



NEWSPAPERS' FRAMING OF NIGERIAN DEMOCRACY AHEAD OF THE 2023 ELECTIONS

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Abstract

This study examined how Nigerian newspapers framed democracy in the period leading to the 2023 general elections, focusing on dominant framing themes, modes of reportage, frequency of coverage, and possible implications for public opinion and electoral outcomes. Guided by Framing Theory and Inoculation Theory, the study employed content analysis to examine election-related materials published between January and March 2022 in three national newspapers: Daily Sun, The Nation, and The Punch. The content analysed included news stories, editorials, opinion articles, cartoons, and letters to the editor. The findings show that the newspapers gave considerable attention to the 2023 elections, though differences existed in the volume and style of coverage. Daily Sun recorded the highest frequency of election-related items, followed by The Nation, while The Punch had the least coverage. News stories were the most frequently used mode of reportage, with editorials, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, and cartoons appearing less often. In line with Framing Theory, election coverage was largely organized around frames such as current events, ongoing trends, conjecture, horse-race narratives, and conflict, reflecting deliberate editorial choices in emphasizing particular aspects of the electoral process. From the standpoint of Inoculation Theory, the repeated use of these frames has the potential to strengthen or weaken audience resistance to political persuasion, depending on how issues are presented. The study concludes that Nigerian newspapers played a crucial role in shaping political discourse and disseminating democratic information ahead of the 2023 elections. It also highlights the need for ethical responsibility, balance, and accuracy in election reporting, given the strong influence of media framing on public perception, political judgment, and democratic participation.

Keywords: Newspaper Framing, Nigerian Democracy, 2023 General Elections, Framing Theory, Inoculation Theory, Political Communication, Print Media, Public Opinion

Introduction

The endurance of democratic practice depends largely on how informed and engaged citizens are within the political process (Dahl, 1989). The media functions as a central pillar of democratic life by shaping the flow of political information within the public sphere (Chiadika et al., 2025). Through routine reporting and interpretive commentary, media organizations provide citizens with access to political knowledge

necessary for meaningful participation (Ngonso, 2021; Palau & López, 2025). By amplifying political debates and scrutinizing power holders, the media contributes to the functioning of representative democracy, particularly during election periods when public opinion is actively formed and contested (McQuail, 2010).

Framing describes the process through which mediated communication organizes reality by selecting particular angles, themes, or emphases through which events are presented. Media frames guide audience interpretation by influencing what is perceived as important, problematic, or worthy of attention (Fadeji et al., 2025). This process does not require the distortion of facts; rather, meaning is shaped through contextualization, narrative structure, and linguistic emphasis, all of which affect audience understanding (Entman, 1993). Framing operates as a discursive strategy that structures public interpretation of governance, leadership, and electoral competition. Media narratives may subtly advance certain viewpoints by highlighting specific causes, consequences, or solutions associated with political events (Chiadika et al., 2025). Over time, such framing practices can normalize particular interpretations while marginalizing alternative perspectives, thereby shaping public consciousness and political judgment (Scheufele, 1999; Entman, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Newspapers remain a major source through which citizens obtain political information, interpret public affairs, and form opinions about democratic processes, particularly during election periods. Beyond reporting events, newspapers actively organize and present political realities through editorial choices, story emphasis, and interpretive frames. As a result, readers often rely on newspaper content not only for information but also for guidance in understanding complex political developments and making electoral decisions.

In Nigeria, elections are frequently accompanied by public anxiety, insecurity, low voter turnout, political violence, and declining confidence in democratic institutions. These conditions heighten citizens' dependence on the media for accurate, balanced, and contextualized political information. However, the manner in which newspapers frame election-related issues may either clarify or complicate public understanding of democratic processes. Through selective emphasis, repetition of particular narratives, or omission of alternative viewpoints, newspapers may shape how electoral events, candidates, and democratic values are perceived by the electorate.

As the 2023 general elections approached, Nigerian citizens were confronted with multiple political choices but had limited direct access to political actors and decision-makers. Consequently, newspapers served as a primary channel for evaluating candidates, parties, and the overall electoral environment. Yet, concerns persist regarding partisanship, ownership influence, and editorial bias in newspaper coverage of elections. Past studies and public discourse suggest that some newspapers have foregrounded certain political actors and issues while marginalizing others, potentially reflecting institutional or ideological interests.

The problem, therefore, lies in the uncertainty surrounding how Nigerian newspapers framed democratic issues and electoral processes in the period preceding the 2023 general elections, and the possible implications of such framing for public opinion and democratic participation. Without a systematic examination of the dominant frames, modes of reportage, and frequency of coverage adopted by newspapers, it is difficult to assess whether election reporting contributed to informed democratic engagement or reinforced existing public skepticism and political apathy. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the framing patterns of selected national newspapers in their coverage of Nigerian democracy ahead of the 2023 general elections.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine how selected Nigerian newspapers framed democratic issues in the period leading to the 2023 general elections. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. identify the dominant framing themes employed by selected national newspapers in their coverage of Nigerian democracy and the 2023 general elections;
2. determine the prevalent modes of reportage adopted by newspapers in reporting issues related to the 2023 general elections;
3. examine the potential implications of newspaper framing patterns for public opinion and democratic engagement during the election period;
4. ascertain the frequency and distribution of election-related coverage across the selected national newspapers;
5. analyze the role of newspapers in political information dissemination and correlation in the context of Nigeria's 2023 general elections.

Literature Review

Media Framing in Political Communication

Newspaper framing plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of political events, particularly during elections. Frames highlight certain aspects of an issue while downplaying others, guiding readers on how to interpret events and assign importance to political actors or policies (Entman, 2007; Eilder, 1997). Editorials and opinion pieces, for example, do more than report facts—they interpret events, assign relevance, and influence both public opinion and the political agenda (Clark, 2003; Fleming & Dolan, 2020). Media frames can be generic, such as conflict or human interest, or issue-specific, depending on the newspaper's editorial stance (Wasike, 2013; Dorland, 2016). Research has shown that the way news is framed interacts with cultural norms and societal values to shape readers' perceptions of democracy, governance, and political participation (Mercado-Saez, 2018; Ogemdi, 2021; Ukpong et al., 2026). In the context of Nigeria, newspapers' framing of elections can influence voters' decisions and their understanding of democratic processes. According to Ngonso (2021) the Nigerian newspapers play a critical role in shaping public perception during political disputes, reinforcing the importance of media in political discourse.

Strengthening Public Resistance to Media Influence

Audiences are not passive recipients of media messages; they can resist biased or manipulative reporting through critical engagement. Prior exposure to multiple perspectives or mild counterarguments enables readers to evaluate information critically and maintain independent opinions (McGuire, 1961; Compton, 2013). This process, akin to a cognitive "inoculation," equips citizens to resist future attempts at persuasion or misinformation. In political reporting, balanced coverage and preemptive counterarguments can strengthen the public's ability to assess electoral information objectively (Pfau et al., 2002). Post-discussion or sharing of information with social networks further reinforces resistance, enabling citizens to defend their beliefs against misleading narratives. Applying these insights to Nigerian newspapers, citizens exposed to diverse framings of the 2023 elections are better positioned to navigate biases and make informed electoral choices.

Theoretical Framework

Framing Theory

Framing Theory provides a lens for understanding how media constructs and communicates meaning to audiences. Rooted in Goffman's (1974) Frame Analysis, the theory posits that individuals interpret events and information through pre-existing cognitive frameworks, which help them make sense of complex social realities. In the context of media, framing goes beyond agenda-setting by not only highlighting issues of importance but also shaping how audiences perceive and evaluate them (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). News frames function as organizing structures that emphasize certain aspects of a story while downplaying others, thereby influencing public perception, judgment, and responses. Framing can create cognitive shortcuts, simplify complex events, and even limit audiences' ability to critically engage with content. In this study, Framing Theory is critical for examining how selected Nigerian newspapers presented and emphasized different aspects of democracy and the 2023 general elections, thereby shaping readers' understanding and potentially influencing their political attitudes and decisions.

Inoculation Theory

Inoculation Theory, developed by McGuire (1961), explains how prior exposure to weakened counterarguments can protect existing attitudes or beliefs from later attempts at persuasion. Using the analogy of a medical vaccine, the theory suggests that introducing individuals to minor challenges against their beliefs strengthens resistance to stronger, future attacks. In the context of media and political communication, repeated exposure to balanced, credible, and carefully structured reporting can serve as an inoculating mechanism, helping readers critically evaluate potentially biased or manipulative content. This theory is particularly relevant to this study because it provides a framework for understanding how audiences might resist or accept the framing strategies employed by newspapers during the 2023 elections. It underscores the role of media not only in shaping perceptions but also in enhancing audience resilience against misinformation or partial reporting.

Methodology

This study employed both primary and secondary data sources to examine how Nigerian newspapers framed democracy in the lead-up to the 2023 general elections. Primary data were obtained from election-related content published in three national newspapers—*Daily Sun*, *The Punch*, and *The Nation*—between January and March 2022, accessed at the Nigerian Tribune morgue. Secondary data included relevant literature, library materials, and online sources to provide context and support the analysis. The study focused exclusively on print media, deliberately excluding electronic media, and considered only content related to the 2023 elections, including news stories, editorials, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, and cartoons.

A content analysis design was adopted, as it allows for systematic examination of textual and visual materials to identify themes, patterns, and modes of reportage. A structured coding sheet was developed to capture relevant information, including the type of newspaper content, framing categories, and publication frequency. Using a purposive sampling approach, the newspapers and their election-related issues were selected based on their relevance to the study objectives, ensuring that the data reflected the dominant framings of Nigerian democracy.

The study population consisted of all national dailies published in Nigeria; however, for feasibility and scope, the analysis was limited to the three selected newspapers and the period of January to March 2022, which corresponds to the campaign phase preceding the elections. Data were systematically coded, tabulated, and analyzed to identify dominant frames, preferred modes of reportage, frequency of coverage, and potential implications for public opinion and democratic engagement. Both quantitative measures, such

as frequency counts, and qualitative assessments, such as thematic interpretation, were employed to provide a robust understanding of how newspapers shaped the discourse around the 2023 elections.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Table 1: Unit of analysis of all the news stories, opinion, editorials, letters to the editor used in the three (3) selected newspapers (*Daily Sun*, *The Punch*, and *The Nation*) within the study period.

Newspapers	News Stories	Opinion/View Point	Editorials	Cartoons	Letters to the Editors	Total	%
<i>Daily Sun</i>	36	7	11	2	4	60	38%
<i>The Punch</i>	25	4	7	0	3	39	25%
<i>The Nation</i>	35	6	12	1	5	59	37%
Total	96	17	30	3	12	158	100%

Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 presents the unit of analysis for news stories, opinions, editorials, cartoons, and letters to the editor published by *Daily Sun*, *The Punch*, and *The Nation* between January and March 2022, focusing on the upcoming 2023 national elections. A total of 158 items were recorded across the three newspapers. *Daily Sun* contributed 60 items (38%), comprising 36 news stories, 7 opinion pieces, 11 editorials, 2 cartoons, and 4 letters to the editor. *The Punch* published 39 items (25%), including 25 news stories, 4 opinions, 7 editorials, and 3 letters. *The Nation* accounted for 59 items (37%), made up of 35 news stories, 6 opinions, 12 editorials, 1 cartoon, and 5 letters. Overall, the analysis shows that news stories dominated coverage (96 units), followed by editorials (30), opinions (17), letters (12), and cartoons (3), indicating the newspapers’ emphasis on informing and shaping public perception ahead of the 2023 elections.

Frames

The study identified ten media frames used by *Daily Sun*, *The Punch*, and *The Nation* to present and package coverage of the 2023 elections. These frames include current events, conflict, consensus, conjecture, operational, horse race, ongoing trends, reaction, policy exploration, and wrongdoing exposed. Current events link news to historical context, while conflict emphasizes disputes among actors. Consensus highlights areas of agreement, and conjecture focuses on speculation about future developments. Operational stories explain processes, horse race frames track winners and losers, and ongoing trend frames show continuity. Reaction frames capture responses from key players, policy exploration examines policy impacts, and wrongdoing exposed uncovers injustice. The findings indicate that newspapers employ a diverse range of frames rather than relying solely on conflict, reflecting varied approaches in news stories, editorials, opinions, cartoons, and letters to the editor. These frames were analyzed in relation to the study’s objectives and research questions.

Current events

Table 2: Unit of analysis for Current events frame used in the three selected newspapers.

News Paper	News Stories	Opinion/View Point	Editorials	Cartoons	Letters To The Editor	Total	%
<i>Daily Sun</i>	32 (38%)	5 (45%)	10 (41%)	1 (50%)	2 (33%)	50	39%

<i>The Punch</i>	22 (26%)	2 (19%)	5 (21%)	0	1 (17%)	30	23%
<i>The Nation</i>	31 (36%)	4 (36%)	9 (38%)	1 (50%)	3 (50%)	48	38%
Total	85	11	24	2	6	128	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The Current Events frame was used extensively across the three selected newspapers—*Daily Sun*, *The Punch*, and *The Nation* during the study period (January–March 2022). Table 2 shows a total of 128 data units identified with this frame. News stories accounted for the largest share with 85 instances, led by Daily Sun with 32, followed by The Nation with 31, and The Punch with 22. Opinion/viewpoints recorded 11 instances, editorials 24, cartoons 2, and letters to the editor 6. Daily Sun consistently had the highest use of the Current Events frame across most categories, while The Nation led in letters to the editor. Overall, Daily Sun recorded 50 data units, The Punch 30, and The Nation 48, demonstrating a prominent focus on linking current news to historical context in coverage of the 2023 elections.

Conflict Story

Table 3: Unit of analysis for Conflict story frame used in the three selected newspapers.

News Paper	News Stories	Opinion/View Point	Editorials	Cartoons	Letters To The Editor	Total	%
<i>Daily Sun</i>	30 (39%)	7 (47%)	8 (42%)	2 (67%)	3 (38%)	50	41%
<i>The Punch</i>	19 (24%)	3 (20%)	3 (16%)	0	1 (12%)	26	21%
<i>The Nation</i>	29 (37%)	5 (33%)	8 (42%)	1 (33%)	4 (50%)	47	38%
Total	78	15	19	3	8	123	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The Conflict Story frame was prominently used across the three selected newspapers *Daily Sun*, *The Punch*, and *The Nation* during the study period. Table 2 indicates a total of 123 data units employing this frame. News stories accounted for the largest share with 78 instances, with Daily Sun leading at 30, followed by The Nation with 29, and The Punch with 19. Opinion/viewpoints totaled 15, editorials 19, cartoons 3, and letters to the editor 8. Daily Sun had the highest number of Conflict Story frames overall with 50, The Punch recorded 26, and The Nation 47. This demonstrates that the newspapers frequently focused on tensions and disputes among political actors, highlighting the contentious nature of the 2023 elections in Nigeria.

Consensus Story

Table 4: Unit of analysis for Consensus story frame used in the three selected newspapers.

News Paper	News Stories	Opinion/ View Point	Editorials	Cartoons	Letters To The Editor	Total	%
<i>Daily Sun</i>	27 (38%)	6 (42%)	7 (37%)	1 (100%)	3 (37.5%)	44	39%
<i>The Punch</i>	17 (24%)	4 (29%)	5 (26%)	0	2 (25%)	28	25%
<i>The Nation</i>	27 (38%)	4 (29%)	7 (37%)	0	3 (37.5%)	41	26%
Total	71	14	19	1	8	113	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The Consensus Story frame was used across the three selected newspapers to emphasize points of agreement around election-related issues. Table 4 shows a total of 113 data units employing this frame. News stories accounted for the largest share with 71 instances, with both Daily Sun and The Nation contributing 27 each, while The Punch recorded 17. Opinion/viewpoints totaled 14, editorials 19, cartoons 1, and letters to the editor 8. Daily Sun had the highest total of Consensus Story frames with 44, followed by The Nation with 41, and The Punch with 28. This suggests that the newspapers also highlighted areas of agreement among political actors and stakeholders, providing a balanced perspective alongside conflict-oriented coverage.

Conjecture Story

Table 5: Unit of analysis for Conjecture story frame used in the three selected newspapers.

News Paper	News Stories	Opinion/ View Point	Editorials	Cartoons	Letters To The Editor	Total	%
<i>Daily Sun</i>	33 (37%)	5 (46%)	5 (23%)	2 (100%)	2 (28.5%)	47	36%
<i>The Punch</i>	23 (26%)	4 (36%)	7 (32%)	0	2 (28.5%)	36	27%
<i>The Nation</i>	33 (37%)	2 (18%)	10 (45%)	0	3 (43%)	48	37%
Total	89	11	22	2	7	131	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The Conjecture Story frame was employed to speculate or anticipate outcomes related to the upcoming 2023 elections. Table 5 shows a total of 131 data units across the three newspapers. News stories accounted

for 89 instances, with Daily Sun and The Nation leading with 33 each, and The Punch contributing 23. Opinion/viewpoints totaled 11, editorials 22, cartoons 2, and letters to the editor 7. Daily Sun published 47 Conjecture Story frames, The Punch 36, and The Nation 48. This indicates that all three newspapers frequently engaged in forecasting and speculation, providing readers with insights into possible electoral developments while maintaining diverse narrative approaches.

Operational story Frame

Table 6: Unit of analysis for Operational story frame used in the three selected newspapers.

News Paper	News Stories	Opinion/View Point	Editorials	Cartoons	Letters To The Editor	Total	%
Daily Sun	24 (34%)	3 (43%)	9 (39%)	1 (100%)	2 (33%)	39	36%
The Punch	22 (31%)	2 (28.5%)	6 (26%)	0	0	30	28%
The Nation	25 (35%)	2 (28.5%)	8 (35%)	0	4 (67%)	39	36%
Total	71 (100%)	7	23	1	6	108	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The Operational Story frame highlights explanations of processes or how events unfold. Table 6 shows a total of 108 data units across the three newspapers. News stories accounted for 71 instances, led by The Nation with 25, followed closely by Daily Sun with 24, and The Punch with 22. Opinion/viewpoints totaled 7, editorials 23, cartoons 1, and letters to the editor 6. Daily Sun and The Nation each published 39 Operational Story frames, while The Punch contributed 30. This demonstrates that the newspapers provided readers with insights into electoral processes, mechanisms, and operational details, helping to clarify how events related to the 2023 elections were conducted.

Horse Race

One of the frames identified by the selected newspapers in this study is the Horse race frame. This frame deals with the explanation of who is winning and who is losing. It is also one of the frames identified in this study.

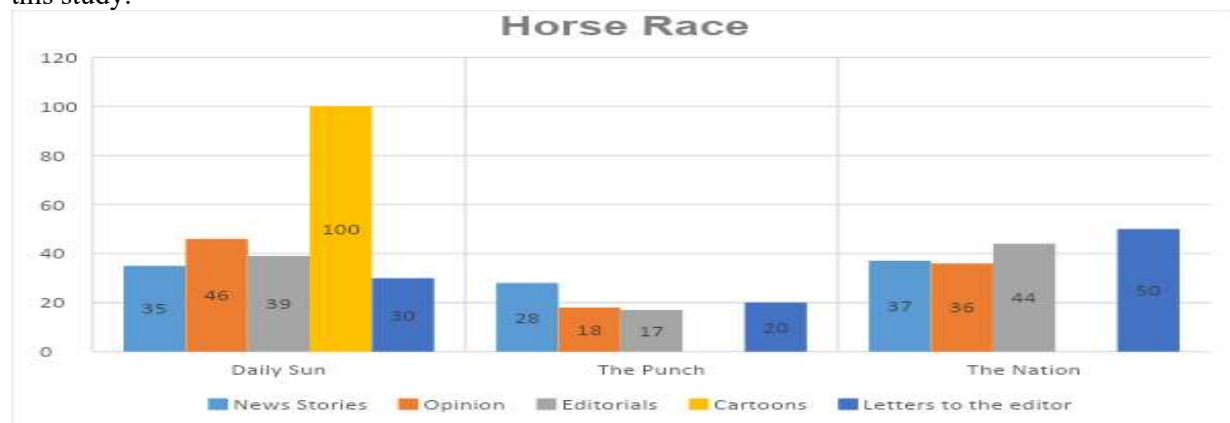


Fig 1.1 The Bar chart of Horse race frames used in the three selected newspaper

The Horse Race frame emphasizes who is winning and losing in the political contest. Data from the three newspapers show that Daily Sun and The Nation led with 38% each, while The Punch contributed 24%. Daily Sun had 35% in news stories, 46% in opinions, 39% in editorials, 100% in cartoons, and 30% in letters to the editor. The Nation displayed 37% in news stories, 36% in opinions, 44% in editorials, 0% in cartoons, and 50% in letters. The Punch had lower figures across all categories. This indicates that the newspapers actively highlighted competitive aspects of the 2023 elections.

Ongoing trend

One of the frames employed by the selected newspapers in this study to depict Nigeria's democracy towards the 2023 national general election is the Ongoing trend frame i.e., news as an ongoing trend.

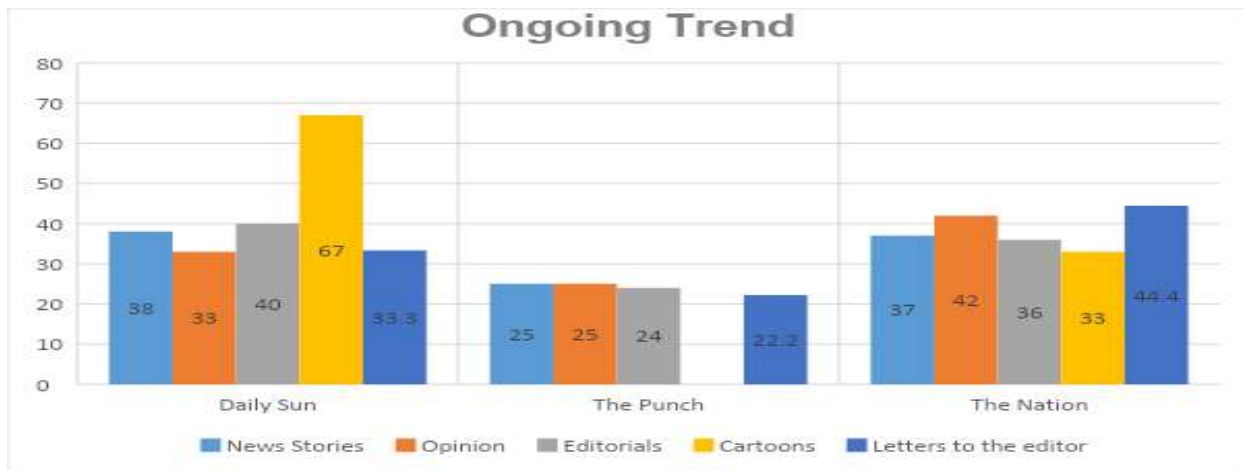


Fig 1.2 The Bar chart of Ongoing trend frames used in the three selected newspapers

The Ongoing Trend frame presents news as a continuous or developing sequence of events. Daily Sun and The Nation each recorded 38% distribution, while The Punch contributed 24%. Daily Sun had 38% in news stories, 33% in opinions, 40% in editorials, 67% in cartoons, and 33% in letters to the editor. The Nation showed 37% in news stories, 42% in opinions, 36% in editorials, 33% in cartoons, and 44% in letters. The Punch maintained lower percentages, reflecting less emphasis on trends over time.

Reaction Story

One of the frames identified by the selected newspapers in this study is the Reaction story frame. The reaction story frame deals with a response or reaction from one of the major players. It is one of the frames employed by the selected newspapers in this study to depict Nigeria's democracy towards the 2023 National general elections.

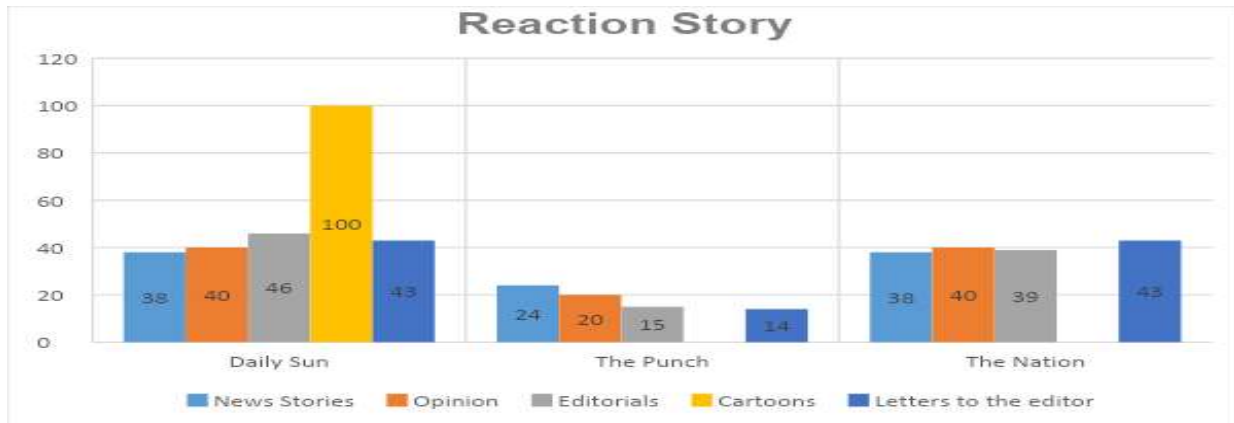


Fig 1.3 The Bar chart of Reaction story frames used in the three selected newspaper.

The Reaction Story frame captures responses or feedback from key players. Daily Sun led with 40%, The Nation followed with 38%, and The Punch recorded 22%. Daily Sun reported 38% in news stories, 40% in opinions, 46% in editorials, 100% in cartoons, and 43% in letters to the editor. The Nation showed similar patterns, while The Punch had minimal coverage. This suggests newspapers actively highlighted stakeholder reactions to political developments.

Policy Explored

One of the frames identified by the selected newspapers in this study is the Policy explored frame. The policy explored frame deals with a focus on exploring policy and its impact. It is one of the frames employed by the selected newspapers in this study to depict Nigeria's democracy towards the 2023 National general elections.

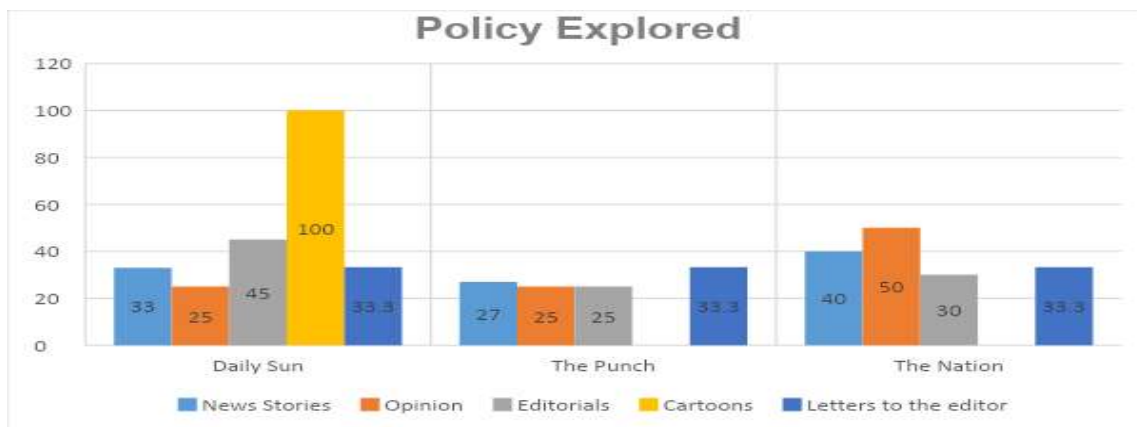


Fig 1.4 The Bar chart of Policy Explored frames used in the three selected newspaper.

The Policy Explored frame focuses on analyzing policies and their potential impact. The distribution shows Daily Sun at 35%, The Nation at 38%, and The Punch at 27%. Daily Sun emphasized editorials (45%) and cartoons (100%), while The Nation led in opinions (50%) and news stories (40%). The Punch contributed consistently but with lower figures. This illustrates that newspapers provided readers with insight into policy issues and governance implications.

Wrong doing Exposed

The uncovering of wrongdoing or injustice is what this framing is all about. It is a part of the frames employed by the three selected newspapers in this study to portray Nigeria's democracy towards the 2023 national general elections.

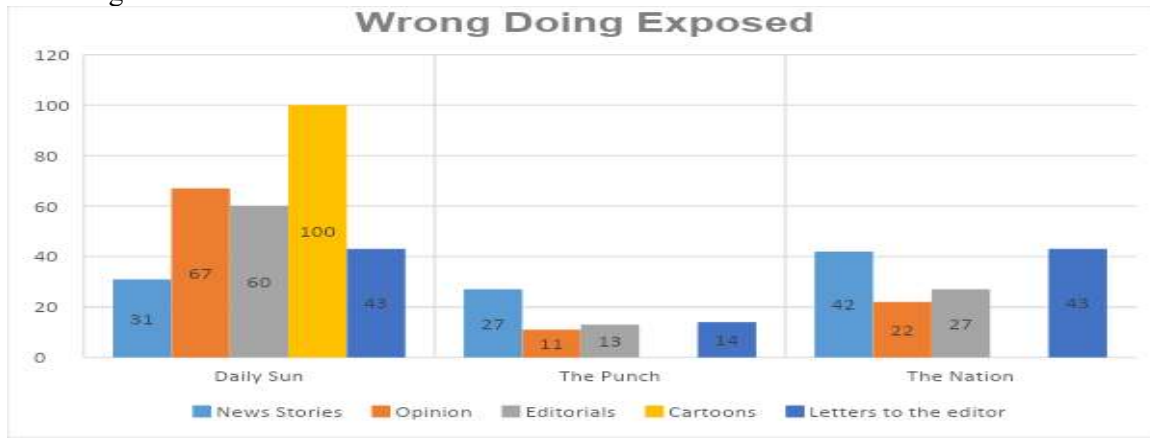


Fig 1.5 The Bar chart of *Wrong Doing Exposed* frames used in the three selected newspaper.

The Wrongdoing Exposed frame emphasizes uncovering injustices or misconduct. Daily Sun recorded 41%, The Nation 37%, and The Punch 22%. Daily Sun was dominant in opinions (67%) and editorials (60%), while The Nation focused more on news stories (42%). The Punch had minimal coverage. This frame shows the newspapers' role in investigative reporting and accountability in the lead-up to the 2023 elections.

Discussion of Findings

The study reveals that Nigerian newspapers employ a range of framing themes in reporting on democracy and the 2023 general elections, with Current events, Conflict story, Conjecture, and Horse race frames dominating the discourse. This aligns with Entman's (1993, 2007) assertion that framing serves to highlight certain aspects of reality while shaping public interpretation, and echoes Dorland's (2016) observations that editorial frames can significantly influence audience perception. Daily Sun, The Nation, and The Punch displayed variation in framing emphasis, suggesting that no single frame overwhelmingly dominated, which supports Goffman's (1974) conceptualization of frames as structures organizing experience and comprehension of events.

In terms of reportage, newspapers favored news stories and editorials, with opinion pieces, letters to the editor, and cartoons used less frequently, reflecting Clark's (2003) findings that journalists strategically select modes of presentation to guide public discourse. The analysis shows that newspapers also carefully package and prioritize election coverage, ensuring that key events, policy issues, and candidate positions are highlighted. This is consistent with Fadeji, Aluko, and Hamzat's (2025) assertion that framing and agenda-setting are intertwined in constructing public understanding of political events.

The study further indicates that framing patterns can shape public opinion and democratic engagement. Conflict and Horse race frames, for example, may generate interest and debate, but could also polarize readers if overemphasized, corroborating McGuire's (1961) insights on persuasion and resistance. Reaction and Policy explored frames, meanwhile, provide context and informed commentary, enhancing civic understanding and voter deliberation (Pfau et al., 2002; Compton, 2013). These findings echo Akinwale (2010) and Gberevbic (2009), who stress that a free press in Nigeria is central to promoting participatory democracy. The frequency and distribution analysis shows that election-related coverage was

concentrated in news stories and editorials, with Daily Sun publishing the highest number of data units, followed closely by The Nation and The Punch. This demonstrates that national newspapers actively function as instruments for political information dissemination and public correlation, consistent with Dahl's (1989) view of the media as a critical component of democratic systems. Moreover, the newspapers' role in providing forums for opinions and letters supports Eilders' (1997) argument that editorial content can set the political agenda and facilitate discourse.

In summary, the findings indicate that Nigerian newspapers not only frame the narrative of democracy and elections in diverse ways but also influence public perception, engagement, and discourse through strategic use of news formats and editorial emphasis. This underscores the continuing importance of newspapers in shaping democratic participation in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study examined how Daily Sun, The Nation, and The Punch framed the Nigerian democracy in the context of the 2023 elections, focusing on themes, reportage style, implications, and frequency of coverage. Findings reveal that the newspapers gave significant prominence to election-related content, providing the public with essential information for informed decision-making. The newspapers also offered a platform for diverse viewpoints, contributing to public discourse on democratic processes.

While journalists face challenges in maintaining complete objectivity, ethical reporting grounded in truthfulness and accuracy remains crucial, particularly on sensitive political matters. The frames employed by the newspapers shape public perception and understanding, highlighting the power of editorial decisions in influencing societal interpretation. Furthermore, each newspaper exhibited distinct reportage styles aligned with their editorial policies, emphasizing the importance of presentation and content structuring in informing and correlating society.

Overall, the study confirms that responsible and well-framed election coverage by newspapers is vital for sustaining public confidence, shaping informed opinions, and supporting the democratic process in Nigeria.

Recommendations

It is however expedient to make some recommendations based on the findings of this study;

1. Journalists should be encouraged to maintain high standards of accuracy, fairness, and objectivity, especially when reporting sensitive election-related issues, to strengthen public trust in the media.
2. Studies should explore how newspaper framings shape voter opinions, political discourse, and election outcomes, particularly in the context of national elections.
3. Media research should be made mandatory to reveal the possible bias of ownership and political alignment of newspapers towards future elections.
4. Efforts should also focus on monitoring potential media bias arising from newspaper ownership and political alignments to ensure transparency and accountability in reportage.
5. Future studies should investigate electronic and digital media, examining how framing, packaging, and presentation of political information influence public perception and electoral participation.

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