cold War brought an unimaginable amount of diplomatic pressure to bear on countries' or governments perceived as corrupt and repressive [1]. The growing interest of the international community led to the emergence of many international bodies such as the Global Organization Against Corruption, the International Group for Anti-corruption Corruption Coordination, the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative, and Transparency International, among others [2]. Notes that the impact of international involvement in the war against corruption has been very noticeable in Africa, where corruption is considered endemic.

Africa and the World Group (2012) report that corruption is perhaps the critical factor that affects development, especially in developing or less developing countries of the world. Development scholars have also echoed that the level of reduction in corruption has a direct link to the level of economic development of nations in the world [3]. To curb the negative effects of corruption on economic and sustainable development requires conscious efforts and attention. Corruption has entered every sector of human life causing difficulties in human affairs. No country is free from corruption; however, Nigeria happens to be among the most corrupt countries in the world. In its international ranking of corrupt nations in the world, Transparency International rated Nigeria as 2nd most corrupt in 2002, 35th in 2012, and 15th most corrupt nation in 2015, Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, 2002, 2012, 2015.

However, press and civil society groups have been cited as crucial partners in combating corruption worldwide. The media principally, sets the agenda for national discourse. The World Anti-Corruption Watchdog, Transparency International, reports in its recent anti-corruption handbook that free and independent media is one of the principal vehicles for informing the public about corrupt activity.

A. Problem Statement

Issues concerning media and corruption, the watchdog role of media in fighting corruption, and coverage of corruption scandals by media, attracted the attention of media scholars and research agencies all over the world [4], as the fourth estate of the realm, media have a vital role to play in keeping people in power accountable through it watchdog and surveillance functions [5]. Articulated in his study that the media has various means of combating and preventing rampant occurrences of corruption through tangible and intangible ways. The media can help mobilize the public against corruption and build pressure for reforms. They can raise standards of public accountability by monitoring and investigating the actions of those who were granted public trust, exposing corruption cases, and increasing

Manuscript received on 23 January 2025 | First Revised Manuscript received on 30 January 2025 | Second Revised Manuscript received on 27 February 2025 | Manuscript Accepted on 15 March 2025 | Manuscript published on 30 March 2025.

*Correspondence Author(s)

Eric Msughter Aondover*, Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication, Caleb University, Imota (Lagos), Nigeria. Email ID: eric.aondover@calebuniversity.edu.ng, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5261-9871

Idris Mohammed, Ph.D Student, College of Communication and Information Sciences, University of Alabama, United States. Email ID: idrismohammed@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0009-0005-6110-4027

Omolara Oluwabusayo Akin-Odukoya, Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication, Caleb University, Imota (Lagos), Nigeria. Email ID: omolara@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3128-6537

Omotola Ogunbola, Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication, Caleb University, Imota (Lagos), Nigeria. Email ID: omotola@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5997-8076

© The Authors. Published by Lattice Science Publication (LSP). This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC-ND license <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

the costs and risks associated with corrupt behaviors. Informing the public and presenting different points of view can also encourage public participation as well as support political competition by putting politicians under pressure to take a stand against corruption. Since the media are seen as the public trustee as articulated in the literature this study examined media coverage of corruption under PMB's administration using Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian newspapers as a test case [6].

B. Aim and Objectives

The study aims to examine the coverage of corruption scandals in the Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian newspapers. Thus, the following serves as the basic tools of inquiry in the study:

- i. What is the nature of coverage given to the corruption scandal under PMB's administration in the Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian newspapers from January-May, 2016?
- ii. What is the frequency of coverage given to corruption scandals under PMB's administration in the Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian newspapers from January-May, 2016?
- iii. What is the level of prominence given to the corruption scandal under PMB's administration in the Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian newspapers from January-May, 2016?
- iv. What is the direction of the coverage in the Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian newspapers from January-May, 2016?

C. Perspective on Nigerian Corruption

It may not be feasible to specifically select a date that marked the beginning of corruption in Nigeria but it is believed that it can be traced as far back as the colonial era. According to [7], before independence, there have been cases of official misuse of resources for personal enrichment. This may be the reason why subsequent governments starting from the First Republic under the leadership of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister, and Nnamdi Azikiwe, the President, were characterized by widespread corruption. Government officials looted public funds with impunity. Federal Representatives and Ministers flaunted their wealth with reckless abandon.

8 argues that the level of corruption in that epoch served as an excuse for young officers like Major Nzeogwu Chukwuma to launch the nation's first coup in 1966 which sacked the Nigerian First Republic politicians from power. The coup was a direct response to the corruption of the First Republic, and the popular support the military received for the coup showed that Nigerians were long expecting such a wind of change to bail them out from the claws of the politicians of that era. Interestingly, despite the killings of some major First Republic politicians, there were widespread jubilations in the country [8]. The new government then came on board to investigate the corrupt activities of the past government and discovered that some Ministers formed companies and used their influence to secure contracts under some parastatals, especially the Nigeria Railway Corporation, Nigeria Ports Authority, and the defunct Electricity Corporation of Nigeria and Nigeria Airways [9]. Further reveals that they were found

guilty of misappropriation of funds as well as disregarding laid down procedures in the award of contracts by parastatals under their Ministries.

While the Aguiyi Ironsi was trying to punish the corrupt officials of the previous government, another coup was launched by Yakubu Gowon which toppled the government. Unfortunately, corruption tendencies of the new government manifested as they began to embark on white elephant projects which was a means of looting the wealth of the nation at the end of which funds were not accounted for. Apart from the mismanagement of the economy, the Gowon regime was enmeshed in deep-seated corruption. By 1974, reports of the unaccountable wealth of Gowon's military governors and other public office holders had become the crux of discussion in the various Nigerian dailies. Coup d'état became a regular feature in the Nigerian polity as Murtala Muhammed also toppled the corrupt Gowon government. Murtala's asset declaration panel discovered that ten out of the twelve states of the previous administration were guilty of corruption.

The culture of corruption continued in Nigeria as the second republic under the first democratically elected president Shehu Shagari witnessed a resurgence of corruption. According to [10]:

The Shagari administration was marked by spectacular government corruption, as the President did nothing to stop the looting of public funds by elected officials. Corruption among the political leaders was amplified due to the greater availability of funds. It was claimed that over \$16 billion in oil revenues were lost between 1979 and 1983 during the reign of President Shehu Shagari. It became quite common, for federal buildings to mysteriously go up in flames, most especially just before the onset of ordered audits of government accounts, making it impossible to discover written evidence of embezzlement and fraud (P.8).

The Nigerian situation is such that while a government tries to fight the menace of corruption, another government topples it or vice-versa. In this respect, the administration of General Muhammadu Buhari was willing and ready for an anti-graft war with little respect for human rights. Just as this fight was about to start yielding results, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida came forth to reignite the corruption regimes in Nigeria. It was so bad that Maduagwu cited was quoted saying [11].

Not only did the regime encourage corruption by pardoning corrupt officials convicted by his predecessors and returning their seized properties, the regime officially sanctioned corruption in the country and made it difficult to apply the only potent measures, long prison terms and seizure of ill-gotten wealth, for fighting corruption in Nigeria in the future (p. 5).

Even though General Babangida's administration succumbed to pressure by handing over to an interim government, General Sani Abacha came on board to continue the corrupt activities of his predecessor. According to General Abacha's corrupt practices became so blatant and systematic that his family and associates looted the Nigerian coffers with relative ease to the extent that it was compared to other notorious governments of Mobutu SeseSeko of Zaire (now called the Democratic Republic of Congo) [12]. It was estimated that the

embezzlement of public funds and corruption proceeds of General Abacha and his family amounted to USD four billion (International Centre for Asset Recovery, 2009). This assertion is likely to be correct as even up till today, Nigeria is still trying to recover the loot of the late General from Swiss Banks.

Up till today, despite the inauguration of anti-corruption bodies like the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), corruption remains a thorn in the flesh of the Nigerian system.

II. SCANDALS

Scandals possess an inherent emphasis on morality that holds individuals to an idealized standard of social conduct, consolidating their fulfillment of watchdog imperatives. Scandal and Silence: Media Responses to Presidential Misconduct examines the relationship between scandals and the watchdog function of the media. His investigation revealed that news media are falling short of fulfilling watchdog imperatives, as the magnitude of scandal news often fails to align with the social costs of transgressions. Scandals fulfill newsworthiness imperatives by satisfying several Galtung and Ruge's, and Harcup and O'Neill's news values. In addition, the media's use of a personalized narrative in scandal narration serves to fulfill newsworthiness imperatives.

It is necessary to maintain a critical awareness of how media mediate transgressions and their role in framing scandals. Scandals are not simply reported by the media and exist independently of them: the media constitute an event and produce its meanings through processes of inclusion, exclusion, emphasis of a perceived reality, and through the use of certain types of discourses. The nature of scandals is shaped by the media, "their emergence, their developmental logic, their prominence, how they are experienced by both participants and non-participants and their consequences".

Johannes articulates that media publication constructs an act in a particular way, which therefore affects the construction of public opinion, judgment, and the consequences for social institutions and social actors. The ability of the media to raise the importance of attributes and frame values indicates comparatively strong effects that go further than agenda-setting. Indeed, Silvio (2004) boldly states that [13]:

No other institution can compete with the media as arbiters of publicity, deciding what acts of corruption and subsequent developments merit public attention. No public space can successfully compete with the media as the ringmaster of scandals. Societies come to know about the existence of scandals through the media (p. 78).

As a result of the media's clear and crucial narrational role in scandals, they play a key role in determining whether newsworthiness imperatives are prioritised over watchdog imperatives.

A. Anti-Corruption Commissions in Nigeria

The notable among the anti-corruption agencies are the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Other agencies previously instituted to fight corruption included the

Judicial Commissions of Enquiry, The Code of Conduct Bureau, The Public Complaints Commission, Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), War Against Indiscipline Council (WAIC), and the Independent Advocacy Project (IAP) known as the Good Governance Group (G).

B. Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established through an Act of the National Assembly in December 2002 but began operation in April 2003 when its Board was inaugurated. Its responsibility specifically included the investigation of all financial crimes such as Advance Fee Fraud known as 419; Money Fraud; Counterfeiting Illegal Cash Transfers; Fraudulent Diversion of Funds; Contract Scam; Forgery of Financial Instruments and Insurance of Dud Cheques. Other responsibilities of the EFCC were coordination and enforcement of all economic and financial crimes laws; adoption of measures to identify, freeze, confiscate, and seize proceeds derived from terrorist activities, economic and financial crimes related offenses, or the properties and values corresponding to such proceeds, determination of the extent of financial loss and such other losses by government, private individuals or organizations collaboration with government bodies within and outside Nigeria which carry out its functions wholly or in part analogs with those of the commission [14]. It is also empowered to affect the following laws:

- i. Money Laundering Acts 1995;
- ii. The Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act 1995;
- iii. The Failed Bank Recovery of Debts and Financial Malpractices in Banks Act 1994 as amended.
- iv. The Bank and Other Financial Institutions Act as amended; and any other law or regulation related to economic and financial crimes.

C. Independent Corruption Practices Commission (ICPC)

The ICPC was instituted to combat the crime of corruption and presided over by Justice Mustapha Akambi (rtd) in 2000. Its main objective was to enforce policies that would be geared toward controlling corrupt behavior. The notable offenses covered by the Acts establishing the ICPC include gratification by officials, corrupt offers to public officers and corrupt demands by persons in public offices, fraudulent acquisition of property and receipt of property, counseling offenses relating to corruption, power to investigate reports of bribery transactions and information, etc.

It is however noted that finance is the stumbling block to execute these strategies of combating corruption in Nigeria. While lamenting over the inability of his commission (ICPC) to meet the expectations of the public, Akambi, its chairman states that his organization has only been able to investigate 608 out of the 1,270 petitions it had received over the past four years, due to lack of funds. Out of the 608, only 34 cases had been brought to court. He wondered why the government had set up the commission and appointed competent people to run it, only to frustrate it from performing by starving it of funds.

D. Media Coverage of Corruption in Nigeria

The media institution plays an important role in investigating and reporting on corruption, its causes, consequences and possible remedies, informing the public about corrupt activities, both within the government and among public officials, as well as within the private sector. The media also promotes anti-corruption efforts of civil groups as well as actions by official bodies in charge of investigating or prosecuting corrupt acts like the Judiciary and the Inspectorate of Government [15].

To effectively play these roles, media practitioners need to have easy access to information, and freedom of expression as well as a cadre of professional and ethical investigative journalists. Media practitioners and indeed members of the public can exploit the Internet and mobile phone tools to demand a more transparent, accountable, and better government, as well as easy access to and sharing of information. The government can also utilize new media tools to showcase its activities and expenditures (making information easily available), while Civil Society organizations (CSOs) can compile and interpret government expenditures to facilitate a better appreciation of the issues and statistics.

III. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Many scholars have studied corruption-related issues at different levels and perspectives. For example [16], conducted their study on combating corruption by promoting ethics in the United States [17]. Studied political scandals in Britain and Spain by paying attention to the nature of coverage in the press of the two countries. They used the survey method agenda-setting theory and purposive sampling. According to corruption studies using some African countries as a case, there seem to be some historical and cultural linkages due to their former colonial masters. It was discovered that African countries are involved in one form of corruption or another which ranges from the collection of gratification for jobs, to individuals or groups suffering from different forms of corruption. This is also similar to the way and manner journalists collect gratification to undermine the profession.

Government Advertising and Media Coverage of Corruption Scandals examines coverage of government corruption in four newspapers in Argentina from 1998 – 2007. The study measures the extent to which the four main newspapers in the country report government corruption cases on their front pages and correlates them with government advertising. The study uses content analysis as a methodology, agenda-setting theory, news stories, and feature articles are units of analysis, and stratified random sampling by days of the week as sampling techniques. The results are robust to the inclusion of newspaper and month-fixed effects and government-newspaper interactions, suggesting that within a particular newspaper, and during a particular government, adverse coverage is negatively correlated with government advertising [18]. The study concludes that the media is potentially important in exercising control over abusive governments, particularly in countries with high levels of corruption and weak legal systems. Accordingly, governments often try to influence the

media through actions that range from outright censorship and intimidation to favors and transfers.

In their study state that there is an increase in the coverage of corruption in news stories by the media but such stories are concentrated more on the inside pages of newspapers and space allotment to corruption articles is small as the majority of these articles occupied one-quarter page of the newspapers. Their study used content analysis as well as agenda-setting theory to investigate corruption stories. The findings of the study revealed that Politics/Governance, are service-oriented (i.e. telecommunications and banks), and the sectors are perceived to be more corrupt sectors in Nigeria giving the relatively high prominence corruption news in these sectors attracted across the sampled newspapers [19].

In his study submits that Nigerian newspapers give prominence to corruption scandals based on political interest, economic gain (attracting people's attention to buy newspapers), and serving their social and professional responsibilities of informing and educating the public about their environment. Media is often confronted with some blocks that deter it from performing its watchdog function [20]. Media scholars identify blocks to the anti-corruption role of media which include lack of press freedom and expression, ownership control, licensing and regulations economic dependence, lack of professional standard, absence or poor investigative journalism orientation poor access to information [21], one of the critical factors from the above mention problems is press freedom, where the media is not free to access information.

A study conducted by on 'Coverage of Arms Deal Scandal in Nigeria: A Content Analysis of Daily Trust and The Nation Newspapers' revealed that one of the primary responsibilities of the mass media is to serve as a watchdog of society by subjecting governments to accountability in the process of discharging their official functions [22]. The mass media therefore must report issues of national and international interests to the citizens in the society. Reports on arms deal scandal according to him is one such issue. From the findings of the study, it was observed that there are slight differences in the way and manner the stories were presented. While The Nation covered almost all aspects of the arms scandal, Daily Trust concentrated on a few issues.

From the studies above, it is evident that there is a lacuna in the literature worthy of empirical investigation, especially the way and manner the media in the 21st century cover and report corruption scandals.

A. Theoretical Framework

The study espouses the theoretical paradigm of 'Issue Attention Cycle Theory'. The theory's origin is traced to the work of Downs who also contributed to the development of the theory [23]. The level of attention that members of any public accord an issue hardly remains as strong as it usually is initially it fades with time. In other words, the public's focus of attention is much like a cycle, which has different points, bends, and turns. Hardly exhaustive are studies on the rate at which the public's interest in and attention to certain issues may fade just after they express concerns about given issues in society. Contextually couched in the public opinion

research tradition, Down's theory assumes that public attention to an issue follows an issue-attention cycle through which members of the public become aware of issues, with this interest petering out eventually. According to Down in 2000, public attention rarely remains sharply focused on any single domestic issue for a long period, no matter how crucial, significant, or relevant the matter may seem to society. Down adds that the public may stop paying significant level attention even if it involves a continuing issue of crucial importance to society: it simply fades off public attention.

What works on the consciousness of the public regarding issues, according to lies in what he called an 'issue-attention cycle', with which he offers insight into how long public attention is likely to remain sufficiently focused on any given issue until it generates enough pressure to cause actions aimed at effectively changing the status quo. As Down notes, the cycle functions in five stages that may vary in duration depending on the particular issue involved. The stages occur in the following sequence [24].

- *Pre-Problem Stage:* This is the point of what Down calls a 'highly undesirable social condition' in society but where much public attention to the situation has not yet arisen. However, certain interest groups or experts are already aware of the condition/situation. Down states that the objective conditions of the developing social problem are usually worse at this stage than they are by the time the social problem gains public interest or attention. In the opinion of Down's theory tackles the trends in public opinion, although Down suggests that policymakers are affected by the public and believes that the mass media have a potential leading role in ensuring that issue salience in the mass media should lead to issue salience for policymakers (such as the Nigerian National Assembly).
- *Stage of Alarmed Discovery and Euphoric Enthusiasm:* Down calls this the stage where a series of dramatic events (such as widespread violence) forces the public into sudden awareness and alarm regarding the social problem. This alarmed discovery is invariably accompanied by euphoric enthusiasm about society's ability to solve the problem.
- *Stage of Realizing the Cost of Significant Progress:* Having been alarmed by the problem, gradually a realization spreads concerning the huge financial and personal costs to be borne in 'solving' it. Thus, the public begin to believe that part of the problem stems from the way the society is currently arranged to benefit some large number while leaving out others, and so will need to be re-arranged so that certain benefits can go around the society. For instance, reducing traffic congestion and smog will mean a reduction in the number of vehicles on the road, a decision that has implications for citizens whose movements rely on such vehicles.
- *Stage Gradual Decline of Intense Public Interest:* Resulting from the third stage of the cost of solving the problem, the fourth stage ushers in a gradual decline in the levels of interest and attention that the public now accords the problem. Besides, as more people realize how personally difficult and costly solving the problem will be, three reactions surge from them: discouragement, feeling positively threatened by thinking about the problem, and boredom with the issue/problem. And these reactions

finally 'push' the problem of public interest as new issues emerge.

- *The Post-Problem Stage:* At this final stage in the cycle, a problem, which already has been replaced by newer ones, enters into 'limbo', the realm of lesser attention and interest from the public. However, the 'limbo' problem now has a different relation to public attention than it did at the first stage, the pre-problem stage.

The issue-attention cycle is relevant to this study because it contains crucial insight into what is currently happening with public opinion about corruption today. Over long periods, the issue of corruption in Nigeria has potentially piqued and dropped on multiple occasions, with the media playing an influential role in exactly where and when this occurs. Thus, the theory holds a vital position in our understanding of how the media cover and report corruption.

B. Research Procedure

The study employs content analysis as the primary approach to data generation. It is an approach used in social science to examine the manifest content of media messages. It is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables.

The population of the study consists of the three national newspapers-Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian. The sampling technique used in selecting the three newspapers is purposive sampling. Consequently, stratified sampling by days of the week was adopted in selecting the editions with two-day intervals per week, eight (8) editions were sampled every month. It means that from January to May we have forty (40) editions from each paper respectively; meaning if you multiply 40 by 3 it will sum up to 120 editions. As such, 120 editions form the sample size to be examined from the three newspapers under review.

Below are the sample stories studied for the three newspapers:

- January 2016 Stories: (4, 7, 11, 14, 18, 21, 25, 28,) = 8 days
- February 2016 Stories: (1, 4, 8, 11, 15, 18, 22, 25,) = 8 days
- March 2016 Stories: (7, 10, 14, 17, 21, 24, 28, 31,) = 8 days
- April 2016 Stories: (4, 7, 11, 14, 18, 21, 25, 28,) = 8 days
- May 2016 Stories: (2, 5, 9, 12, 16, 19, 23, 26,) = 8 days

This study further develops some content classification to determine and analyze the nature of the report. The newspapers content is based on corruption scandal and was classified according to the following divisions:

News stories and Features Articles

To determine the frequency of coverage, three labels were used for analysis based on the instrument developed by [25]:

- *Very High:* These are stories considered outstanding in quality with regard to the content and the language of presentation of the issue being discussed. It could be 11 and above (very high).
- *High:* These are stories considered to be very good in the quality of the content and the language of presentation of the issue being discussed. It could be 6-10 times (high).



Press Coverage of Corruption Scandal in Nigeria

- *Low*: These are stories considered to be poor in quality of the content and the language of presentation of the issue being discussed. It could be 1-5 times (low).

To determine the level of prominence attached to the corruption scandal by the three selected newspapers, the following divisions were made:

Front page (FP) very important stories.

Back page (BP) stories are next in prominence.

Inside page (IP) stories are least in the order of importance placed on the stories.

The direction was determined by the stand taken by the newspapers concerning the issue under discussion. To achieve the objective of this study about the direction, the following divisions were put into cognizance:

- *Positive*: This is a story without support for the fight against corruption and the persecution of each individual involved in the corruption.
- *Negative*: This is a story of a corruption scandal that supports or depends on the accused individuals on their actions.
- *Neutral*: This is a story on a corruption scandal with a mixed reaction.

The study also considered some units of analysis which consists of all news stories and feature articles on corruption scandals as reported in Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian newspapers. The content categorization was based on the typology of corruption as developed by Weber in such as Political corruption, economic corruption, administrative corruption, grand corruption, petty corruption, and systematic corruption. Data gathering instrument was through the creation of a coding scheme, while quantitative content analysis was used to present the findings in tabular format, use of figures, and percentages which take account of numerical values or the frequencies with which the various delineated items of the content analysis occurred [26].

C. Data Presentation and Analysis

The study examines the coverage of corruption scandals in the Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian newspapers. Data were analyzed through the creation of a coding scheme, for a sample of 120 editions as covered and reported in the three newspapers below.:

Table-I: Presents Data on the Nature of Corruption Stories by the Three Newspapers

Newspapers	Daily Trust		The Nation		The Guardian		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
News Stories on Corruption	37	92.5	39	97.5	36	90	112	93.3
Features Articles	3	7.5	1	2.5	4	10	8	6.7
Total	40	100	40	100	40	100	120	100

Table one indicates 112 news stories with 93.3% in the three selected newspapers, followed by eight feature stories with 6.7%, on corruption scandals in the three newspapers. This result shows that the majority of the issues reported on corruption scandals are in the form of news stories.

Table-II: Frequency of Stories on Corruption Scandals in the Three Newspapers

Variables	Daily Trust		The Nation		The Guardian		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
News Stories								
1-5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6-10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11- above	37	92.5	39	97.5	36	90	112	93.3
Feature Articles	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1-5	3	7.5%	1	2.5%	4	10%	8	6.7%
6-10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11- above	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	40	100	40	100	40	100	120	100

Table two indicates that Daily Trust accounts for 92.5% of news stories on corruption, The Nation accounts for 97.5%, and The Guardian 90%. On the other hand, Daily Trust reports three stories on feature articles with 7.5%. The Nation reports one feature article which constitutes 2.5% while The Guardian accounts for 10%. Thus, the coverage of the corruption scandal by the three newspapers was very high (11-above) in terms of news stories and low coverage (1-5) in feature articles.

Table-III: Dominant Location and Placement of Stories on Corruption Scandals in the Three Newspapers

Variables	Daily Trust		The Nation		The Guardian		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
News Stories								
Front Page	4	10	28	70	2	5	34	28.3
Inside Page	33	82.5	10	25	34	85	77	64.2
Back Page	-	-	1	2.5	-	-	1	0.8
Feature Articles	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Front Page	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Inside Page	3	7.5	-	-	4	10	7	5.8
Back Page	-	-	1	2.5	-	-	1	0.8
Total	40	100	40	100	40	100	120	100

Table three indicates 82.5% of corruption stories on the inside page and 10% on the front page of Daily Trust. The Nation accounts for 70% on the front page, 25% on the inside page, and 2.5% on the back page. The Guardian accounts for 5% on the Front page, while 85% on the inside page. The data indicates that there is an element of prominence given to the stories, particularly by The Nation newspaper with 70% of news stories on corruption on the front page. However, a low level of coverage was given to feature articles by the three newspapers under review.

Table-IV: Direction of Stories on the Corruption Scandal in the Three Newspapers

Variables	Daily Trust		The Nation		The Guardian		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
News Stories								
Positive	4	10%	27	67.5	2	5%	33	27.5
Negative	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Neutral	33	82.5	12	30%	34	85	79	65.7
Feature Articles								
Positive	1	2.5%	-	-	2	5	3	2
Negative	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Neutral	2	5	1	2.5	2	5	5	4.2
Total	40	100	40	100	40	100	120	100

Table four indicates that positive stories in Daily Trust account for 10% and neutral stories for 82.5%. The Nation accounts for 67.5% on the positive ground and 30% on the neutral section. The Guardian records 5% in the positive direction and 85% in the neutral section. The table revealed that there was a high level of neutralism in the three newspapers, while low coverage was given to feature articles by the three newspapers.

IV. FINDINGS

The selected newspapers under investigation report issues relating to corruption scandal within the period under review with 93.3%.

There are some slight differences in the way and manner the stories were presented in the three newspapers. While The Nation covered corruption scandal on the front page with 97.5%, Daily Trust reported 92.5% on the inside page and The Guardian 90% on the inside page.

The location of stories on corruption scandals was placed on the inside pages of Daily Trust at 82.5%, The Guardian at 85%, and The Nation at 70% on the front page while feature articles were given paucity publication.

The findings of the study are not at significant variance from the findings of the previous studies in the area.

The findings of the study indicate that the three newspapers under investigation report corruption scandals with 93.3%. This affirmed the position of that Nigerian newspapers give prominence to corruption scandals [26]. However, such prominence is based on political interest, economic gain (attracting people’s attention to buy newspapers), and serving their social and professional responsibilities of informing and educating the public about their environment.

Similarly, the second finding revealed that there is a slight difference in the way and manner the stories were presented in the three newspapers [27]. This confirms the position of that there is a slight difference in the way and manner the stories are presented in Nigerian newspapers [28]. While The Nation covered almost all aspects of the arms scandal, Daily Trust concentrated on a few issues [29].

The last finding revealed that the location of stories on corruption scandals was placed on the inside pages of the three newspapers [30]. This coincided with the position of that there is an increase in the coverage of news stories on

corruption by the media but such stories are concentrated more on the inside pages of newspapers and space allotment to corruption articles is small as majority of these articles occupied one-quarter page of the newspapers [31]. This also confirms the tenets of issue-attention cycle theory which emphasizes crucial insight into what is currently happening with public opinion about corruption scandals today [32].

V. CONCLUSION

The three newspapers under study have covered and reported corruption scandal, which shows that there is an increase in the coverage of news stories on corruption scandals in Nigeria. The implication is that lack of newspaper coverage on corruption scandals can make such scandals remain hidden in society but constant reportage of corruption scandals in Nigerian newspapers will expose those involved in such scandals into the public domain and action may be taken against them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that Nigerian newspapers should ensure that issues on corruption scandals are important and should be reported on the front pages, with equal proportion to feature articles. The study recommends the replication of the study in different parts of Nigeria and using different methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks as to enrich the available literature in the area.

DECLARATION STATEMENT

After aggregating input from all authors, I must verify the accuracy of the following information as the article's author.

- **Conflicts of Interest/Competing Interests:** Based on my understanding, this article has no conflicts of interest.
- **Funding Support:** This article has not been sponsored or funded by any organization or agency. The independence of this research is a crucial factor in affirming its impartiality, as it has been conducted without any external sway.
- **Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate:** The data provided in this article is exempt from the requirement for ethical approval or participant consent.
- **Data Access Statement and Material Availability:** The adequate resources of this article are publicly accessible.
- **Authors Contributions:** The authorship of this article is contributed equally to all participating individuals.

REFERENCES

1. Aondover, E. M., Daushe, A. U., Ogunbola, O., & Aondover, P. O. (2025). Media Coverage of Internally Displaced Persons in two Selected Newspapers in Nigeria. *Journal of Migration and Health*, 100301. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmh.2024.100301>
2. Yar’Adua, S. M., Msughter, A. E., & Garba, S. (2023). Media and National Development in Democratic Societies. *Polit Journal Scientific Journal of Politics*, 3(3), 105-115. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33258/polit.v3i3.948>
3. Msughter, A. E., Yar’Adua, S. M., & Ogechi, A. P. (2022). Information seeking behavior on Covid-19 vaccine among residents of Fagge Local Government Area of Kano, Nigeria. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(9), 2526-2541. <https://www.journalppw.com/index.php/jpsp/article/view/12707>
4. Aondover, E. M., Aondover, P. O., Adewale, O. C., Falobi, F., & Maiwada, A. A. (2024). Contextual Issues Surrounding Investigative Journalism in Nigeria. *Polit Journal Scientific*



Press Coverage of Corruption Scandal in Nigeria

- Journal of Politics*, 4(4), 226-239. <https://www.biarjournal.com/index.php/polit/article/view/1231>
5. Aondover, E. M., Yar'Adua, S. M., & Aondover, P. O. (2025). Influence of Digital Images on the Propagation of Fake News on Twitter in Russia and Ukraine Crisis. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, 8(1), 59-74. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387896386>
 6. Mendes, I. (2013). Political corruption in Nigeria: theoretical perspectives and some explanations, *The Anthropologist*, 11(4), 281 – 292. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228739799>
 7. Aondover, E. M., Maradun, L. U., & Yar'Adua, S. M. (2022). Mediatization of the net and internetization of the print media in Northern Nigeria. *Unisia*, 40(2), 335-356. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20885/unisia.vol40.iss2.art5>
 8. Aondover, P. O., & Aondover, E. M. (2023). Nollywood Offering and Nigeria People and Culture: Reflections and Projection. *Unisia*, 41(1), 117-142. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20885/unisia.vol41.iss1.art6>
 9. Aondover, P. O., Aondover, E. M., Adewale, O. C., Akin-Odukoya, O. O., & Maradun, L. U. (2024). Media Portrayal of Female Celebrities in the Nigerian Press. *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi dan Perubahan Sosial*, 11(4), 259-272. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387896043>
 10. Onyejelem, T. E., Aondover, P. O., Maradun, L. U., Chime-Nganya, C. R., & Akin-Odukoya, O. O. (2024). Media and Pictorial Reportage of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria. *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi dan Perubahan Sosial*, 11(4), 287-299. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387938422>
 11. Saint, E. J., Aondover, E. M., Ebele, U. C., & Onyejelem, T. E. (2024). Influence of social media on newspaper patronage among lecturers in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *LingLit Journal Scientific Journal for Linguistics and Literature*, 5(3), 142-157. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/386370632>
 12. Vitalis, P. O., Aondover, E. M., Ogunbola, O., Onyejelem, T. E., & Ridwan, M. (2025). Accessing Digital Divide and Implications in Nigeria: The Media Dimension. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, 8(1), 1-12. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/386905613>
 13. Camerer, L. (2009). White collar crime in South Africa: A Comparative Perspective. *African Security Review*, 2(5), 28-39. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387896386>
 14. Aondover, E. M., Yar'Adua, S. M., & Aondover, P. O. (2025). Influence of Digital Images on the Propagation of Fake News on Twitter in Russia and Ukraine Crisis. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, 8(1), 59-74. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/386370632>
 15. Saint, E. J., Aondover, E. M., Ebele, U. C., & Onyejelem, T. E. (2024). Influence of social media on newspaper patronage among lecturers in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *LingLit Journal Scientific Journal for Linguistics and Literature*, 5(3), 142-157. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387938422>
 16. Onyejelem, T. E., Aondover, P. O., Maradun, L. U., Chime-Nganya, C. R., & Akin-Odukoya, O. O. (2024). Media and Pictorial Reportage of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria. *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi dan Perubahan Sosial*, 11(4), 287-299. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387938422>
 17. Msugther, A. E. (2022). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Hate Speech among Editors of Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian Newspapers in Nigeria. *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi dan Perubahan Sosial*, 9(2), 216-226. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33258/konfrontasi2.v9i2.209>
 18. Onyejelem, T. E., Aondover, P. O., Maradun, L. U., Chime-Nganya, C. R., & Akin-Odukoya, O. O. (2024). Media and Pictorial Reportage of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria. *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi dan Perubahan Sosial*, 11(4), 287-299. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387938422>
 19. Oreoluwa, P. A., Vitalis, P. O., Nneka, A. Q., Collins-Dike, J., & Ridwan, M. (2024). Online Harassment of Female Journalist in Lagos State. *Polit Journal Scientific Journal of Politics*, 4(3), 162-174. <https://www.biarjournal.com/index.php/polit/article/view/1166>
 20. Msugther, A. E. (2023). Nigerian press coverage of hate speeches in the Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Guardian newspapers. In *The Psychology of Trust*. *Intech Open*. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.108731>
 21. Obasi, M. C., & Msugther, A. E. (2023). Assessment of media coverage of environmental hazards in mining communities in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. *Environmental Challenges*, 13, 100758. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envc.2023.100758>
 22. Vitalis, P. O., Onyejelem, T. E., & Okuneye, A. P. (2023). Understanding advertising in the era of social media. *Information System and Smart City*, 3(1), 502-502. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59400/issc.v3i1.502>
 23. Kurfi, M. Y., Aondover, E. M., & Mohammed, I. (2021a). Digital Images on Social Media and Proliferation of Fake News on Covid-19 in Kano, Nigeria. *Galactica Media: Journal of Media Studies*, 1(1), 103-124. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46539/gmd.v3i1.111>
 24. Msugther, A. E., Garba, S., & Rabiu, A. B. (2023). Framing Theory Perspective of Identity and Narratives of Conflict in Nigerian Media. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54105/ijmcj.D1039.121221>
 25. Msugther, A. E., Hile, M. M., & Bappa, F. S. (2022). Have you Heard What They Are Doing to Women? Media Portrayal of Female Celebrities in Nigerian Press. *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi dan Perubahan Sosial*, 9(2), 186-197. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33258/konfrontasi2.v9i2.206>
 26. Msugther, A. E., Hile, M. M., & Yar'Adua, S. M. (2023). Ethical Issues and Insecurity in Africa: The Media Dimension. *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi dan Perubahan Sosial*, 10(2), 58-68. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33258/konfrontasi2.v10i2.272>
 27. Garba, S., & Msugther, A. E. (2023). Newspaper Content Analysis of 2012-2015 Ombaste Ethnic Conflict in Nasarawa State: A Framing Theory Perspective. *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi dan Perubahan Sosial*, 10(2), 69-77. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33258/konfrontasi2.v10i2.273>
 28. Eric Msugther, A., & YarAdua, S. M. Influence of Digital Images on the Propagation of Fake News on Twitter in Russia and Ukraine Crisis. *Suleiman M., Influence of Digital Images on the Propagation of Fake News on Twitter in Russia and Ukraine Crisis*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387896386>
 29. Swamini Pandit, Sustainable Development Goals and Media Coverage by English Language News Channel Websites in Indian and International Context. (2020). In *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering* (Vol. 9, Issue 4S, pp. 28–32). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijtee.d1004.094s20>
 30. Nurhadi, Burhanuddin Tola, Riyadi, Emotional Instruments on Reading Novel using Social Media Among Indonesian Students. (2019). In *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering* (Vol. 8, Issue 3S2, pp. 515–519). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijrte.c1117.1083s219>
 31. Srivastava, A., & Saxena, Dr. U. K. (2023). Digital Media and Media literacy. An Analysis of the Contribution and Effect of social media in Media Literacy. In *Indian Journal of Mass Communication and Journalism* (Vol. 3, Issue 1, pp. 17–22). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54105/ijmcj.a1051.093123>
 32. Farooq, M., & Khan, M. H. (2019). Pattern Recognition in Digital Images using Fractals. In *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology* (Vol. 9, Issue 2, pp. 3180–3183). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijeat.b4229.129219>

AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Eric Msugther Aondover Ph.D is a lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication at Caleb University, Imota, Lagos. Aondover is a communication scholar with media and communication research. He has published papers in several national and international scholarly journals and attended and participated in several conferences and workshops on communication, media, and journalism.



Idris Mohammed is a PhD Student in College of Communications and Information Sciences, University of Alabama, United States.



Omolara Oluwabusayo Akin-Odukoya is a lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos. The area of her research interest include: advertising, public relations, media and gender.





Omotola Ogunbola is a lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos, Nigeria. Her area of research interest is film, media and gender, and digital media.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of the Lattice Science Publication (LSP)/ journal and/ or the editor(s). The Lattice Science Publication (LSP)/ journal and/ or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.