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FRAMING POLITICAL ACTORS: THE CASE OF G-5 GOVERNORS IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract: This study examined how The Punch, The Guardian, and The Vanguard newspapers reported the activities of the G5 governors in the build-up to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The research focused on evaluating the perspectives adopted in framing the G5 governors' stories before, during, and after the elections. Guided by Framing and Conflict theories, the study pursued three objectives: to determine how the selected newspapers framed the activities of the G5 governors, to identify the dominant frames employed, and to analyze the overall patterns of reportage. Content analysis was adopted as the research design, with reports published between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023, serving as the data set. A constructed calendar method was used to select 48 issues on the G5 governors as the study sample. Findings revealed that the three newspapers largely reported the G5 governors through straight news stories and interviews, sourced from press briefings and exclusive interactions. The dominant frames identified were peace, reconciliation, and political frames. However, limited intertextual referencing was observed, as previous actions of the governors were not adequately linked to their agitations during the electoral process. The study concludes that while journalistic neutrality is crucial, it is often influenced by editorial policies, socio-religious attachments, personal beliefs, educational competence, and broader social contexts. It recommends that persistent political conflicts, such as the G5 saga, should be investigated more deeply to uncover underlying motives. Additionally, in reporting sensitive political issues, journalists are encouraged to emphasize the human-interest angle as part of their social responsibility to foster public understanding and democratic accountability.

Keywords: Framing, G5 Governors, Political Reporting, Media Coverage, Elections

Introduction

Political communication as a result of its intriguing nature and the effect it has on any society has become one of the unavoidable forms of communication that humans can hardly dissociate themselves from and not feel the aftermath. The intriguing part of this communication is that it affects almost all the sectors of the society especially when the issue of national politics is at stake. This political communication can start at the smallest unit of life

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being the family where children use diverse means to gain the love of parents and parents on their part use it, (sometimes without knowing), to manage the affairs of the home; the political skills one can learn from home are lobbying (Mayer, 2008) (seeking for support on issues behind the scene), diplomacy (communicating cautiously with siblings when passing important information), compromise (getting used to not wining sometimes) and sacrifice among others. These attributes if properly groomed have the tendency to impact political atmospheres when deployed accurately.

The framing of the G5 by select Nigeria newspapers could be traceable to the unsettled water in the camp of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) especially in the build up to the 2023 General Elections, hence, a cause for concern among party faithful and in turn became a major news story on the front pages of some national newspapers. Nigeria's main opposition Peoples Democratic Party was thrown into disarray following the decision of five of its governors led by Rivers State Govermor, Nyesom Wike (others are Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia State, Samuel Ortom of Benue State and Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State), to kick against the emergence of the party's presidential flagbearer, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, and the national chairman, Sen. Iyorcha Ayu, who were both of northern descent. These five aggrieved governors which would later be identified and framed as G5 or the Integrity Group kicked against virtually every decision of the party aimed at resolving disputes and misunderstandings arising from the conduct and outcome of the presidential primaries of the party.

The G5 had argued that the North cannot produce both the Presidential Candidate as well as Chairman of the party at a time, hence, the call for the resignation of Sen. Iyorcha Ayu as Chairman of the party in favour of a southerner. However, the inability of the party to address this demand is said to have led to the withdrawal of the support of the G5 to the presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, before and during the presidential election. Political analysts had argued that the misunderstanding between the integrity group (G5) and the party led to an abysmal performance of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) at the presidential poll.

Framing, as a theory of mass communication, refers to how the mass media package and present information to the public. Accordingly, the mass media highlights certain events and then place them within a particular context to encourage or discourage certain interpretations, for example, the case of G5. In this way, the mass media exercise a selective influence over how people view reality.

The idea of framing highlights the following points:

a)   Journalists select the topics they will present and decide how they will be presented. This determines the issues audiences think about and how they think about them.

b)   Audiences interpret information through their own frames. Meaning audiences' frames may overlap or contradict the media's frames

Statement of the Problem

The intriguing nature of politics generates a number of conflicts that need to be properly managed to guarantee a relatively habitable society.

The stance of the leadership of the people's Democratic Party (PDP) occasioned the crisis between it and the G-5 Governors especially in the build up to the 2023 general elections. The crisis assumed a terrifying dimension

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immediately after the PDP presidential primaries of 28th May, 2022 which the former Vice President, the *WAZIRI Adamawa*, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar won. The G-5 Governors vehemently contended that both presidential candidate and National Chairman of the party (PDP) cannot emerge from the same zone (northern Nigeria) as it was in contravention of the tripod of justice, equity and fairness upon which the party was founded. They agitated that the national chairman of the party, Sen. Dr. Iyorchia Ayu must resign his position to pave the way for a Southern Chairman to emerge, failure of which they (G-5 Governors) would not support the presidential candidate of the party. The agitation raised serious concern among some party faithful especially in the home states of the aggrieved governors, and in turn became a major news story on the front pages of most newspapers.

The contention is that one cannot tell whether the newspapers were neutral in their reportage of the activities of the G5 governors. One can also not tell if ownership structure of the newspapers exerted unfair influence on the newspaper reportage and editorials.

With the plethora of perspectives on the clamour and agitations of the G5 governors, it becomes a cause of great concern to appraise how the print media especially newspapers projected the entire interplay using the instrumentality of framing as cornerstone. It is in the light of the above that this study seeks to analyze how *The Punch, The Guardian* and *The Vanguard* newspapers framed the activities of the G5 governors with a view to streamlining their ideological path while narrowcasting on areas of convergence and divergence in the tactical use of frames to tell a story.

This interestingly is the primary concern of the study.

Objectives of the Study

The study appraised how *The Punch, The Guardian* and *The Vanguard* framed the activities of the G5 governors so as to synthesize and streamline their convergences and divergences. The specific objectives among others include the need to:

1. Find out how *The Punch, The Guardian* and *The Vanguard* framed the activities of the G5 governors.
2. Identify the dominant frames used in the reportage of the G5 governors by *The Punch, The Guardian* and *The Vanguard*
3. Infer based on the framing, the disposition of the newspaper studied towards the cause of the G5 governors

Research Questions

The study therefore, answered the following questions:

1. How did *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *The Vanguard* newspapers frame the activities of the G5 governors?
2. What are the dominant frames used in the reportage of the G5 governors by *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *The Vanguard* newspapers?
3. What is the disposition of the newspapers studied towards the cause of the G5 governors?

Theoretical Framework

The study was however anchored on the framing theory and the conflict theory.

Framing Theory

This theory was propounded by Erving Goffman in 1974 and the focus of the theory is on the choice of angle and emphasis the media gives to perspectives of a story. In this context, the term "framing" refers to the way that the

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mass media provide a specific angle on a topic by means of choosing, emphasizing, isolation, and amplification (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2010 cited in Okoro & Odoemelam (2013). This implies that the objectives of the reporter or the media outlet they work for are used to frame the content of every channel. In a similar vein, framing is conceptualized by Chew, Ahmad, Ibrahim, and Chang (2012) as a model that is focused on the presentation of media contents. According to the framing theory, during the news collecting and production process, reporters highlight some parts of reality while underscoring others (Goffman, 1974).

Accordingly, framing can be done by reporters and the media organizations where they work in a deliberate or unconscious manner. It makes sense that Kuyers (2006) identified framing as the act of media practitioners creating a perspective that promotes the facts of an instance to be perceived in a particular way, with certain details emphasized as more obvious compared to others. It is important to note that the media has developed into society's eyes because people rely so much on the information provided by daily media coverage to guide their decisions. The media is perceived as being everywhere, reflecting the society and accumulating information for general consumption; as a result, the society at large (particularly the individuals that possess direct interaction with these media) takes seriously any information that predominates in these media.

As a result, media frames transform into societal frames, turning the journalist into a visionary for society. The trend is established by what the media continuously reports and how they display it. Therefore, framing is crucial because it influences how society views life in general. This is thus because every fact or piece of information is unbiased until it is framed, and framing depends on the reporter's or the media outlet's point of view. Gitlin (1980:7 cited in Ikon 2016) made the case that media frames are the precise method of how symbol controllers constantly manage both verbal and visual discourses, including the selection, accentuation, and presentation of stories for general consumption. The journalist, who serves as the first gatekeeper, chooses what is reported as news and how it should be reported. According to Baran and Davis (2009), the knowledge that is associated with the frames that shape the coverage results through exposure to the news coverage comes from whatever angle the journalist decides to report from.

This theory is relevant to this study because it clarifies the importance of framing in newspaper publishing. It guides us in understanding framing and why it is important in this study.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory is a Marxist idea that has been addressed in the literature by Karl Marx. This theory is predicated on the idea that society is constantly at war because there are not so many resources that can be made available. Conflicts will persist as long as individual interests are disparate. However, Allan (2006) asserts that the degree of violence in a confrontation varies. According to him, conflict tends to be less violent when people regard it as a way to accomplish clearly defined, rational goals, but it turns violent when individuals have sentimental attachment and transcendent aims associated to it. Allan (2006 citing Durkheim) further emphasizes that moral boundaries are established around collective ideals and goals as a result of emotional engagement in conflict. This implies that group members have a tendency to act defensively when they perceive a danger to the group's interests. Media messages have the power to arouse or subdue emotional responses. Conflict is fostered when ideological impositions or factual distortions rule the media, while conflict can be reduced when the media is disinterested in the stories it covers.

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According to Oni-ojo and Otaru (2013), tension can lead to mistrust and dread when people believe their interests were negatively impacted or are going to be affected. Citing Ogbulogu (2005), Oniojo and Otaru (2013) further argue that conflict escalates due to personality clash, miscommunication, and other factors. As stated by Vandeveer and Menefee (2010), it is generally accepted that there cannot be a dispute if no one is aware of it. Therefore, awareness of the conflicting situation or feeling is necessary for conflict to increase. Therefore, it is the media's duty to inform the public, seek clarity from all parties involved in a situation, and address the issue of conflicting parties' inability to communicate. This theory implies that media frame is a very important component of conflict avoidance and resolution. Media professionals should be aware that, given the competitive nature of society, no frame is free from meaning (both surface and underneath meaning). As a result, media reports should be written in neutral, understandable languages that do not favor one group over another. Accurate framing is necessary for balanced reporting.

The angles from which a newspaper choose to report a story have the tendency to generate political conflict which can lead to favourable or unfavourable outcomes to parties involved in the elections. If one particular story is overemphasized at the expense of the other, then the issue of fairness and balance have not been ensured. Political conflicts are bound to happen but balanced reporting needs to be ensured when such conflicts are being reported.

Concept of Framing

The interpretation of every message and information by either the receiver or the sender is inherent with the power to wield human influence and trigger behavioural change. Hence, the information content of every newspaper possesses a degree of force to compel and influence the intended reader of the news story through framing. Framing is a quality of communication that leads others to accept one meaning over another (Francis, 2017). He further refers to framing as mass media capacity in choosing and stressing aspects of a reality or event, until it becomes important.

Merilainen and Vos (2011) state that "framing is directed at the zero-sum game rule, like agenda setting in which the raising of one issue leads to the demise of another" (p.4). In most situations, the newspaper operating within the walls of autonomy.

According to Altschull cited in Amadi (2016) confirms, "No newspaper, magazine, or broadcasting outlet exceeds the boundaries of autonomy acceptable to those who meet the costa that enables them to survive" (p.45). The effort to construct news stories which exposes and reveals the secrets of public servants in the government to the people, is hinge on control. This however, limits news stories of newspapers to conform to the media house normative structures. In most cases, the act of framing is done to induce an applauding pattern from the public. Gorp (2007) adds that the frame is a persuasive invitation, a stimulus, to read a news story in a particular way (p.60). So that a specific definition of an event, the causal and treatment responsibility for a societal topic and a moral judgment of a person come more easily across the receiver's mind.

Newspaper Framing

The concept of newspaper framing is related to the agenda-setting tradition but expands the research by focusing on the essence of the issues at hand rather than on a particular topic. The basis of framing is that the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. As Scheufele (1999) observed, framing

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is an important topic since it can have a big influence and therefore the concept of framing expanded to organizations as well. In essence, the idea of framing presupposes that how something is presented to the audience, known as the frame, influences the choices people make about how to process that information. According to Scheufele (1999, p. 106), frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning and the most common use of frames is in terms of the frame the newspaper or media place on the information they convey. They are thought to influence the perception of the news by the audience, in this way it could be construed as a form of second level agenda-setting. This is because the framed news not only tell the audience what to think about, that is agenda-setting, but also how to think about that issue (second level agenda setting).

The concept of newspaper framing and its theory was first put forward by Goffman Erving. According to Goffman (1974, p. 4), people interpret what is going on around their world through their primary framework. This framework, Goffman (1974) noted is regarded as primary as it is taken for granted by the user; stressing that its usefulness as a framework does not depend on other frameworks. Goffman (1974) also stated that there are two distinctions within primary frameworks: natural framework and social framework. Arguing that both play the role of helping individuals interpret data so as to ensure that their experiences is understood in a wider social context. In addition, Goffman (1974) maintained that the difference between the two is functional. Unlike media agenda setting that stresses on how to make an issue appeared more salient than the others before the mass audiences, framing as a newspaper concept emphasizes on answering one simple question, "how to think about an issue?". Simply put, framing is concerned with the presentation of media contents and with such premeditated organization of information; it aims to lead the audiences' evaluative perception on a particular issue (Fairhurst & Sarr 2006).

Political News Frames

Political news frames are the underlying perspectives, narratives, or angles through which news outlets and journalists present political events and issues to the public. These frames shape how individuals perceive and understand political developments, influencing their opinions and attitudes (Sikorski & Matthes, 2020). News frames can vary significantly depending on the media outlet, political ideology, cultural context, and individual journalists' biases. As observed by (Sikorski & Matthes, 2020), news frames can be categorized into several common frames, including:

1.   Partisan Frame: This frame emphasizes the viewpoints and interests of specific political parties or ideological groups. News outlets adopting this frame tend to present events from a particular political perspective, often reinforcing existing partisan divisions.

2.   Conflict Frame: The conflict frame focuses on highlighting political controversies, clashes, and disagreements. It emphasizes the drama and contention surrounding political issues, often portraying politics as a battle between opposing forces.

3.   Ethical/Moral Frame: This frame emphasizes the moral, ethical, or values-based dimensions of political events. It seeks to evaluate political actions and decisions based on principles such as justice, fairness, or human rights.

4.   Economic Frame: The economic frame emphasizes the economic impacts and implications of political decisions and policies. It explores issues such as taxation, government spending, job creation, and economic inequality.

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5.   National Security Frame: This frame emphasizes issues related to national security, defense, and foreign policy. It often focuses on threats, conflicts, and diplomatic relations, framing political events in terms of national interests and security concerns.

6.   Human Interest Frame: The human interest frame highlights the personal stories, experiences, and emotions of individuals affected by political events. It aims to engage audiences by emphasizing the human impact of political decisions.

7.   Solution Frame: This frame focuses on potential solutions and policy proposals to address political challenges. It highlights innovative ideas, expert opinions, and success stories to provide constructive approaches to political issues.

It is important to recognize that news frames can influence public perception and understanding of political events. Media consumers should be aware of these frames and seek diverse sources of information to gain a more comprehensive understanding of political issues.

Media Convergence

From a technological point of view, media convergence is all about integration and interoperability. It is the integration of technology systems, communication technologies, and electronic forms of information that are inherently adaptable, and they are delivered through 'intelligent' platforms, applications, and devices (Holliman 2011). The manner in which we generate and consume digital media to transmit science, politics, sports, and other topics are the processes that facilitate media convergence. These processes are determined by social practices and cultural values, and they also shape the processes that facilitate media convergence. People used to have the ability to compile and filter scientific knowledge through a variety of "traditional" communication methods; however, digital technologies are now also playing a significant role in this process (Holliman 2011).

The presence of newspapers on social media platforms in this case is a means of convergence and this converging nature of the media makes it have wider reach than it ordinarily would have.

Media Divergence

Convergence is the defining characteristic of our so-called digital age, according to Jenkins's theory. An integrated multimedia system has been put into operation as a result of the fact that many forms of media have become functionally interchangeable, meaning that their applications have convergence or overlap one another. In this framework, media such as television, telephones, and computers, as well as books and screens, which were once separate technologies serving diverse purposes, combine into a single conglomerate in which digital technology is the predominant technology. According to Wurth, Espi, and Ven (2013), we use our mobile devices to send texts, read the news, and view films. Convergence is not so much an endpoint as it is a process that is continually changing; it is a process that is always growing, and it is in the hands of many users. This is because no one can completely predict these relations (from Jenkins's perspective, convergence culture is a culture that is out of control).

Jenkins (2006b) has claimed that media convergence immediately implies media divergence. This is due to the fact that in convergence culture, media functions are interchangeable with one another (Jenkins, 2006a). He believes that convergence implies divergence due to the fact that the uses of media flow across many platforms (as we can see with phoning and texting to illustrate this point). The argument that Jenkins makes is that

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convergence may show us how media merge, but divergence tells us how their uses are being dispersed throughout society.

Is this the sole phenomenon that the divergence of the media may imply? According to Jenkins's theoretical framework, divergence is more of the same in a pattern of dispersal, with various media fulfilling functions that are comparable to one another. On the other hand, the phrase "more of the same" ignores a significant aspect of divergence as a concept and of media interactions in the present, both new and old; deviation and difference. Divergence is a phrase that has been used for a protracted period of time in the field of psychology to refer to a manner of thinking that is considered to be multiple.

The G5 Governors

The G5, also known as Integrity Group, comprises five Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governors, Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu, Samuel Ortom of Benue, Seyi Makinde of Oyo, and Nyesom Wike of Rivers. Before the 2023 elections, the G5 governors led by Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike have been clamouring for the PDP National Chairman, Sen. Iyorchia Ayu's resignation shortly after a northerner, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, won the party presidential ticket (Oyero 2023 cited in Channels TV, 2023). The Integrity Group saw the need for the South to produce the party's national chairman because the party's presidential candidate for the 2023 general election, Atiku Abubakar, is from the North. The G5 was said to have been formed on equity, fairness, and justice, a maxim some analysts have criticized and faulted for lacking substance as it is more like a conglomeration of individuals with distinct interests rather than a common goal (Oyero 2023). Unfolding events after the party's presidential primaries and the failure of the party to heed to the demand of the G5 governors created room for an alliance of the G5 with other political parties. Also, within the ranks of the G5 governors, the group became a shadow of itself as three of its members failed in their quest to move to the Senate after their two terms as governors elapsed.

There also appears what could be termed an in-house division within the G5 as the group could not reach a consensus and forge common front on the presidential candidate to support in the build up to the presidential election. To buttress this point, it will be recalled that Governor Ortom, had publicly endorsed Peter Obi of the Labour Party a few days before the February 25 poll, Nyesom Wike of Rivers State and presumed leader of the group and Seyi Makinde of Oyo State was said to have secretly pledged support for the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Tinubu, while Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State and Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia State was said to have decided on supporting either the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Ahmed Tinubu or candidate of the Labour Party, Peter Obi, respectively (Arogbonlo 2023).

The Emergence of the G-5 Philosophy: Causes and Consequences

The political space in Nigeria is typically characterised by drama, surprises, and controversies. Generally, it can be argued that the political environment is basically characterized by interests from individuals, groups and political parties and that these interests are usually heightened during the period of democratic transition through a peaceful, unbiased, well-planned and organized election. Hence, the 2023 Nigeria General Election, like other previously-held elections since Nigeria's return to democratic dispensation in 1999, was not without pockets of partisan, group, or sectional interests. In the build up to the 2023 General Election, the Integrity Group, popularly called or known as G5, emerged after the PDP presidential primary where Nigeria's former vice President, Atiku Abubakar, defeated former Gov. Nyesom Wike and other aspirants in the race to emerge as the party's presidential

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candidate. The emergence of former Nigeria's Vice President, Atiku Abubakar who hails from the north, as the People's Democratic Party flagbearer is said to have ignited the agitation and demand for the resignation of the National Chairman of the PDP, Iyorchia Ayu, whose origin is also traced to the north, to pave the way for a southerner to lead the party in order to achieve what the group referred to as "regional balance" (*TheCable*, 2023). Another argument in favour of the emergence of the G5 was Atiku Abubakar's decision to pick

Delta State Governor, Ifeanyi Okowa, as his running mate ahead of the then Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike who was also believed to have earned the support of party faithful especially as some members of the People's Democratic Party National Working Committee (NWC) endorsed Nyesom Wike, as the Vice-Presidential candidate (Arogbonlo, 2023). Following this development, Wike and his allies called for the resignation of Iyorchia Ayu as the party's national chairman, on the grounds that Iyorchia Ayu cannot hail from the same region (north) as the Presidential candidate. Several attempts targeted at resolving the crisis turned fruitless and the Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, backed by four other People's Democratic Party (PDP) governors, withheld their support for the PDP presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar. Other members of the G5 are Enugu State Governor, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, Samuel Ortom of Benue State and Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia State (*ChannelsTv*, 2022). Consequently, a spin-off of the crisis birthed what was later known as the G5 or the Integrity Group. (*TheCable*, 2022).

Unfolding events after the party's presidential primaries and the failure of the party to heed to the demand of the G5 governors created room for an unholy alliance of the G5 with other political parties. Also, within the ranks of the G5 governors, the group became a shadow of itself as three of its members failed in their quest to move to the Senate after their two terms as governors elapsed. Also, there appears what do up be termed an in-house division within the G5 as the group could not reach a consensus and forge common front on the presidential candidate to support in the build up to the presidential election. To buttress this point, it will be recalled that Governor Ortom, had publicly endorsed Peter Obi of the Labour Party a few days before the February 25 poll, Nyesom Wike of Rivers State and presumed leader of the group and Seyi Makinde of Oyo State was said to have secretly pledged support for the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Tinubu, while Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State and Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia State was said to have decided on supporting either the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Ahmed Tinubu or candidate of the Labour Party, Peter Obi, respectively (Arogbonlo 2023 cited in *Tribune,* 2023).

METHOD

This study adopted the content analysis method in the quest for answers to the research objectives. Berelson (1952), cited in Mordi and Ogbu (2017) avers that content analysis is a study technique utilized for the objective, systematic, and the quantitative explanation of the manifest content of communication interactions. To ensure the data for the study is detailed, the study also utilized the interview method to ascertain the views of reporters that covered the activities of these G5 governors within the period of the study.

The universe of this study includes all the newspapers published within Nigeria. This is so because all these newspapers stand a chance of being selected for the study. However, only three newspapers shall be selected for the study; *The Punch*, *The Vanguard* and *The Guardian* newspapers. The manageability of these newspapers however necessitated their choice in order to have a representative coverage of the activities of the G5 governors during the period under review. The period covered was from April 1st 2022 to March, 31st 2023. During this

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period, the three newspapers (*The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *The Vanguard* newspaper) had three hundred and sixty-five (365) publications each. A summation shows that the newspapers had one thousand and ninety-five (1095) publications within the study period. The population of this study was therefore 1095 publications from the selected newspapers.

The content of three newspapers was the focus of this study; *The Guardian, The Punch* and *The Vanguard* from April 1st 2022 to March 31st 2023. The sample size for this study was 48 issues selected from the 1095 publications targeting only issues that have stories on G-5 governors.

Data Presentation

The presentation of data in this chapter was done in two phases, the first phase displays the quantitative data generated from the contents reviewed while the other deals with the interview responses from the interviewees.

Data Presentation/Analysis

Table. 1: Frames used

Frames	*The Punch*	*The Guardian*	*The Vanguard*	Total	Percentage
Political	3	3	4	10	20.8
Betrayal	2	1	1	4	8.3
Ethnicity	0	1	0	1	2.1
Religion	0	0	0	0	0
Human interest	0	0	0	0	0
Challenge	1	2	1	4	8.3
Competition	2	0	0	2	4.2
Peace/Reconciliation	2	6	5	13	27.1
Power	3	0	1	4	8.3
Reaction	0	1	2	3	6.3
Grievance	3	2	2	7	14.6
Total	**16**	**16**	**16**	**48**	**100**

The above table shows that peace /reconciliation frame dominated the frames followed by political frames. This means that majority of the stories focus on the chances of reconciling the G5 governors within their party as well as the political consequences of the actions of the G5 governors.

Table 2. Category and Frequency of the story on the newspapers

Story Genre	*The Punch*	*The*	*The*	Total	Percentage

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		Guardian	*Vanguard*		
Features	0	4	1	5	10.4
Opinions	0	0	0	0	0
Straight news	11	8	13	32	66.7
Editorials	2	1	0	3	6.3
Comment	0	0	1	1	2.1
Letter to the	0	0	0	0	0 editor
Interview 3 3 1 7 14.5 **Total 16 16 16 48 100**					

The table shows that majority of the stories on G5 governors were written as straight news and feature stories showing the urgency with which the reports were presented.

Table 3. Insights from *The Vanguard* newspaper

Date	Headline	Lead	Interpretation	Further Insight
November 22, 2022	Pro-Atiku group chides Jang, G5 govs over stance on Ayu. By MarieTherese Nanlong	A pro-Atiku/Okowa group in Plateau State, Plateau for Atiku Movement has faulted the continued call for the resignation for the National Chairman of the People's Democratic Party, PDP, Iyorchia Ayu saying its member are disappointed with the former Governor Jonah Jang and the G5 governors for their insistence on Ayu's resignation.	The was a counter offensive from the Atiku camp to make a seemingly balance protests within the PDP	Obviously, all a campaign organization is expected to do is to manage the processes of an election to ensure victory for the candidate so this report mere shows a reaction to what is targeted at demarketing Atiku as a candidate.
November 20, 2022	PDP crisis: We're still open to reconciliation – G5 govs, others. **By Dapo Akinrefon**	Five governors elected on the platform of the People's Democratic Party, PDP, and some aggrieved party leaders, Atiku and Wike were making on Sunday, said they are still open to reconciliation within the party. Recall that the Presidential candidate of the PDP, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and Governor Wike have been at daggers drawn over removal of Ayu and the need for	The use of the phrase 'at daggers' implies that the two parties Atiku and Wike were making efforts to destroy each other politically. By comparing it to a dagger fight, the reporter presents a situation far from the reconciliation	What seemed like Wike's personal fight with Atiku was generalized on certain 'aggrieved' members who themselves did not state what their grievances were. The reporter presented the story as though everyone present at the meeting were aggrieved. This assumption was

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Table 3. continued

Date	Headline	Lead	Interpretation	Further Insight
4 January 2023	Let's join hands to rebuild Nigeria, Diri, Obaseki urge G5 Governors.	Bayelsa Governor, Douye Diri and his Edo counterpart, Godwin Obaseki, on Tuesday, called on the G5 Governors of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to join hands with the party in its rescue mission to rebuild the country. The governors made the call in an interview with journalists shortly after a courtesy visit to the PDP Vice-Presidential Candidate and Governor of Delta, Sen. (Dr) Ifeanyi Okowa, at his home in Owa-Alero, Ika NorthEast Area of the state.	This headline uses simulated solidarity ('us') to make it look as if the G5 of governors were on the adverse side of Nigerian development thus needed to come join them in the development process. By doing so Diri presented himself and his co-travelers as agents of Nigerian development.	Politicians often times try to drag the public into their conversation especially when facing crisis within their political cycle or trying earn sympathy. Nigerian reporters seem not to take note of this during their questioning and reporting sessions. This report presents the PDP as the rescue Nigeria needs.

Interview Presentation

In order to get further insights into how frames are arrived at, some reporters were interviewed to ascertain their perspectives on newspaper framing. The interview responses are presented thus:

Q. 1. Please kindly tell us how frames are generally determined in journalistic reporting

Response A: Frames in journalistic reporting are determined by various factors such as editorial perspective, audience interests, and the overall narrative being constructed.

Response B: Frames can also be influenced by the reporters' background, personal biases, and the sources they choose to include or exclude in their coverage.

Response C: In some cases, frames are established by the way a story is presented, including headlines, visuals and the language used in the reporting. However, frames are a function of a lot of other personal (I wouldn't like to call it biases) factors such as religion, upbringing, educational disposition of the reporter and other things that shape his/her believe systems.

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Response D: Journalistic frames are often shaped by the news organisations values, societal norms, and the prevailing political or cultural climate. That is not to say that the reporter doesn't contribute to the framing process. The reporter is the primary gatekeeper when it comes to framing. By gatekeeper I mean that they filter the frames based on their choices before choosing to report a story.

Q. 2: What are the key considerations made by your newspaper house when choosing angles to report the stories on G5 governors?

Response A: We prioritize angles that highlight the impact of G5 governors' policies on their respective states, focusing on issues such as governance, development projects, and socio-economic indicators.

Response B: First, the issue of prominence in line with the current situation at that point in time and as was the case election. At that point, whatever could affect the outcome of the general election was considered important and affected the frames. Also, the trend at any particular point in time affects the angle from which we choose to present our stories. But, in all we do, we ensure that we stick to our editorial policy.

Response C: Our newspaper house aims to provide balanced coverage by considering the perspectives of various stakeholders, including the governors themselves, opposition parties, civil society groups, and ordinary citizens.

Response D: We assess the relevance and significance of each story angle based on its potential to inform our readers about the challenges, achievements, and controversies surrounding G5 governors and their administrations.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: How did *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *The Vanguard* newspapers frame the activities of the G5 governors?

The result on table 4.2 shows a number of frames were used in reporting the stories on the G5 go governors including peace and reconciliation frame with (27.1%), political frame (20.8%), grievance frame (14.6%), betrayal (8.3%), challenge frame (8.3%), power frame (8.3%), reaction frame (6.3%), competition frame (4.2%), and ethnicity frame (2.1%). Each of these frames showed the importance the newspapers attached to reporting the stories from a professional stand point. The fact that the stories were reported mainly as straight news indicated the urgency with which the newspapers wanted to break the news to their audiences the danger of these pattern of hasty reporting is that it can skip the facts of a story and focus on the elementary drama within the story. Lindgren, Torun and Yariv (2022) observed that news frames present information in a way that emphasizes certain aspects of a story as salient that the others. This implies that hasty reporting as opposed to fact finding can present the trivial part of a story as the main element of that story, thereby overshadowing the main gist of the story that should be of public interest.

The reporters' interviewed agreed that the editorial policy of a newspaper audience interest, reporters background and personal biases all contribute to the framing process. However, these forces act differently on individual reporters except for the editorial policy which looks unavoidable for journalists that are employees of any newspaper house.

The 2023 general election was seen as one of the heated and most keenly contested election in the history of Nigeria's nascent democratic journey characterized by different political alignment and realignment. One of the famous political stories that flooded the front pages of major Nigerian newspapers including *The Punch, The Vanguard*, and *The Guardian* was the G5 governor's decision to go against the wishes of their party, PDP, based

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on perceived grievances and form alliance with then Sen. Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his presidential ambition. According to *The Punch* newspaper, the G5 caused a major division within the People's Democratic Party after demanding the then National Chairman, Iyorchia Ayu step down for a southern replacement as a precondition to support the presidential ambition of the party's flag bearer, Atiku Abubakar in the February 25 poll (Punch newspaper, 8 June, 2024). *The Punch* also added that both Atiku and Ayu, in reaction to the G5 group called the then governors "bluff" and did not succumb to their demands in the just concluded elections. *The Guardian* newspaper on their path framed the G5 as rebel governors who named themselves integrity group (Guardian newspaper, 2/01/2023 cited in Eniola Akinkuotu, 2023). However, *The Vanguard* newspaper on its path reported that the decision of the G5 is in line with the principle of equity, fairness and justice. As reported, "Equity, fairness and justice demands that for national loyalty no one section should dominate the other" (Vanguard, Dec., 29 2022).

Research Question 2: What are the dominant frames used in the reportage of the G5 governors by *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *The Vanguard* newspapers?

The result on table 4.2 shows that majority of the reports reviewed on the G5 governors had peace and reconciliation frames and political frames as the most recuring frames. The reports were written from the standpoints of politics and the tone of resolving the crisis within the PDP. The importance of some members of the G5 group such as Wike made the issue of expulsion from the party difficult hence the other option was a move for reconciliation. The G5 governors constantly presented themselves as open for peace and reconciliation giving conditions they felt would bring peace. The nature of the Nigerian reporting terrain is such that reporters are given packages after news gathering hence reporters often than not report stories from the perspective of the news makers. Altschull cited in Amadi (2016) argues that newspapers and other media outlets are restricted to the autonomy or boundaries acceptable to those who give them packages that enhance their survival. This explains why journalistic reporting follows certain pattern and anything out of the line is seen as strange. These reported frames can be likened to an attempt to see only the political angle to the G5 stories without necessarily looking at its impact on the generality of Nigerians who needed nothing more than good governance. This was done to take public attention from the dangers of such fight to the democratic system in Nigeria. Merilainen and Vos (2011) is agreement with this view assert that framing is used to set the agenda and to downplay the importance of other angles for the benefit of another.

Research Question 3: What is the disposition of the newspapers studied towards the cause of the G5 governors?

The disposition of the newspapers towards the stories was mild and less interpretive of the actions of the G5 governors. The newspapers only conveyed the thoughts of the governors to the masses without critically examining the consequences or rationale behind those thought processes.

Sides (2011) noted that a newspaper report on political news should cover one or more of the following:

1.   Different political activities by ruling and opposite parties.
2.   Election campaigns and truth behind them.
3.   Review various public policies.
4.   Keep a check on law and other government and legal systems and institutes. The basis for this according to Sides (2011) is to overcome biased presentation of political news events.

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According to Amadi (2013), the autocratic type of governance follows a lapdog tradition where journalists and the media are controlled by the government without their awareness of being under its control. The government provides excessive support and favors to the media, particularly those that are under government ownership. The media/journalists who are favored by the government comply and cooperate. When they participate, they feign ignorance towards any societal issues. They spread only insincere compliments about the government. They avoid asking inquiries that could be considered embarrassing to government leaders.

Conclusion

The circumstances that lead to newspaper framing or any other media framing is dynamic and socially produced. While it is required that journalists be neutral and objective when choosing angles to a story, it is clear that neutrality can be relative especially when these journalists are hoodwinked or restrained by editorial policy, socio-religious attachments, educational competence, personal believes and general social upbringing as well as the need to survive. A breakdown of these factors will show from the study that, media ownership, ethnicity, religious disposition, personal affiliations as well as environment all constitute the processes that lead to a journalist's convictions and positions.

We can conclude in simple terms that journalists are products of the society they live in, the way they are trained, the religious affiliations and their decisions to stay upright while practicing their profession. Political reporting comes with a lot of benefits and risks hence those involved (including media houses and journalists) tend to be careful in choosing the angles to report from.

Recommendations

From the findings made in the study, it is recommended that;

1. Newspapers should report stories in details and follow up until hidden perspectives behind those stories are unearthed and reported. Persistent conflicts like the G5 stories ought to be investigated on a deeper level to unravel the hidden reason behind the G5 agitations and not just as straight news stories. This will give reporters the chance to expose the manipulative components of the messages they publish on critical electoral issues.

2. When reporting tropical issues like politics, the dominant frame should be the human interest perspective as it aligns with the responsibility of journalists.

3. Political stories should be devoid of the reporter's sentiments and biases to allow them ask all relevant questions and publish or report same to keep the masses reasonably informed.

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