NEWSPAPERS COVERAGE OF THE 2021 GUBERNATORIAL PRIMARIES CONFLICTS IN ANAMBRA STATE – A STUDY OF THREE DAILY NATIONAL DAILIES

Eugenia Chinweokwu ENEOME, Ph.D.¹, Jammy Seigha GUANAH, Ph.D² & Nyerhovwo MUOBOGHARE³

¹Department of Mass Communication, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University 
Igbariam Campus – Nigeria.

²Department of Mass Communication, 
University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

³Department of Mass Communication 
Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author: Nyerhovwo MUOBOGHARE 
Corresponding Author Email: nyerhovwo.muoboghare@yahoo.com

Article Received: 15-11-22 Accepted: 17-12-22 Published: 28-12-22

ABSTRACT

This research examined how three national newspapers in Nigeria (Daily Sun, The Guardian, and The Vanguard) covered the conflicts that arose during the 2021 gubernatorial primaries in Anambra State. The researchers used the agenda-setting theory to analyse the news reports and determined the depth, direction, and dominant frames used to report on the crises. The study lasted...

eight months, from April 1st to November 30th, 2021, and analysed 732 editions of the selected newspapers using content analysis. The results showed that the depth of coverage of the 2021 gubernatorial election party primaries crisis in Anambra state by the selected newspapers is related to the framing of stories; that the direction of the reportage by the three selected newspapers significantly correlated with journalism frames, and that Conflict frames and Informative frames were the dominant news frames in the coverage. It concluded that the findings emphasised the importance of journalistic frames in shaping media coverage. The recommendations made were that newspapers should utilise their coverage of election crises to further explore the agenda-setting theory, that newspapers should use their coverage of election crises to help manage and resolve crises through communication; that the coverage of gubernatorial election party primary crises should be approached with caution regarding journalistic framing, and that newspapers should use their coverage of gubernatorial election party primary crises to encourage political participation and interaction between voters and candidates.

Keywords: Conflicts, Coverage, Election, Frame, Gubernatorial, Primaries.

INTRODUCTION

Communication has always been closely intertwined with politics and governance. Scholars such as Karl W. Deutsche argue that communication is an essential component of human activity (Meyer, 2009, cited in Shehaatta & Stromback, 2018). Mass media, in particular, play a crucial role in providing information, views, beliefs, opinions, and perceptions to citizens in any political environment. The media must be independent of the state and powerful interests to perform this service (McQuail, 2005, as cited in Stromberg, 2015).

The pioneer newspaper in Nigeria, Iwe Irohin Fun Ara Egba ati Yoruba, established in 1859 by Reverend Henry Townsend of the Church Missionary Society-CMS, served as a dominant means of expression for carrying out political activities during the colonial era (Alawode & Adesonya, 2016). Other newspapers established during this period include the Anglo African, Lagos Times and Gold Coast Advertiser, The Lagos Observer, The Eagle and Lagos Critic, The Mirror, The Lagos Weekly, The Nigeria Pioneer, and The African Messenger (Iheanacho, 2019, as cited in Ndolo (2005). These newspapers were aimed at a mass audience, but some served as means of communication for an elite audience, the wealthy, and politically active middle class.

According to Onwude, Nnomaeh, Chima and Obayi (2017), the rise in political awareness gave rise to the establishment of various nationalist newspapers in Nigeria, such as The West African Pilot, The Nigerian Tribune, The Daily Service, and The Nigeria Citizen. These newspapers served as means of political actualisation and agitations against colonial rule. During election periods, political marketers, advertising, and public relations agencies use newspapers extensively for political education and mobilisation (Onwude, Nnomaeh, Chima & Obayi, 2017; Sete, 2018, Dermarest & Langer, 2019). The packaging of political parties, party manifestoes, and party candidates are carried out through communication in the mass media.

Therefore, modern political processes are incomplete without the media. British and American elections employ communications consultants (advertising and public relations agencies) from the outset of any political process. In fact, Saatchi and Saatchi, an advertising agency, has reportedly...
become an integral part of the British Conservative Party during electioneering campaigns (Nwosu, 1992, as cited in Olaniru, Olatunji, Ayodele & Popoola, 2019). Successful management of electioneering campaigns by the Saatchi and Saatchi Advertising has been attributed to the victories recorded by the Conservative Party over the Labour Party in British elections (Gibbertas, 1993, as cited in Stromberg & Synder, 2020). Also, Guanah (2022a) opines that, “the media too, apart from their primary functions of informing, entertaining and educating the citizenry, are expected to be the mouthpieces and eyes of the public, especially in a democratic setting like we have in Nigeria at present” (p.91).

During election campaigns in Nigeria, newspapers are filled with various forms of political communication such as advertisements, cartoons, news articles, opinions, and letters. This provides political parties and candidates with an opportunity to communicate their ideas and gain approval from voters. Newspapers are a popular medium for directing campaign efforts towards substantive issues that concern the welfare of the people and development of the country. The process of political communication provides voters with more information on party manifestoes and candidate qualities, allowing them to make better assessments. The history of elections in Nigeria is replete with active political communication, and there is a strong synergy between political electioneering campaigns and mass media (Chima & Obayi, 2017). In this context, this research evaluated newspaper coverage of the 2021 gubernatorial election party primaries conflicts in Anambra state, which were contested by 36 political parties, including Accord (A), All Progressive Congress (APC), and All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), among others (BBC, 2021; Vanguard, 2021).

The development caused conflicts within political parties before and after the primaries. The campaigns were focused on personal attacks instead of issues, worsening the chances of some parties in winning the election. Therefore, this research analysed how the newspapers' coverage of the 2021 gubernatorial election party primaries in Anambra State, Nigeria handled any potential crises that arose, considering the role of the press in electioneering campaigns.

Statement of the Problem

Ever since democracy was restored in Nigeria in 1999, Nigerian newspapers have played an active role in both the election and governance processes. This participation is not only a legal requirement but is also consistent with the principles of agenda-setting and the social responsibilities of the press. While the media have a responsibility to objectively inform the public and voters about ongoing political developments, their ability to influence public opinion means that politicians may try to manipulate the media to prioritise issues that align with their interests (Lazarsfeld, 1944, as cited in McQuail, 2005). As the most commonly used medium for political advertising (Petrova, 2011), newspapers are actively employed in Nigerian election campaigns to provide the electorate with information on political parties, their manifestos, and candidates. Newspapers have various uses, including packaging, marketing, and undermining political activities during election campaigns. Given these important roles, it is necessary to assess how newspapers have covered the crisis that occurred during the 2021 party primaries in Anambra State. The researchers are currently unaware of the extent and focus of the coverage provided by national newspapers on the Anambra State governorship election crisis in 2021, which is why empirical research is needed to investigate this matter.
In addition to their existing responsibilities, the press also has a duty to provide balanced, objective, and unbiased information during crisis situations. This is particularly important during election campaigns for party primaries, which can often be fraught with crises that journalists can use as a source of news and editorial content. However, in their coverage of such crises, newspapers must adhere to certain ethical and theoretical propositions to avoid creating a dysfunctional impact. Despite this, the nature and direction of the coverage of the 2021 Anambra governorship election conflicts by the three selected national newspapers is not yet known to the researchers, making it a gap in knowledge that this study seeks to fill. The study's geographic scope is Anambra State, Nigeria, and it focuses solely on content analysis of three national newspapers over a four-month period: *Daily Sun*, *The Guardian*, and *Vanguard*.

**Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this study was to assess the coverage provided by three national newspapers - *Daily Sun*, *The Guardian*, and *Vanguard* - on the conflict that occurred during the 2021 gubernatorial election party primaries in Anambra State. To achieve this, the study had three specific objectives:

1. To ascertain if the depth of the reportage of the 2021 gubernatorial election party primaries crisis in Anambra state by the selected newspapers has a significant relationship with framing of stories,
2. To ascertain if the direction of the reportage of the 2021 gubernatorial election party primaries’ crisis in Anambra state by the three selected newspapers has a significant correlation with news frames, and
3. To ascertain the dominant news frames on the 2021 gubernatorial election party primaries crisis in Anambra State by the selected newspapers.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Theoretical Framework**

The Agenda-Setting theory served as the theoretical framework for the study. The theory was developed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972 following a study on North Carolina voters during the 1968 US presidential election (Aruguete, 2017). According to McCombs and Shaw (1972, as cited in Walgrave & Van-Delst, 2016), the study showed a strong correlation between what the media reported as the most important issue and what the public perceived as the most important issue. This theory suggests that the media have a significant influence on their audience, instilling in them what they should think about instead of what they actually think. The more frequently and prominently an issue is covered by the media, the more important it is perceived to be by the audience.

The agenda-setting theory also suggests that the media determine what issues are regarded as important to a given society at a given point in time. This is done by giving certain issues preferential treatment in terms of frequency coverage, prominence, weighting factors, and position (Rosler, 2017). In summary, the media's power lies in determining what the public is thinking about, rather than what they actually think; that is why this theory is relevant to this study.
Media Coverage of Election

During election periods, the attention of the political candidates and civil society is heightened due to the impact the outcome will have on the future of the nation. Success at the polls rests squarely on the shoulders of the elected officials, which is why politicians and their supporters often use persuasive strategies to gain and control power (Uwugiaren, 2015, as cited in Eneome, 2022). The media have become one of the most powerful influences on how an election is perceived in and outside of a country, and according to Omenugha (2015, as cited in Eneome, 2022), the media are essential to democracy, and a democratic election is impossible without media coverage.

Modern politics has made it nearly impossible for politicians to reach all of their constituents and solicit support without the help of the media. Television advertisements have become a ubiquitous feature in American political campaigns at every level of government, and it is also one of the most expensive tools of a political campaign (Thurber, Nelson, & Dulio, 2000, as cited in Moskowitz, 2021, p. 122). The news media have become the modern platform from which party candidates disseminate information to voters and solicit their support to win elections.

It is arguable that citizens cannot fulfill their roles in democracy without access to the full range of information about their world, and democracy will wither without this access, as noted by Owen (2018). Politicians and the mass media do not necessarily regard the public as an adversary. Rather, politicians seek to shape and draw benefits from public opinion, and the mass media seeks to entertain the public and maintain public attention and influence (Fortunator & Martin, 2021). The role of the media in electioneering campaigns is to provide information on the registered parties, their programs, and candidates that would enable citizens to decide on the party and candidates they wish to vote for during elections.

One of the primary functions of the media's coverage of the campaign is to increase information about the choices on offer, stimulate interest in public involvement in the process, and inform viewers about the major issues during the campaign, according to Morris (1997, as cited in Tryggvason, 2020, p.425). Enlightened voters consider the public character of the individual concerned, their experience for the job, as well as the previous commitment demonstrated by the candidates toward the well-being of society before casting their votes.

The freedom that candidates have to express their views, and the amount of information to which citizens have access in reaching their judgments, determines the level of democracy in a regime, as stated by Maisel (2007, as cited in Oboh (2016). Elections are a critical aspect of any nation's development, and the media play a crucial role in shaping citizens’ opinions and informing them of the available options.

Nigerian journalists play an important role in providing information about political parties and candidates to voters during elections through news coverage, editorials, and feature stories. It is crucial that the media provides balanced and comprehensive information on the personality profiles of political aspirants to enable the public to make intelligent decisions on whom to vote for in the elections. The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) advises that the media should enable the electorate to decide wisely on who to vote for in an election, based on public assessment of the capability of the candidates to perform in public office, rather than on what the candidates can immediately provide for the people CDD (2019).
It is important that the media provide adequate information on political candidates to enable the people to cast their votes for the more deserving candidates in the elections. The media can also support the government to implement its policy agenda for development after the election. However, some Nigerian newspapers do not provide the public with balanced and objective accounts of the integrity and competence of candidates, which hinders voters from casting their votes intelligently for deserving party members. The European Union (EU) emphasized that the mass media should provide adequate political education to enlighten the masses on the appropriate electoral procedures that would enable them to avoid the disadvantages of voting along the lines of ethnicity and religion.

Newspapers have been found to be more successful at informing voters than television news, candidate advertising, or radio, providing thorough and comprehensive information regarding political campaigns, issues, and public policies (Hollihan, 2001, as cited in Moskowitz, 2021). As a result, newspapers provide a permanent and official record of current events and have the potential to have a wider social influence due to their wider readership (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance-IDEA, 2017). However, political issues were often tailored towards the government's interests, and media coverage was unbalanced due to factors such as ownership, political party affiliation, ideological differences, and regional differences. Despite this, newspapers can work together with other forms of communication to influence people's development-oriented attitudes, actions, and behaviours, and help bring about development in society.

According to Media Tenor's research in 2004 (as cited by Eneome, 2022), the press plays a crucial role in political development. In South Africa, from January 1 to April 14, 2004, leading up to the presidential election, political parties were given proportional access to the media. This ensured that all parties were given a fair opportunity to express their views and communicate with the public.

As Pye (1966, p.156), cited by King, Schneer and White (2017), observed, the communication process shapes the political process by constantly reminding politicians that their actions have consequences and that people have high expectations of them. At the same time, the media serves as a warning to politicians that illusions of omnipotence can be dangerous, even among those with a casual understanding of causality.

In contemporary times, political communication has become an integral part of political processes and election campaigns, as noted by Feezeii (2018, as cited in Eneome, 2022). However, this often leads to attacks and counterattacks, which have become dominant methods in many election campaigns in Nigeria. Agba (2006, as cited in Apuke & Apollos, 2017), emphasises that campaign reporting should serve to guide the electorate on how to make informed decisions about their votes rather than promoting attacks on opposing candidates.

**The Role of Media in Politics**

The role of media in elections is multifaceted and can be classified into several functions. One of the primary functions is that of informing the electorate about the political parties and their candidates. Political parties engage in advertising or marketing, which is both informative and entertaining, to persuade the electorate to vote for them. For instance, the Social Democratic Party
(SDP) had an advertisement that was informative and entertaining, highlighting the party's policies and programmes to solve the problems faced by the people (Daramola, 2017). Another crucial function of the media is integration, which involves bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and fostering unity. In a diverse country like Nigeria, where ethnic and religious differences often divide people, the media play a vital role in bringing them together to understand, appreciate and accept one another. For example, the media promotes cultural programmes and encourages the use of local languages to communicate with the electorate who may not understand English. Moreover, the media have played a role in promoting power rotation between the north and south, where each region takes a turn to produce a president or a vice-president. The media's ability to confer status and influence public images of political figures is especially important during elections, where media coverage can significantly affect a candidate's chances of winning. Additionally, the media's ability to set the agenda for political debates and discussions is crucial in determining which issues are deemed more important than others, ultimately shaping the outcome of the election. (Conroy-Krulz, 2018; Daltan, 2017; Moore, 2019). Furthermore, media can also serve as an important tool for motivating and mobilizing the public towards achieving specific goals or objectives, ranging from nationalism to freedom from oppression. Also, the media's infotainment function, which combines information and entertainment, can create awareness and keep citizens informed of political happenings. The media also perform the cultural function of disseminating knowledge, values, and social norms from one generation to another or from one group to another. In election campaigns, the media disseminates cultural and artistic products for the purpose of preserving the past heritage of the people. Candidates often dress up in cultural attires, use local dialects, and speak in their local language to reach out to the electorate. Finally, the media perform the advertising function in elections, which is a planned form of communication aimed at capturing the interest of the consumer towards a particular product or service. Political parties and their candidates are increasingly aware of the effectiveness of advertising in getting the electorate to choose a particular candidate or party over others. Advertising allows candidates to reach uninterested and unmotivated citizens who usually pay little attention to news reports, debates, and other campaign events (Stephen & Shanto, 1995, as cited in Eneome, 2022). The use of political advert campaigns has increased over time, and each candidate tries to outdo the other using various forms of media to communicate their messages.

**Election Crisis and the 2021 Anambra State Governorship Election**

The concept of election-related crises refers to premeditated or planned acts that directly or indirectly threaten the electoral process, which includes the involvement of political candidates, their friends, relatives, and major supporters, electoral officials, election management bodies, election observers, party agents, media personnel, voters, and other electoral stakeholders. Some examples of such crises are pre-election litigation, the burning of campaign vehicles, party secretariats, and candidates' properties, snatching of ballot boxes, physical assaults, and possibly, the murder of opponents' family members or loyalists, and kidnapping. Notably, electoral competitions in both developed and developing countries have become increasingly prone to crises, including litigations, bloodshed, and destruction of properties, which
often affect election credibility, democratization, and popular participation. (Ashindorbe, 2018). To Guanah (2022b), the perpetrators of these infractions are referred to as Politicspreneurs. They are politicians who are involved in politics for self-gain, “they are mostly suspected as culprits in numerous problems raging the political scene, including political violence that is growing at an alarming rate in Nigeria” (p. 52).

Political thugs/hoodlums, security agencies, militias, and political party elites are also some of the actors involved in electoral crises. In Nigeria, for example, unhealthy rivalry, high-stake competition, and "do-or-die" politics among political elites are contributing factors to election crises.

Furthermore, periodic alliances between Nigerian politicians and political thugs during electioneering have been noted to manipulate the electoral process. Political gladiators across political parties typically prepare for elections in a manner similar to preparing for war, making the electoral process brutal, conflict-prone, and violent-ridden. Election-related violence is seen as a tool employed by political elites to alter, change, or influence voters' behavior, voting patterns, or electoral outcomes in favor of a particular candidate or political party (Birch, Daxecker, & Hoglund, 2020; Shenga & Pereira, 2019).

Nigeria has conducted seventeen elections, out of which seven have been organised by post-independence civilian and democratic governments, namely 1964/65, 1983, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019. Unfortunately, virtually all these elections have been characterized by violence, with election periods in post-independence Nigeria becoming more troubling, including incidences of killing, arson, maiming, destruction of property, and military coups (Adesote & Abimbola, 2014; as cited in Eneome, 2022). The transition to democratic rule (Fourth Republic) on May 29, 1999, brought with it remarkable and unimaginable trends of electoral violence, with the period between 2011 and 2019 experiencing unprecedented levels of electoral crises. Campaign periods, election days, and the aftermath of the declaration of election results have been fraught with tensions, politically motivated attacks, destruction of property, killings, and violent clashes between rival political parties (Nigeria Electoral Violence Report, 2011, as cited in Eneome, 2022). Political parties have become areas where do-or-die politics is played and electoral rules are blatantly violated, leading to a tensed political atmosphere, breakdown of law and order, and an undermined level-playing field for political candidates (Elaigwu, as cited in Eneome, 2022; Moliki, 2020). Nigeria's political parties have been characterized by factionalism, division, and inter and intra-party squabbles of different dimensions due to a lack of viable political ideology and workable internal democracy. Lack of internal democratic practices has made political parties not abide by the basic rules and guidelines related to democratic elections (Moliki, 2020).

Despite efforts to prevent election-related crises, violent clashes have emerged among political party supporters during primaries, election campaigns, voting days, and after the declaration of election results. Similar situations occurred during the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State, where the three leading political parties had splinter groups.

The All Progressive Congress (APC) had several candidates for the governorship primaries, including George Muoghalu, Paul Orajiaka, Johnbosco Onunkwo, Goeffrey Onyejegbu Amobi Nwokafor, Ben Etiaba, Azuka Okwuosa, Ikeobasi Muokelu, Godwin Okonkwo, Edozie Madu,
Igwebuike Ifeanyi, Maxwell Okoye, and Senator Andy Ubah. The APC primaries were held on June 26th, 2021, with two prominent candidates: Senator Andy Ubah and George Muoghalu. However, the party became divided between these two candidates, and there were allegations that Senator Andy Ubah rigged the primaries. This caused George Muoghalu to become upset, leading to litigations and injunctions from both factions. Senator Chris Ngige supported George Muoghalu in the legal battle against Andy Ubah, with the situation continuing until after the gubernatorial election on November 6th, 2021. Eventually, the Federal High Court in Abuja ruled against Andy Ubah.

In the governorship election primaries for the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), there were nine aspirants including Professor Charles Chukwuma Soludo, Damian Chibuzor Okolo, ThankGod Christopher Ibeh, Okwudili Christopher Ezenwankwo, Ifeanyi Odera Ozoka, Nonso Smart Okafor, Akachukwu Sullivan Nwankpo, Chukwuma Michael Umorji, and Carter Dike Umeh (INEC, 2021). However, according to Vanguard (2021), the APGA screening committee disqualified five of the aspirants, including Umorji, before the primaries. This left Soludo, Okolo, Ibeh, and Ezenwankwo as the remaining candidates for the primaries, which Soludo eventually won. However, Chief Chukwuma Umeorji was not satisfied with the outcome of the primaries held on June 28th, 2021, and engaged APGA and its candidate, Professor Chukwuma Charles Soludo, in court cases. This resulted in injunctions and counter injunctions.

During the process, a faction of the party emerged. Chukwuma Umeorji, who is a respected member of the House of Representatives representing Aguata Federal Constituency, reportedly worked with Edozie Njoku to challenge the convention of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) that installed Ozomkpu Victor Ikeoye as the National Chairman. Through their collaboration, Edozie Njoku claimed to have held his own primary election and produced Chief Umueorji as the party's candidate for the November 6th, 2021 Governorship election. The Edozie Njoku faction filed a court case challenging the authenticity of Ozomkpu Victor Oye's leadership of the party and sought the court's order to recognize Umorji as the genuine candidate for APGA in the governorship election.

The Njoku-Umeorji group secured a court order to prevent INEC from acknowledging Professor Chukwuma Charles Soludo as APGA's candidate (Guardian 2021). The already tense situation within APGA worsened when INEC released the list of successful candidates for the election, recognizing Umeorji instead of Soludo for APGA. As a result, Victor Oye went to court and obtained a favorable judgement, which required INEC to recognize and republish Prof. Soludo as the APGA candidate. These legal proceedings were protracted and had an adverse impact on Soludo's campaign efforts.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) had a total of 16 aspirants for its primaries, with nine under the Chukwudi Umeaba/Peter Obi faction and four under the Ndubuisi Nwobu/Chris Ubah faction. Three aspirants withdrew due to the struggle for recognition. The party was divided into two factions - one loyal to Chief Chris Ubah and another to Chief Peter Obi. These two factions conducted separate primaries on July 5th, 2021, resulting in two candidates, Dr. Ugochukwu Ubah and Valentine Chito Ozigbo. This led to litigation, which was later resolved in favor of the Obi-
led faction and their candidate, Valentine Chigbo Ozigbo. The party was plagued by this crisis from the beginning, causing disruptions in its primary process and leading to multiple candidates.

**Empirical Review**

Numerous studies have been conducted on the media's coverage of political parties and elections, but only a few that are relevant to the current study are reviewed. Oyesomi, Salawu, and Onyenankanaya (2019) used the *Punch* and *Guardian* newspapers to analyse how well they adhered to the code of election coverage for the 2015 elections. Kawakami, Umarova, and Mustafaraj (2020) studied the media's coverage of the 2020 presidential election candidates through Google's Top Stories, using news aggregators to collect data. Akinyele and Taiyese (2019, as cited in Eneome, 2022) conducted a qualitative analysis of how international and local media covered the 2019 Nigerian Presidential polls, with the BBC being the most accurate and efficient.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study used content analysis to collect data in order to address the various objectives, particularly examining the editorial contents of three daily newspapers on the 2021 gubernatorial election crisis in Anambra state.

The study also used the documentary or library research approach for background information, data interpretation, and analysis. Content analysis was suitable for this study because it is a systematic way of determining the characteristics of a written material and examining it for patterns, frequency, and bias. The study period was eight months, from April to November 2021, covering all stages of the election.

The population of interest for the study was 732 editions of three selected newspapers, chosen based on national outlook, high circulation, wide readership, geographical distribution, and prestige. The study adopted a census approach, studying every element in the population, to ensure reliability of data. The research instruments used were a Coding Guide and code sheet, with the unit of analysis being article/features, news, advertorials, cartoons, and letters/opinions. The content categorisation scheme were adopted as follows:

1. **Depth (Volume);** is the measurement (in inches) of the editorial contents of the selected newspapers on the 2021 gubernatorial election campaign crisis in Anambra state.

2. **Direction/Slant:**
   - i. Favourable
   - ii. Neutral
   - iii. Unfavourable

3. **Frames:** How news and other stories are contextualized by journalists and/or reporters. The news frames for this study are as follows:
   - i. Crisis frame
   - ii. Resolution/crisis management frame
   - iii. Informative frame
   - iv. Political interest frame

The coding for this research work was carried out by two independent coders. The Hosti’s formula was used to calculate the Inter Coder Reliability.
Method of Data Presentation and Analysis
Data gathered for this study were presented in tables, and each variable calculated using percentage scores. The gathered data were, subsequently, interpreted and analysed.

Table 1
Total Editions of the Three Selected Newspapers by Months of Publication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Daily Sun</th>
<th>The Guardian</th>
<th>The Vanguard</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>732</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content Analysis, 2022

The data in the above table revealed that each of the days in the week and month for the eight months study period was studied and analysed for each of the three selected national newspapers.

Table 2
Depth of Coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depth of Coverage (Volume)</th>
<th>Daily Sun</th>
<th>The Guardian</th>
<th>The Vanguard</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 inches – 20 inches</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 40 inches</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 60 inches</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 inches – Above</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content Analysis, 2022

Data on Table 2 above indicated the categories of the stories on the gubernatorial election party primaries crisis in Anambra State by the three selected newspapers, according to their depth of reportage.

Table 3
Direction of the Coverage of the 2021 Gubernatorial Election Party Primaries Crisis in Anambra State by the Three Selected Newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction of Coverage</th>
<th>Daily Sun</th>
<th>The Guardian</th>
<th>The Vanguard</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favourable</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavourable</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content Analysis, 2022

According to the data on Table 3 above, a total of 152 stories on the subject matter, representing 56% of the entire stories, were neutral on the party primaries crisis, while 73 stories (27%) were neutral. Forty seven (47) stories, representing 17% of the 272 were favourable to the crisis. The data apparently represented unbiased and objective reportage of crisis situation by the three newspapers; the data on the table were represented differently, using the pie chart.
Table 4  
*Journalism Frames on the Coverage of the 2021 Gubernatorial Election Party Primary Crisis in Anambra State by the selected Newspapers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Daily Sun</th>
<th>The Guardian</th>
<th>The Vanguard</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crisis Frame</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution Frame</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative Frame</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest Frame</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>97</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
<td><strong>272</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content Analysis, 2022

The data on Table 4 above revealed the learning of journalists on their reportage of the 2021 gubernatorial election party primary crises in Anambra State by the three selected national newspapers.

**Discussion of Finding**

The study's first finding suggests that the depth of coverage of the 2021 gubernatorial election party primaries crisis in Anambra state by the selected newspapers is related to the framing of stories. This finding is unique, as no previous studies have looked at the depth of coverage in this context, making it an interesting area for further research.

The three newspapers had 45 (17%) of their editorial contents on the subject matter on between 1 and 20 inches while the stories that occupied 21 – 40 inches were 109 (40%). The others were: 41 – 60 inches – 46 (17%); 61 – above inches: 72 (26%). The implication of this data was that greater number of the stories on the subject matter occupied sufficient space in the three newspapers.

The study's second finding showed that the direction of the reportage of the 2021 gubernatorial election party primaries crisis in Anambra state by the three selected newspapers is significantly correlated with journalism frames. This finding is a crucial observation in the study. It underscores the importance of journalistic frames in shaping the media's approach to reporting events and emphasises the need for media practitioners to be aware of their frames and strive for balanced and objective reportage. This finding suggests that the newspapers' approach to reporting the crisis may be influenced by their journalistic frames.

Journalistic frames are the lenses through which journalists view and interpret events, and they can influence the way they report the news. Different frames can lead to different interpretations of events and, ultimately, different types of news stories (Entman, 2004). Therefore, the framing of news stories is a crucial aspect of journalism that can significantly influence public opinion. In the context of the 2021 gubernatorial primaries crisis in Anambra state, the direction of reportage by the selected newspapers could reflect their journalistic frames. For instance, if a newspaper tends to adopt a partisan or sensationalistic frame, they may report the crisis in a manner that is biased towards a particular party or emphasizes dramatic or scandalous aspects of the story.

The significant correlation between the direction of reportage and journalistic frames suggests that the newspapers' approach to reporting the crisis may be influenced by their editorial policies, political affiliations, or commercial interests. This finding highlights the need for media practitioners to be aware of their journalistic frames and strive to provide balanced and objective reportage of events. Demerest and Langer (2019).
The study also showed that Conflict frames and Informative frames were the dominant news frames in the coverage of the 2021 gubernatorial election party primaries crisis in Anambra state by the three newspapers. This is a significant observation in the study. This finding suggests that the newspapers tended to frame the crisis in terms of conflict and provide informative analysis of the events.

Conflict frames refer to the portrayal of the crisis as a struggle between opposing parties, with an emphasis on the tensions, disagreements, and power struggles involved. Informative frames, on the other hand, involve the provision of in-depth analysis, explanations, and background information that can help the audience to understand the context and significance of the events. The dominance of Conflict and Informative frames in the coverage of the crisis suggests that the newspapers recognised the importance of presenting the crisis in a manner that would capture the audience's attention and help them to understand the events fully. Conflict frames can be effective in generating interest in news stories and providing a sense of drama and urgency, while informative frames can help the audience to understand the complexities of the situation.

However, it is worth noting that the dominance of Conflict frames can also lead to oversimplification and polarisation of the issues, while the dominance of Informative frames can lead to dry, academic-style reporting that may not engage the audience effectively. Therefore, a balance between Conflict and Informative frames is essential in providing.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the newspapers' coverage of the 2021 gubernatorial primaries conflicts in Anambra State and found that the depth of reportage has a significant relationship with framing of stories. The direction of reportage also showed a significant correlation with journalism frames, with conflict frames and informative frames being the dominant frames used by the newspapers. These findings emphasise the importance of journalistic frames in shaping media coverage and highlight the need for media practitioners to be aware of their frames and strive for balanced and objective reportage. These concepts are central to the relationship between politics and the press, known as political communication. Therefore, newspapers are considered to be effective means of achieving political communication goals.

Recommendations

The study provided several recommendations, including:

i. Newspapers should utilise their coverage of election crises to further explore the agenda-setting theory.

ii. Newspapers should use their coverage of election crises to help manage and resolve crises through communication.

iii. The coverage of gubernatorial election party primary crises should be approached with caution regarding journalistic framing.

iv. Newspapers should use their coverage of gubernatorial election party primary crises to encourage political participation and interaction between voters and candidates.

v. Media practitioners should be trained to recognise and apply different journalistic frames in their reporting to provide balanced and informative coverage of events.
References


Tryggvason, P. O. (2020). The winner-loser spiral in political news coverage-investigating the impact of poll coverage on subsequent party coverage. *Political Communication.*
