

# Press Framing and Coverage of President Muhammadu Buhari's 2019 Election Campaign Rhetoric

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## Abstract

The research, "Press Framing and Coverage of President Muhammadu Buhari's 2019 Election Campaign Rhetoric", set out to examine the way and manner in which *The Guardian*, *Daily Trust*, *Daily Sun* and *The Nation* newspapers framed the 2019 President Muhammadu Buhari campaign rhetoric. Systemic functional grammar theory and agenda setting theories guide the study. The study uses content analysis as the research methodology. The period of study covers from November 18, 2018 to January 31, 2019). The total population of the study is 296 of the selected newspaper editions. Further, the study adopts multistage sampling, beginning with purposive sampling technique to select *Daily Sun*, *The Nation*, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust* newspapers and thereafter uses the systematic random sampling technique to get a sample size of 64. The content categories studied include straight news, feature, editorial, pictures, comments, opinions, cartoon among others, while units of analysis are headlines and article topics. Findings reveal that the newspapers use different patterns of framing, such as positive, negative and neutral, economic, poverty reduction, corruption among other frames. The study concludes that newspapers framed issues such as campaign responsibly as this will give members of the electorate clear picture of issues in their domain. The study, therefore, recommends that framing of electoral promises by politicians should be subjected to adequate investigations and interpretations in the reportage by newspaper establishments.

**Keywords:** Framing, newspaper agenda setting, rhetoric, election, politics.

## Introduction

Actualisation of political ambition cannot be possible without the involvement of the mass media. Politics and journalism, in Nigeria, began as far back as the inception of the first newspaper, "*Iwe Iroyin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba*", which means a print news medium that was meant for the Egba and Yoruba people. The newspaper, which was a brain child of Reverend Henry Townsend and the first to be published in an African language, according to the publisher was to open the eyes of the people through reading of activities in their domain and to also pave way for them to begin to seek for information (Duyile (2008) in Daramola (2013).

Duyile in Alawode and Adesanya, (2015) while recounting the success of Reverend Henry Townsend said, he was able to come to limelight even though it took a long period, but his prestige, influence and fame were possible through the establishment of *Iwe Iroyin* in 1859. They further posit that; the local print medium was the main catalyst that Reverend Henry Townsend used to spread his political agenda. The newspaper, started as a community based information platform mainly for evangelism, but it had a lot of impact on the political arena.

Deducing from the foregoing, there is no denying the fact that politics and journalism are put side by side. In other words, politics cannot survive without the mass media (newspapers) and vice-versa, both in Nigeria and in the world at large. Those who made fame before in the

political space were largely connected to journalistic efforts, which can be either through news, features, editorials, advertisements, cartoons, comments, opinions, pictures to mention but a few.

From the foregoing, framing of issues and personalities is one of the techniques that the mass media deploy with a view to affecting people's perceptions or views. Auerbach and Bloch-Elkon (2005) opine that due to over reliance of the masses on the mass media for education, entertainment, information and enlightenment for them to be able to take decision that affect them, mass media frame issues along these lines. They further note that:

When the media place stories in specific frames, they lend a different meaning to the news. The media increase or decrease the salience of issues, which allow the public to remember and make judgments on such issues. Framing assumes that subtle changes in the wording of the description of a situation might affect how audience members think about the situation. (p.13)

In the view of McCombs and Reynolds (2002), the way and manner that the media slant report, the frequency of such a report, and where the report is placed in terms of a newspaper or magazine, or the time that the report is presented (headline in a broadcast medium) is a major determinant factor concerning the knowledge that the public will have about such an issue as well as their perceptions. This type of reportage is a good platform for people to continue to discuss the issue, which is referred to as the agenda setting function of the mass media. Therefore, the way and manner the media framed the President Buhari's 2019 election campaign rhetoric went a long way in shaping the way Nigerians and indeed, the world at large perceived the President Buhari.

Entman (1993, cited in Ezegwu, Udoyo & Chime-Nganya, 2017) note that framing makes a piece of information more meaningful or memorable to the audience. The way a news story is written or placed in terms of prominence and frequency can affect the value or importance the readers place on it. The media influence the public opinion and attention toward the topics and themes that they consider important. According to Carstea (2012, p.97), "The approaches mass media use regarding these themes can induce specific effect in their evaluation by the public". The media and political parties share a symbiotic relationship. The former generate income from electioneering advertisements while the latter need publicity to get their message across. This arrangement is a critical component of the discourse on media commercialism (Omojola & Morah, 2014).

Sambe (2015, p.119) asserts that "Governments around the world, knowing the power of the media ... tend to hold onto it or fear the level of freedom allowed because of the power of the media toward public opinion and mass mobilization." Ekeanyanwu (2015, p. 198) corroborates that "media and politics are inseparable in any democratic culture and environment". In media contents, frames exist

or are created which affect election fortunes and influence political destinies. Herman and Chomsky (2002), in their much-acclaimed book entitled *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, extolled the importance of the mass media as veritable catalysts for communicating varied messages and symbols to the members of the reading or viewing public.

The mass media are veritable institutions which influence the perceptions that the public have; and this the mass media do through framing of issues such as political matters. The mass media are the primary means through which public opinion is shaped and at times manipulated (Amenaghawon & Fagbamigbe, 2020). They further note that, the media can form, reverse or modify the public opinion of a people in various ways depending on the goals and objectives of the media. Dapiya (2019) remarks "the media serve as a potent force in shaping popular beliefs and perceptions. They have the potential of influencing social attitudes positively or negatively through framing and reconstruction of audience's ideologies, orientations and opinions (p. 345).

The media can influence the public opinion and perception of a candidate with the way they frame and construct news reports. Framing is a "central process by which political actors and government officials exercise political influence over each other and over the public" (Oksanen, 2011, p. 481). This, explains Anyanwu's (2004) and Ohaja's (2005) positions that whatever the audience makes of media information or messages is determined by the way such messages are mediated. This means that news frames serve as means through which journalists highlight, emphasize and give more prominence to a specific aspect of a news story. According to Hallahan cited in Afomachukwu (2020), using a framing metaphor, a news frame can be interpreted as a "window or portrait frame drawn around information that delimits the subject matter and, thus, focuses attention on key elements within".

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, Nigerians went to the polling units to elect their president. Initially, the election was to be conducted on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February but it was shifted by 7 more days, after Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) complained of late arrival of electoral materials in some states of the federation. In some places, the vote was delayed until 24 February due to electoral violence. Polling in some areas was subsequently delayed until 9 March, when voting was carried out alongside gubernatorial and state assembly elections. But prior to the election date, President Muhammadu Buhari had gone round the country canvassing for vote from members of the electorate, and as expected, the 2019 presidential election campaign rhetoric of President Muhammadu Buhari that was anchored on "Next Level" received framing from newspapers. Adeagbo, Ewuola, Lawal and Awofadeju (2019) note:

Men of pen profession indeed contributed immensely to the success of 2019 general in the country, Nigeria. Electorates and entire citizens of the country were adequately informed before,

during and after the elections. But what remains unclear is the way and manner that the media, particularly the newspapers framed the campaign messages of all the candidates from the national assembly to state houses of assembly, governorship and presidential elections. These frames affected the perceptions and shaped the opinions of the electorate. (p. 76).

It is on this premise that the study investigates the frames used in the coverage of President Muhammadu Buhari 2019 presidential election campaign rhetoric by four national dailies – *The Sun*, *The Nation*, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust* newspapers.

### Statement of the Problem

Quite a number of studies have been conducted on media framing of issues, individuals and ideas (Aduradola, Remi, Chris and Ojukwu, 2013; Ajibua, Oladitan, Adesina and Bewaji, 2013; Ngwu, 2014 and Baran & Swan, 2007). From these studies, little was discussed about the framing of 2019 newspaper framing of President Muhammadu Buhari presidential election campaign messages. Thus, investigating how President Muhammadu Buhari's 2019 presidential election campaign rhetoric is framed in *Daily Trust*, *The Nation*, *The Guardian* and *The Sun* newspapers is also to add to the already existing literature on media framing of issues such as political matters.

The media have assumed and reinforced their significant roles as a legitimate reflection of public interest. In reporting political campaigns, the media sometimes get enmeshed in these cases to such an extent that Galadima (2003) cited in Okon (2018) notes that there were "accusations of sectional bias levelled against Southern news media in their neglect of some political campaign issues in their region, the same also goes to the Northern media. Corroborating, Sampei and Aoyagi-Usui (2009) posit that given the roles of the media in the reportage of political matters, there have been, political, ownership and regional interests that have long tried to influence media framing and coverage of political campaign, with a view to affecting public's understanding and perception.

Bast (2010) says that reporting politics as an issue with two or more sides is capable of affecting the true picture of the phenomenon. Okolo and Odoemelan (2013) cited in Olisa (2015) believes that media frames give meaning to events and issues and that, when used appropriately, they instigate readers' attention and interest. By giving emphasis to certain aspects and downplaying others, they capture and retain the readers' attention to the news.

From the foregoing, it brings to us the imperative of media power to frame issues to members of the public. Therefore, the gap the research seeks to fill is to know how selected newspapers framed President Muhammadu Buhari 2019 Presidential election campaign rhetoric.

### Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to determine newspapers framing and coverage of President Muhammadu Buhari 2019 presidential election campaign rhetoric. Specifically, the research aims to examine these other objectives:

- i. Determine the frames used by the selected newspapers in covering the 2019 President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) election campaign rhetoric;
- ii. Find out the extent of coverage of the selected newspapers of the PMB 2019 election campaign rhetoric;
- iii. Determine the prominence of the selected newspapers of the PMB 2019 election campaign rhetoric;
- iv. Ascertain the formats the selected newspapers used in reportage of President Muhammadu Buhari 2019 election campaign rhetoric.

### Review of Literature

#### Conceptual Clarification

#### Newspaper Coverage

Newspaper coverage as a term has to do with the frequency of reportage of a particular issue or personality by the newspaper. According to Asemah (2011), newspaper coverage is the level of awareness that a particular newspaper pays to a particular happening. The parameters that are used to gauge the concept of newspaper coverage include how often the issue appears on the newspaper, which is technically referred to as the 'frequency of reportage', the extent of coverage known as the volume or depth of reportage. This aspect of newspaper coverage is measured through the amount of space that is allotted to a particular story. For instance, is the story in fully page, half or quarter pages? The stories that occupy the entirety of a page are seen to have been given more recognition compared to the ones that are of half pages, and that of half pages got more attention than stories on quarter pages (Olijo, 2016).

Another parameter used to determine the concept of newspaper coverage is prominence. By prominence, it means the importance given to the issue that has been reported. This is usually the function of where the story appears. In newspaper page planning, there are stories that appear on front pages, back pages, inside front pages, inside back pages, inside pages, centre pages (centre spread) and so on. Therefore, stories that appear on the front pages are usually regarded as been given more attention because they attract the attention of the reader. The ones that are found on the back pages are said to have been given more recognition than the ones on the centre pages, while the stories that appear on the centre pages are normally considered as receiving more prominence than those on centre spread while those on centre spread are considered as receiving more prominence than those on inside page. Other measuring instruments are the manner in which the stories were

presented to the public, and these are referred to as the content presentation formats, which include news format, editorials, features, columns, illustrations, cartoons, pictures, adverts depending on the interest of the researcher (Igwebuike, 2017).

### **Election and Election Campaign**

Aderibigbe (2006) says, elections are well known exercises that people use to show their sentiments, opinions and perceptions about a particular candidate, issue or phenomenon. Similarly, Nnadozie (2004) describes elections as the present-time and globally recognised platform through which by going to the polling units and other arranged mechanisms, people are openly and procedurally picked out to represent a body or community in a larger entity or government.

Similarly, Olisa (2015) remarks that, election is an official arrangement that enables people to choose an individual or group of persons to be in government. This means that election is a process through which the public make decisions on the kind of people they want to formulate policies and implement programmes on their behalf. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th century. Thus, according to Momoh and Adejumbi (1999), cited in Olisa (2015), elections are very key in the success and continuation of democracy, and this made possible through the animating force they provide for representative government. On the one hand, elections are means through which legalization instruments designed by the state are conferred on certain individuals for the interest of the state. In other words, elections are legitimate means that a society, community or an organisation gives to others to ensure accountability.

The concept “political campaign”, which can be used in place of election campaign or campaign is, according to the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (2009), simple utterances that people who aspire to occupy an office or position use consistently during the period of talking to the would-be electorates to persuade them in their favour. Similarly, Aduradola and Ojukwu (2013) describes campaign message as powerful and sturdy instruments that political actors employ to convey what they have in terms of policies and programmes to the masses with the purpose of wooing the electorates to their side.

In the views of Gingsberg (2009) cited in Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2011) political campaign is an orderly or methodical activity put in place by an aspirant or candidate under a political party seeking to become a government official by presenting his or her intended policies and programmes so as to attract, stimulate, seduce and gain the support of voters in an election. They also argue that a political campaign is a function of elements such as involvement of competent public relations personnel, opinion poll, the use of the broadcast mass media, sending of mails and vigorous use of the most effective and expansive medium of information dissemination-the Internet.

### **Agenda-Setting**

Agenda-setting as a concept all started with Walter Lippmann in 1922 when he wrote a book on public opinion. Lippmann was of the opinion that the mass media are the principal connection between events in the world and the images in the minds of the public. Without using the term ‘agenda-setting’, Walter Lippmann was writing what we today would call ‘agenda-setting’ (Asemah, Nwammuo & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017, pp.73-74). Next was Bernard Shaw who observed that the press “may not be successful much of the time in telling the people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. The world will look different to different people”. Cohen corroborates this, “depending on the map that is drawn for them by writers, editors and publishers of the paper they read” (Asemah, Nwammuo & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017, p.74).

Agenda-setting was finally brought to limelight through the efforts of Maxell McCombs and Donald Shaw in the study on the 1968 American presidential election. In the study, they demonstrated a strong correlation coefficient between what one hundred residents of Chapel Hill and North Carolina thought was the most important election issue and what the local and national news media reported was the most important issues. By comparing the salience of issues in news content with the public’s perceptions of the most important election issue, McCombs and Shaw were able to determine the degree to which the media determine public opinion (McCombs & Shaw, 1968).

The foregoing statement means that the mass media in all their forms, set agenda for the people to follow, thereby affirming the earlier statement that the mass media raise salient issues that are in the society for the public to start to think along that path. McQuail (2010, p. 512) supports the above assertion by insisting that the “main idea behind agenda-setting lies in the fact that news media indicate to the public what the main issues of the day are and this is reflected in what the public perceives as the main issues”.

### **Media Framing**

According to Entman (1993, p.52), “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”. In this manner, frames offer both a diagnosis and a prescription to a complex problem or event (Nisbet, 2009). Frame is a technique used to analyze media content found in newspapers, radio programs, advertisements, cartoons, and other sources to determine the material’s underlying meaning (Goffman 1974) cited in Louine (2016, p. 18). Ofori-Birikorang (2010) contends that “Through news framing the media provide knowledge to their audiences, and such knowledge, in turn, exerts crucial influence in deciding the direction of citizens’ understanding and possible actions they take”. “Framing analysis can

examine messages as they are shaped by reporters and editors and by public relations sources attempting to promote an idea or opinion". Corroborating, Ngoa (2012, p. 13) states that framing is "a means through which an issue is given a particular meaning". Ngoa goes further and asserts that: "Framing means the selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described, (p.13).

### **Concept of Rhetoric**

The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2013 edition) defines rhetoric as "the art of discourse; the skill in the use of language; the power of pleasing or persuading" (p. 1080). This means that rhetoric is the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques. An Oxford online dictionary explains rhetoric as, the language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect, but which is often regarded as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content. Similarly, information on the meaning of rhetoric from (<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/rhetoricdefinitions.htm>) defines it as, the study and use of written, spoken and visual language. It investigates how language is used to organize and maintain social groups, construct meanings and identities, coordinate behaviour, mediate power, produce change, and create knowledge (<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/rhetoricdefinitions.htm>).

According to Plato, rhetoric is the "art of enhancing the soul, the art of enhancing the soul by discourse" (Gerald A. Hauser, Georgw Kennedy; Lloyd Bitzer and George Campbell, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/rhetoricdefinitions.htm>). The faculty of discovering in any particular case all of the available means of persuasion (Aristotle). This means that rhetoric is the art of speaking well; applying reason to imagination for better moving of will. It is also the art or talent by which discourse is accepted to the end; that which creates an informed appetite for the good. Rhetoric equally means the art of framing an argument so that it can be appreciated by an audience or the mode of altering reality, not by direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action. It is an instrumental use of language; one person engages another person in an exchange of symbols to accomplish some goals. Rhetoric is communication that attempts to coordinate social action. It is the strategic use of communication, oral or written, to achieve a specific goal (Andrew King and Jim Kuypers, 2004). For this reason, rhetorical communication is explicitly pragmatic. Its goal is to influence human choices on specific matters that requires immediate attention (Gerald A. Hauser; George Kennedy; Lloyd Bitzer; and George Campbell, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/rhetoricdefinitions.htm>)

### **Media and Politics in Nigeria**

Politicians use the media to reach out to the electorate. Media projections can therefore be deployed to achieve either positive or negative ends. Atoyebi (2011) asserts that perception is everything and that it is the media that play a political role in moulding people's political perception. Equally, Aina (2011) is of the view that media reports, analysis and rendition of issues shape and reshape the perception of the people to issues and impacts on their understanding and reaction to them. He explained that a good issue may receive a bad press and becomes a bad issue. A bad issue on the other hand may be properly dressed and redressed and the public may receive such an issue positively. Jega in Atoyebi (2011) further explains that the credibility of any election with the populace is largely a function of their perception and it is the media's prerogative and privilege to mould that perception.

Obot (2013) avers that the media has a key role in ensuring active and positive and peaceful participation of citizens in the electoral process as well as ensuring that the outcomes of the elections are credible and acceptable to the generality of the populace.

A quick look at the past history of the Nigerian press in elections indicates a crisis of interest between political parties in their quest to monopolize the media space for their campaigns. Ezinwa (2014) observes that "the partisan involvement of the media in the First Republic Federal and regional elections not only created doubts on the integrity of the elections but also polarized the country." Conflicting election results were announced by the Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (WNBS), the Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Service (ENBS) and the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) during October 1965 election into the Western Region House of Assembly (Egbuna, 2011).

Similarly, elections in the Second and Third Republics were no different. Aina (2011) cited in Ezinwa (2014) reports that "during the Second and Third republics, news content, presentation and interpretation were different and sometimes conflicting where the party in control of government in the state is different from the party in the centre." During these periods, Akpan (1985, p. 251) cited in Chidi and Ebenezer (2015) note that "there was serious conflict of interest between the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and some state-owned stations." He further explained that it got to a point where one was unable to say the station that was telling the truth.

The Fourth Republic unarguably is so far the longest democracy the country has witnessed since independence accommodating six distinct general elections (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 & 2019) and the election of four different presidents. Arguably, the media in this era have been more dogged and proactive in its role to the populace by accommodating divergent views from different shades of interests thereby leaving the audience with the choice of making decisions based on information available. Analysts, however, argue that, the media have not been totally washed off the accusations of being

partisan but that with the deregulation of the media and the entry of the social media into the Nigerian media landscape, the audiences and political parties now have an avalanche of media choices for exposure and to air their views as the case maybe. The effect of this is that, discredited media houses with time may lose audience and by implication revenue from advert patronage.

Furthermore, there is no doubt about the fact that the media have a core function of providing the citizens with relevant, adequate and unbiased information before, during and after election processes. The social responsibility function places a demand on the media to, amongst other things, give fair, balanced and objective political reports (Ezinwa, 2014). Mboho (2005, p.157) states that political functions of the mass media include creating and promoting political awareness, identifying and promoting civil responsibilities among the people, mobilizing the people towards the achievement of national goals and promoting social justice based on the responsibilities and rights of the individual in the society.

From the foregoing, the media owe it as a duty to inform and enlighten people on political issues as well as activate in them the willingness to participate actively in the process.

### **Review of Studies on Political Speeches**

Ukonu and Ajaero (2017) examined "Newspaper Framing of Incumbent President and Challenger in Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Election". This study examines the coverage, by four dominant newspapers, of an incumbent President and his challenger in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria, to determine how the news was constructed and the framing patterns in their reports. Using the continuous week formula, 28 editions spread over four months were studied. Results show that there were 110 articles on the 2015 election that captured a total of 245 frames. The history frame was dominant, followed by national security and corruption. The findings reveal that the history frame was dominant, followed by national security and corruption. It concludes that the 2015 presidential elections were adequately reported by the media but contents focused more on the candidates than on issues. The study recommended appropriate reportage of issues raised by the candidates in their manifestos, as this will provoke national debate with a view to affecting the citizens' lives rather than the portrayal of the personality of the candidates.

According to a study conducted by Akinwotu (2018) on the topic "Language and Style in Political Inaugurals: A Study of Inaugural Speeches of Governor Olusegun Mimiko of Ondo State, Nigeria", which adopted the Systemic Foundation Grammar Theory to examine the influence of language choices and meaning. The study employs the critical discourse analysis strategy. The findings reveal that, Dr. Mimiko creatively deploys lexical items (e.g. pronominals) to promote his political programmes, present himself as a committed, sincere and responsible leader. These are virtues which citizens expect of their leaders. His attitude towards his audience as well as what he says is a confirmation of his resolve to

deploy all available linguistic medium to mobilise the citizens to support his government. Some words, especially adjectives and adverbs are carefully deployed as collocates of other words in the speeches to reveal the force of the speaker's intention. The syntactic features of the data reveal the predominance of declarative sentences and declarative mood which Mimiko engages in making promises, giving assurances and stating his positions. This is with the view to strengthening his social relationship with his audience in order to gain their support.

Also, some non-linguistic devices such as topicalisation and graphology are employed as stylistic strategies with specific semantic and pragmatic import. Mimiko deploys some persuasive tools such as direct address, repetition, parallelism, testimonial argument and promising to attract and sustain listeners' attention and to emphasise some important points or issues. He employs the technique of testimonial argument and promising to provide evidence of his track record while promising to do better. These have also helped him to boost his image and the confidence of the listeners to trust him and support his government. Thus, Dr. Mimiko deploys language resources not just to achieve style but as strategies to persuade and mobilise his listeners.

In another investigation by Kazemia and Hashemi (2014) on the topic "Critical Discourse Analysis of Barack Obama's 2012 Speeches: Views from Systemic Functional Linguistics and Rhetoric". The study used Halliday's Ideational Grammatical Metaphor, Rhetoric and Critical Discourse Analysis. The major objectives of this study are to investigate and analyze Barack Obama's 2012 five speeches, which amount to 19383 words. This was examined from the point of frequency and functions of Nominalization, Rhetorical strategies, Passivization and Modality. This was done with a view grasping the effective and dominant principles and tropes utilized in political discourse.

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks based on a Hallidayan perspective are used to depict the orator's deft and clever use of these strategies in the speeches which are bound up with his overall political purposes. The results represent that nominalization, parallelism, unification strategies and modality have dominated in his speeches. There is some antithesis, expletive devices as well as passive voices in these texts. Accordingly, in terms of nominalization, some implications are drawn for political writing and reading, for translators and instructors entailed in reading and writing pedagogy.

Schoniecki and College (2004) investigate the speech of President Ronald Regan of the United States of America on the fight against communism. They identified the relevance of the context of the speech (Tear Down this Wall), delivered against the backdrop of the cultural history of the Americans which culminated in the opening of the Berlin wall.

Other scholarly works on political speeches include Oha (1994) which is a stylistic study of the war speeches of Yakubu Gowon and Emeka Ojukwu –the two leaders of the warring sides in the Nigerian/Biafran Civil War (1967-70). The study, which focuses on the nature and the

relationship of style to meaning, applies the Systemic Functional Theory (SFT) to investigate the actual circumstances of language use. The study observes that meanings are determined by contexts and stylistic choices, and that the conflict between the two sides is demonstrated in their use of language.

Adetunji (2009) examines speech acts and rhetoric in the second inaugural addresses of President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and President George Bush of America. The paper affirms that two contextually contiguous speeches may not have similar illocutionary force and rhetorical elements even when they belong to the same discourse genre. Also, Babatunde and Odepidan (2009) examine the roles of pragmatics and rhetoric in effective communication in politics and governance. The paper explores the effects of context, intention and world knowledge on the choice of acts performed in selected speeches of President Olusegun Obasanjo. It concludes that language can be a tool for effective mobilisation of people towards a desired cause and it can also be used to restrain them from taking particular actions.

### Excerpts of Framing of PMB 2019 Election Rhetoric in the Investigated Newspapers

Beginning with *Daily Sun* on January 31, 2019 headline by Judex Okoro entitled 'Buhari promises to fulfil campaign promises if re-elected'. *Daily Sun* deliberate use of the lexical item 'promises' twice in the headline is loaded with a lot of undertone. The use of the lexical word 'promises' twice, which is one of the words that journalists use to tell stories to their audience, was intended to remind Buhari that he is a man of promises, as well as that the electorates were not only following his promises since 2015, but that his promises have become 'promises'.

Promises are usually used by politicians during campaigns to convince and woo the would-be electorates to their side. Part of the promises in the text of this headline reads 'My administration has made substantial progress in the area of security, economy and agriculture. Nigerians are very lucky in the past three years, as we have tried to reposition it for the betterment of all. We promise to take Nigeria to the Next Level. According to Omozuwa and Ezejideaku (2007), politicians make use of expressions that are full of assurance and hope for a better tomorrow to sway the opinion of the electorate. Virtually all the political campaign materials are laden with promises. This is one unique way politicians hold their audience spell bound. An example is presented thus: Our vision is to take Nigeria to the Next Level by eliminating corruption, poverty, insecurity...President Buhari, *Daily Sun*, January 27, 2019). The headline was attention drawing. Media writers have realised that politicians in Nigeria are full of promises, hence, *Daily Sun's* use of the frame 'promise' in its headline. Commenting on framing, Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) cited in Pavelka (2013), observes that framing comprises of three components – language, thought and forethought; in fact, there are a number of options to frame events, statements and topics, and so to determine their meaning. Apart from other things, it can be done by means

of stories (myths, legends and anecdotes), rituals, slogans and metaphors, which determine their new meaning on the basis of comparing two different realities.

The second headline of the news report carried by *Daily Sun* on January 19, 2019 by Gyang Bere entitled 'Buhari expresses gratitude as mammoth crowd overwhelm Jos rally'. In this headline, it clearly shows the characteristics of Nigeria's election rallies, especially the presidential election rallies (mammoth crowd). If this is the characteristics of Nigerian election rallies, as Gyang claims, it is no wonder, then that *Daily Sun* used 'mammoth crowd' to convey the kind of supports that a candidate such as Buhari has in the 2019 presidential elections. Commenting on the use of words by media to frame a particular candidate, issue or idea, Akinwotu (2018, para) says that language framing by the media is an essential tool in politics because it serves to help politicians in actualising their intentions. It, therefore, did not come as a surprise that *The Sun's* use of the lexical item 'mammoth crowd' could be considered appropriate due to the nature of election campaign rallies in Nigeria.

Similar headline was used by *Daily Sun* at the 2019 PMB presidential election campaign in Jigawa State. The headline read 'crowds overwhelm security men at Jigawa APC rally'. Part of the story reads 'the sea of supporters was seen pushing it through the heavy...The campaign started calmly until the arrival of the President's entourage, forcing the ecstatic crowd shouting for joy'. Buhari said his administration has achieved 'greatly in the fight against insurgency and the revitalization of the agricultural sector'. The deliberate use of the lexical items 'crowds overwhelm security men' by *Daily Sun*, although it was intended to show the atmosphere at the Jigawa's rally, there was an element of the use of hyperbole. Hyperbole as a figure of speech connotes exaggeration. The headline, therefore, was ideologically meant to align with the kind of support that Buhari has from the North.

*The Nation* of Thursday, January 31, 2019 by Ogochukwu Anioke entitled 'I am not corrupt, Buhari tells Nigerians at Ebonyi rally', was attention-grabbing. Going through the rest of the story, the story did not reflect the headline. To better understand why Buhari said 'I am not corrupt', it is imperative to establish the context that led to such a statement. Buhari made such a statement because there were accusations in some quarters that his government is the most corrupt. So, he made the statement to dispel rumours that he was corrupt and to convince members of the electorate that he remains the best choice for them. The use of the phrase 'I am not corrupt' by *The Nation* may have been a discursive technique aimed at validating the corruption fight of President Buhari administration. Fighting corruption was one of Buhari's campaign slogans which he used as his key selling point.

The use of the lexical phrase 'I am not corrupt' by *The Nation* resonates the central point of framing, which is interested in the use of text. It is worthy of noting that framing by its characteristics pays attention to the study of ideologically based text. Describing language use by the media, Woods (2006) notes that, politics is a struggle for power in order to put certain political, ideological and

social ideas into practice. In this process, language plays a fundamental role, and every political action is prepared, accompanied, affected and played by language. Political rhetoric is highly stage-managed for and by the media; it leans heavily on devices such as slogans and snappy expressions, parallelism and rhetorical strategies. To support Woods words on rhetoric and media framing, *The Nation* newspaper captures part of what Buhari said thus:

I can assure you that I, as the President, today have never been in a position of abusing trust. As a governor of the whole six north-eastern states, as minister of petroleum for over three years and as former head of state, I was arrested, detained and investigated but they never found anything against me. (p. 6).

Applying Woods description of framing by the media, *The Nation's* judgement, here is, that Buhari is incorruptible. The main headline of *Daily Trust* of Tuesday, January 1, 2019 by Ismail Mudashir and Saawua Terzungwe reads 'My election not do-or-die affair – Buhari. This headline goes contrary to that of *The Guardian* headline of Wednesday, December 5, 2018 discussed above. The headline reads 'My return in 2019 non-negotiable, says Buhari.' This two contrasting headlines fit into what in framing is called 'intertextuality'. This notion, according to Richardson (2007), is based on the belief that a text cannot be studied separately, because texts are not consumed in isolation; they must be read and understood in relation to other texts.

However, in a letter to the editor by *Daily Trust* on Tuesday, January 1, 2019 written by Femi Adeniyi entitled 'fact-checking APC's campaign promises', the deliberate use of the lexical word 'fact-checking' by *Daily Trust*, although it was intended to show the severity of the electoral promises made in 2015 by APC and its presidential candidate, which was also captured in the 2019 campaign messages of PMB, it was not devoid of the use of hyperbole. The use of hyperbole, the figure of exaggeration is consistent with Van Dijk's (2001) use of semantic and rhetorical selection of metaphors.

To align this with Van Dijk's submissions, part of the article reads:

A quick check on the APC campaign promises has revealed that not up to 10% of the 80 lofty promises have been fulfilled till date. For the sake of clarity, nearly all the 80 electoral promises of APC have been hinged on security, improved economy and fight corruption. Sadly, the Buhari government has largely appeared to be without direction in its desired fulfilment of these promises. (p. 42)

This excerpt reveals the adoption of certain frames, metaphors, lexical choices and discursive strategies to

promote bad ideologies in the electorates concerning the person of PMB. Such frames are, without direction, lofty promises, largely appeared, sadly, etc. This, in a way, suggests a kind of balance in the reportage of PMB election campaign messages.

The headlines of *The Guardian* on Thursday, January 31, 2019 by Charles Otu and Azimazi Momoh Jimoh reads 'Buhari vows to re-organise police, judiciary, if re-elected'. *The Guardian's* deliberate use of the lexical word 'vow' is loaded with meaning. This implies that Buhari remains resolute to giving the police and judiciary a better working atmosphere if he returns elected in 2019. The use of the word 'vow' further suggests that the police and judiciary are crucial to the PMB's administration if re-elected. According to Richardson (2007), the lexical choices in a newspaper text are more often than not the starting point of any discourse analysis. The reason for this, as Richardson avows, is because lexical items often convey the imprint of society and they also convey connoted and denoted meanings.

*The Guardian's* use of the word 'vow' in its reports was part of a journalistic storytelling protocol meant to convey to the electorates that Buhari is someone that does not fail his promises to the people. This means there was an emphatic affirmation of the candidacy of Buhari's promises to the electorates. Vowing is usually used to tell others that one is never a disappointing person. On the surface, *The Guardian* can be said to be deceptive because the same promise was made in 2015 and it seems not to have been kept by President Muhammadu Buhari (*Channels Television Sunrise Daily programme*, Friday 15, 2021). In 2015, for instance, Buhari campaigned on the slogan of 'Change', and 'Change' as framed by PMB in 2015 means bringing a positive facelift to all the sectors of Nigeria's national life.

The next headline of the news report carried by *The Guardian* on Wednesday, December 5, 2018 by Msugh Ityoloura, Terhemba Daka, Adamu Abuh and Charles Gyamfi entitled 'My return in 2019 non-negotiable, says Buhari'. In this headline report by Msugh and his colleagues, it clearly, gives the impression of do-or-die winning by PMB. The newspaper in its headline deliberately used the word 'non-negotiable'. If this is the feature of election in Nigeria, as Msugh and his colleagues claim, it is no wonder, then that it is difficult to defeat incumbent President in Nigeria. Commenting on the state of electoral processes on the African continent, Elklit and Svensson (1997) posit that it is a do-or-die-affair. They cited several examples of flawed Presidential Elections in Africa to include (but not limited to) the Mwai Kibaki and Rahila Odinga 2007 in Kenya; Robert Mugabe's refusal to cede power in 2008 Zimbabwe's elections; the manipulation of the Presidential Elections in Guinea by Lansana Conte, and so on. It therefore did come as a surprise that *The Guardian* headline here suggests such a political scenario in Nigeria.

The deliberate use of the lexical item 'non-negotiable' by *The Guardian*, although it was intended to show the severity of the electoral atmosphere, it was not devoid of the use of hyperbole. The use of hyperbole, the figure of exaggeration is consistent with Van Dijk's (2001) use of

semantic and rhetorical selection of metaphors. This is because reading through *The Guardian's* report one does not get the kind of severe change the headline portrays. In other words, the severe headline is not supported by the text.

## Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the following theories:

### **Systemic Functional Grammar Theory (SFG)**

Systemic functional grammar theory was developed by Michael Halliday in the 1960s. The theory is a part of a broad social semiotic approach to language called systemic linguistics. The term 'systemic' refers to the view of language as a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning. The term 'functional' indicates that the approach is concerned with the contextualized, practical uses to which language is put, as opposed to formal grammar, which focuses on compositional semantics and syntax (Halliday, 1985).

The theory is concerned primarily with the choices that grammar makes available to speakers and writers. These choices relate speakers' and writers' intentions to the concrete forms of a language. The choices are viewed in terms of either the content or the structure of the language used. SFG is a theory of language that places premium on the choices made by language users in their linguistic performance. It provides tools for the description of the choices which manifest in specific linguistic features in the language use of speakers and writers in any given context. The choice of SFG in this study is based on its social orientation which allows adequate description of the relationship of language to everyday social discourse. SFG, therefore, is concerned with how people use language to accomplish everyday social life. It is descriptively adequate to account for the influence of social context on language use by providing tools for analysing how meaning is produced and interpreted by participants in language events. Since the discourse under investigation takes place in a particular social context (political campaign rhetoric), it is believed that certain specific linguistic features will set it apart as a distinct discourse genre, hence the relevant of this theory to this study.

### **Agenda Setting Theory**

Bernard Cohen was credited to have popularized and articulated the agenda setting theory in 1963 (Chinedu, Nwamaka & Olarewaju, 2017). They state that the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.

The elements involved in agenda setting according to Chinedu *et al* (2017) include, the quantity or frequency of reporting, prominence given to the reports through headline displays, pictures, and layout in newspapers,

magazines, films, graphics or timing on radio and television and the degree of conflicts generated in the reports as well as the cumulative media specific effects over time.

Agenda setting theory is relevant to this study because if the media set the agenda of public discussion, it is assumed that sustained media framing of the 2019 PMB presidential campaign rhetoric directly influenced the level of importance the Nigerian public attaches to election campaign. This means that the theory applies to this research because the media can utilize the elements of this theory through increasing the frequency of reportage of the 2019 PMB presidential campaign activities in the country; giving prominence to the campaign activities through headline displays, pictures and placements in the newspapers.

## Research Methodology

The study adopted content analysis method of research enquiry. Content analysis, according to Nnadiukwu (2009) is a tool for researchers to easily determine the presence of words, themes, or concepts from qualitative data. This means it is any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information. Justifiably, the researcher adopted this method because content analysis looks directly at communication via texts or transcripts, and hence gets the central aspect of social interaction. It allows for both quantitative (data that are numerical in nature and can be mathematically computed) and qualitative (data that are mostly non-numerical and usually descriptive or nominal in nature. Such data are in form of words and sentences which most times capture feelings, emotions and subjective perceptions of something) operations.

The population of this study included all *Daily Trust*, *Daily Sun*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers produced and disseminated in the country within the period under study (November 18, 2018 to January 31, 2019). The total population is 296 newspaper editions. The researcher arrived at this figure by adding the editions of all the newspapers from November 18, 2018 to January 31, 2019. This was the time scheduled for the commencement and termination of the 2019 Nigeria's general elections. That was the rationale the period was chosen. Multi-stage sampling was deployed. Multi-stage sampling divides large population into stages to make the sampling process more practical. Explaining further, Chinedu, Ojonta and Olarewaju (2017, p. 160) assert that, "multi-stage sampling technique requires the researcher to choose his samples in stages until he gets the required sample". This justifies the use of the multi-stage sampling technique.

Therefore, to begin with, a sample size of 64 was determined through systematic random sampling technique. Hayes (2019) notes, a random sample is a subset of a statistical population in which each number of the subset has equal probability of being chosen. It is meant to be an unbiased representation of a group. This technique was considered relevant because it gives every unit of the population equal opportunity of being selected.

That is, bias is minimal. The four newspapers were purposively selected. The researcher selected *The Nation*, *The Guardian*, *Daily Trust* and *Daily Sun* newspapers because they are among the majority listed and widely read newspapers in Nigeria, they are national newspapers that are registered in Nigeria, owned and run by Nigerians, the newspapers have sustained publications during the period of study (4International Media & Newspapers, 2019 & InfoGuide Nigeria, 2021).

Also, *The Guardian* claims to be independent of any ethnic group, religious community, political party or other interest groups. *The Guardian* also regards itself as the flagship of all the Nigerian national dailies, *The Nation* says it is Nigeria's newspaper of first choice among discerning readers, the one that provides the general public with information they need to be free and self-governing in a democratic society, *Daily Trust* says it is "Trust is a Burden" while *Daily Sun* claims that they are "The Voice of the Nation".

The method of data collection was through observational checklist, while coding sheet was instrument of data collection. Simple percentage method of data analysis was adopted for easy understanding.

Furthermore, the study is narrowed to only ten items which include news, editorials, features, opinions, cartoons, letters to the editor, interviews, opinions, comments and pictures.

### Frames for Discourse

The types of frames that the research analysed included:

1. **Economic Diversification Frames:** This refers to PMB's campaign messages frames used by the media to either score the administration high or not.

2. **National Security Frames:** These frames talk about the country's security situation in the PMB's campaign messages as a whole.
3. **Poverty Reduction Frame:** These frames indicate or show that there is no effort to reducing poverty or there is.
4. **Food Security Frames:** These are frames or words that demonstrate PMB's food sustainability plans or not.
5. **Corruption Frames:** This refers to slants in articles, opinions, cartoons, news, features, interviews among others that point at the corruption fight of BMP in his campaign messages or the administration's inability to curb corruption.
6. **Education Frames:** This implies words used that indicate PMB's efforts in revamping the education sector as captured in his campaign messages or just paying lip services to the sector.
7. **Electoral Violence Frame:** This refers to words either in as phrases or verbs that indicate there was violence or not during PMB's 2019 election campaign tour.
8. **Positive Frames:** Frames that are favourable and generally supportive of the PMB's 2019 campaign messages.
9. **Negative Frames:** Frames that are unfavourable and not supportive of the PMB's 2019 election campaign messages.
10. **Neutral Frames:** Newspaper contents that are neither in any of the two kinds described above. Newspaper contents do not appear to present PMB 2019 election campaign message either positively or negatively.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 1:** Population of the Study Newspapers

Year	Month	<i>The Nation</i>	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>
2018	November	4	3	6	5
2018	December	4	7	5	6
2019	January	8	6	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 revealed that a total of 64 sampled editions of the newspapers published from November 18, 2018 to January 31, 2019 were studied.

**Table 2:** Frequency of Campaign Messages in Selected Newspapers

Media outfit	Frequency	Percentage
<i>The Guardian</i>	43	26.2%
<i>Daily Sun</i>	32	19.5%
<i>Daily Trust</i>	37	22.5%
<i>The Nation</i>	52	31.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

An examination of the table revealed that, *The Nation* is highest and this may be because the newspaper is a pro

APC voice and it is owned by a chieftain of the APC, Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

**Table 3: Frequency of Front Page Reportage**

Media outfit	Frequency	Percentage
<i>The Nation</i>	19	41%
<i>Daily Sun</i>	9	19%
<i>The Guardian</i>	4	10%
<i>Daily Trust</i>	15	30%
Total	47	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

*The Nation* newspaper again had the highest in its front pages, 41% (representing 19 items). This may not be unconnected to *The Nation* being a pro APC newspaper.

**Table 4: Frequency of Reportage on other Positions**

Prominence of reportage	<i>Daily Sun</i>		<i>The Nation</i>		<i>Daily Trust</i>		<i>The Guardian</i>		Total/%
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency		
Back page	0	0%	4	7.8%	2	3.9%	0	0%	
Centre page	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	
Inside page	9	17.6%	21	41.1%	15	29.4%	18	35.2%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>48.9%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>35.2</b>	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The implication is that the investigated newspaper did not give the needed prominence because most of their stories were inside the pages.

**Table 5: Volume of Reportage**

Volume of Reportage	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>The Nation</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>	Total
Quarter page	11(6.7%)	38(23%)	17(10.3%)	28(17.0%)	94(57%)
Half page	12(7.3%)	20(12.1%)	14(8.5%)	24(14.6%)	70(43%)
Full page	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>23(14%)</b>	<b>58(35.1%)</b>	<b>31(18.8%)</b>	<b>52(31.6%)</b>	<b>164 (100%)</b>

Source: Field Work, 2021

The implication of these results is that quarter pages are the most used pages by the studied newspapers in reporting the 2019 PMB election campaign messages.

**Table 6: Spread of PMB's 2019 Presidential Campaign Messages According to Categories**

Types of stories	<i>The Nation</i>		<i>Daily Sun</i>		<i>The Guardian</i>		<i>Daily Trust</i>	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
News	17	10.3%	13	7.9%	11	6.7%	13	7.9%
Editorials	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.6%	0	0%
Features	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.6%	0	0%
Letters to the editors	6	3.6%	2	1.2%	3	1.8%	3	1.8%
Opinions	7	4.2%	0	0%	14	8.5%	4	2.4%
Comments	1	0.6%	1	0.6%	0	0%	0	0%
Columns	2	1.2%	0	0%	1	0.6%	0	0%
Interviews	0	0%	1	0.6%	0	0%	0	0%
Cartoons	2	1.2%	0	0%	3	1.8%	2	1.2%
Reviews	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Advertorials	14	8.5%	2	1.2%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>47.2%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>22.4%</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>21.2%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

By implication, PMB 2019 election campaign messages were reported more in news format (54) in all, followed by opinion articles that had 25 and advertorials 16.

**Table 7:** Kinds of Frames Adopted by *Daily Sun*, *The Nation*, *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* on PMB's 2019 Campaign Messages

Frames types	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>The Nation</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Total	%
National security frames	10 (35.7%)	3(7.1%)	6(11.1%)	12(29.2%)	31	83.1
Electoral violence frames	2(7.1%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(4.8%)	4	11.9
Education frames	3(10.7%)	6(14.2%)	10(18.5%)	8(19.5%)	27	62.9
Corruption frames	3(10.7%)	9(21.4%)	15(27.7%)	5(12.1%)	32	71.9
Poverty reduction frames	3(10.7%)	8(19.0%)	10(18.5%)	6(14.6%)	27	62.8
Economic diversification frames	4(14.2%)	10(23.8%)	10(18.5%)	6(14.6%)	30	71.1
Food security frames	1(3.5%)	5(11.9%)	3(5.5%)	0(0%)	9	20.9
Total	26	41	54	39	160	352.1%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2021

The implication of this is that the newspapers narrative within the study time tilted more on corruption, national security, education and poverty reduction frames, which were the key agenda of PMB's electoral campaign promises.

**Table 8:** Tones of frames on PMB Presidential Campaign Messages in the Newspapers' Reportage

Tones of frames	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>The Nation</i>	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Total
Positive	42(41.5%)	53(52.4%)	19(18.8%)	14(13.8%)	128
Negative	28(27.7%)	12(11.8%)	43(42.5%)	23(22.7%)	106
Neutral	31(30.6%)	36(35.6%)	39(38.6%)	64(63.3%)	170
Total	101	101	101	101	404

**Source:** Field Survey, 2021

The implication of this is that, the newspapers investigated covered and reported the 2019 PMB presidential election campaign messages, framing it from their own perspectives, thereby validating the adoption of media framing theory, which says that media make an issue salient and direct audience attention to specific issues, ideas and individuals while downplaying what lies outside the frames.

### Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings was done to provide answers to research questions asked. These were:

#### Research Objective One: Determine the frames used by the selected newspapers in covering the 2019 President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) election campaign rhetoric

The study discovered that a total of 168 frames that include national security frames, incompetence frames, electoral violence frames, education frames, poverty reduction frames, economic diversification frames and food security frames. Each of these frames has the level

of slant as shown in Table 7. Corruption frames were the highest with 32.

Though some of the frames were positive such as 'I am not corrupt, Buhari tells Nigerians at Ebonyi rally', in *The Nation* of Thursday, January 31, 2019' to present President Muhammadu Buhari as a good candidate in the 2019 presidential election campaign, other frames such as 'Fact checking APC's campaign promise', in *Daily Trust* of Tuesday, January 1, 2019, presented PMB in an unfavourable manner (see Table 7).

From the perspective of the framing theory is that, framing by newspapers or media in general confirms the fact that news framing of individuals, issues and ideas registers the identity of actors or interests that competed to dominate the text (Entman, 1999 in Santas & Udende, 2018). Corroborating this, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), say framing is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by the audience. This is in line with the position of Dimitrova and Stromback (2005); and Ofori-Birikorang (2010) cited in Msugter and Philips (2020) that through framing, the media provide important information and knowledge which often influence public or audience opinion and decision. The implication is that by constant framing of stories by the

media, people can incline in that direction and their mind can be conditioned to believe what the media are projecting or setting agenda on. This validates the theoretical assumption of media framing, discussed above which postulates that through framing, the media make an issue salient and direct audience attention to specific issues, ideas and individuals while downplaying what lies outside the frame. This also validates the adoption of the Systemic Functional Grammar in the study. The theory states that language places premium on the choices made by language users in their linguistic performance.

These findings also relate to that of the content analysis segment of the study, where positive, negative, neutral, national security, electoral violence, education, corruption, poverty, economic diversification and food security frames were employed by the investigated newspapers, which can influence the way that the audience perceives and supports the candidacy of PMB (see table 7 & 8) above.

### **Research Objective Two: The extent the selected newspapers cover PMB's 2019 presidential election campaign rhetoric**

On the extent of coverage, the result on table 5 indicated that quarter pages had more of the stories on the 2019 PMB presidential election campaign messages. A total of 94 (representing 57%) were the stories found in quarter pages of all the newspapers studied. This showed low extent of reportage for an issue that is as important as presidential election campaign messages. This is because there were no full page reports, for instance, to give detail to the audience regarding the campaign promises of PMB. The media, particular the newspapers need to step up in this aspect.

Relating it to framing theory as Nisbet (2009) notes, that the pattern of discourse control and access are closely associated with social powers. The power given to media owners make them to present issues either in support or against. Such patterns of control also extent to the most detailed structures of text and context. Thus, context control may consist of control of 'calling' a communicative event, setting an agenda. This implies that those who control the media decide on the kind of agenda to set as well as the type of frame to adopt for an issue, individual, group of individuals, organizations, tribes, etc. This necessitates the discussion of framing theory in the body of the work.

### **Research Objective Three: Determine volume prominence of coverage of the selected newspapers of the PMB 2019 election campaign rhetoric**

Finding in Table 4 above was prominence with *The Nation* leading (41%), *The Guardian* (10%), *Daily Sun* (19%) and *Daily Trust* (15%). Looking at it from the volume of selected newspaper editions studied (64), the result is indicative of the fact that the four newspapers did not set the desired agenda on the 2019 PMB presidential election campaign messages. The agenda theory says that, the media give proper prominence to issues so that the public

will consider such issues as important (Igwebuike, 2017). This result has implications on political reporting in Nigeria because it will spur the newspapers and indeed the other media houses to continue to set agenda on political related matters.

### **Research Objective Four: Ascertain the formats the selected newspapers used in reportage of President Muhammadu Buhari 2019 election campaign rhetoric**

Finding of this study revealed that most of the stories on the 2019 PMB presidential election campaign rhetoric were straight news (see Table 6). This was followed by opinion articles. This result is not good enough because editorials, which, for instance, are the stance of newspaper organisations on issues were virtually missing in the coverage of 2019 PMB presidential election campaign messages. (Ossai cited in Okunna 2002, p. 221) notes that, in editorials, "background and interpretation are provided by editorials because they explain and interpret fully, topical national issues. Editorial is one of the interpretative forms of writing in journalism, which performs a social function. It is an extension of the social responsibility theory of the mass media, which says that mass should be responsive and responsible to the problems of the society. They are also good contents in setting agenda for public discourse. This is normally done by taking sides on issues on national interest". Hence the relevance of agenda setting theory in the study.

The implication of this finding is that the newspapers studied did not set much agenda through the editorials and features, which are considered important in discussing national issues like election.

At a glance, the study found that:

1. The studied newspapers used poverty reduction frame, improve education frame, fight against corruption frame, economic diversification, positive, negative and neutral frames in reporting the 2019 PMB presidential election campaign messages.
2. The Nation newspaper had more issues on the 2019 PMB presidential election campaign messages.
3. Straight news formats were the most adopted in covering the 2019 presidential election campaign messages of PMB.
4. Quarter pages had more stories on the 2019 PMB presidential election campaign messages.
5. The Guardian had more neutral frames

### **Conclusions**

The study, which is on press framing of President Muhammadu Buhari's 2019 election campaign rhetoric concludes that economic diversification, taming electoral violence, improving education, fighting corruption, poverty reduction, improve food and national security frames, as well as negative, positive and neutral frames were found to be adopted by the investigated newspapers in the

framing of the PMB 2019 election campaign messages. This conclusion is in line with objective number one that was set out to determine the framing patterns. Secondly, on the premise of the findings of this study vis-a-vis Norman Fairclough's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, it can be concluded that newspaper framing and presentation of the PMB's 2019 presidential election campaign rhetoric is significantly influenced by the ideology of the text producers (newspaper Reporters/Editors) which manifests itself in their choice of linguistic items used in reporting. It is pertinent to state that this would affect the perception of the audience about the issue. The underlying fact behind this assertion is that the 21st-century society is a post-modern society characterized by complex social structures and relations. Through high media dependency (a situation in which people rely heavily on newspaper reports for information about events and issues mostly beyond their personal contacts as well as their consumption of media information such as newspaper reports), people get influenced, not just by the information substance, but also by their manners of presentation encapsulated in how they are framed.

The study also concludes that news stories were the main formats of reportage that the newspapers used in reporting the 2019 PMB election campaign rhetoric. This was possible because news stories are basically the main formats that newspaper outfits use to tell stories to their audience. This has a link with objective number three which the study set out to investigate. The analysed data showed that fighting corruption topped the frames adopted by the investigated newspapers.

## Recommendations

From conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Framing of electoral promises by politicians should be subjected to adequate investigations and interpretations in the reportage by newspaper organizations.
- ii. There is need for newspapers to report political issues through editorials as there were few editorials found in this study.
- iii. Since stories on the front pages of newspapers tend to carry more weight, newspaper establishments should improve on this, especially when placing campaign messages as this will make the audience pay more attention to campaign promises.

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