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- Author (s):** Oluwakemi Mufutau Oriola, Olatubosun Temitope Omotayo, Olatunde Olufemiajayi Ajayi
- Affiliation (s):** Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria
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# National Newspapers' Framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential Election Campaigns: Perception and Voting Patterns of Tasued Community Members

Oluwakemi Mufutau Oriola\*, Olatubosun Temitope Omotayo, and Olatunde Olufemi Ajayi

Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State

## Abstract

The pattern of news construction by political journalists, called framing, could result in certain direction of perception in the public and lead to voting actions. This study analyzed pattern of framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election in five national newspapers and examined direction of perception of the framed issues. The study determined the relationship between perception and voting pattern in Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED), Ogun State, Nigeria. It adopted correlational descriptive research design which combined content analysis with survey. Sample of 92 editions of *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Sun* published between November 18, 2018 and February 21, 2019 was selected for content analysis. Questionnaire survey was based on 541 respondents from TASUED community. Findings showed that the campaign stories, dominated by the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), were mostly reported using issue-specific frames and supportive of the party. Respondents perceived framing of the campaigns in the selected newspapers as personality-focused, dominated by the APC, projected name-calling and mudslinging among political actors, subjective and unhealthy for Nigeria's growing democracy. Voting was motivated by media reportage and candidates' personalities. The study found a significant relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of the campaigns and voting pattern among members of TASUED community. Political party affiliation had significant moderating effect on the relationship between perception and voting pattern among respondents. The study recommended objective coverage and sensitive use of frames by political journalists, constructive campaign by political actors and better stakeholder engagement by the electoral umpire.

**Key words:** Framing pattern, Perception, Election campaigns, Voting pattern, Audience factors

## Introduction

The mass media as the fourth estate of the realm in every democratic society constitute an important institution due to their pervasive roles. Media surveillance function, performed through the journalistic service of news gathering and dissemination, is fundamental to other roles of the mass media in society generally, particularly in politics. According to Dominick (2011) the importance of the media's surveillance role lies in the fact that political news is constructed and presented by the mass media in such a way that much of what people perceive as political reality is experienced through the media. Other important functions derive from the basic roles of information dissemination, including interpreting political issues, connecting political interest groups, enshrining political values, belonging to different interests, and providing forums for the expression of opinions between different actors in politics (Dominick, 2011). By implication, the mass media constitute an indispensable political institution by virtue of the importance of journalism to politics. This is because information dissemination is a basic democratic ideal through which informed and rational choices are promoted among citizens. By extension of the surveillance function, political journalism has attracted various nomenclature to the media such as watchdog, fourth estate, mediator, representative, participant and advocate (McNair, 2009). According to McQuail (2010) the media play the roles of window, mirror, filter, interpreter, platform and interlocutor in the field of politics. It is noteworthy that these roles derive their potency from news as a media product.

News as media text is produced with specific attributes or narrative cues called frames, and the distinctive way of constructing news narratives is called framing. Rodelo and Muñiz (2019) assert that media frame building is evident in the flow of frames from political actors to journalists who cover political events and such frames manifest in news through narrative frameworks. Political actors are intentionally or inadvertently involved in political events and issues which journalists, in the course of performing the surveillance function, cover and report to the public. In the coverage of political events and issues, journalists employ narrative cues – verbal and non-verbal – to construct and report news through the process of framing. According to Rodelo and Muiz (2019), framing is the process of selecting a piece of information presented or positioning it with some attributes for the public to differ in their attitudes or behavior towards an issue. This implies

that framing involves selective presentation of information and its attributes regarding an event or issue. Such characteristic presentations shape public perception and the meaning so perceived further leads to particular pattern of attitudes or behaviour about the issue presented in news.

Applied to politics, journalists cover political events such as campaigns and report them using certain narrative cues which have potentials of shaping public perception about what and who matter in the campaigns in certain directions. The directions of perception in turn determine public attitudes towards political parties and their candidates which can manifest in voting behaviour. Thus, there could be relationships between patterns of framing and direction of public perception, and between the direction of public perception and patterns of voting in an election. According to Aalberg et al. (2011), framing of political issues, such as electioneering campaigns, potentially has negative consequences such as undermining political information among citizens, promoting the self-interest of politicians, reducing knowledge of political positions, distracting the public from the substance of the issue, encouraging a spiral of public cynicism, and creating a mass disengagement from political participation. Against this background, this study analysed the pattern of framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election in five national newspapers, examined the direction of perception of the framed issues and established the relationship between perception of the framed issues and pattern of voting among members of the community of Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED), Ogun State, Nigeria.

### **Research Objectives**

This study aimed to:

1. Identify the pattern of framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns in five selected national newspapers;
2. examine the direction of perception of newspaper framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns among members of TASUED community;
3. determine the pattern of voting in Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election among members of TASUED community; and
4. ascertain the extent of relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns and voting pattern among members of TASUED community.

5. To assess the moderating effect of audience factors on the relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns and voting patterns among members of TASUED community.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses guided the conduct of this study:

H<sub>i1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns and voting pattern among members of TASUED community.

H<sub>i2</sub>: There is a significant moderating effect of audience factors on the relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns and voting patterns among members of TASUED community.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study was delimited to analysis of framing of straight news stories about the 2019 Presidential campaigns in Nigeria published on the front pages of five selected national newspapers - *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Sun*. The study also included survey of male and female members of TASUED community between the ages of 18 years and above who were full-time staff and students of the community. The material scope of the study comprised editions of the five selected newspapers published between November 18, 2018 and February 21, 2019, the officially approved period of the 2019 Presidential campaigns in Nigeria by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on agenda setting and media framing theories, which are situated in media effects paradigm. Dominick (2011) explains that the agenda setting process begins with agenda building, the process by which the news media selectively report on, cover and highlight (political campaign) events, actors and issues based on the media consideration of their importance. The pattern of coverage of such events, personalities and issues by the media underscores the media's agenda in which case some (campaign) events, personalities and issues are given intense coverage and emphasis in their treatment. In a salience transfer manner, the (campaign) events, personalities and issues treated as important through media selective

and emphatic reportage are then considered as important or prominent in public considerations and discourse (McQuail, [2010](#)). Agenda setting theory is summarised in Griffin ([2012](#)) as the media's "ability to transfer the salience of issues on their news agenda to the public agenda" (p. 378) and in Baran & Davis ([2003](#)) as "the idea that the media do not tell people what to think but what to think about" (p. 311).

Framing theorists postulate that an issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and be constructed as having implications for multiple values or considerations. News frames are used to conceptualise issues, organise everyday reality, lend meaning to an unfolding streak of events, and encourage a particular definition and interpretation of issues (Shahet al., [2002](#)). Chong and Druckman ([2007](#)) argue that individual frames (frames in thought) are influenced by communication frames (media frames) and the interaction between the two can shape perception and behaviour. The narrative cues (frames) used in constructing news about political campaigns can have implications for perception among media audiences or electorates. The meaning or perception derived from such news about political actors can determine the attitudes of members of the public towards certain candidates or their political parties and ultimately manifest in voting behaviour.

### **Literature Review**

Framing is one of the prominent subjects that have attracted scholarly attention the field of communication and media studies in recent times. Rooted in psychology and sociology, framing has gained prominent attention in media effects research and theory. It has been identified as a concept that has no commonly agreed definition and application among scholars and this has led to defining the concept variously as applicable to the discourse at hand. Lecheler and de Vreese ([2019](#)) define news frame functionally as that which can influence a person by emphasizing certain aspects of reality and eclipsing others. The news frame has a selective function in which way, specific problem attributes, judgments, and decisions are suggested (p.3). This suggests that framing involves the presentation of an issue in news using certain attributes that suggest some aspects of meaning about reality while neglecting others and the meaning so conveyed has the potential to influence the judgment and decisions of media audiences. When this influence manifests, framing effect occurs.

Lecheler and de Vreese (2019) describe framing effect as the media's potential to influence people's attitudes and behavior through subtle portrayals of issues in the news. It is described by Gonzalez et al. (2005) such as the considerable influence of the way issues are presented in the media on the choices media audiences make in their decisions. Empirical research into media framing effects began in 1981 with the study by Tversky and Kahneman on the outbreak of a disease in Asia (Tabesh et al., 2019). In the study which adopted experimental design, respondents were asked to make their choices between alternatively framed issues in positive light (survival) and negative light (death). Findings of the study showed that people are likely in their decision-making to take more risks when issues are framed to them in negative light (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). This shows a correlation between the patterns of issues framing in the media and the direction of decision-making in the public. Framing as a subject in communication and media studies have attracted robust empirical investigation following Tversky and Kahneman's study. Entman's seminal paper of 1993 titled "Framing: Toward a Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm" charted a course for framing research in media studies. The paper conceptualises frames in the commonly cited definition thus:

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 (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

Entman's paper advocates consistency in the conceptualization of framing in communication studies, explains the functions of communicative frames and positions framing as a research paradigm in the field of communication and media studies. Following Entman's paper, framing research has been applied to several issues. In a review of literature, Oriola (2017) traces current trends in framing research and identifies issues of focus such as civil liberties, the use of sunscreens among beach goers, effects on citizens' competence in a political system, effects on risk or gain alternatives within a political context, effects on public discourse, effects on obesity as a public health issue, consequences on the introduction of the Euro, effects on decision-making, effects on HIV/AIDS as an health issue, framing of the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, framing of the West Nile virus as an health issue, media presentation of ageing and motherhood,

framing of crisis, effects of framing of global warming, framing of social inequality and poverty, framing of modern biblical translation in linguistics, effects of framing of the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict on global public discourse and different political issues.

Political issues that have attracted framing research attention in recent times include a study conducted in Denmark by Slothuus and de Vreese (2010) which focused on how issues were sponsored by political parties were framed to motivate citizens. The study examined welfare policy and trade policy as framed issues in the prospect and consequence frames. It tested effects of issues framing on how citizens were attached to political parties and were willing to partner with them. The result of an online survey of 925 respondents showed that people's opinions supported welfare policy more in the prospect frame than in the consequence frame and the same was observed in the trade policy issue, which had more support in the prospect frame than consequence frame. The study also revealed that political party attachment was instrumental to framing effects because people were more supportive to frames sponsored by their political parties of choice. This supports the findings of Druckman (2001), and D'Angelo (2002) who earlier reported that political knowledge and affiliation were audience factors that moderated framing effects.

A study by Aalberg et al. (2011) examined how German and Israeli politics was framed in the media between 1994 and 2003. In their conceptual clarification, they classified framing in politics as either strategy or game, with each having positive and negative consequences on elections. They also identified specific frames in German elections within the period under review. Results of the study revealed that issues strategy/policy frames dominated news coverage during non-election periods while game frame dominated news coverage during election periods. The researcher also reported that elections issues and events were mostly framed as horserace, accounting for about 40 percent of the news stories. The Israel media used more of game frame than issue frame while German media used more of strategic frame than game frame in the coverage of elections during the period. The study considered framing patterns but did not examine the consequences such patterns could have on the audience who consume news stories as media products.

Lecheler and de Vreese (2019) examined the influence of political news framing on public opinion, taking into cognisance the mediating and



moderating factors of framing effects on political attitudes. Belief importance and content were identified as mediators while political knowledge was considered as a moderator of framing consequence on the issue of the expansion of the European Union (EU) in 2007. The study conducted survey and experiment on 1,537 citizens of the Netherlands between ages 16 years and 92 years. Results of the study revealed that media framing influenced public opinion and framing consequence was “mediated by both belief importance and belief content, with belief content being the more prominent variable” (Lecheler & de Vreese, [2019](#), p. 185). However, belief content was reported to be more influential in mediating framing consequence among people with high political knowledge.

Oriola ([2017](#)) examined the relationship between newspapers’ framing and public perception of President Buhari’s anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria, considering agenda setting and priming as mediating variables, and political knowledge and attitude as moderating variables. The study adopted quantitative content analysis to examine the patterns of news framing of the anti-corruption crusade in 1,960 editions of the five national newspapers and survey of 1,200 participants to determine the direction of public perception. Findings showed a significant relationship between patterns of framing and direction of public perception of the crusade. Also, the study reported political knowledge and party affiliation had significant moderating effects on the relationship between framing and perception, while agenda setting and priming had significant mediating effects on the relationship. Both moderating and mediating variables were reported to have significant interactional effects on the relationship between framing and public perception of the anti-corruption crusade. This study examined newspaper framing, public perception and the relationship between perception of framed issues and voting patterns.

## Methods

This study adopted a correlative descriptive research design that combined a content analysis with a descriptive survey. Correlational research is a type of descriptive research design concerned with measuring the degree of relationship or association that exists between two statistically independent variables (Ogundare, [2013](#)). There were two sets of population in the study: content analysis and survey. The content analysis population comprised a total of 480 editions of the five selected national newspapers (96 editions each) published between November 18, 2018 and February 21, 2019 – the

period of the 2019 Presidential election campaigns in Nigeria. The newspaper titles – *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Sun* - were randomly selected through balloting from among the national newspapers readily available on newsstands in Ogun State, Nigeria. The content analysis sample comprised 92 editions selected from 460 out of the 480 editions which displayed the campaign stories on their front pages. The sample was selected using the nth technique in which the 5<sup>th</sup> edition in the list of each newspaper was selected.

The survey population comprised a total of 25,537 staff and students of Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun. There are 825 members of staff and 24,712 full-time students in the university as at the time of the study. The survey sample comprised 540 full-time staff and students of Tai Solarin University of Education who have attained the voting age of 18 years. Stratified sampling technique was adopted to select the survey sample. The Saunders et al. (2009) formulas was be applied to select the sample for the survey exercise thus:

The minimum sample size of the population is estimated using the following:

$$n = p\% \times q\% \times \left[ \frac{z}{e\%} \right]^2$$

$n$  is the minimum sample size required

$p\%$  is the proportion belonging to the specified category

$q\%$  is the proportion not belonging to the specified category

$z$  is the  $z$  value corresponding to the level of confidence required

$e\%$  is the margin of error required.

Therefore,  $P\%$  in this formula is reasoned to be 50% and  $q\%$  is 50% because some proportion of the population are estimated to be aware of newspaper coverage of the 2019 Presidential election campaign while others may not be aware. Thus

$$n = 50 \times 50 \times \left( \frac{1.95}{5\%} \right)^2$$

$n = 385$  which was the minimum sample size for this study.

To determine the adjusted sample size, minimum sample (385) was substituted for  $n$  and the population (25,537) is factored in the following formula:

$$n = \frac{n}{1 + \left(\frac{n}{\text{Population}}\right)}$$

$$n = \frac{385}{1 + \left(\frac{385}{25,537}\right)}$$

Therefore the sample adjusted by population is size is 379.

The actual sample size was adjusted by estimating response rate. This is done by substituting 385 for  $n$  and 70 for  $re\%$  in the following formula. It is 70% because respondents were expected to cooperate with the researchers to a large extent. This estimation therefore catered for high response rate in the region of 70% it therefore helps to increase the sample size in preparation for such an event. Hence:  $n^a = \frac{n \times 100}{re\%}$

$$\text{Therefore, } n^a = \frac{379 \times 100}{70} = 541$$

The final sample size was five hundred and forty one (541). This was distributed by proportion as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Study Population and Sample*

S/No	Staff Sections/Students' Colleges	Population	Percentage Per Stratum	Sample Per Stratum
A1	Academic Staff	324	1.3	7
A2	Non-Teaching Staff	501	2	11
	Sub-Total	825	3.3	18
B1	College of Science & Info. Tech.(COSIT)	4,830	18.9	102
B2	College of Specialised & Professional Education (COSPED)	5,648	22.1	119
B3	College of Humanities (COHUM)	5,074	19.9	108
B4	College of Social & Management Sciences (COSMAS)	5,094	19.9	108

S/No	Staff Sections/Students' Colleges	Population	Percentage Per Stratum	Sample Per Stratum
B5	College of Vocational & Technology Education (COVTEd)	4,066	15.9	86
	Sub-Total	24,712	96.7	523
	Grand Total	25,537	100	541

## Results and Discussion

Patterns of framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns in five selected national newspapers:

**Table 2**

*Cross Tabulation of Frame Categories in Presidential Campaign News*

Newspapers	Frame Category		Total
	Generic Frame	Issue Specific Frame	
The Guardian	0	9	9
The Punch	4	22	26
Vanguard	0	21	21
Nigerian Tribune	0	18	18
Daily Sun	1	17	18
Total	5(5.5%)	87(94.5%)	92(100%)

**Table 3**

*Cross Tabulation of Direction of Presidential Campaign News Framing*

Newspapers	Direction of News Framing								Total
	Pro APC	Pro PDP	Pro other Parties	Anti APC	Anti PDP	Anti other Political Parties	Anti APC & PDP	Neutral	
The Guardian	3	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	9
The Punch	1	2	0	10	2	1	7	3	26
Vanguard	6	3	1	5	3	0	3	0	21
Nigerian Tribune	8	3	0	5	0	0	2	0	18
Daily Sun	5	3	1	2	6	0	1	0	18
Total	23 25%	14 15.2%	2 2.2%	23 25%	13 14.1%	1 1.1%	13 14.1%	3 3.3%	92 100%

Analysis of the categories of frames used in constructing the news stories about the campaigns showed that a vast majority of the news stories

( $n = 87, 94.5\%$ ) were reported using issue-specific frames. This implies that the selected newspapers mostly reported the campaigns focusing on specific issues of concern to the political parties and their candidates. Only 5 percent of the campaign stories adopted generic framing approach, implying presenting issues within broad contexts or perspectives. Thus, Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns were largely reported using issue-specific frames. As regards the direction of news framing, results showed that one-quarter of the total campaign news stories were supportive of the ruling APC, 15.2 percent were supportive of the major opposition PDP while about 2 percent were supportive of other political parties. In a similar vein, stories that were against the APC accounted for 25 percent: those that were against the PDP, 14.1 percent; only one was against other political parties; and 14.1 percent were against both the APC and PDP. These imply that though the APC's campaign attracted more coverage, the direction of framing of the campaign issues and events was balanced between the ruling party and the main opposition.

### **Direction of perception of newspaper framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns among members of TASUED community**

**Table 4**

*Respondents' Newspaper Readership*

	Frequency	Percent
Readership		
I Read Newspaper(s)	448	83.7
I Do Not Read Newspaper(s)	56	10.5
Indifferent	31	5.8
Total	535	100
Readership Frequency		
Very Often	127	23.7
Often	211	39.4
Once in a While	133	24.9
I Do Not read	64	12
Total	535	100
Newspaper Title(s) Preferred		
The Guardian	31	5.8
The Punch	259	48.4
Vanguard	29	5.4

	Frequency	Percent
Nigerian Tribune	45	8.4
Daily Sun	17	3.2
All Titles Mentioned	97	18.1
None of the Titles Mentioned	57	10.7
Total	535	100

**Table 5**

*Direction of Perception of Newspaper Framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential Election Campaigns among Members of TASUED Community*

Items	SA <i>f</i> (%)	A <i>f</i> (%)	D <i>f</i> (%)	SD <i>f</i> (%)	U <i>f</i> (%)	$\bar{x}$	<i>SD</i>
The campaigns in Nigeria were largely issue-based as framed in Nigerian newspapers.	35 (6.5)	273 (51)	95 (17.8)	88 (16.4)	44 (4.2)	3.31	1.08
Newspapers framing of the election was more focused on the personalities of political candidates than issues and programmes.	125 (23.4)	229 (42.8)	41 (7.7)	103 (19.3)	37 (6.9)	3.52	1.07
Major political parties/candidates dominated the coverage of the campaigns in Nigerian newspapers.	106 (19.9)	250 (46.8)	64 (12)	74 (13.9)	41 (7.7)	3.57	1.10
There were name-calling and mudslinging in the campaigns as framed in Nigerian newspapers.	123 (23)	177 (33.1)	89 (16.6)	112 (20.9)	34 (6.4)	3.53	1.16
Nigerian newspapers' framing of the was healthy for the growth of democracy.	85 (15.9)	220 (41.1)	105 (19.6)	84 (15.7)	41 (7.7)	3.04	1.07
Newspapers framing of the campaigns was objective and neutral.	41 (7.7)	155 (29)	161 (30.1)	140 (26.2)	38 (7.1)	3.42	1.16

**Note.** SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, U=Undecided. Decision Rule if mean is  $\leq 1.49$  Undecided; 1.5 to 2.49 = Strongly Disagree; 2.5 to 3.49 =Disagree; 3.5 to 4.49 = Agree; 4.5 to 5= Strongly Agree

In the survey aspect of this study, 541 copies of self-structured questionnaire were administered on the respondents out of which 535 were returned and valid, representing 98.9% return rate. Newspaper readership pattern among the respondents was determined prior to perception of newspaper framing. Results presented in Table 4 show that majority of the study respondents ( $n = 448, 83.7\%$ ) read newspapers, about one-tenth did

not read while ( $n = 56$ ) while 31 (5.8%) were indifferent. As regards frequency of readership 211 respondents (39.4%) read often, 133 (24.9%) read once in a while, 127 (23.7%) read very frequently while 64 (12%) claimed not to read newspapers. Results about respondents' newspaper titles of preference show that *The Punch* was the most widely read newspaper among the study participants ( $n = 259$ , 48.4%). A total of 97 respondents (18.1%) read all the titles under the focus of this study while 57 (10.7%) claimed not to read any of the titles. The foregoing implies that majority of the study participants were newspaper readers (83.7%), read at least once in a while (82%) and read at least one of the titles of focus in this study (89.3%).

Findings regarding the direction of participants' perception of newspaper framing reveal that respondents generally disagreed with the assertions that the 2019 Presidential Election campaigns were largely framed as issue-based in the selected newspapers ( $\bar{x} = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ), the newspapers' framing of the 2019 Presidential Election campaigns in Nigeria was healthy for the growth of democracy ( $\bar{x} = 3.04$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) and that the newspapers' framing of the 2019 Presidential Election campaigns was objective and neutral ( $\bar{x} = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ). However, they agreed with the assertions that the selected newspapers' framing of the 2019 Presidential Election campaigns was more focused on the personalities of political candidates than issues and programmes ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ), the major political parties and their candidates dominated the coverage of the 2019 Presidential Election campaigns in the newspapers. ( $\bar{x} = 3.57$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) and that there were name-calling and mudslinging in the 2019 Presidential Election campaigns as framed in Nigerian newspapers ( $\bar{x} = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ).

These results imply that members of TASUED community perceived the framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential Election in the selected Nigerian newspaper to be personality-focused rather than issue-based, dominated by the ruling APC and main opposition PDP, projected name-calling and mudslinging among political actors, subjective and unhealthy for Nigeria's growing democracy.

## Voting pattern of voting among members of TASUED community in Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election

**Table 6**

*Respondents' Participation in Voting in 2019 Presidential Election*

Readership	Frequency	Percent
I Voted	477	89.2
I Did Not Vote	32	6
Indifferent	26	4.8
Total	535	100

**Table 7**

*Pattern of Voting among Members of TASUED Community in Nigeria's 2019 Presidential Election*

Items	SA <i>f</i> (%)	A <i>f</i> (%)	D <i>f</i> (%)	SD <i>f</i> (%)	U <i>f</i> (%)	$\bar{x}$	SD
Newspaper reports as motivation for voting my political party/candidate of choice	61 (11.4)	247 (46.2)	137 (25.8)	63 (11.8)	427 (5)	3.57	1.10
Personality attacks as discouragement from voting certain candidate(s)	42 (7.9)	237 (44.3)	141 (26.4)	93 (17.4)	22 (4.1)	3.34	0.99
Party affiliation as motivation for voting candidate of choice	145 (27.1)	214 (40)	70 (13.1)	84 (15.7)	22 (4.1)	3.52	1.03
Candidate's personality as motivation for voting candidate of choice	105 (19.6)	207 (38.7)	114 (21.3)	84 (15.7)	25 (4.7)	3.53	1.11
Previous performances as motivation for voting candidate/political party Presidential Election in Nigeria.	51 (9.5)	263 (49.2)	129 (24.1)	68 (12.7)	24 (4.5)	3.46	0.98
Campaign promises as motivation for voting political party/candidate	53 (9.6)	144 (27)	188 (35.3)	101 (18.9)	49 (9.2)	3.09	1.10
Immediate reward as motivation for voting political party/candidate	60 (11.2)	119 (22.2)	210 (39.3)	97 (18.1)	49 (9.2)	3.08	1.10

**Note.** SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, U=Undecided. Decision Rule if mean is  $\leq 1.49$  Undecided; 1.5 to 2.49 = Strongly Disagree; 2.5 to 3.49 =Disagree; 3.5 to 4.49= Agree; 4.5 to 5= Strongly Agree

Results showed that a vast majority of the study participants ( $n = 477$ , 89.2%) voted in the election, 6 percent did not vote while 4.8 percent were indifferent. Thus, the study participants were largely qualified to respond to



items regarding voting pattern. Results of the analysis of voting pattern showed that respondents agreed with the assertions that the content of media reports motivated them to vote their political party/candidate of choice ( $\bar{x} = 3.57$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ), party affiliation ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) and candidate's personality motivated them to vote in the 2019 Presidential election in Nigeria ( $\bar{x} = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ). They also disagreed with the statements that personality attacks discouraged them from voting candidates in the election ( $\bar{x} = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ), implying that attacks on personalities influenced voting decisions in the election. Conversely, they disagreed with assertions that previous performances motivated them to vote their candidates/political parties of choice ( $\bar{x} = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ), campaign promises motivated them to vote their political parties/candidates of choice ( $\bar{x} = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) and immediate reward motivated them to vote their political parties/candidates of choice ( $\bar{x} = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) in the 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria. By implication, members of TASUED community voted based on the content of media reportage of the campaign, party affiliation and personalities of candidates in the election, while previous performances, campaign promises and immediate reward did not contribute to their voting decisions.

### Test of Hypotheses

In order to test the hypotheses set in this study, the preset level of significance is 0.05. The alternate hypotheses set in this study will be accepted if the significance or probability value is less than or equals 0.05 ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). If the significance or probability value is greater than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ), the alternate hypotheses will be rejected.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns and voting patterns among members of TASUED community.

**Table 8**

*Pearson's Correlation Analysis between Perception of Newspaper Framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential Election Campaigns and Voting Patterns*

		Perception of Framing Voting Pattern	
Perception of Framing	Pearson Correlation	1	.626
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.021
	N	535	535

		Perception of Framing Voting Pattern	
	Pearson Correlation	.626	1
Voting Pattern	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	
	<i>N</i>	535	535

Result of the Pearson's correlation analysis shows that the alternate hypothesis is accepted because the significance or probability value is less than the present level of significance ( $p = 0.021 < 0.05$ ). This implies that there was a significant relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns and voting pattern among members of TASUED community. This corroborates earlier result that the content of newspaper reports partly motivated the voting pattern of TASUED community members.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant moderating effect of audience factors on the relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns and voting patterns among members of TASUED community.

**Table 9**

*Model Fitting Information for Moderating Effect of Audience Factors on the Relationship Perception of Newspaper Framing and Voting Pattern*

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
		Chi-Square	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Intercept Only	2939.495			
Final	2744.365	195.129	621	1.000

**Table 10**

*Likelihood Ratio Tests for Moderating Effect of Audience Factors on the Relationship Perception of Newspaper Framing and Voting Pattern*

Effect	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
		Chi-Square	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Intercept	2744.365 <sup>a</sup>	.000	0	.
Voting Pattern	2751.550 <sup>b</sup>	7.185	23	.999

Effect	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
		Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Newspaper Readership	2826.126 <sup>b</sup>	81.761	253	1.000
Level of Knowledge of Politics	2766.853 <sup>b</sup>	22.488	92	1.000
Political Party of Interest	2895.603 <sup>b</sup>	151.238	115	.013

Tables 9 and 10 contain data generated from the multinomial regression analysis of the significant moderating effect of audience factors on the relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns and voting patterns among members of TASUED community. When the model fitting summary was considered, results showed that the alternate hypothesis is rejected because the significance or probability value is greater than the present level of significance ( $X^2 = 195.129$ ,  $df = 621$ ,  $p = 1.00 > 0.05$ ). This implies that generally, there was no significant moderating effect of audience factors on the relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of the 2019 Presidential Election campaign and voting pattern of TASUED community members. In Table 8, each of the audience factors was considered and the results of the likelihood ratio test showed that there is no significant moderating effects of newspaper readership ( $X^2 = 81.761$ ,  $df = 253$ ,  $p = 1.00 > 0.05$ ) and level of knowledge of politics ( $X^2 = 22.488$ ,  $df = 92$ ,  $p = 1.00 > 0.05$ ) on the relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing and voting pattern among TASUED community members. However, political party of interest had significant moderating effect on the relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing and voting pattern of TASUED community members ( $X^2 = 151.238$ ,  $df = 115$ ,  $p = 0.13 < 0.05$ ). It can be deduced from the foregoing that although there was no interactional effects of audience factors (when considered collectively) on the relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of the 2019 Presidential election in Nigeria and voting pattern, political party affiliation played a significant role in the voting pattern among TASUED community members.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Many of the previous studies on framing of political issues considered framing effects on public perception, opinions and actions without taking cognizance of audience factors as moderating variables of framing consequence. In order to fill this gap, this study examined the pattern of newspaper framing of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential election campaigns, the perception of members of TASUED community about the framed campaign issues and the relationship between their perception and voting pattern. The study also considered the moderating effects of newspaper readership, political knowledge and political party affiliation on the relationship between the perception of newspaper framing and voting pattern among TASUED community members. The study combined quantitative content analysis with descriptive survey in order to achieve its stated objectives, answer research questions and test hypotheses. The fact that the modern-day audiences are sophisticated and (potentially) better informed, having multiple information sources that can influence their perception and actions motivated this study's approach.

The study established that the selected newspapers mostly reported the campaigns using issue-specific frames. The direction of framing of the campaign issues and events was balanced between the ruling party and the main opposition while the campaigns of other political parties in the election were under reported. Members of TASUED community perceived the framing of the campaigns in the selected newspapers to be personality-focused rather than issue-based, dominated by the ruling APC followed by the main opposition PDP, projected name-calling and mudslinging among political actors, subjective and unhealthy for Nigeria's growing democracy. As regards voting pattern, majority of TASUED community members voted in the election and their voting was motivated by the content of media reportage of the campaign, political party affiliation and personalities of candidates in the election. Candidates' previous performances, campaign promises and immediate reward did not contribute to their voting decisions.

Furthermore, the study found a significant relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of the election campaigns and voting patterns among members of TASUED community. Lastly, the study found no interactional effects of audience factors (when considered collectively) on the relationship between the direction of perception of newspaper framing of the election in Nigeria and voting pattern.

Specifically, newspaper readership and voters' level of political knowledge had no significant moderating effect but political party of interest had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between the perception of newspaper framing of the campaign and voting pattern among TASUED community members.

This study hereby recommends that political journalists should realise the sensitivity attached to the coverage of election campaigns as an influential component of politics and carefully choose verbal and non-verbal frames used in constructing campaign news stories. They should be mindful of the consequent interpretations of the frames adopted in constructing campaign news stories at the audience's domain. Such interpretations have implications for political decision-making and actions, leading to certain direction of voting in elections. Political actors should eschew campaigns of calumny in the course of electioneering campaigns in order to safeguard the country's nascent democracy. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should intensify efforts on stakeholders' engagement in order to play its roles effectively as election umpires. The Commission should embark more on voter enlightenment in order to mitigate negative effects of misleading campaigns by political actors and subjective framing of election campaigns by the media.

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