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IMPACTS OF 2027 GENERAL ELECTION'S REPORTAGE IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

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Introduction

The mass media play a crucial role in shaping voters' perceptions of political candidates and the issues of new governance by influencing a desired electoral outcome. Reportage of general collection directly shape the political landscape, determining the party, that holds power as well as the policies and how the government is form. Reportage on general election can have profound effects on social unity or division in bringing a party and its candidate to power or not.

Reportage on election campaigns often reveal and even influence public opinions and election results can shift public sentiment about government policies and the political system. Impacts on reportage of the anticipated general election of Nigeria for 2027 has far-reaching impacts on politics, governance and public perception which can be positive and negative.

Abstract

This study sets out to analyze political news stories of 2027 General Election. The aim of the study was to find out how newspapers that are based on the northern and southern parts of the Nigerian State reported political parties that have dominant leadership in the country. The study is anchored on; Critical Political Economic theory. It analyzed six newspapers both from the Northern and Southern Nigerian regions. The time frames were 1st December 2025 to March 2027. From a population of 1080 newspapers' editions, 276 issues were sampled and studied using a constructed calendar which represented everyday of the week. The unit of analysis consist of all news items relating to the presidential elections. The findings revealed that; Leadership newspaper dominated depth of coverage; news reports were predominantly slanted in favour of the All Progressive

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Congress (APC) and that campaign news stories dominated the election reportage. It was also revealed that, the newspapers did not slant their news stories because of the region where they were based. It was because of the political party in power (APC). It was therefore recommended that newspapers managers should give all contesting political parties equal level ground on coverage of campaign news.

Keywords: 2027 General Election, Reportage, Impacts, Nigerian Newspapers, Campaign News.

Nigeria is located in West Africa bordering the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria has the largest diversified set of people in the whole of Africa (Uche 1991). They are made up of; the Hausas, the Fulanis, the Yorubas, the Igbos and various minority tribes that are diametrically opposed in religion, politics and culture.

The Hausas, the Fulanis and minority tribes like the: Idomas, Igalas, Tivs and the Jukuns to mention, but a few live in the northern part of Nigeria. New Nigerian newspaper among other newspapers was established as an instrument by the northern government to fight ignorance, illiteracy, backwardness, and to protect northern interest especially by countering the negative press focus from western part of Nigeria (Nkwocha, 1999).

The Yoruba native speakers live in South West Nigeria. Herbert Macaulay, a Yoruba man, emerged as the father of Nigerian nationalism in the 1920s. This was because he used his newspaper, called Lagos Daily News, to unleashed nationalistic attacks against the British. Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, in a similar vein formed the Nigerian Tribune newspaper which is highly political and has the interest of the Yorubas at heart (Nkwocha, 1999).

The Igbo ethnic group lives in the eastern thick forest of Nigeria. Their highly competitive nature, ultra democratic attitude, intense dislike as well as suspicions of any form of external government according to (Uche, 1991) prove the Igbos to be the most difficult people to govern in Nigeria. Minority tribes like the Ibibios, Efik, Anang, Ekoi, Ijaw among others share the eastern part of the country with the Igbos. The Sun Newspaper, Vanguard Media and Daily Independent Newspaper among others are basically used as a communication tool of the Igbos in South-East Nigeria.

From the foregoing, the press had been used as a tool to protect regional interest and attain independence. After independence was realized, many state governments, political parties, ethnic groups and powerful political individuals

sponsored newspapers. These injected into the press, biases, partisanship, half truth and pernicious propaganda to win elective offices (Nwosu, 1989).

Statement of the Problem

Some newspaper publishers are politicians and they use their newspapers as political armoury. Others in the interest of their own economic and physical survival only act as messengers to propagate the directives of those that govern (Uche 1991). Thus, reporters that are assigned to political parties, share the views and ideologies of the parties lopsidedly in their reportage. In the same vein, different news frames are constructed to demonstrate such views and ideologies but news framing nature of perceived reality are rarely objective (Blumler and Gurevitch 2000).

Research Questions

1. What is the comparative depth of coverage between Southern based and Northern based selected newspapers for the impacts on the 2027 general election?
2. How many political news stories were slanted in favour of a political party by the newspapers?
3. Which unit of analysis dominated coverage of the election reportage?
4. Which newspaper gave more analysis of the reportage?
5. What level of news prominence did the newspapers give to the reportage of the anticipated election?

Critical Political Economic Theory

This theory, according to (McQuail, 2000) identifies a socially critical approach that focuses primarily on the relationship between, the economic structure and dynamics of media industries and the ideological content of media.

It directs research attention to the empirical analysis of the structure of ownership and control of media and the way market forces operate. It links the political system as viewed by Karl Marx (Adebayo & Adekunle 2025). They posit that: The class which has the means of material production has control at the same time over the means of mental production.

Newspapers' contents and impacts on the electorates during elections

Different opinions have been expressed by scholars about the general conditions or prerequisites of successful participation of elections. Such opinions include; whether the people have to be literate, or informed through the newspapers before becoming an electorate or not, the level of awareness or understanding

necessary for the maintenance of effective electoral participation and the instrument that should be used to provide these awareness as well as the contents of the awareness by the mass media.

The essence of political education in order to, measure its impact is to ensure that the citizens acquire the necessary enlightenment that will enable them to participate in the affairs of their society effectively. Such education also enables the masses to make informed voting decisions in electoral periods. The way people gather sometimes to discuss contents of newspapers, inevitably promotes critical thinking, retention of information, problem solving and political education of the populace particularly in electoral periods. The masses get to know names of political parties, their presidential candidates and any other matter that can encourage the electorates to carry out their franchise as a duty to their societies.

Political Parties that were covered for the elections.

Political parties that had been registered according to the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) as of February 2026 were:

1. Accord
2. Action Alliance (AA)
3. African Action Congress (AAC)
4. African Democratic Congress (ADC)
5. Action Democratic Party (ADP)
6. All Progressive Congress (APC)
7. All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)
8. Allied Peoples Movementction (APM)
9. Action Peoples Party (APP)
10. Boot Party (BP)
11. Democratic Leadership Alliance (DLA)
12. Labour Party (LA)
13. National Rescue Movement (NRM)
14. New Nigeria Peoples Peoples Parties (NNPP)
15. Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC)
16. Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
17. Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)
18. Social Democratic Party (SDP)
19. Young Progressive Party (YPP)
20. Youth Party (YP)

Reportage on six of these parties that have dominant impacts were purposively selected. The parties are: All Progressive Congress (APC), African Democratic Congress (ADC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Labour Party (LP), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), and New Nigerian Peoples Party (NNPP) The selected newspapers were; Daily Trust, Leadership, New Nigerian newspapers for the northern part of the country. The Punch, The Nation and The Vanguard were equally selected for reportage from the Southern part of the country.

Units of Analysis

Newspapers unit of analysis on impacts from coverage of the anticipated 2027 General Election in Nigeria, include; campaign news stories, features, political advertisements; editorials, letters/commentaries/ opinions and any other news items relating to the election. The news reports can be positive or negative, slanted or neutral to a political party. The length of news reports and the quantity of the news items are vital in reportage on a party for the election. How long a news report really is and the number of times the items are reported give the depth of coverage in the newspapers. Thus, the depth of coverage can be quantified to be high or low according to (Entman, 2008).

Placements of news items in newspapers attract the attention of the masses to the newspapers. Such placements give; on the spot information, simplicity, appropriateness of subject matter and centre of interest of the reportage. Placements in newspapers can be front page, middle page or back page.

Newspapers gave different level of analysis on political issues and events of elections. Analysis of issues and events of elections are based on interpretations of political journalists. Such analysis is distinguished by its merging of data collected and interpreted to communicate political ideas (Stromback & Kaid, 2008). Thus, newspapers gave multiple analyses on issues and events of the election to provide the electorates with prerequisites of successful election for democracy.

Design of the Study

Content analysis (Holsti, 1969), research design was adopted for this study. It was meant to analyze how the elections were reported to the electorates so as to determine its impacts.

Population and Sampling Technique

The population of this study consists of 278 newspapers. They were systematically selected using a constructed calendar. The units of analysis were news stories on

the presidential elections. The news stories were purposively sampled, studied and analyzed, (Ihejirika& Omega 2011).

Instrument

The instrument used were content categories. Four content categories were used with constructed calendar which represented everyday of the week.

Data Collection

Unit of analysis from the sampled newspapers were contently analyzed using the content categories that were established.

Data Analysis

Collected data in SPSS spreadsheet were analyzed into tabled numbers and percentages. They were analyzed to address the research questions.

Presentation of Data

- **Table 1: Depth of news coverage between Southern and Northern newspapers by story identity.**

Year	Regional base of newspapers' story identity	Total	Percentage
2026	Southern based s elected newspapers.	468	44%
	Northern based selected newspapers.	601	56%
Total		1069	100%

Source: Content analysis on Impacts of 2027 general election reportage by selected newspapers

Table one shows that Southern based selected newspapers had a depth of coverage of 468 (44%) and Northern based selected newspapers had a higher depth of 601 (56%) in the reportage of the 2027 general election Comparatively the northern newspaper's identity was higher by133 (12%)

Table 2: Number of slanted news stories on the political parties

Year	Names of Political parties	Positive news stories	Negative news stories	
2026	ADC	109 (75%)	36 (25%)	145 (100%)
	PDP	58 (65%)	31 (35%)	89 (100%)
	APGA	10 (71%)	4 (29%)	14 (100%)
	LP	106 (80.9%)	25 (19.1%)	131 (100%)
	APC	170 (82.5%)	36 (17.5%)	206 (100%)
	NNPP	59 (90.6%)	6 (9.4%)	65 (100%)

Source: Content analysis on impacts of 2027 general election reportage by selected newspapers.

PDP = People's Democratic Party. ADC = All Democratic Congress. APGA = All People's Grand Alliance. LP = Labour Party. APC=All Progressive Congress. NNPP=New Nigerian People s Party

Table two (2) shows that one hundred and nine 109 (75%) news stories were positively slanted in favour of the ADC and thirty-six 36 (25%) news items were negatively slanted on the ADC. The total number of news stories were 145 (100%). The figures on the PDP indicate that the PDP had 58 (65%) news items slanted in favour in the election reportage but 31 (35%) were negatively slanted. The total number of items slanted were 89 (100%). On the APGA, the figures show that 10 (71%) news items were slanted positively and 4 (29%) news items were negatively. Labour Party had 106 (80.9%) political news stories slanted positively and 25 (19.1%) political news items negatively slanted. Total number of news items were 131 (100%). Favourable news items slanted positively for the APC were 170 (82.59%) and the negative ones were 36 (17.5%). The total news items were 206 (100%) for the APC. The total. News items on NNPP were 65 (100%). Positively, 59 (90%) was slanted, while 6 (9.4%) were negatively slanted. The total political news items for the NNPP were 65 (100%).

From the table reportage on the election in order from the highest to the lowest were; APC =206, ADC=145, LP=131, PDP=89, NNPP=65 and APGA=14.

Table 3: Unit of analysis that dominated coverage of the election reportage

Unit of analysis	Total	Percentage
Campaign news stories	712	66.60%
Features	153	14.30%
Advertisement	91	8.50%
Opinion/letters/commentaries	90	8.40%
Editorials	15	1.40%
Others	8	0.75%
Total	1069	100%

Source: Content analysis on impacts of 2027 general election reportage by selected newspapers.

Unit of analysis that dominated coverage of 2027 general election reportage are displayed in order of magnitude from the highest to the lowest. Campaign news had 712 (66.6%), features had 153 (14.3%), advertisements 91 (8.5%), opinion/letters/commentaries 90 (8.4%), editorials 15 (1.4%) and 'others' (0.75%) in the coverage of the anticipated 2027 general election.

Table 4: Magnitude of political analysis on issues and events of the 2027 general election reportage by the newspapers

Names of newspapers	Total	Percentage
New Nigerian	42	24.40%
The Nation	31	18%
Leadership	30	17.40%
Daily Trust	28	16.30%
The Vanguard	23	13.40%
The Punch	18	10.50%
Total	172	100%

Source: Content analysis on Impacts of 2027 general election reportage by selected newspapers

Table 4 displays newspapers' magnitude of political analysis on issues and events from the highest to the lowest. The reportage of the general election shows that New Nigerian had 42 (24.4%), The Punch 31 (18%), Leadership 30 (17.4%), Daily Trust 28 (16.3%), The Vanguard 23 (13.4%) and The Punch 18 (10.5%).

Table 5: Levels of news prominence by placements of news items.

Type of Placements	Total	Percentage
Front Page	185	14.70%
Inside Page	1040	82.50%
Back Page	35	2.80%
Total	1260	100%

Data on table four reveals that general election reportage had 185 (14.7%) front page, 1040 (82.5%) inside page and 35 (2.8%) back page level of news prominence by placements of news stories 35(2.80).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study from the selected newspapers in table one shows that the Northern based selected newspapers had more depth of coverage in the 2027 General Election reportage by story identity.

Table two (2) on the other hand displays number of news stories that are slanted on the selected political parties. The table shows that the APC had the highest amount of positive news stories. It was followed by the ADC and LP. PDP and NNPP followed chronologically.

Table three (3) shows the unit of analysis that dominated coverage of the general election reportage so far. The table displays that campaign news, features and advertisements respectively dominated the unit of analysis of the reportage. They were followed by opinion/letters/commentaries, editorials and others.

Analyzed data on table four shows names of newspapers that provided analysis of the elections in order of magnitude. New Nigerian, The Nation and Leadership newspapers in order of magnitude provided more political analysis of the 2027 general election reportage.

Level of news prominence is illustrated in table five. Front page placements of news items in 2027 general election reportage were 185 (14.7%). Inside page level of news prominence by placements was 1040 (82.5%) and back page level of prominence by placements in was 35 (2.8%).

The findings of this study indicate that media reportage of the anticipated 2027 General Election in Nigeria significantly shapes perception particularly through Agenda Setting and Framing of political parties in their news items, (D' Alessio & Allen,2000). This aligns with earlier studies that emphasized on the media role in influencing political attitudes and electoral outcomes in emerging democracies. Similar to research conducted after 2015 General Election in Nigeria, this study found out that the media emphasis on balanced and fairness, were seriously suppressed by slant, which heightened public anxiety and reduced trust in the electoral reportage, (Ameh2003)>

The findings of this study show strong similarities with existing literature on the impacts of media reportage during general elections. Consistent with previous studies on the 2015 and 2019 General Elections in Nigeria, this research confirms that media coverage plays crucial role in shaping voters' awareness and political engagements.

One major area of similarity is the News Framing functions of the media.This supports widely accepted in mass media reportage that media outlets significantly influence what the public perceived as important during election.Thus the consistency between this study and earlier research highlights a shared conclusions regardless of the election cycle.Media reportage remain a powerful force in influencing voter behaviour,political awareness and perception of electoral integrity.

However, while earlier studies suggested that such reportage discourage voter turnout, the present findings revealed a more complex pattern where exposure to critical media coverage is determined by economic power as well as creating mobilizing politically awareness on citizens to participate more actively on electoral process, (Aluko-Olokun,2023).

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In comparison with other studies, Nnochiri (2000), from other contexts such as the reportage on the United States 2016 Presidential Election, the influence of the social media appeared pronounced. Platforms like Tweeter and Face book were said to be amplified for accurate information and misinformation. While this study agrees with with global findings on the spread of misinformation through slants, it diverges in showing that Nigerians electorates in electoral period display a level of skepticism toward political news items that are not verified.

Additionally, the findings of this study, had significant socio-economic and political impacts in the northern and southern areas where the newspapers are located. This can be understood within the context of Political Economic theory which to some extend expresses that "He who pays the piper dictates the tone". Similarly, this study found out that that perception on newspaper political reportage reduced trust and future voting intentions. In all, the findings contribute to ongoing debates about electoral credibility, governance and engagements of citizens in political process of general election 's reportage. It emphasized the need for reforms that enhance transparency of media reportage no matter the party in power.

Conclusion

Analysis of this study reveals that coverage of the elections supported rotational presidency between the Northern and Southern regions of Nigeria. This was because the newspaper rnese 3s predominantly slanted their news items in favour of Northern presidential candidates in 2007 general election. They equally slanted their news stories in favour of Southern presidential candidates in 2011 general election reportage.

By the manner of coverage of the 2027 general elections so far, the Nigerian press was not able to demonstrate the required ethos of professionalism, impartiality, responsibility, objectivity and balanced political news reports. This was because slant in news reports and prominence were the major framing strategies that were used to report the elections of the electorates. The newspapers did not slant their reportage base on the political parties that are in their area of operation but probably because of the party in power.

Recommendations

Base on the analysis of pre-election reportage, here are key recommendations to mitigate unhealthy impacts and leverage positive potentials. For the media outlets;

1. Prioritize the electoral reportage on policy analysis and the candidate's qualifications.

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2. Vary coverage focus and maintain a neutral tone into mitigate bias and slant in the reportage.
3. Rigorously fact-check claims made by political parties and their candidates. Hold the candidates accountable.
4. Maintain ethical standards and avoid click-bait that sacrifices contexts in the reportage.

For the people;

1. Resist emotional manipulation as a primary vector for viral misinformation. For example, social media news items sometimes are design to trigger stronger emotions.
2. Prioritize on trusted sources like the traditional news use because they correlate with more positive perceptions of election integrity in their reportage.
3. Voters should suppliment horse-race coverage of electoral news items with long-form journalism, non-profit news or candidates debates to get substance beyond the polls.
4. Use a pre-voting media diet to get conflicting claims and emotional manipulation of the pre-election reportage.

For election management bodies.

1. During voting hours, update the public with available rumors and their sources.
2. Mandate a pre-election and a post-election media impact review to earn public trust and public accountability.
3. Beware that staggered release of election results amplify horse -race narratives in electoral reportage of general election.

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