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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE ON CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT-*Corruption is an endemic virus which has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigeria and made the fight against corruption very challenging. This study is a comparative study of newspaper coverage of corruption in Nigeria with emphasis on Daily Trust and The Nation newspapers. The study hinges on agenda-setting theory and supported by social responsibility theory. Content analysis was used as research method. The period under review was six months (1st June-31st December). Each of the papers had 214 editions. The study found that newspapers did not adequately cover corruption with the placement of stories and the level of prominence it requires. It was also found that most of the corruption stories centered on politics, government, embezzlement and appropriation of public resources for private gain at the expense of other forms of corruption such as bribery and influence-peddling. The study concludes that newspapers in Nigeria did not adequately cover corruption with the level of frequency it requires. The study, therefore, recommends among others that there is need for the placement of corruption stories on the front pages of newspapers which attract readers' attention instead of burying those stories inside pages of newspapers. There is also need for in-depth coverage on corruption and to dedicate more space to reporting corruption thereby giving prominence to the stories.*

Keywords: Newspaper coverage, Corruption, Media play, Constitution of Nigeria, Accountability, Public resources.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The media often referred to as the fourth estate of the realm, have been an organ of the society that cannot be dispensed with. As an agency for social mobilization, they have continued to exert much influence on virtually every aspect of the society. They also function not only as the voice of the oppressed and the suppressed masses but also as a veritable instrument of influence and control (Samuel. 2014).

The media play a critical role in promoting good governance and help to curb corruption by investigating and reporting incidences of corruption in professional and ethical manner. Newspapers have long been recognized as having a role to play in ensuring that governments are accountable to the governed. Coronel (2009, p.1) says "despite the mass media's propensity for sleaze, sensationalism and superficiality, the notion of the media as watchdog, as guardians of the public interest, and as a conduit between governors and the governed remains deeply ingrained."

Media as seen by Giddens (2004) is wide variety of forms, including television, radio, newspapers and magazines that reach mass audience. In parlance, media can be the various means of mass communication including magazines radio, television and newspapers, together with the people involved in their production. The role of the media is to provide factual and reliable information including the expression of ideas and opinions. The general perception is that the newspapers are important institutions needed to uncover the abuse of power and economic malpractice (Ronning, 2009). As one of the traditional classic checks and balances in the division of powers, the 'fourth estate' investigates to expose official corruption, corporate scandals, and government failures (Norris, 2000).

Newspapers thus play key roles in investigating allegations of impropriety in the public affairs and exposing corruption practices. This role becomes even more important when existing political institutions are inadequate and insufficient in ensuring accountability of public servants, especially in a country like Nigeria which is rife with corruption (Smith, 2007) whose image as bastion of bribery, venality, and deceit has remained constant over the years and consistent with perception surveys detailed by Transparency International. Thus both in reality and perception, Nigeria is one of the most corrupt places in the world (Ronning, 2009) and consensus today is that corruption is one of the greatest evils obstructing Nigeria's path towards sustainable development.

The fight against corruption in Nigeria, is one of the most daunting and challenging tasks to embark on, but with political will and commitment by her leaders and the right attitude by all Nigerians, there is no doubt that someday, the Transparency International will in her report rank Nigeria as one of the least corrupt countries in the world (Ameh, 2007). Also, Muhammed (2009) opines that media on its part have not been silent on this issues, especially the newspapers most of which are privately owned. But unlike many developed countries such as the United States and Britain where the media had to some extent been successful in bringing down public officials, the extent to which that is achieved in Nigeria as a developing country is a subject of debate.

Indeed, responsible and forthright media have become a *sine qua non*for a society that aims at preventing corruption. This was evident as the media reported the issue of N28.7 trillion budget padding by the 10th National Assembly in March 2024. The media not only raise public awareness about the corruption, its causes, consequences and possible remedies but also investigate and report incidents of corruption, thereby aiding other oversight and

prosecution bodies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences (ICPC). Effective media are therefore critical elements of a country's anti-corruption programme. A former World Bank Chief, Wolfenshon, cited in Ciboh (2014, p.117) sums it all:

> The press is at absolute core of equitable development because, if you can enfranchise poor people, if they do not have a right to expression, if there are no searchlights on corruption and inequitable practices, you can not build the public consensus needed to bring about change.

Reducing corruption in Nigeria certainly requires intensive and protracted efforts but one way to make public servants more accountable according to Ciboh (2014) is an aggressive and unfettered press and to promote an efficient and proactive media. Ayoola (2009 also corroborate that if democracy is to survive and be fruitful concept, the role of the media in sustaining it through anticorruption crusade cannot be overemphasized and this campaign against corruption in Nigeria has been on for a while and it has been a major issue on newspapers and academic discourse.

2.0 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Review of Concepts

2.1.1 Newspaper

Newspaper according to Ate (2014) refers to a daily publication that carries news and other items.Babalola (2002, p.403) defines newspapers as:

> The textbook that provides up-to-date information on local, state/provincial, national, and world affairs; the most current analysis and criticism on executive and legislative decision-making; the latest in music, theater, television and the fine arts and even column and comics to make people laugh. Newspapers are among the most accessible texts available to the vast majority of people-literate, illiterate, young and old, students, workers, elites and peasants-in any community. Thus is because every category of reader mentioned above can find something they care about indie the newspaper's pages. Today's newspapers use design elements-story placement, type face, and graphics-to make information easily accessible to the reader. Important stories are usually placed at the top of a page. The most important stories have large bold headlines. Graphics appears next to related stories.

He further explains that the universal format of a newspaper presents information in a predictable way in a straight news story; the headline gives the reader the main idea of the story. The lead paragraph gives the summary of the story in capsule form, answering the important newspaper questions-who, what, when where, why and how. The reminder of the news story provides additional details, with the least important information at the end of the story.

Newspapers and other periodic literature and media practitioners are often captured under the term press (Ate, 2014). Also, on the advantage of newspaper, Daramola (2003) observes that newspapers and magazines like transistors enjoy the great advantage of portability because they can be carried almost anywhere, read anywhere, supplied at reading points such as library, waiting room, of offices, homes taken along while traveling or read while eating. Newspapers are chosen because they typically report relevant current events, and they carry information on a broad spectrum of issues which include: news,

advertisement, politics, education, science and technology, religion, commerce, etc. the average newspaper contains far more news than available in radio, television or any other medium (Alozie, 2009).

Newspaper is a publication issued for general circulation at frequent intervals; a public print that circulates news, and provides the most current information. Newspapers are published either daily or weekly on current issues of public interest. Newspaper is timely because they primarily covers, comprehensive in scope, covering an extraordinary variety of topic and interest.

2.1.2 Corruption

Corruption is difficult to define but everybody seems to know and understands what it is, though attitudes for or against it differs from person to person and from society to society. Corruption remains a symptom of a poorly functioning state as witnessed in most developing countries such as Nigeria (Sowumi, Raufu, Oketokun, Solako & Usifoh, 2010). In the same vein, Ribadu (2006) states that the word "corrupt" when used as an adjective literally means "utterly broken." It was first used by Aristotle and later Cicero who added the term bribe and abandonment of good habit. It is the misuse of public office for private gain; this includes a public servant accepting, soliciting, or extorting a bribe as well as instances where no bribery occur but public office is still misused, such as nepotism, patronage, theft of state assets and diversion of state revenues.

The term corruption, in spite of its notoriety is often used as a catch-all phrase to describe wanton looting of the nation's resources, stealing, bribery, embezzlement, fraud, favouritism and other ills which any civilized, morally-upright, God-fearing or right-thinking person happens to fear or repudiate (Maxwell, 2016). In an attempt to distinguish between 'corrupt act and corruption', he explains that "corruption is when individuals misuse the public power they are bestowed with for private benefits." While corrupt act occurs "when a responsible person accepts money or some other forms of reward, and then proceeds to misuse his official power by returning undue favours."

Similarly, Lawal (2012) identified types of corruption to include: moral corruption-exhibited in sexual pervasiveness, greed especially in interpersonal relationship, loose tongue, indecent dressing, etc; economic corruption-example include manufacturing fake drugs, adulteration of drinks, piracy, plagiarism, fraud at all levels, etc; political and bureaucratic corruption-include illegal, unethical and unauthorized exploitation of one's political or official position for personal gains; electoral corruption-has to do with electoral fraud such as election rigging, manipulation, ballot stuffing, registration of underage, etc.

Also, corruption include bribery, smuggling, fraud, illegal payment, money laundering, drug trafficking, falsification of documents and records, window dressing, false declaration, evasion, underpayment, deceit, forgery, concealment, aiding and abetting of any kind to the detriment of another person, community, society, or nation (Matthew, 2013). The World Bank (1997) defines corruption as:

> The abuse of public office for private gains, public office is abused for private gains when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and process for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs through patronage and nepotism, the thereof state assets or the division of state resources.

Corruption according to Edward (1996) is the process of obtaining material enrichment or opportunities for oneself and or for others, through the use of public office (or influence) in ways other than those publicly acknowledged through rules and procedures of office. This includes such behaviours as bribery (use of reward to pervade the judgment or actions of a person I position of trust) nepotism bestowal of patronage by persons of in scripture relationship rather than merit and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private use).

Corruption in Nigeria as Okolo and Akpokighe (2014) opine that it is not the exclusive pressure of politicians, civil servants, and captains of industry. Among the "common people" there is an instinctive honing of stealing skills. One should stop thinking that people suddenly become corrupt when the join the government. However, having been tutored and mentored on petty stealing from probably the age of five, Nigerian naturally explode when they occupy position of authority at any level either in private or public sector. They join the bandwagon of selfish leaders after suddenly finding themselves in the corridor of power rather than use their position to repair its ills; they conform to the enrichment craze. In other words, corruption is defined as the involvement in illegal, dishonest, or wicked behaviour which is destructive of the moral fabric of society.

Supporting the above view, Ronning (2009, p.154) argues that:

> Nothing will be done except one offers routinely hierarchically defined bribes or kickbacks for services rendered. It may be that one by handing over something to an individual official avoids paying a fine or customs duties or VAT. It is this petty corruption that ordinary people encounter in their day-to-day life. For instance, it takes the form of 'dashing' a traffic cop who stops you and insists that your car is not in order, or paying the headmaster of a school for securing that your child is being accepted there, or indeed passes his/her exams, or 'entre into an agreement' with a civil servant to have your application for a passport or and identity card processed, or having to pay directly to a nurse to receive the medicine you need.

Corruption is a term used to describe acts that are considered immoral, such as fraud, graft, bribery, stealing, perjury, lying, dishonesty, indiscipline, and debased act like sexual immorality or prevention. Corrupt act, therefore, include economic and financial crimes, nepotism, favouritism or indiscrimination and particularly in decision-making or allocation of values.

2.2 Review of Related Literature

The media have for long been recognized as having a role to play in ensuring that governments are accountable to the governed. The usefulness of the media as active participants in the responsibility to rid society of corruption and promote good government is undeniably established and guaranteed in most of constitutions of nations. Section 22 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 state that: the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people.

This constitutional role requires the newspapers as social institutions to be responsive to social problems and needs, to serve the political system by providing information,

discussion, and debate, and as watchdogs over government (Coronel, 2009). Therefore, successive governments in Nigeria have put in place several anticorruption measures and strategies such as Exchange Act of 1995, Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act of 2000 were also enacted to back probe panels and tribunals. Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established in 2003 to complement the zero tolerance for corruption crusade of Obasanjo's administration. The anti-graft body was established by EFCC establishment Act (2004).

The Goodluck Jonathan government according to Ciboh (2014) professes a new waged war against corruption, observance of due process and respect for rule of law as well as repositioning and strengthening the anti-corruption agencies in his Transformation Agenda but President Goodluck Jonathan has, three years in office, failed to demonstrate purposeful leadership and only pays lip service to fighting corruption and prudent financial mismanagement.

After being elected in 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari was expected to lead strict anticorruption probes in office in a bid to clean up Nigeria's civil service, government offices and bad image of Nigeria. Subsequently, two high-profile officials, Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir David Lawal, and Director General of Nigeria's National Intelligence Agency, Ayo Oke were sacked. The sackings came after weeks of pressure by civil society groups for the president to act on findings of the panel set up to investigate both men.

Many reasons have been put forward as probable causes for the prevalence of corruption in Nigeria. This ranges from non-conformity to religious tenets, imparted values and ideas alien to our culture, ethnicity which encourages favouritism and nepotism, a weak legal system which is honoured in the breech than observance (Okolo &Akpokighe, 2014). They further state that according to political Bureau in its reports mentioned such causes as excessive materialism generated by our individual capitalist order which emphasized personal wealth without regards to the collective interest and welfare of the larger society. Other causes of poverty, illiteracy, get-rich-mania, and wrong attitude to public property. However, in situation like this, the media have a dual role. First, they investigate and expose incidents of corruption in order to deter people who might have the mind of indulging it corrupt practices. Second, they can prevent corruption by publicizing information about the nature, occurrence, and seriousness of corrupt behaviour.

2.1.1 The Role of Newspaper in the War against Corruption

Transparency International had noted that by investigating and reporting corruption, the media provides an important counterpoint to the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, shedding light on the wrong doings of public office holders and corporate executive alike. The media can channel its whistle-blowing function and ability to influence policies and government action to in turn bring about much needed development and good governance. It is important to note that in contemporary times, the attention to corruption has shifted from the pulpits' and philosophers' arenas to that of the media's (Ciboh, 2014).

Given that corruption is anti-development, newspaper as a medium of mass communication have an enormous responsibility of carrying out surveillance, monitoring, reporting and exposing all known corrupt tendencies for a better and healthier society. This is what Nwosu (1993 p.124) calls "agitation or crusading function of the press". According to him, agitation involves a representation of an issue or stand. The media and civil society

groups have been identified as the two very important weapons to fight the scourge of corruption worldwide and the media itself is considered as the strongest force in shaping public opinion on issues.

The main function of newspaper is to tell readers what is happening in the world, including the country, the state, city and the locality (Okunna, 1999, p.52). Newspaper is an information carrier. People believe strongly in what they read because newspapers give the truthful comprehensive and intelligent account of the daily event in a context-which gives them meaning.

The media have a dual role. First, they investigate and expose incidents of corruption. Second, they can prevent corruption in the first place by publicizing information about the nature, occurrence, and seriousness of corrupt behaviour. This distinction between exposure and prevention of corruption is described as tangible or direct (exposure) and intangible or indirect (prevention) media effects (Stapenhurst, 2000). These effects are important in fostering public accountability.

The inability of citizens according to Oladokun (2010) to monitor the conduct of officials makes it imperative for the media to do the job. Media performance is therefore germane to democracy. Poor media performance seriously puts the citizenry under the yoke of political office holders or civil servant who seen to have the natural tendency to be corrupt. In spite of the fact that the media have been an active of the country's political triangulations as stated earlier, corruption has been on the increase. He further states that in 2007, the multilateral corruption monitoring body, Transparency International rated Nigeria as one of the most corrupt in the world and put the country side by side with such very backward countries as Haiti and Bangladesh. Evidence of corruption is shown in the citizens' constant criticism of government officials all at the federal, state or local government level.

There are cases according to Sowunmi, Raufu, Oketokun and Usifo (2010) when reporting on corrupt or ethically questionable behaviour does not result in immediate investigations, prosecutions or resignations, but exercises another form of sanction: electoral defeat at the ballot box for a single elected office holder or an entire government. Hard-hitting journalism can also expose flaws in policy, laws or regulation that foster a climate ripe for corruption, thus creating pressure for reform.

Most obvious examples of media potential for curbing corruption can be seen when politicians or other senior public officials lose their jobs as a consequence of the public outcry or legal proceeding that follows the fearless reporting on corruption. Examples of this kind of outcome are not hard to find-particularly from Nigeria where a surge in media reporting on corruption charges (certificate forgery) has helped to force former Speaker of House of Representative-Ibrahim Salisu Buhari and former President of the Senate-Evan Ewerem to resign their position. Also, journalists' stories can play a critical role in reinforcing the effectiveness of public anticorruption bodies like the EFCC and ICPC-even when the stories in question are not, strictly speaking investigative reports that reveal wrong doing of some kind. Simply reporting in a regular, detailed way on the work and findings of these bodies can reinforce public scrutiny of them and, hence, the independence of such bodies from vested interests within the power structure that might otherwise be tempted to interfere in their work.

The profit-driven, literally-set standards of the media have constrained the contents to reflect the interests of those who sponsor them, thus undermining the claims to press freedom

by the media operating under the free market economy and the trumpeted of the interest of the media audience. The commercial objective of profit making, which is in line with the patronage of these users, can conflict with ethics of editorial objectivity. The income from these media users in becoming increasingly important by the day in the face of dwindling reader patronage in many cases as a result of illiteracy and the usually low purchasing power of Nigerians. As long as income from media users forms the bastion of media performance, the media task of holding public official accountable in the interest of the public will remain elusive.

One of the hindrances of journalism practice is media commercialism; it also undermines its integrity. The valid but immoral claim of a typical news organization to break even and make profit on the platform of commercialism has invoked the fortitude of celebrating the sources of advertising incomes. This corporate spirit has found its way into the heart of the typical Nigerian journalists who seen to have caved in to corruption tendencies. The situation is compounded by the fact that journalists in this country are poorly paid, thereby resulting in the vice of corruption that is demonstrated in the form of bribery and other types of indirectly solicited gifts. Therefore, for Nigerian journalists to carry out their responsibility credibility, a code of ethics that is practical enough to checkmate these vices should be formulated. However, a caution exists at this point. A study of Nigeria and some other countries in Africa has shown that one should be careful with regard to what constitutes gifts. Offering foods and drinks and giving transportation assistance, which is common practice oftentimes journalists are invited to an event, are in line with the tradition and customs of many ethnic groups in the country (Omojola, 2008).

2.3. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the agenda setting theory and social responsibility theory of the media.

2.3.1. Agenda Setting Theory

The agenda setting theory, formerly developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in a study on the 1968 presidential election was published in the *Public Opinion Quarterly*edition 1972, determined the degree to which the media determines public opinion the agenda setting theory is about the transmission of salience, not the determination of opinions pro and con about a particular issue in setting the public agenda, the news media influence the salience or prominence of that small number of issues that come to command public attention. For the most part, news media in democratic societies do not consciously and deliberately set the agenda. But they do set it inadvertently as a by-product of a necessity to choose a few topics for attention in each day's news report. Because agenda-setting is an inadvertent outcome of reporting the news, this is a role that cannot be dedicated or sidestepped. The agenda setting role of the news media is an awesome ethical responsibility.

The theory focuses attention on audience interaction with media and empirically demonstrates links between media exposure, audience perception of public issues. According to Folarin (2000, p.75), 'Agenda Setting Theory does not describe to the media the power to determine what we actually think, but it does ascribe to them the power to determine what we should think about'.

This theory is relevant to this study because the media can utilize the elements of this theory through increasing the frequency of reportage of corrupt activities in the country; giving prominence to corrupt activities through headlines display, picture and layout in

newspaper, magazine, film, graphics, or timing on radio and television. The power of the media to expose corrupt acts through the elements of this theory will go a long away in reducing corrupt acts in the country. If public figures know that their corrupt acts will be giving a lot of publicity, they are likely to have a rethink before stealing public funds.

2.3.2 Social Responsibility Theory

The social responsibility theory functions as a supportive theory for this study. The 1947 US Commission on Freedom of the press according to McQuail (1997) did more than lay the foundation for social responsibility theory. This theory originated from the Hutchin's Commission of 1947 on freedom of the press. The theory emphasizes phrases like the public right to know and the public responsibility of the press.

The theory according to Ijwo and Omula (2014) came into limelight because the press abused the freedom given to them, which they enjoyed as a result of the free press. Under every free press objective flow of information ought to be which gives citizens avenue and opportunity to express them well as air their view point. But due to sensationalization and yellow journalism, this free flow of information was deterred in the libertarian system.

Against this backdrop, social responsibility theory according to Ijwo and Omula (2014) disagree with the abuse of the freedom witnessed during the libertarian era. The theory believes that the press should be free in the discharge of her duties but it should be self regulating. That, there should be codes of conduct or codes of ethics that would guide the "reporter" in the discharge of his duty; which gathering and dissemination of news. Ijwo and Omula further aver that anybody that has anything should be allowed to say it. The press under social responsibility is expected to be controlled by: community opinion, consumer action or behaviour and professional ethics.

The relevance of the theory to the current study is in the sense that it cautions media practitioners especially journalists not to disregard their responsibilities to the society, to this end, they must at all time avoid armchair journalism or use the media to cause chaos in the society but engage in truthful journalism rather than journalism full of deceit, lies and subjectivity. Journalists should also, be aware that they are socially responsible on various issues to the larger society; it is therefore very imperative for the mass media to adopt and apply ethical code of conducts in their day to day operations so as to earn public trust for grass root development because it is believed that grass root development is national development and this can only be successful through the application of truth, objectivity, balance and fairness, regardless of ownership or political influence on news contents.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methods

The study will adopt content analysis research method in finding answers to the research questions. The reason for choosing content analysis for this study is because the research is a study of manifest content of communication. This section describes the method of data analysis that will be employed in attaining the stated objectives of the study. Also, the research design, population of the study; sample size, sampling technique and procedure, research instruments and administration will be considered in this session as well as method of data collection and analysis.

3.2. Research Design

In this section, the selected newspapers will be used to examine the crusade against

corruption by the media from 1st June to 31st December, 2016. However, the study did not study the entire period as a constructed media week will be used for the six months to draw inferences. According to Berelson (2008) content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.

3.3. Population of the Study

The population of this study will be four hundred and twenty-eight (428) editions of two national dailies, *The Nation* and *Daily Trust.* The population of the study constitutes all issues of the selected newspapers (*The Nation* and *Daily Trust*), published from 1st June to 31st December, 2016. The reason of choosing this time frame is because the period forms the first six months of President Buhari's administration which rode to power on the crest of fight against corruption.

3.4 Sampling Size Determination

In order to give the two newspapers (*The Nation* and *Daily Trust*) under review equal opportunity of representation, the researchers will used constructed week sampling method for the two newspapers (*The Nation* and *Daily Trust*). In other words, a calendar will be constructed for each of the editions, beginning from 3rd June, 2016. Using Stampel constructed week technique, the researchers will draw out a calendars starting from the 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27, and 30 and will arrive at 72days per newspapers. The total sample size, therefore, will be two newspapers (one edition for each of the two newspapers on each sample day) this will be multiplied by 72 days, which will yield editions that will be content analyzed.

3.5 Sampling Technique and Procedure

In this research, the researchers used purposive sampling technique to choose two national dailies to represent a portion of the number of national dailies. Purposive sampling was used by the researcher because of convenience.

3.6 Instrument and Administration

The research instrument that was used to collect data is the coding sheet and coder's guide.

3.7 Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher used data that were extracted from the newspapers selected for the study and secondary data from the library, textbooks, Internet and other research works. However, for the analysis, data will be presented in charts, tables, and the analysis was based of simple percentage.

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Data Presentation

Out of the 144 editions, only 102 issues had corruption stories. Out of which 251 were coded stories, the nation had 140 stories (56.2%) and *Daily Trust* had 111 representing 43.8% from the analysis, it shows that *The Nation* from the South West covered and gave more prominence to the corruption stories than *Daily Trust* from the North.

Table 4.1: Placement of stories concerning corruption

Placement	Daily Trust	The Nation	Total
Front page	27	31	58 (23.1%)
Inside page	79	106	185 (73.7%)
Back page	5	3	8 (3.2%)
Total	**111**	**140**	**251 (100%)**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From Table 4.1, data revealed that 58(23.1)stories were reported on the front page both newspaper of which *Daily Trust* had 27(10.8%) and *The Nation*had 31 (12.4%). The table also revealed that 185 (73.7%) were reported inside the pages, of which *Daily Trust* had 79 (31.5%) and *The Nation*got 106 (45.2%). The table also shows that the totals of 8 (3.2%) stories were reported at the back page. This implies that newspapers reported corruption stories inside pages than front and back pages. Meanwhile, prominence is giving to stories when it is reported in the front page, which attracts readers' attentions.

Table 4.2: Frequency of stories reported on corruption

Month	Daily Trust	The Nation	Total
June	9	16	25 (9.9%)
July	12	10	22 (8.7%)
August	14	15	29 (11.5%)
September	21	19	40(15.9%)
October	17	25	42(16.7%)
November	20	32	52(20.7%)
December	18	23	41(16.3%)
Total	**111**	**140**	**251(100%)**

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 4.2 revealed the frequency of stories reported on corruption in Nigeria from June to December. Data as shown on the table implies that most stories reported by Daily Trust and The Nation started from September to December. This does not mean that there are no stories from June to August, but it was scanty compared to other months that featured prominently.

Table 4.3 Source of information corruption

Sources	Daily Trust	The Nation	Total
Police/DSS	10	14	24(9.6%)
Court(CCB/High/Supreme	10	9	19 (7.6%)
Prosecutors/Lawyers/EFCC/ICPC	28	44	72 (28.7%)
Experts	16	11	27 (10.8%)
Politicians	21	26	47 (18.7%)
Anonymous or other Sources	26	36	62 (24.7%)
Total	**111**	**140**	**251 (100%)**

Source: Field Survey 2023

The above table revealed the various sources of news stories about corruption. It can be

noticed that politicians also got much newspaper attention. This is because of the number of politicians involved in corruption charges or allegations. As elected officials who are expected to be accountable to the people, media or newspapers devoted much of their time to cover them.

Table 4.4 Themes/issues used in reporting Corruption

Themes	Daily Trust	The Nation	Total
Bribery	9	22	24(9.6%)
Embezzlement	12	30	62 (24.7%)
Influence-peddling	10	9	21 (8.4%)
Appropriation of Public resources for private gain	17	19	36 (14.3%)
Patronage	3	4	7 (2.8%)
Pork-barreling	0	0	0 (00%)
Bureaucratic conflict of interest	5	15	20 (8.0%)
Impropriety	24	19	43 (17.1%)
Others	16	22	38 (15'1%)
Total	**111**	**140**	**251 (100%)**

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 4.4 revealed themes/issues used in reporting corruption stories. Data from the table showed that embezzlement and appropriation of public resources for private gain were given more attention than others by *Daily Trust* and *The Nation* newspapers.

4.2 Discussion of Finding

On the level of prominence given to corruption stories by the *The Nation* and *Daily Trust* the study revealed that the newspaper carried the total of 58 stories on front page as*Daily Trust* have less than *The Nation*. The inside pages carried the total of 185. This does not mean that the newspaper did not give prominence to corruption since inside pages stories were more than front ones. It is because all news stories cannot contained on front pages alone. The study found that inside pages have the highest frequency of reports on corruption issues, the front page ranked the second while the back pages covered the least reports. This finding indicate that The Nation and Daily Trust newspapers report on corruption mainly in the inside pages. Thus, according to agenda setting theory, the media have the ability to direct attention to certain issues, to make them inevitable for public discussion. This is reiterated in Aina (2003) that in choosing and displaying news, editors, news room staff and reporters play important part in shaping political reality. Readers, learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in news story and its position.

Pertaining to frequency of stories on corruption in *The Nation* and *Daily Trust* newspapers, the study found that out 144 editions, only 102 issues had corruption stories. Out of 251 were coded stories. The Nation had 140 stories (56.2%) and Daily Trust had 111 representing 43.8%. to get such an average number from 144 editions of two newspapers, by implication suggests that newspapers did not adequately cover corruption with the level of frequency it required. This implies that newspapers in Nigeria did not prioritize the issue of

corruption. This finding agrees with Bolu (2016) who notes that it is necessary to place the reportage of corruption article on the front burner of Nigeria newspapers agenda giving the pervasiveness of the problem in the country and that efforts should be intensified by journalists in the area of editorials writing on corruption. This is required to raise a virile social movement against corruption in the country.

On the sources of corruption stories, the study found that most corruption stories were often from prosecutor such as lawyers of the defendant, EFCC and ICPC. This means that newspapers were not picking stories on the streets or social media but got it from the right sources for the right information. Other sources that got newspapers attention are Civil Society Organizations and politician sources. Findings also showed that politicians equally got much newspaper attention. This is because of the number of politicians involved in corruption charges or allegations. As elected officials who are expected to be accountable to the people, media devoted much of their time to cover them.

Finally, on the theme used in reporting corruption related stories, the study found that embezzlement and appropriation of public resources for private gain were given more attention than others by the *Daily Trust* and *The Nation* newspapers. By implications, other issues such as bribery and influence-peddling were not given adequate attention. The implication of such reportage on good governance and national development is that, if bribery and financial impropriety which are considered as the root of corruption are not given adequate attention but rather focusing on the fruit of corruption (embezzlement and appropriation of public resources for private gain), with a view to dissuading public officers and private sector workers and owners from using corruption for personal gain or profit at the expense of tax payers and national development. This finding resonate the views of McCombs and Ghanem (2001) that media play key roles in investigating allegations of impropriety in public affairs, expose corruption and corrupt practices. These roles become more important when existing political institutions are weak and inefficient in ensuring accountability of public servant.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The main objective of this study is a comparative study on how Nigerian newspapers covered the issues of corruption with particular reference to *The Nation* and *Daily Trust*newspapers. To arrive at the findings, the analysis of the study was based on the following variables such as placement, prominence, frequency, sources and the themes or issues of corruption. In order to achieve this result, four research questions were drawn to guide the study. To find answers to these research questions, the researcher used content analysis of the two national dailies, *The Nation* and *Daily Trust.* The period under review was from 1st June to 31st December. The study was anchored on agenda setting theory and supported by social responsibility theory. Literature review was done to make the study effective.

5.2 Conclusion

In view of the analysis in the study, it is clear that the frequency at which newspapers report corruption stories is low which suggests that newspapers in Nigeria did not give adequate attention to corruption stories in Nigeria. The also found that embezzlement and appropriation of public resources for private gain featured more prominently than others as reported by *Daily Trust* and *The Nation* newspapers.

5.3 Recommendations

i. There is need for the placement of corruption stories on the front pages of newspapers which attract readers' attention instead of burying those stories inside pages of newspapers.
ii. There is need for in-depth coverage on corruption and to dedicate more space to reporting corruption in almost every style that is, features, opinion, columns editorial and letters to the editor thereby giving prominence to the stories.
iii. Stories on corruption should also be sourced from dependable sources and interview should also be conducted to lend more credibility to the stories.
iv. Bribery and financial impropriety should be given consideration as the root of corruption which should be given adequate attention.

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