

Original Article

Newspaper Framing of Political Parties' Primaries in the Run-Off to Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election

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Abstract: Framing has been used to explain people's attitudinal and behavioural dispositions to issues based on the perspectives of media reportage. The presidential primaries of political parties in the run-off to the 2023 presidential elections occupied a critical stage in the electoral process which produced Bola Ahmed Tinubu as the sixth democratically elected President of Nigeria. This research was carried out to examine how newspapers in Nigeria framed stories on the presidential primaries of the two leading political parties: The All Progressives Congress, APC, and the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, preparatory to the 2023 presidential polls. The framing theory was used as the framework while content analysis was adopted as the methodology for the study. The result showed the preponderance of news stories over editorials, features and columns. Nine different frames were found in this study with zoning taking the lead. The study concludes that newspapers' framing of the presidential primaries of APC and PDP centred on regional interest via zoning, personality projection and aspirant's strength of character instead of their enunciated course of action if chosen as their parties' flagbearers in the 2023 elections. It was therefore recommended that there is need for the press in Nigeria to always focus on campaign of issues ahead of other considerations in their framing of stories in the reportage of subsequent primaries of political parties.

Keywords: Newspapers, Framing, Democracy, Political Parties, Party Primaries, Elections.

I. INTRODUCTION

Political parties are essential ingredients of democratic governance. Historically, political parties' formation in Nigeria can be traced to the period of colonialism (Danjibo & Ashindorbe, 2018; Ali & Isah, 2018; Uchegbue, 2019). According to Wilson (2014), Nigeria has seen a dramatic increase in the numerical strength of political parties and events culminating in improved opportunities for citizens' participation in democratic process and governance from the colonial to the independence and post-independence eras. The importance of political parties in a democracy cannot be over emphasised. After presenting their manifestoes to the electorate during pre-election campaigns thus helping them to understand national problems and form opinions, political parties give the electorate the opportunity of making choice(s) which is quite germane in any democracy. Dowse (1971) cited in Ugorji, (2022) explains that political parties are vital in democratic settings because they, among other things, defend political power, choose and remove leaders, organise opinions, establish public policy and balance the interests of various groups.

Political parties provide the platform where elected officials emerge from in order to administer the state as essential elements of a democratic society (Uchegbue, 2019). This starts from choosing their flag bearers from aspirants in what can best be described as inter-party electoral contests. The process is popularly known as primary elections or simply primaries. Primary elections are intra-party democratic processes through which political parties choose their candidates for general or local elections. Pasquino and Valbruzzi (2016) say primary elections refer to the process of selecting candidates for various elections, from local to national. The process, according to him, always involve the generality of members and sympathisers of the concerned political parties. Kenig & Atmor (2021) explain that primaries were once associated almost exclusively with United States of America. However, the intra-party democratic methods of selecting candidates have grown to be acceptable in most democracies of the world, Nigeria inclusive. From 1999 till date, Presidential candidates of political parties have always been chosen via primaries even when the same cannot be said wholesale for candidates in gubernatorial and local government elections where there have been alleged cases of imposition.



It could be argued that the effectiveness and efficiency with which political parties manage its internal affairs, most especially their primary elections, play vital roles in the development of democracy. Ideally, primaries of political parties should observe all democratic and election tenets such as inclusiveness, credibility, fairness and transparency.

Bandipo (2016) observes that all forms of media are germane to the promotion of democracy and good governance. Sequel to that, Ojebuyi (2012) cited in Ojebuyi and Ekennia (2013 p.123) note that “the mass media are regarded as sacred institutions that service the democratic process. They re-construct, interpret and report issues that happen in the human society”. Norris (1995) referenced in Onwude et. al (2017) adds “that the media describe, explain and interpret events and simultaneously provide the platform for the public to perceive social reality.”

Creation of frames is a veritable means used by the media in the enhancement of the understanding of affairs and occurrences in their everyday activities. The coinage of the term “frame” can be traced to a sociologist, Erving Goffman, who in his book titled “Frame Analysis” described frame as “the culturally determined definitions of reality that allow people to make sense of objects and events.” Entman (1993) opines that “Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.”

There is no iota of doubt that Nigeria had one of the most eventful presidential primary elections especially between the two major political parties, the APC and the PDP, in 2022. The primaries revealed a long list of contenders. According to Ezezi (2022), it was the most expensive presidential primary elections in Nigeria’s political annals thus far with intention and expression of interest forms sold for between forty and hundred million Naira across all the political parties. The high cost of intention and expression forms notwithstanding, the primaries witnessed high number of aspirants across all the political parties. Each of the aspirants used the media in different degrees to win support from members of their parties who will elect delegates that will eventually elect the candidates. It is on this note that this study examines the frames used by newspapers in reporting the 2022 presidential primary elections in Nigeria.

A. Statement of the Problem

Primaries occupy a vantage point in the choice of politicians that will eventually occupy elective offices in a democracy. The choice of the electorate is limited to whoever comes up from parties’ primaries as candidates. The media play prominent roles in helping party faithful, members, supporters and sympathisers to form opinions on the various personalities aspiring to fly the flags of their parties. This is done wittingly or unwittingly by the way the media frame their stories on each of the aspirants. The framing to a large extent depends on the political, economic, religious as well as ethnic or tribal biases or affiliations of the different media. Aggarwal, Sinha, Kukreti and Shikhar (2020) submit that media outfits are known to report in a biased way which has the inherent potentials of affecting the beliefs of news consumers and altering their behaviours. Nowhere does that assertion holds sway in Nigeria more than in political reporting like presidential primaries of political parties.

Studies dealing with framing have consistently confirmed that news frames have ways of influencing the value attached to issues by media audience. The media thus add or reduce the values of stories which in turn enables the people to remember, form opinions as well as take positions on the said news items. However, despite these many studies, this researcher observed that newspaper framing of presidential primaries of political parties in Nigeria, most especially during the period under review, have not enjoyed much attention from researchers. How the presidential primaries of political parties were conducted and the ways aspirants involved were depicted in the media with regard to the frames used called for this study.

B. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the regularity in the reportage of the presidential primaries of political parties during the run off to the 2023 presidential elections in Nigerian national dailies;
2. Find out the degree of prominence given by newspapers to stories of political parties’ primaries; and
3. Ascertain the dominant frames in newspapers reportage of the presidential primaries of political parties leading to the 2023 presidential polls.

C. Research Questions

The following research questions were drawn from the objectives of the study:

1. How frequently did newspapers in Nigeria report political parties' presidential primaries preparatory to the 2023 presidential elections?
2. What is the degree of prominence given to presidential primaries of political parties during the run off to the 2023 presidential elections in the selected newspapers?
3. What are the dominant frames in newspapers reportage of presidential primaries of political parties leading to the 2023 presidential polls?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Political Parties

There are numerous definitions of political parties. The famous 18th century historian and political thinker, Edmund Burke, cited in Ogunyemi (2020) sees a political party as "A body of men, united for promoting by their joint endeavours, the national interest upon some particular principles in which they all agreed." Duverger (2023) makes it more explicitly by defining political parties as political organisations made up of people whose sole aim is the acquisition and exercise of political power.

Political parties are central actors in representatives' democracies because of their role as institutions which nominate candidates for public elections (Biezen, 2003, Gauja and Kosiara-Perdersen, 2022). Demker, Odiboh, Omojola, Ekanem and Oresanya (2020, p. 2) explain that there is a special connection between "political parties and their candidates as well as the electorate." In its own view, National Democratic Institute -NDI- (2023) submits that:

Political parties are essential institutions of democracy. By competing in elections, parties offer citizens a choice in governance, and while in opposition they can hold government accountable. When citizens join political parties, volunteer their time, donate money and vote for their leaders, they are exercising their basic democratic rights. Participation of citizens in political parties offers unique benefits, including opportunities to influence policy choices, choose and engage political leaders, and run for office.

International IDEA (2017) makes it clear that political parties are in a key position to safeguard inclusiveness which a healthy and resilient democracy is built on. It can be safely said that the main gatekeepers for the emergence of candidates for participation in politics, except in few cases where there are provisions for independent candidature, are political parties.

B. Political Parties in Nigeria: The Historical Perspective

In Nigeria, the history of formation of political parties in had its root in colonialism and the agitation against it by a group of Nigerian elites who formed the country's nationalist movement. The opposition to the British colonial rule shortly after Hugh Clifford took over from Lord Frederick Lugard in 1919 led to the enactment of Hugh Clifford constitution in 1922. The Clifford Constitution was the harbinger of the first political party in Nigeria, the Nigerian National Democratic party (NNDP) formed by Herbert Macaulay on January 14, 1923. The Clifford constitution provided for four elected members into the then-46-member Legislative Council; three in Lagos and one in Calabar. NNDP contested for and won the three seats allotted to Lagos (Omonijo, 1999, ogunyemi, 2020).

The various changes of guards during the colonial rule had impact on formation of political parties in the country. According to Omonijo (1999), the succession of Clifford by Sir Cameron in 1931 saw to the formation of Lagos Youth Movement (LYM) led by Ernest Ikoli in 1934 which later expanded and transformed into the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1938. The National Council of Nigeria and Cameron, NCNC, which later became National Council of Nigerian Citizens, and retained the acronym, NCNC, was is 1944. Northern Elements Progressive Union, NEPU, followed suit in 1950, Action Group, AG, 1951, Northern Peoples' Congress, NPC, 1951, United National Independence Party, UNIP, 1953, United Middle Belt Congress, UMBC, 1955, Bornu Youth Movement, BYM, 1956, Dynamic Party, DP, 1955. Parties in that era can be categorised into majority and minority political parties. While AG, NCNC and NPC fell under majority parties, others earlier listed as well as Igbira Tribal Union, Mabolaje Grand Alliance and Niger Delta Congress, among others, belonged to the minority group.

Omonijo adds that in readiness for Nigeria's independence, parliamentary elections were held on December 12, 1959. There were alliances among the political parties before and after the elections. Eventually, NPC which won 134 of the 312 seats in the House of Representatives formed coalition first with the Mabolaje Grand Alliance, Igala Union, Igbira Tribal Union and Niger Delta Congress and other affiliated independents increasing the seats from 134 to 148. The NCNC with 81 seats also joined forces with NPC to form the government. While Sir Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa of NPC was appointed Prime Minister, Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe of NCNC was made first the ceremonial Governor-General and later President when Nigeria became a republic.

According to Emmanuel, (1994) cited in Nwolise, (2018) political activities in Nigeria in the first republic ended after the military coup of 1966. Thereafter, the Second Republic was ushered in with five political parties; National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the People's Redemption Party (PRP), the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) and the Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP) in 1979. The sixth one, Nigeria Advance Party, ADP, was formed in 1983. Unfortunately, on 31st December, 1983 General Muhammadu Buhari, on the allegations of corruption and indiscipline, terminated the Second Republic.

The aborted third republic was heralded by elaborate party registration exercise at the end of which General Ibrahim Babangida's regime decreed into existence two parties, the National Republican Convention, NRC, and Social Democratic Party, SDP. The two parties contested the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election. The annulment of the 1993 presidential poll was another setback to the growth of political parties in Nigeria as the succeeding regime of General Abacha outlawed NRC and SDP.

The return to democratic rule in the Fourth Republic took place under the watch of General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who came to power after the death of General Sani Abacha. According to Omonijo (1999), twenty-six political parties paid N100, 000: 00 to pick registration forms from the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC when the ban on politics was lifted in 1998. However, only nine of the twenty-six were granted provisional registration to contest the December 5, 1998 Local Government Election. After the local government election, the three best performing political parties, Alliance for Democracy, AD, People's Democratic Party, PDP and All People's Party, APP, were registered.

Early in the re-democratisation process, the number of political parties was severely restricted as INEC imposed stringent conditions for registration. There were legal fireworks between INEC, on one hand, as well as politicians and political activists with the active support of civil societies and non-governmental organisations, on the other hand, for the opening up of the political space for the registration of more political parties. The Supreme Court ruled in favour of the agitation on the account of which the National Assembly enacted a new Electoral Act in 2002 (Chizea, 2004). According Nwachukwu (2019), INEC's National Commissioner and Chairman of Information and Voter's Education, Festus Okoye, said ninety-one political parties were registered to contest in the 2019 elections. The parties participated at various layers of the elections from councillorship to chairmanship at local government level, state houses of assembly membership and governorship at state level as well as national assembly membership and the presidency at the federal level. However, only seventy-three of the parties took part in the presidential elections of 2019 in Nigeria (Sahara Reporter, 2019). As reported by Sanni (2020), INEC deregistered seventy-four political parties in February, 2020 with an unambiguous statement from its Chairman, Yakubu Mahmood that the deregistered parties would no longer take part in future elections. Meanwhile, after the deregistration, the Independent National Electoral Commission listed eighteen political parties as fully registered for the 2023 elections (Adesanmi, 2023).

C. Empirical Studies

Many researchers have conducted studies on framing of stories having to do with electoral process(es) which include formation of political parties, inter and intra political parties' activities before, during and after elections, among which are primaries, campaigns by as well as debates between either aspirants or candidates, actual conduct of elections and activities of stakeholders at all the stages of the electoral process(es) across all nascent, evolving, developing or even developed democracies of the world. They include but not limited to Stromback & Luengo (2011); Swafford (2012); Drufulca (2014); Ekeanyanwu (2015); Besley & Prat (2016) Elega, Oloyede & Ozad (2021); and Ogbodo, Ugbo, Duru & Jubrin (2022).

While Stromback & Luengo (2011) and Swafford (2012) assert that newspapers give political issues preferences over other matters, Drufulca (2014) and Basley & Prat (2016) are of the view that newspapers in Nigeria disseminate adequate information to their readers on political parties in order for them to be able to choose the best aspirants to represent their parties as candidates in the presidential polls. In a study conducted in (2015), Ekeanyanwu identifies human interest and history as the key issues in that year's general elections in Nigeria while to Elega, Oloyede & Ozad (2021) political interest was the dominant factor in the coverage of elections in the country and Ogbodo, Ugbo, Duru & Jubrin (2022) find out that via frequent pre-election reportage, newspapers focus more on election related matters than other issues.

Wajfasik (2019) investigated how manipulated actions via media provide the chance to influence voters' decisions and subsequently election results. Findings of the research demonstrated the potential for media manipulation of election outcomes. Such manipulations, he continues, are possible when free and pluralistic media, which promote political communication, are subject to instrumental influence, as well as when non-objective information is created and disseminated in the context of instrumental influence on information.

D. Theoretical framework

Framing theory, which according to (Bajracharya, 2018) was propounded by Erving Goffman in his book “Frame Analysis” published in 1974 was used for this study. Applying framing to communication, Goffman defines it as a “schemata of interpretation” which enables people to “locate, perceive, identify and label” happenings or experiences of life. Framing as a notion has to do with the concept of agenda-setting. Hence, it is generally regarded as second level agenda setting theory. Price and Tewksbury (1997) contend that “if agenda-setting describes how the public accessibility of a problem is affected by how much the media cover the problem, frame-setting describes how public perceptions of what is applicable to explaining a problem are influenced by how the media frame that problem.”

Assessing the term “news frame” metaphorically, Hallanhan (1999) cited by Afomachkwu (2020) says it is like a “window or portrait frame drawn around information that delimits the subject matter and thus focuses attention on key elements within.” Alphonsus (2018) describes media framing as a device adopted by politicians and the media to present desired points which will help their readers to achieve the expected frame of mind.

This theory is apt for the study because of its position that the way candidates of political parties are portrayed by the media plays significant roles in their success or otherwise in elections. Contestants and their parties commit lots of financial resources to positive projection by the media to enhance their acceptability by the voting public.

III. METHODOLOGY

Due to the fact that this study is aimed at assessing newspapers framing of parties’ primaries in the run-off to the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria, quantitative content analysis research design was adopted. The methodological leaning is supported by Kerlinger’s description of content analysis referenced in (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014:163). According to him, content analysis is “a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables.” Sequel to this, the content of *Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Sun* newspapers were objectively, systematically and quantitatively analysed to achieve the research objectives and answer the research questions. The selection of the three newspapers was informed by the fact that they have both online and offline publications thus enjoying wide national and international readership. Their geographical locations were also considered. While *Daily Trust* is headquartered in the north, *Nigerian Tribune* has its operational base in the south-west and *The Sun* in the south-east. These were the key geo-political divides in the multi-ethnic and religious heterogeneous Nigerian nation at independence before they were broken into states and later geo-political zones. They were also selected because they do not have known ownership tie to any of the aspirants in the 2022 presidential primaries of political parties in Nigeria.

A. Population of the Study

Study population, in social science research, is seen as the entire group of elements in a study out of which some would be selected to represent the entire population (Shittu, 2022). The population of this study consisted of all editions of *Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Sun* newspapers published between February and June, 2022. However, the total population for this study is 450 (150 editions each).

B. Sampling Technique/Sample Size

In line with the postulation of Neuman (2007) that when the population is large, a sample technique is required to limit the sample to a scientifically manageable one was relied on. As a result of this and since this study focused primarily on Nigerian newspapers that are believed to have national distribution, audience and contents, *Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Sun* newspapers were selected through the purposive sampling technique for the study. The study covered the period between February and June, 2022. The period was selected based on the fact that it includes the period in which political parties and their candidates prepared and campaigned for the primary elections leading to the 2023 presidential elections. Also, the period includes the time that INEC, through its time table, had mandated all political parties to conduct their primaries (April 4-June 3, 2022). Composite sampling technique was used to determine the sample size of the study. This is in conformity with the submission of Wimmer and Dominick (2011) cited in Shittu (2022) that “a composite week sampling technique was superior to both a random sample and a consecutive day sample when dealing with newspaper contents”. Thus, the editions of the selected newspapers were grouped according to months and days in the weeks. The selected editions through the composite week sampling technique were shown as follows:

Table 1: Sampled Editions of the Selected Newspapers between February and June, 2022

Months	Weeks/Days					Total
	1 st Week/Day	2 nd Week/Day	3 rd Week/Day	4 ^h Week/Day	5 th Week/Day	
February	Tue (01/02)	Wed (09/02)	Thur (17/02)	Fri (25/02)		4
March	Sat (05/03)	Sun (06/03)	Mon (14/03)	Tues (22/03)	Wed (30/03)	5
April	Thur (07/03)	Fri (15/03)	Sat (23/03)	Sun (24/03)		4
May	Mon (02/05)	Tues (10/05)	Wed (18/04)	Thur (26/05)		4
June	Fri (03/06)	Sat (11/06)	Sun (12/03)	Mon (20/06)	Tue (28/06)	5
						22

Based on table 3.1 above, 22 editions of each of the newspapers making a total of 66 editions of the three newspapers between February and June, 2022 were selected through composite sampling technique to be content analysed. This implies that the total of 66 editions of the *Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Sun* newspapers were selected as the sample size from the population of 450 editions.

C. Instrument/Content Category/Unit of Analyses/Reliability

For the collation of data based on the objectives of the study, coding sheet was used as the research instrument. The content category includes frequency of reportage, prominence of reportage and dominant of frames of reportage. The frequency of reportage was measured based on the number of times that the selected newspapers (*Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Sun* newspapers) covered stories that has to do with the presidential primaries leading to the 2023 presidential polls. Prominence on the other hand was measured by considering the placement of items/issues relating to presidential primaries of political parties leading to the 2023 presidential elections in the selected newspapers, hence; stories that appears at the front page (major and minor) are regarded as top news. Consequently, inside page major, Op-Ed page, inside page minor, back page major and back page minor placements will be analysed to determine the prominence. Furthermore, in line with the studies by Swafford (2012); Ukonu and Ajaero (2015) as well as Ogbodo, Ugbo, Duru and Jibrin (2022) the frames used to analyse newspapers reportage of issues relating to primary elections include horse race, conflict, political strategy, age, religious, ethnic, history, national security, electoral violence, good governance and miscellaneous. However, for the purpose of this study, four unit of analysis units that are germane to this study were examined. They are: news stories, features, editorials/columns and opinions. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was employed to process the quantitative data gathered through the coding sheet for presentation, interpretation and discussion.

To determine the inter-coder reliability, the study adopted the Holsti formula shown below:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

Where M= number of coding decisions on which the two coders agree

N1= number of coding decisions by the first coder

N2 = number of coding decisions by the second coder

Therefore, inter-coder reliability = $\frac{2(7)}{10 + 10}$

$$= \frac{14}{20}$$

$$= 0.70$$

Inter-coder reliability = 0.70

According to the formula by Holsti, the coding process used for the study was largely reliable because of the high value of the measurement.

D. Presentation and analysis of data

In conducting the study, data were collected from *Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Sun* newspapers. However, a total number of sixty-six (66) editions of the three selected newspapers were analysed (22 editions form each of the newspapers). The data are presented and analyzed as follows:

Table 2: Frequency of Reportage Given to Presidential Primaries of Political Parties during the Run off to the 2023 Presidential Elections in the Selected Newspapers

	Newspaper	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily Trust	122	31.4	31.4
	Nigerian Tribune	149	38.4	69.8

	The Sun	117	30.2	100.0
	Total	388	100.0	

Table 4.1 above shows the total number of stories reported on presidential primaries of political parties during the run off to the 2023 presidential elections in the selected newspapers in a bid to determine the frequency of coverage given to it by *Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Sun* newspapers between the periods under review. A total of 388 stories were reported on presidential primaries of political parties by the three selected newspapers in the sampled editions. *Nigerian Tribune* newspaper had the highest number of stories with a total of 149 which represents 38.4% of the stories; *Daily Trust* newspaper had a total of 122 stories which represents 31.4% of the stories while *The Sun* newspaper had a total of 117 which represents 30.2 percent. This shows that the newspapers gave much attention to issues on the presidential primaries of political parties leading to the 2023 presidential elections.

Table 3: Story Formats Used in Reporting Issues Relating to Presidential Primaries of Political Parties during the Runoff to the 2023 Presidential Elections in the Selected Newspapers

Format		Newspaper			Total
		Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	The Sun	
Valid	News Stories	42	48	39	129
		34.4%	32.2%	33.3%	33.2%
	Features	29	29	26	84
		23.8%	19.5%	22.2%	21.6%
	Editorials	15	13	14	42
		12.3%	8.7%	12.0%	10.8%
	Columns/Opinions	6	11	6	23
		4.9%	7.4%	5.1%	5.9%
Pictures		14	23	14	51
		11.5%	15.4%	12.0%	13.1%
Cartoon		11	17	10	38
		9.0%	11.4%	8.5%	9.8%
Letters to the Editors		5	8	8	20
		1.8%	3.0%	6.8%	5.2%
Total		122	149	117	388
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A further break down of the data shows the frequency of reportage of issues relating to presidential primaries of political parties during the runoff to the 2023 presidential elections in the selected newspapers in terms of the story formats. The table 4.2 reveals that most of the issues were reported in news stories with (33.2%). This is followed by those reported in features (21.6%). However, pictures were used to report 13.1% of the issues, editorials and cartoons were used to report 10.8% each of the issues while 5.9% of the issues were presented in columns/opinions and 4.8% in letters to the editors. This shows that the newspapers gave much attention to issues relating to presidential primaries of political parties during the runoff to the 2023 presidential elections.

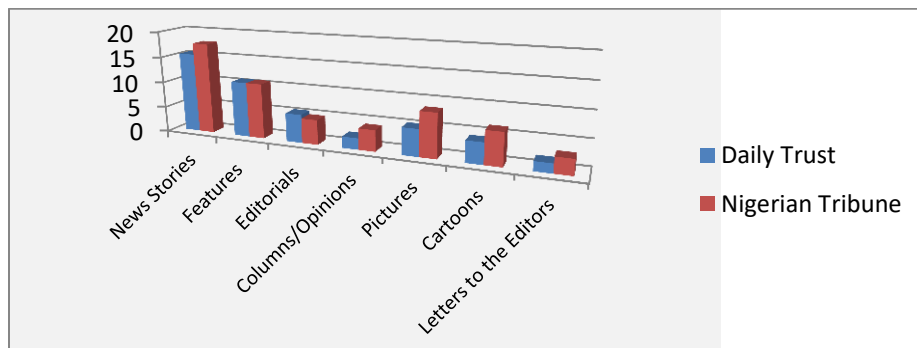


Figure 1: Chart Showing Story Formats used in Reporting Issues Relating to Presidential Primaries of Political Parties during the Runoff To the 2023 Presidential Elections in the Selected Newspapers.

Table 4: Degree of Prominence Given to Presidential Primaries of Political Parties during the Run off to The 2023 Presidential Elections in the Selected Newspapers.

Prominence		Newspaper			Total	
		Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	The Sun		
Valid	Front Page Major	32	31	18	81	
		26.2%	20.8%	15.4%	20.9%	
	Front Page Minor	40	37	19	96	
		32.8%	24.8%	16.2%	24.7%	
	Inside Page Major	20	24	19	63	
		16.4%	16.1%	16.2%	16.2%	
	Op-Ed page	8	15	14	37	
		6.6%	10.1%	12.0%	9.5%	
	Inside Page Minor	9	21	23	53	
		7.4%	14.1%	19.7%	13.7%	
	Back Page Major	7	16	18	41	
		5.7%	10.7%	15.4%	10.6%	
	Back Page Minor	6	5	6	17	
		4.9%	3.4%	5.1%	4.4%	
	Total		122	149	117	388
			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The data presented in table 4.3 aimed at ascertaining the degree of prominence given to issues relating to presidential primaries of political parties during the run off to the 2023 presidential elections in the selected newspapers. It was found that front page minor which accounted for 24.7% has most of the stories, followed by those in the front-page major with 20.9% and complemented by those that appeared on the inside page major with 16.2%. However, on the aggregate, majority of the stories appeared on the front page as a total of 177 which represents (45.6%) appeared on both front page major and front page minor. Those that appeared on the inner page has a total of 153 which represents (39.5%) while those at the back page has a total of 58 stories which represents (14.9%) This could be because the selected newspapers do present headlines in the front page and thus complete the stories in the inner page and since it is the same story, those on the front page were considered and counted while those in the inner were ignored for such.

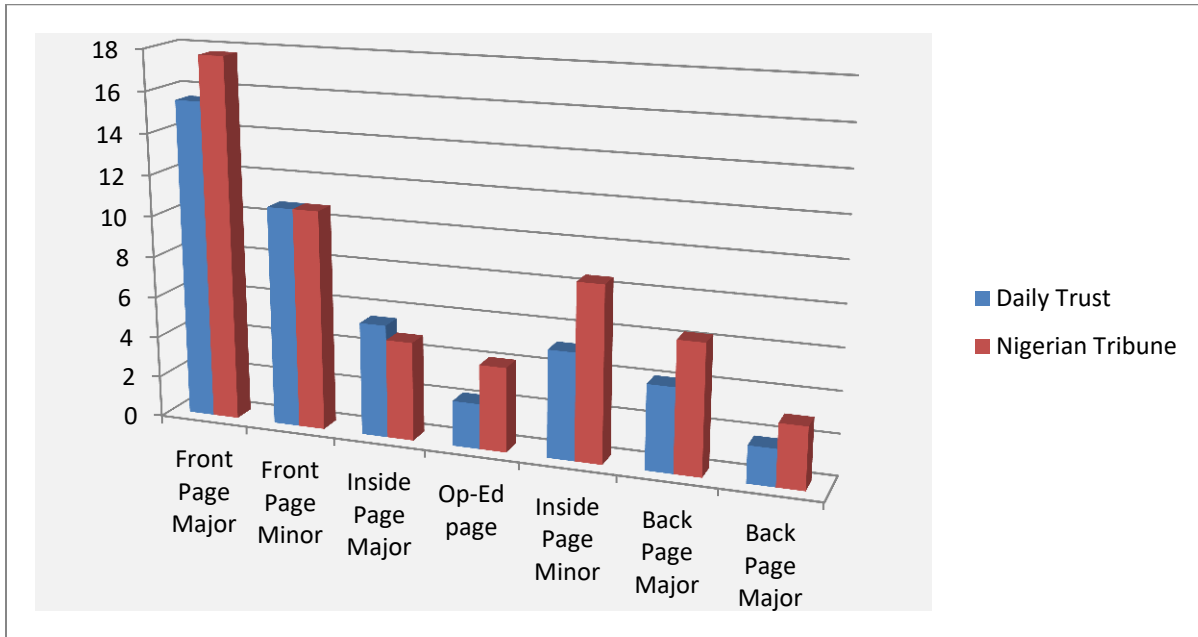


Figure 2: Chart Showing Story Formats Used in Reporting Issues Relating to Presidential Primaries of Political Parties during the Runoff to the 2023 Presidential Elections in the Selected Newspapers.

Table 5: Dominant Frames of Stories Reported on Presidential Primaries of Political Parties during the Run off to the 2023 Presidential Elections in the Selected Newspapers

Valid	Dominant Frame	Newspaper			Total
		Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	The Sun	
Horse Race		3	11	6	20
		2.5%	7.4%	5.1%	5.2%
Conflict Frame		12	12	7	31
		9.8%	8.1%	6.0%	8.0%
Political Strategy Frame		10	14	6	30
		8.2%	9.4%	5.1%	7.7%
Age Frame		21	11	19	51
		17.2%	7.4%	16.2%	13.1%
Religious Frame		32	20	28	80
		26.2%	13.4%	23.9%	20.6%
Ethnic Frame		29	34	23	86
		23.8%	22.8%	19.7%	22.2%
History Frame		5	10	7	22
		4.1%	6.7%	6.0%	5.7%
National Security Frame		0	22	3	25
		0.0%	14.8%	2.6%	6.4%
Electoral Violence Frame		2	1	3	6
		1.6%	0.7%	2.6%	1.5%
Good Governance Frame		5	9	9	23
		4.1%	6.0%	7.7%	5.9%
Miscellaneous Frame		3	5	6	14
		2.5%	3.4%	5.1%	3.6%
Total		122	149	117	388
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

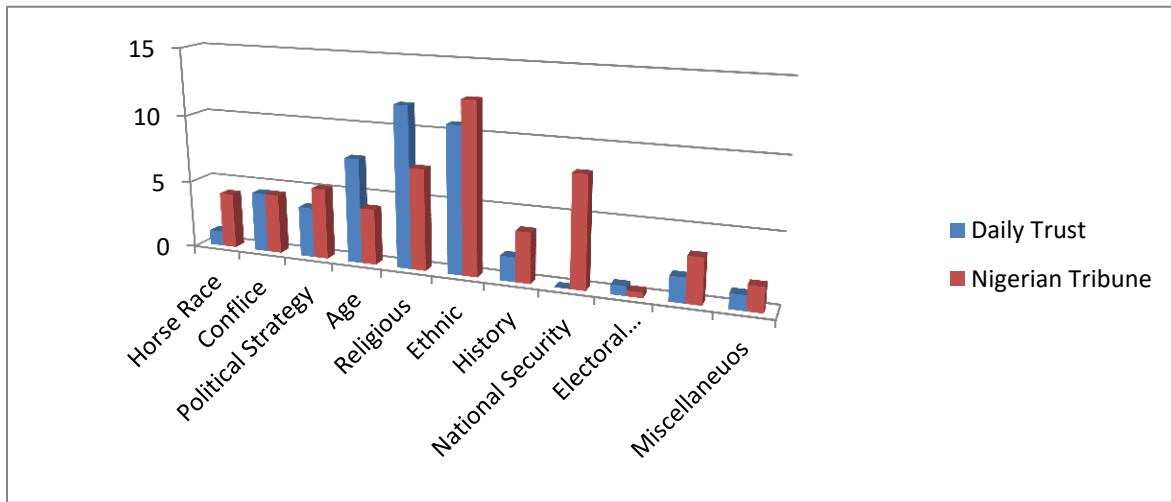


Figure 3: Dominant Frames of Stories Reported on Presidential Primaries of Political Parties during the Run off to the 2023 Presidential Elections in the Selected Newspapers

Table 4.4 presented the data which sought to determine the dominant frame used in reporting issues relating to presidential primaries of political parties during the run off to the 2023 presidential elections in the selected newspapers. It was found that ethnic frame which accounted for 22.2% dominated in the framing approach. This is followed by religious frame which accounted for 20.6% of the story frames. On the other hand, age frame had 13.1%, political strategy and conflict frame with 8.0% each, national security frame had 6.4%, good governance frame with 5.9%, history frame had 5.7%, and horserace frame had 5.2%. However, electoral violence and miscellaneous were low on the framing approach of the selected newspapers.

This result shows that the selected newspapers (*Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Sun* newspapers) focused more on the ethnic, religious, age, political strategy, conflict, as well as national security in reporting issues relating to presidential primaries of political parties during the run off to the 2023 presidential elections in the selected newspapers.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined the newspaper framing of political parties' primary elections in the runoff to 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria. The data gathered and analysed as revealed in table 1 shows that the newspapers gave much attention to issues on the presidential primaries of political parties leading to the 2023 presidential elections. This finding is in line with that of Ogbodo, Ugbo, Duru and Jibrin (2022) and Swafford (2012) which found out those newspapers often give much attention to issues relating to election than any other issues through frequent reportage especially in a period that election is fast approaching. Also, this finding conforms to that of Strömbäck and Luengo (2011) which revealed that the newspapers usually focus more on political matter than any other issues. In terms of the story format used in reporting issues relating to presidential primaries of political parties during the runoff to the 2023 presidential elections in the selected newspapers, it was revealed that most of the issues representing (33.2%) were reported in news story format. This may be because the newspapers present the happenings as it was to the audience in a bid to satisfy their need for current information before setting agenda around it through writing of feature articles, editorials, opinions and other contents. On the other hand, features accounted for 84 stories representing 21.6% of the formats used in presenting issues relating to the primary elections of political parties in the runoff to the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria. Other formats used in presenting the issues include pictures with 51 stories representing 13.1%, editorials with 42 stories representing 10.8%, and cartoons with 38 stories representing (9.8%) among others. This shows that the newspapers gave much attention to issues relating to the presidential primaries of political parties during the runoff to the 2023 presidential elections.

In ascertaining the degree of prominence given to issues relating to presidential primaries of political parties during the run off to the 2023 presidential elections in the selected newspapers, it was found that most of the stories find their ways to the front page of the newspapers with 177 stories representing 45.6%. This is as a result of the high interest that Nigerians have in getting to know who won the ticket of each political party in the primary election coupled with myriads of defections and campaigns that happened during the period. Those that appeared on the inner pages have a total of 153 stories representing 39.4% while those at the back pages have a total of 58 stories representing 14.9% of the total stories reported. With this finding, it is clear that the newspapers gave much prominence to issues relating to the presidential primaries of political parties during the period to a very large extent. This finding provided a backup to the submission of Drufuca (2014) and Besley & Prat (2016) which stated that newspapers in Nigeria provide enough information to the audience on presidential elections primaries in a bid to guide and instill choice of candidates in the mind of their audience. In other words, the media by giving much prominence to the presidential primaries of political parties in the runoff to the 2023 presidential elections may be as a result of some certain factors which may include the interest of political gladiators.

The last objective of this study was to determine the dominant frame used in reporting issues relating to presidential primaries of political parties during the run off to the 2023 presidential elections in the selected newspapers. A total of 11 frame types were identified with the ethnic frame having the highest number of occurrences, contrary to the findings of the study by Ekeanyanwu (2015) that human interest and history was the most important issue as at 2015 general election. As revealed in table 4.4, the dominant framing approaches adopted by the selected newspapers in reporting issues relating to presidential primaries of political parties during the run off to the 2023 presidential elections was ethnic frame with 86 stories representing 22.2%. This finding negates that of Ogbodo, Ugbo, Duru and Jibrin (2022) as well as that of Elega, Oloyede & Özad (2021) which established that political interest frame dominated the coverage of general elections in Nigeria. However, this current study mainly focused on presidential primaries of political parties during the run off to the 2023 presidential elections and not the broader context of the presidential election that Ogbodo, Ugbo, Duru and Jibrin (2022) examined. The data presented and analysed also revealed that religious frame came second in the frames that dominated the newspaper reportage of presidential primaries of political parties leading to the 2023 presidential election with 80 stories representing 20.6% of the story frames. On the other hand, age frame had 31 stories representing 13.1% while conflict frame and political strategy frame had 31 stories representing 8.9% each. The domination of religious frame as well as that of ethnic frame is linked to the clamour for a shift of power to the southern part of the nation after the eight years of president Muhammadu Buhari from the northern part as well as the call for a Christian candidate and or running mate by the Christian faithful in the nation. One point to note here is that the locations of the newspapers (*Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Sun* newspapers) was among the determinants of the kind of frames that dominated their reports on the presidential primaries of political parties. The presence of conflict and political

frames is as a result of misunderstandings and several issues within the political parties especially Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) over zoning and the choice of party chairman and also in the APC where it was that alleged some cabals seem to be in support of the then Vice President (Professor Yemi Osinbajo). The finding shows that the three selected newspapers (*Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Sun* newspapers) focused more on ethnicity, religion as well as age frames in reporting issues relating to presidential primaries of political parties during the runoff to the 2023 presidential elections in the selected newspapers. The implication of this is that the newspapers set agenda through their dominant frames in which ethnicity and religion take precedence over what the candidates have for the nation.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the result of this study, it is concluded that the studied newspapers (*Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Sun* newspapers), during the period of study, gave prominence to presidential primary elections thus delivering on their agenda setting role to the society. The frequent and prominent coverage of the presidential primary elections in the runoff to the 2023 presidential election by the selected newspapers under study resonates with the fact that the election dominated public discussion during the period under reference. The study also found that the issue of ethnicity and religion were on the front burner of the presidential primaries. This shows that the issue of religion and ethnicity cannot be pushed to the background in Nigeria owing to more than 250 competing ethnic groups in the country with all kinds of faith. Nevertheless, the media did a good job in reporting events surrounding the presidential primary elections of political parties but focusing more on the issues of ethnicity and religion could promote division among Nigerians. Therefore, it has been established that the Nigerian media did well in the coverage of the presidential primaries' candidates in the 2023 presidential primaries election. Even though, the reports were centred on ethnic and religious issues.

Flowing from the above, this study recommends that Nigeria newspapers should be focus on issue-based political happenings and campaigns rather than personality traits. Also, the media are widely known as the purveyors of information as the people look up to them to satisfy their information need hence, journalists should pay more attention to manifestos of the candidates during presidential primaries in order to generate discourse on issues rather than religion and ethnicity of candidates and voters. Nigerian newspapers should be fair in their choice of words/phrases, adjectives and lexical categorisations of politicians aspiring to fly the flags of their parties in presidential elections in Nigeria.

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