

JOURNALISTS' PERCEPTIONS ON DETERMINANTS OF CORRUPTION NEWS FRAMING

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Submission date: 15 Feb 2018

Accepted date: 15 April 2018

Published date: 30 May 2018

Abstract

The pervasiveness of corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers has called concern for studies on how people interpret, respond and evaluate corruption issues. However, attention has not been directed to the forces behind corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers. As such, this study explored journalists' perceptions of organizational and extra media forces on corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers consequent upon the 2016 public officers' arrests and trials on corrupt conducts. A total of 6 print registered correspondents were generated using purposive sampling in a population 27 correspondents to national newspapers found in Kwara State. Using a qualitative in-depth interview, Nvivo (10) software was used to analyze the interview responses in a thematic way. Findings revealed that ownership and economic pressures at the organizational level, and political influence and public relations at the extra media level are forces that shape and sieve corruption stories in Nigerian newspapers. Therefore, prompt payment for journalists at the organizational level and their protection from extra-media forces in their professional callings are recommended for objective corruption coverage. While this study explored the forces behind corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers, future research can attempt to explain why such forces.

Keywords: Newspaper, News Framing, Unethical Behaviour, Journalists' perception, Corruption

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country gifted with enormous resources and eminent human assets with great economic diversity (World Bank, 2014), yet, suffers from the problem of economic stagnation. Ogbeyi (2012) adduced the reason for common economic fatigue in Nigeria to corruption. Corruption according to Adaja (2016) is a global phenomenon. But the phenomenon called corruption is a big problem in Nigeria (Adeyemi, 2013). It wanes civic hope, impedes justice and fairness, affects communal understanding and undesirably weakens economic buoyancy (Adaja, 2016; Adeyemi, 2013; Nageri, Gunu & Abdul, 2013; Rek, 2015). It is perhaps, the only reason why nothing seems to be working in Nigeria (Adeyemi, 2013). Virtually every aspect of human endeavour is touched by corruption. This is why Omenka (2013) regards corruption issues as endemic disease which, according to (Moyosore, 2015), presents itself in different dimensions and wide spread in terms of media coverage.

Such coverage has necessitated concern for communication scholars (Amadi, 2015; Chen & Zhang, 2016; Delfin & Garcia, 2016; De Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001; Johnson, Davis & Cronin, 2007; Park, 2012; Semetko & Vulkenburg, 2000; Wickberg, 2016) to study how people interpret, respond and evaluate corruption reports in both print and electronic media. In line with this, Goldberg (2001), Nisbet and Newman (2015) concluded that nothing goes to the media without being framed. Conversely, one of the critical gaps, which this study has responded to, is what Colistra (2012) referred to as the dearth of research focus in the area of “organizational and extra media forces” behind the framing of public officers’ corruption reports in Nigerian newspapers. This is important because newspapers on their part do not only inform and provide news on corruption but spring bearing for public to manufacture their views and decisions about corruption, however, who set the corruption scene or who dictate the tone in corruption reports propel the silent focus of this research. This become even more necessary to explore as media role is important in sourcing news for the audience but what is even more important is the direction with which they (the media) report and consequently the outlook they set in executing their role serves the media effect function (Sadaf, 2011).

From this, newspaper is capable of setting its representation to generate anticipated effects among its audience (Sadaf, 2011). Whatever newspaper present, what it intends to promote and or specifically making corruption issue as the important of all in the newspaper content and basically how it present such, influences the audience perception. This direction of reportage is what Goffman (1974) sees as frame. Frame is significant since it clarifies the location of specific forms of symbols within the explanatory accounts which can possibly effect the way the symbols are sensed by audiences (Valeda, 2002), by emphasizing a specific part of what Entman (1993) called “definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation” (p.52). The significant influence of the newspapers on their readers seems to be recognized by the newspapers’ aptitude to direct their stories in resounding styles. In accomplishing this function, the newspapers purposefully select an explicit element of corruption issue and make it more salience. This process of ‘selection’ and ‘saliency’ clearly define a framing theory (Park, 2012).

More importantly, newspaper on its part, contributes a lot when it comes to distributing social issues to the public. As one of the oldest media, newspaper has become not only one of many sources of everyday information but also has the power to control the reader on what topic to discuss day by day (Delfin, & Garcia, 2016). It is equally perceived that today’s print newspapers afford the public with widespread information where thousands of updates arose concurrently (Jan, Riaz, Siddiq & Saleem, 2013). With the excess of news and information, newspapers remind the public which topic should be the “primary issue” from the lots of unending topics. Therefore, Walter Lippman (n.d.) cited in (Delfin & Garcia, 2016, p.70) argued that people’s dependence upon the press to provide them with information about certain matters is a result of limited opportunities for them to observe important events instantaneously. Therefore, the way audience perceive certain news issue has a link with the way journalists frame their news stories. Mhango (2011) contend that truly objective stories do not really exist; that stories are reported through what the sender define and constructs. Thus, this only means that framed news articles is a result of news framing techniques employed by journalists.

2.0 BACKGROUND/LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 News Framing Trends

Research on news frames specifically in media studies mostly surveys the bearings of news frames on media audiences (Park, 2012). Various studies (Andsager, 2000; Nisbet, Brossard, & Kroepsch, 2003), established that there is increasingly power of influence on news frame from concern groups and political bigwigs. Scholars have equally established that a particular news frame used in any communication texts

has, plainly, a correlation on how people labelled responsibility. Meanwhile, explanations from social cognitive scholars like Chong and Druckman (2007b) together with successive findings on news frames did not however perceive the fact that people obtain numerous frames, whether even or uneven. This concern therefore hints us on frame competition which suggest that media audiences have the tendencies of consuming information preeminent with, (either uneven slice of numerous forceful frames or even slice of numerous forceful frames), of which its frequency serves a response to the effects of public opinion frames found in communication texts.

The above submission corroborated the works of Chong and Druckman (2007b) Druckman (2001) that public opinion frames is a product of the frequency in enormous competing frames. Similarly, it was submitted by Saris and Sniderman (2004) that people receiving two different frames which appeals desirable and undesirable frames reactions tend to show upper backing for government expenditure on the deprived than those consuming solitary frame. Therefore, researches on newspaper frames is continuously done in the area of perturbing “corruption” (Chen, 2010). This is because corruption is a social issue ever in the history of man and it will continue for as long as people struggle for dominance and maintenance of culture and representations. Fundamental in the concept of corruption is the concern of illegal or unethical behavior in specific societies (Julie & Ivana, 2003).

However, biases in print media, particularly in newspaper broadsheets are highly inevitable since framing of news stories by journalists are always present. It was submitted by Goldberg (2001) that the main newspapers in US are prejudiced with a copious dogmatic cause. This means that no matter how objective the newspapers construct their news, underlying intentions are still evident. Ahrens (2002) proved in his study that the editor of the *Washington Times* employ “story selection” to promote conservative views. It implies that newspaper outfits seem to possess the ability to filter its news before it gets to the public. Kurtz (1996, as cited in Morris, 2007) argued that Bob Dole’s presidential campaigns against Bill Clinton, particularly in *New York Times* was stumbling because of the news media’s leftward tendencies. This seems to suggest that the media, when subjected to opposing issues, tends to favor one side against another. Asian media for instance, exercise a significant part in shaping public views by swaying their thoughtfulness and sensitivity of a certain agenda or topic (Otieno, Spada & Renkl, 2013).

2.2 Influence of Media on News Frame: Organizational and Extra Media in Perspectives

Entman (1993) states that news framing in communication media may have a semblance with journalistic principle of reporting but still have inherent perspectives that ultimately debar media audience from objective assessment of an issue. His words then suggest that no matter how strict media professional is in adherently to journalistic standards they work under the influence of certain cultures and values which directly or indirectly conditioned what is referred to as framing in news production. His opinion coincides with Collins, Abelson, Pyman and Lavis (2006), and Soroka (2002) that the generalized media perform the function of transmitting public issues to the generality of the people. Therefore, one can say that the media perform the function of channeling well packaged information to those who subscribe to them. For instance, Collins et al, (2006) confirmed that the production of news about certain subject is embedded with certain knowledge while the knowledge in turn, is defined in such a way that sway people’s view regarding the subject.

Correspondingly, the contexts of culture in a society have the tendency of founding frame in news media (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). Frames, in this context, are often negotiated. More importantly, frames are preloaded with certain meaning that confirm the ideology of an existing culture since they are being formed from a cultural bearing of a society. Therefore, the framers (which constitute the journalists) in the course of their daily routine are mostly swayed by the culture of the environment in which they operate. This suggests that frame building is always impacted on by the preexisting cultural parameters without being known by the framers. Similarly, frames constructed by government can impact ample effect on the bearing of a state generally. Policy makers are often the originators of frame issues in the media with journalists passively relying on them for news related issues consequent upon much of the framed issues

found in the news media. Lim and Seo (2009) corroborate this by observing that the trend of interdependence and relationship between journalists and the government concerning information flow however, led to the conclusion that government have the perceived tendencies of controlling the frames by the news media.

However, with regards to the above influence of government on news frame, Janssen (2010) observed that separating external influences from ideal journalistic practice might be unrealistic, because journalists are also referred to as commodities in the market place of ideas in line with any other individuals especially in environment where mass media function to serve the political economic end of few individuals who controls what should or should not be included in news production. Van Gorp (2007) says framing in communication texts espoused when he noted the interchange that ensues between the audience and the frame makers that has to do with the schemata in audience processing of framed issues, and the extra media level-the subject of frame sponsors. Entman (2009) cited in Janssen (2010) observed that the frame sponsors are those who influence the media content. He further opined that they can be advertisers, spin doctors, concern groups who show interest in maneuvering the sensitivity and journalists' framing selection in line with their aims. In this case, journalists are regarded as instruments that will accompany the realization of their desired outcome in framing issues. Below is the hypothesized model of various influences on media content.

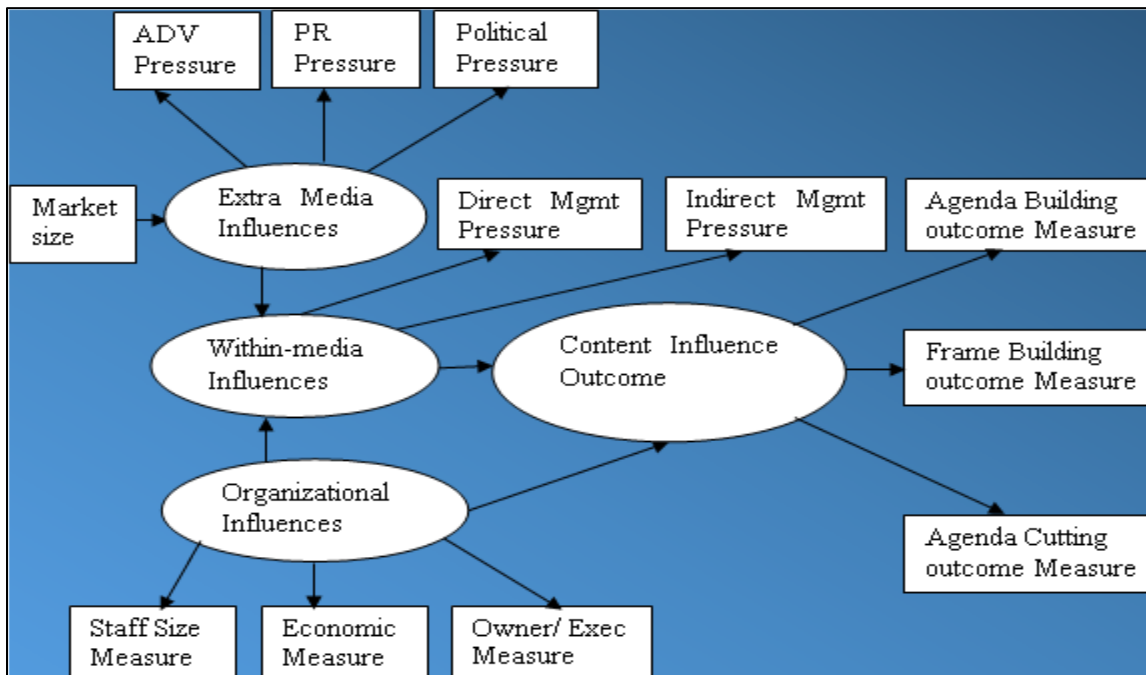


Figure 1 Hypothesized Model of Influence on Media Content (IOMC) Source: (Colistra, 2012, p. 126)

Influences on media content could come from within or outside media industry; the within media influences is known as organizational frame and if the frames come from outside media operations it is extra media (Colistra, 2012). Similarly, Colistra (2012) observed that potential extra media effects come from interest group, public relations packages, advertisers' pressures, government and political pressures. He opined that the bond amid news sources and journalists necessitate extra media influence on news frame. The term sources in the words of Colistra not only refers to personalities associated with events, but include polished information from organizations.

Gandy (1982) contend that the sources are information subsidies with enormous influence on the agenda-building process of communication. Therefore, to examine extra media influence, Colistra (2012) identified

three sources of pressures (such as public relations, government and advertisers,) that should be considered. Buttressing further, pressure on the news content could be seen from top organizational executives. For instance, the size, structure, staff and ownership of the media entity constitute influences at the organizational level of media of communication. Equally important is the fact that an increased bottom-line worries constitute a signal propelling economic pressures. These economic concerns are constraint which affect decisions with regards to media messages. Constraints and pressure are often conversed by owners and top executives. Of all, economic and ownership pressures, at the organizational level, are the strongest factors of influence on media agenda-building and news framing (Colistra, 2012).

Similarly, Ofori-Birikorang (2010) and Van Dijk (1993) have argued that the trend of citizens' understanding has a correlation to the trend of knowledge in news production consumable by the audience. Specifically, Van Dijk (1993) contended that the media secured dominant powers by manipulating, retaining and directing audiences' individual minds. Stated differently, Park (2012) citing Gamson and Modigliani 1999, and Van Dijk (1993) confirmed that the mass media are significant driving force in structuring how events and conditions of individual group experiences are socially constructed.

In line with above submission, the works of (Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder, 1983; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; McGuire, 1986; Mcombs & Shaw, 1972 cited in Park, 2012) have proved that several researches have been extremely established to show the varied influences of news media on civic opinion. The presentation and direction of stories in mass media, for instance, determines the significant influences of such media on its audiences. Studies have found that the selection, definition and saliency of a specified issue in mass media is intentional to direct attitudinal change.

Webster (2011) analyzed how ownership pattern determines Western media production and concludes that Western market forces ruin the hope that private media organizations might provide the arena where "debates and discussions would take place amongst citizens engaged in conversations about what would be the most preferable directions of government" (p. 31). Webster's conclusion is reinforced by the fact that government-owned public media institutions have not, as yet, been able to keep the interest of the powerful away from media products (Amadi, 2015).

Nigerian case for instance is not an exemplification of where government exerts influences on corruption news frames used by routine journalists. Scholars like Zhou and Moy (2007) have contend that external pressures particularly from government may be overwhelming for journalists on how news framing is influenced by, for instance, the emphasis on national interest and political ideology of a seemingly inherent competitive government. This explains more on why Nigerian journalists participate in the promotion of news frames (Zhou & Moy, 2007), that advertise what the government sees as ideals and good for the people.

Similarly, an analysis which shows that media production in Nigeria is influenced by a six-prism filtering process controlled by paymasters (Amadi, 2015), confirms that the menace of overshadowing media contents with the interest of the powerful is more alarming in Nigeria. Amadi (2012) cited in (Amadi, 2015) reports that even social media in Nigeria are awash with paid agents who are mandated to make sure that contents that question the interest of the powerful, no matter how logical, are either expunged or crowded out.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopts Qualitative method through in-depth interview approach because it elicits responses that could be useful in the promotion of knowledge (Roulston, 2010), and contribute in exploring journalists' perception regarding the organizational and extra media forces on corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers. Creswell (2012) notes that interview aid research findings by enhances participants–researcher interactions. Therefore, this study holds interpretive perspective which emphasizes qualitative data value

in the promotion of knowledge by providing background treatment to forces behind corruption frames in newspapers. Thus, 27 print correspondents to national newspapers surfaced in Kwara state. Purposive sampling was used to select six (6) registered members (print journalists) serving as correspondents to the national newspapers. The researcher purposively selected correspondents that are capable of representing the geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The selection was equally based on correspondents' availability and relevance in terms of data generated for the study. It is known that correspondents to *Daily trust* and *Blue print* are from the north, *Thisday* and *Vanguard* are from the south, and that *Punch* and *the Nation* correspondents work for the west newspapers (Adaja, 2016; Uko 2014). Wimmer and Dominick (2011) say, this selection was based on specific qualities while leaving out those that did not support the qualities. Nworgu (1991) noted, the essence and justification of this selection was to meet the study objectives. Another reason for their selection according to (Uko, 2014) was that the correspondents' newspapers were rated among the top ten (10) newspapers in Nigeria. They therefore, constituted the sample that answered the organizational and extra media influences on corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers. Meanwhile, series of in-depth interviews on the 6 print correspondents to national newspapers were conducted. The interviews generate sub themes and sub-sub themes consisting of conceptualized elements that explained the perceptions of the correspondents on the forces behind newspapers' corruption frames in Nigeria. The questions that were asked were grouped into three themes, i.e. organizational influences on corruption frames, extra media influences on corruption frames and recommendation for objective corruption coverage by Nigerian Journalists. Therefore, the responses provided in each of the three themes used in the interviews were itemized and analyzed using Qualitative Data Analysis Software (NVivo 10). This brought a better picture on how the journalists interviewed for the research have different perspectives on how organizational and extra media influences affect the reportage of corruption issues in Nigerian newspapers. Consequently, the following research questions were explored:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of journalists on the organizational influence in the framing of corruption by Nigerian newspapers?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of journalists on the extra media influence in the framing of corruption by Nigerian newspapers?

RQ3: What are the perceived recommendations for the objective corruption coverage by Nigerian Journalists?

4.0 FINDINGS

With regards to the interpretive approach, the primary data were analyzed in the thematic analytical style, while the interpretations, models were done in line with the views of the correspondents that constitute the informants in this present study. In view of the study's main research objectives and research questions however, the following findings, for which each theme answered each research question, anchored on organizational and extra media forces on corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers emerged.

4.1 Theme 1 Organizational Forces---Ownership Influence

Ownership influences, just like other influences, play a key role in audience perception of realities in any media reports. This is because, how issues are shaped and sieved conditioned the interpretation of texts in hearing publics. Colistra (2012) submitted that the much influences on frames at the organization level is credited to the economic pressure and media ownership. She further noted that constraints and pressures are often conversed by owners and media executives. It is in this that park (2012) opined that the construction of individual group experiences and events by mass media is a response to the general phenomenon that the mass media are themselves powerful. Meanwhile, Rek (2015), Amadi (2015) observed that pressure from media organization could affect the realities of reports on corruption coverage.

Further, the need to understand journalists' perceptions about forces behind corruption frames in Nigerian newspaper is demanding, particularly with a view to establishing the controls behind them. Meanwhile, based on the interviews correspondents to national newspapers, the following (figure 2 below) demonstrate "ownership influence" as forces behind corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers.

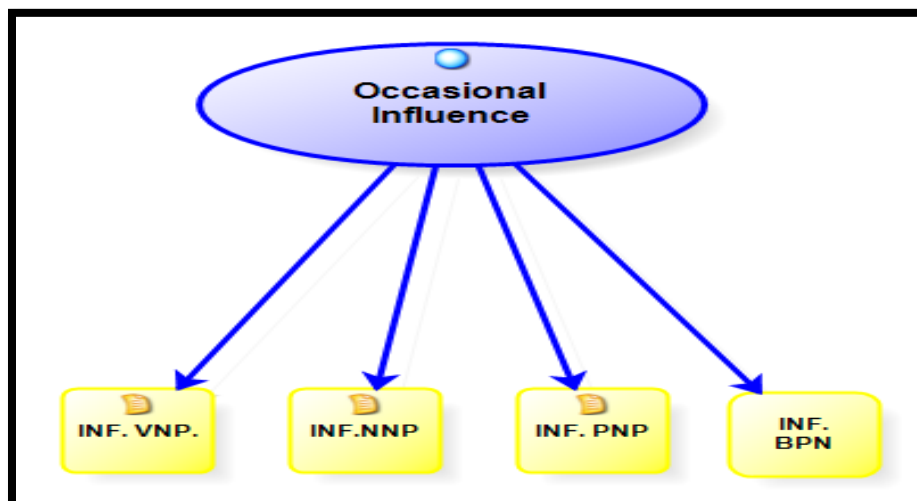


Figure 2: Journalists perceived ownership as forces behind corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers

Ownership of any medium of mass communication is known to have perceived tendencies of influence in their news content. Amadi (2015) confirmed that media production in Nigeria is influence by a six-prism filtering process controlled by paymasters-ownership. He further contends that contents that question the interest of the owners, no matter how logical, are either expunged or crowded out with mindlessness. This concern on the occasional influence of the newspaper owners especially in corruption was expressed by the reporters interviewed. For instance, Informant VNP expressed thus:

Actually, on few occasions they might not dissect the publisher's interest in one or two issues but that is not a general fact. It only happened ones in a while and that is human nature. If I tell you that, perfectly, there is no influence it is not totally true because that is human nature...But that is not a general fact because it's only happened ones in a while (**Inf. VNP**).

Corroborating Inf. VNP's perception, Informant PNP, affirmed that newspapers owners influence news content. He claimed: *I know that in some organizations some of these influences would come* (**Inf. PNP**). In the view of Inf. BPN ownership sometimes affect the content of production by claiming "*Partially yes because the laid down principle that I mentioned earlier were the ideas of the publisher* (**Inf. BPN**). *My employer understands what he wants and how to get it*". Similarly, Informant NNP argued that "*Ownership influence is less pronounced in the management of the paper*" (**Inf. NNP**). This suggests that there is presence of influence of newspaper owners with consequent influence on their media.

Organizational Forces ---Economic Pressure

Economic pressure may increase the level of influence in corruption. These economic concerns are constraint which affect decisions with regards to media messages. Constraints and pressure are often conversed by owners and executives. Of all, economic and ownership pressures, at the organizational level, are the strongest factors of influence on media agenda-building and news framing (Colistra, 2012). Meanwhile, McManus (1994) noted that the greatest worry in the news production is economic pressure since mass media are a part of a "market-based economy". This, according to (Colistra, 2012), are indeed noted concerns among journalists as they are frequently viewed as seeking and imposing economic material or as enlisting profits and monetary expectations above ethical journalistic standard. More succinctly, in

this study, figure 3 below representing informant responses demonstrate “poor salary” as forces behind corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers.

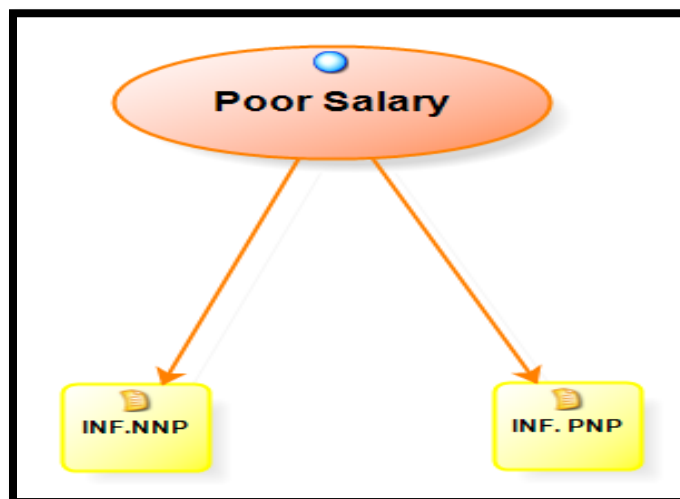


Figure 3 Journalists perceived economic pressures as forces behind corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers

Responding to the issues of economic pressure confronting journalists and which affect the framing of corruption, one of the informants, TNP holds that “*welfare of practitioners should be of utmost importance*” (Inf. NNP). Similarly, Informant PNP corroborates thus:

The issue of poor staff salary is another factor that may influence how a corruption matter may be reported in the newspapers. There are some journalists who were being owned three and some more than six month’s salary. How do you want such kind of person to maintain principles of journalism? They will influence what comes out of the paper (Inf. PNP).

4.2 Theme 2 Extra media Forces----Political Influence and Public Relations Influence

Forces that shapes and sieves the flow and realities of news in newspaper organizations mostly come from the government, this according to (Colistra, 2012), is a product of the relationship between the journalists and news sources which consequently necessitate influences on news frame. Scholars like Zhou and Moy (2007) have contend that external pressures particularly from government may be overwhelming for journalists on how news framing is influenced by, for instance, the emphasis on national interest and political ideology of a seemingly inherent competitive government. This explains more on why Nigerian journalists participate in the promotion of news frames (Zhou & Moy, 2007), that advertise what the government sees as ideals and good for the people. So, how corruption is reported in Nigerian newspapers may be attributed to influences alongside political pressure, and government in power.

Similarly, public relations practitioners in the words of (Berkowitz & Adams, 1990), are charged with the sense of creating and maintaining a positive outlook for its public over time. It is no contention that the practitioners use official proceedings, press conferences, press releases, news releases, and public service announcements to converse their messages to the masses (Berkowitz & Adams, 1990). Colistra (2012) noted that there success in getting their messages across to the audiences through the mass media will influence media’s news agenda, (Curtin, 199), which can in turn influence public opinion and the public agenda. However, the findings of extra media influence on corruption frames in (Figure 4 below) shows

“lack of media skills” and “government in power” as forces behind corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers.

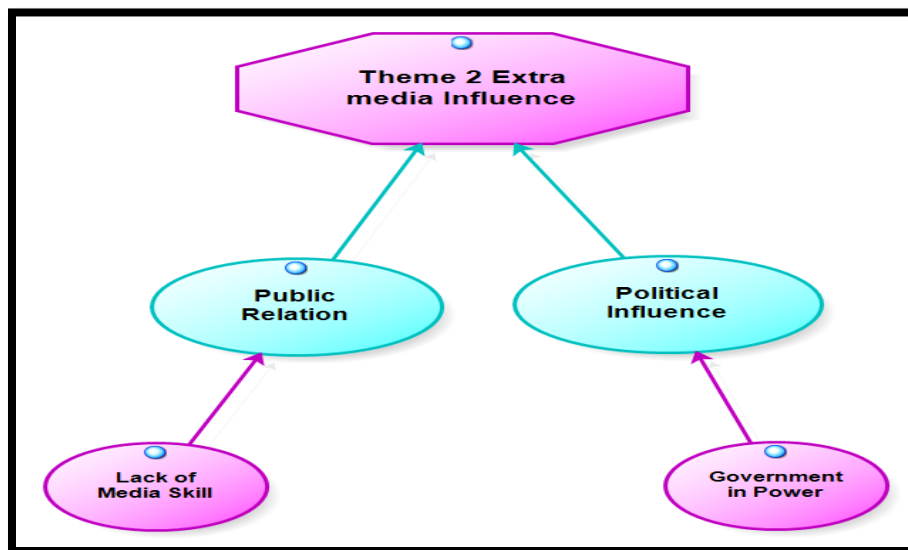


Figure 4 Journalists perceived government in power and lack of media skills as forces behind corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers

Extra media Forces—Government in Power

Government in power may exercise influences on media content in form of campaign advertising. Berkowitz and Adams (1990) observed that off-the-record interviews, news leaks, backgrounders are informal channels that government information sources use to curtail excesses in news media content. Similarly, Colistra (2012) posits that this hidden type of pressure may help explain the dearth of academic literature covering instances of politicians and government officials attempting to influence news coverage. Meanwhile, Gandy (nd) noted that “at every level of government, in every agency, there are information specialists whose responsibility is to ensure that the nation’s public media carry the desired message forward” (Gandy cited in Colistra, 2012, p.93). This may as well tell us that the government knows how to create a specific message and distribute it when it will have the most impact (Colistra, 2012). This therefore explains why journalists take resistant to professionalism when it comes to accepting government offer. In line with this, Informant PNP submits thus: “*any government that comes in the paper remains relevant because it has not compromise the principle to the detriment of the core journalistic principle and the interest of the masses why favouring the power-that-be*” (Inf. PNP). Impliedly from this is the fact that government or political pressure wield enormously on the content of news media, and this may go to show how newspaper reportage of corruption revealed what the politicians want public to know about any corruption issue.

Extra media Forces—Lack of Media Skills

In a related development, Nigerian correspondent, informant NNP affirmed that “*media practitioners need to be well in the rudiments of the ethics of the profession*” (Inf. NNP). This goes to show that lack of adherence to professional ethics result in pressures from public relations in form of news releases which in turn influence media agenda with consequent effects on public opinion and public agenda.

4.3 Theme 3 Recommendation for objective corruption coverage--Protection for Journalist

Especially with respect to the sensitive issue of corruption, journalists work in an entirely dangerous arena when it comes to reporting public official corruption. Okunna and Popoola (2015) observed that protection for journalists in their professional reportage of issues of national interest is similar to the protection of the nation from corrupt selfish overzealous government. Corroborating this, Informant PNP concludes that: “There should be insurance protection for journalists because the job is very risky. This will make journalists to be bolder and more focused in the reportage of all issues objectively” (Inf. PNP). This would mean that insurance protection for journalists, according to (Inf. PNP), is related to what Okunna and Popoola (2015) called protection of the nation.

Recommendation for objective corruption coverage--Maintaining Professionalism

Professionalism in journalism is the bedrock of objective journalistic practices. Woo (2003) observed that “the purpose of journalism is more than reporting and writing of stories... skills and competence are essential. Its purpose has to do with something more fundamental...serving the public trust... providing the news and information that free people need to make political, economic, social, and personal decisions” (Woo, 2003 cited in Pate, 2007, p.8). Informant TNP readily supports this thus: “As journalist we must be professional in the reportage of stories. When you are professional, you don’t take side. We must be professional in whatever we do in such magnitude” (Inf. TNP). This suggests that journalists must uphold objectivity, accuracy and facticity in their reportage of corruption.

Recommendation for objective corruption coverage--Prompt Payment for Journalists

In line with the objective reportage of corruption issues, figure 5 below shows how prompt payment for journalists in their professional callings could help enhance effective corruption coverage.

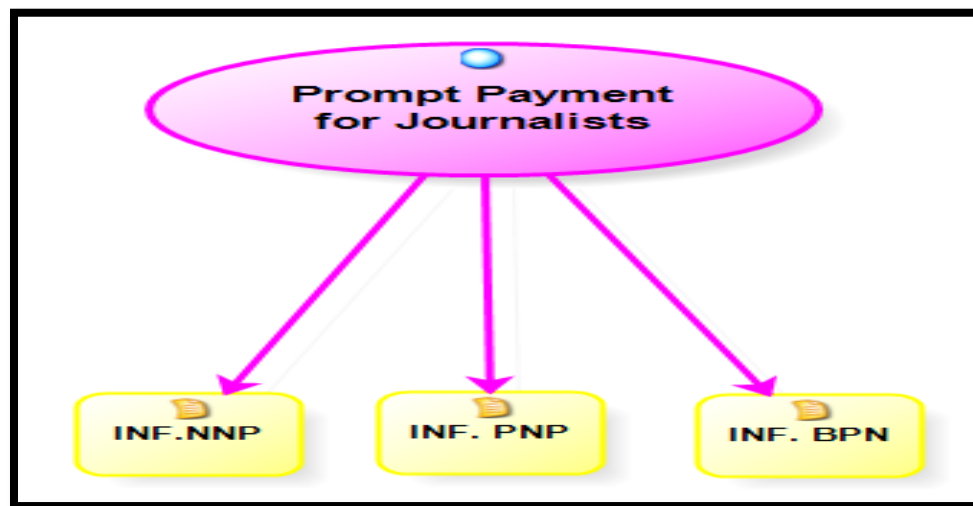


Figure 5 Journalists noted prompt payment for journalists will ensure objectivity in corruption coverage

An objective, unbiased newspaper reportage of corruption is occasioned with prompt payment for journalists. Informant NNP submitted that: “welfare of practitioners should be of utmost importance” (Inf. NNP). This indicates that welfare of newspaper workers is an essential part of undiluted newspaper coverage. In support of this, informant PNP buttressed that:

Welfare of practitioners should be of utmost importance...People must be paid their due entitlements. A situation where pensioners are not paid is a signal to those who are working that they should also be innovative and that what is happening to pensioners now could happen to them (Inf. PNP).

Similarly, Inf. BPN holds that:

Publishers should consider the welfare of his staff as most paramount. This is because in a situation where reporters especially are being owned salaries of several months, how will you expect such an individual to reject offers from people who will be willing to buy a story (Inf. BPN).

Impliedly from this, regular payment and incentives to journalists could help achieved unbiased newspaper reportage of corruption issues.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

A total of six registered journalists were interviewed. All the journalists were correspondents to national newspapers and were based in Kwara State. They constitute professional reporters who have experienced years of service in reporting for national newspapers. The reporters who also doubled as informants answered the research questions that formed the basis of this study.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of journalists on the organizational influence in the framing of corruption by Nigerian newspapers?

Regarding organizational influence on corruption framing, Informants VNP, PNP, BPN and NNP, as represented in the figure 1 above submitted that there exists occasional influence of ownership on the content of Nigerian newspapers while Informant NNP, TNP equally identified economic pressure as a second factor that influence the content of the media. Then it can be sum up that ownership and economic pressure constitutes important forces behind corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers. These findings corroborate Amadi (2015) and Colistra (2012) that ownership and economic pressures affect, to a great extent, what comes into the media and what goes out of the media.

RQ2: What are the perceptions of journalists on the extra media influence in the framing of corruption by Nigerian newspapers?

As for the extra media influence, Informant PNP and NNP submitted that Public relation pressures and political influence which is occasioned by lack of media skills and government in power respectively, have dominant/representations in Nigerian newspapers' outfit. They concluded that political influence and public relations are two distinct external forces that influence Nigerian newspapers' content specifically in corruption reportage. Apparently, these findings confirmed the submission of Zhou and Moy (2007), and Berkowitz and Adams (1990) that journalists experience external pressure from the government and public relations through political ideology and news releases which consequently play a greater role in news framing and by extension influence the media agenda, public opinion and public agenda.

RQ3: What are the perceived recommendations for the objective coverage of corruption by Nigerian Journalists?

The Informants, with respect to their perceived recommendations for the coverage of corruption however, showed varied and mixed perceptions. For instance, Informant VNP highly recommended that journalists protection in their professional sense of duty could help enhance objective corruption coverage. In another perception, Informant NNP, PNP, BPN contrarily but firmly hold that maintenance of professionalism in journalism, protection for journalists and prompt payment for journalists could help enhance objective coverage for corruption issues. While Informant TNP perceived that maintenance of professionalism in journalism is needed for the coverage to work well.

Implied from the foregoing is that prompt payment for journalists and their protection from external and internal forces in their professional callings stand a high chance for objectivity to be achieved in corruption

coverage. This is why Okunna and Popoola (2015) noted that protection for journalists is preservation of the nation from the primordial selfish overzealous leaders.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The study discovered that newspaper ownership, economic pressure, public relations pressures and government in power play a significant role in the buildup to influences that ultimately results to corruption frames in Nigerian newspapers. This role which matches the conclusion in literatures, (Colistra, 2012; Zhou and Moy 2007), is specifically discernible, more penetrating and adaptable through pressures from public relations, media owner, government in power and staff measure in the framing of corruption in newspapers. This discovery coincided with the concept of framing proposed by De Vreese (2005) that the initial starting of influences in news media begins from frame building to framing setting which he named internal and external factors. The frame building, he noted was in recognition with what Colistra (2012) called organization and extra media influence on news content. Thus, this qualitative in-depth interview specifically emerged that ownership, public relations and government in power as perceived by Informants VNP, PNP, BPN and NNP influence the reportage of sensitive topic like corruption in Nigerian newspapers. Similarly, it was also recommended in the in-depth interview that those influences such as internal and external forces (i.e. ownership, public relations pressures and government) that perpetually shaped and sieved the structure of corruption reportage should be aloof through constitutional bodies by establishing grounding law that will enhance prompt payment for journalists on one hand and their protection on the other hand. Little wonder that ownership and its influences on news content on different levels of media researches are the concerns of many recent studies (Adisa, 2016; Amadi, 2015; Rek, 2015; Webster, 2011).

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Ownership of newspapers should allow professionalism to work well in the reportage of corruption issues. They must be made by government to know and remember at all times that the media ownership is a public trust and that the work of journalism is that of service to the nation. Violation of which should be accompanied with punishment/fine. This will, to some extent, help remove the political, ownership and the motive for market share that shape and sieve the quality of news content at the expense of ethical journalism.

Government should equally hold ownership responsible for any stories contravening realities, as this would, to a large extent help in reducing the influence of ownership on corrupt related issues. Similarly, the role of Government in power is critical in the fight against corruption issues. They must help in reducing ownership influences on news content. Also, many journalists are still lacking media skills; therefore, the need to train them with regards to public relations influence on news content is paramount.

Above all however, to encourage professional standards in the coverage of corruption in Nigerian newspapers, journalists must be paid promptly and their protection from external and internal forces in their professional callings must be ensured by concerned bodies.

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