



Academic Journal of Da'wa and Communication

Newspaper Coverage of PVC Registration and Collection Against 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria

¹Obioma R. Ozioko, ²Andrew C. Apeh, ²Sunny E. Udeze, ^{*3}Etumnu Emeka Williams

¹Department of Mass Communication, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, Nigeria

²Department of Mass Communication, Enugu State University of Science and Technology

³Department of Mass Communication, Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria

Abstract

Keywords: News
paper Coverage,
PVC Registration,
PVC Collection,
Presidential
Election

It appears that within the time frame of this study there was a low newspaper coverage on PVC registration and collection. Even for an important issue as PVC Registration and Collection in Nigeria. In some other cases, the placements of PVC registration and collection stories are placed at the least noticeable space in the select newspapers used. This problem necessitated the study hence; the researchers assessed Guardian and Daily Sun newspapers coverage of PVC registration and collection. The researchers hinged this study on Agenda setting theory. This study employed the descriptive content analysis research design. The population used for the study was 730 newspaper editions. A sample size of 168 was arrived at whereas the composite month sampling technique was employed for the study. The code sheet and guide were the instruments for data collection. Finding from the study showed that PVC registration and collection was given low frequency of coverage, it was as well placed more in inside pages of newspapers, as for the depth, they were given more of 1/4 page depth and were reported in a neutral direction. It was concluded that Guardian and Daily Sun give less space, depth and frequency when reporting permanent voter's card registration and collection much depth, to help their voter card registration and collection.

Kata kunci:

Liputan surat
kabar, Registrasi
PVC, Pengumpulan
PVC, Pemilihan
Presiden

Abstrak

Dalam angka waktu penelitian ini terdapat sedikitnya liputan surat kabar tentang pendaftaran dan pengumpulan PVC. Bahkan untuk isu penting seperti Pendaftaran dan Pengumpulan PVC di Nigeria. Dalam beberapa kasus lain, pendaftaran dan pengumpulan PVC selalu diletakan pada ruang yang paling tidak terlihat di surat kabar tertentu yang digunakan. Masalah ini perlu dilakukan penelitian. Hal ini dikarenakan para peneliti menilai liputan surat kabar Guardian dan Daily Sun tentang pendaftaran dan pengumpulan PVC. Para peneliti menjelaskan penelitian ini pada teori Agenda setting. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian analisis isi deskriptif. Populasi yang digunakan untuk penelitian ini adalah 730 edisi surat kabar. Ukuran sampel yang dicapai adalah 168 sedangkan teknik pengambilan sampel bulan komposit digunakan untuk penelitian ini. Lembar kode dan panduan adalah instrumen untuk pengumpulan data. Temuan dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendaftaran dan pengumpulan PVC diberi frekuensi liputan yang rendah, juga ditempatkan lebih banyak di halaman dalam surat kabar. seperti untuk kedalaman informasi, mereka diberi lebih menampilkan isu ini menjadi 1/4 halaman dan dilaporkan dalam arah yang netral. Disimpulkan bahwa Guardian dan Daily Sun memberikan ruang, kedalaman informasi, dan frekuensi yang lebih sedikit ketika melaporkan pendaftaran dan pengumpulan kartu pemilih permanen, untuk membantu pendaftaran dan pengumpulan kartu pemilih mereka.

INTRODUCTION

The media plays a very useful role to keep people informed and aware of agendas that they should know of. Among the varous media, the print and broadcast media are used to set agenda for their readers, viewers and listeners (Oyero&Oyesomi, 2023). The newspaper as a form of the print media plays a very vital role in keeping the general public informed about all they need to know about elections, from the pre and post election preparations and even about the candidates, issues, and processes of elections (Democracy 2022).

Newspaper reports on election and the exercise of public franchise helps the people, who eventually are the voters to make informed choices, monitor the fairness and integrity of the electoral system, and hold the elected officials accountable for their promises and actions. Newspapers has been said to be used to foster a democratic culture by encouraging civic engagement, dialogue, and debate among different segments of society (Project 2023). The journalists after covering the pre and post election

and electoral inaugurations reports and keep the public informed about these changes and political updates (Politifact 2023).

Newspaper frequency can have significant impacts on the public perception and behaviour in elections. Newspapers are now used to provide frequent and quality coverage that informs, educates, and empowers voters, and supports the democratic values and principles of elections (Jones 2020).

Media are by far the voters' most important source of information about elections and election campaigns. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that the analysis of election (campaign) coverage is a long-standing tradition in communication science (Fujiwara, Müller, and Schwarz 2024). Central questions in the analysis of media reporting on elections and campaigns address, for example, the amount and structure of coverage relating to topics, the key actors and their evaluations (Leidecker-Sandmann 2022; Trilling 2016).

According to a report by the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), a coalition of civil society organizations, it was observed that in the 2023 presidential and National Assembly elections in Nigeria, the newspapers in Nigeria covered a total of 1,975 election-related incidents between January and March 2023 (Africa. 2023; Burke 2023; Kabor 2023). Several studies have shown that the press coverage of electoral related matters in the Nigerian 2023 general election, highlights that most newspapers, especially; *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *The Nation* newspapers devoted a sizeable percentage of their election related reports on electoral violence stories (Vanguard 2023; Ukato, Emeke, and Ezekiel 2023). Nigerian newspapers try to do their best to report election related matters to the public's to keep them informed and make them participate in the whole election processes.

Newspaper coverage is a very useful tool to propagating and compelling the masses to act on what is important and useful to them. The various Nigerian newspapers try their best to cover almost all the beats disposable to them, as this is part of their basic responsibility to the society. Nigeria has had several newspapers that publish either daily, weekly, weekends, monthly, quarterly, annually or bi-annually, the researchers used two prominent newspapers in Nigeria to ascertain their coverage of Permanent Voters Card (PVC) registration and collection in different parts of this country. It is possible that within the time frame this study tried to cover that there are low newspaper

coverage on PVC registration and collection. It is as well possible that newspapers coverage of PVC can be unfavourable or one sided. In some other cases it might be that the placements of covered PVC registration and collection stories are placed at the least noticed space in these two newspapers. The newspapers may even be covering stories on a particular state or region more than in every other region in Nigeria, this might end up making only people in that region to take the whole course of action serious, whereas others in uncovered states or regions sees the whole PVC thing as unimportant.

Again, there is dearth of literature that look at newspaper coverage of PVC registration and collection in Nigeria which necessitated this study on *the Guardian* and *Daily Sun* newspapers coverage of PVC registration and collection of the 2023 presidential election. Most studies seem to focus on election proper and the aftermath of election without paying enough attention to PVC registration and collection which is a key factor determining the outcome of any election. A study like this is necessary because election is periodical hence the study will serve as guide to electoral stakeholders on how to handle the issue of PVC registrations and collection in subsequent elections in Nigeria.

The main objective of this study was to find out the extent of newspaper coverage of PVC registration and collection on the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to: Examine the frequency of coverage of PVC registration and collection by *the Guardian* and *Daily Sun* Newspapers towards 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Assess the prominence given to newspaper reports by *the Guardian* and *Daily Sun* towards PVC coverage and collection against the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Ascertain the depth given to *the Guardian* and *Daily Sun* newspapers while covering PVC registration and collection towards 2023 Presidential election in Nigeria. Finally, to x-ray the direction of coverage on PVC registration and collection by *the Guardian* and *Daily Sun* newspapers towards 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.

The Role of Newspaper in Informing the Publics of Election Procedures

Newspapers play a vital role in informing the public about the candidates, issues, and processes of elections. They can help voters make informed choices, monitor the fairness and integrity of the electoral system, and hold the elected officials accountable for their promises and actions. Newspapers can also foster a democratic culture by

encouraging civic engagement, dialogue, and debate among different segments of society (Project 2023). However, newspapers also face challenges and risks in covering elections, such as legal restrictions, political pressures, ethical dilemmas, and security threats. Therefore, journalists need to be prepared, professional, and responsible in their reporting, and adhere to the principles of accuracy, balance, and credibility (Democracy 2022; Politifact 2023).

The significance of newspapers covering pre and post election preparations. Newspapers are important sources of information for voters, who need to know the backgrounds, platforms, and records of the candidates running for office. Newspapers can also educate the public about the electoral rules, procedures, and timelines, and alert them of any potential problems or irregularities. Newspapers can also scrutinize the performance and accountability of the elected officials, and expose any corruption, mismanagement, or abuse of power. Newspapers can also promote a culture of democracy by providing a space for diverse opinions, perspectives, and voices, and facilitating dialogue and debate among citizens, civil society, and political actors (Democracy 2022).

Newspapers, however, also face some challenges and risks in covering elections, especially in countries where there is no press freedom, rule of law, or respect for human rights. Newspapers may be subject to legal restrictions, such as censorship, defamation, or sedition laws, that limit their ability to report freely and critically. Newspapers may also face political pressures, such as intimidation, harassment, or violence, from the government, the opposition, or other groups that seek to influence or manipulate their coverage. Newspapers may also encounter ethical dilemmas, such as how to balance fairness and accuracy, how to verify sources and facts, how to protect confidentiality and anonymity, and how to avoid bias and conflicts of interest. Newspapers may also face security threats, such as physical attacks, cyber-attacks, or sabotage, that endanger their staff, equipment, or operations (Project 2023). Journalists are to be vigilant and cautious, and take measures to ensure their safety and security. By doing so, they can fulfill their role as watchdogs of democracy, and serve the public interest (Politifact 2023).

Newspapers are essential sources of information and education for voters, who need to know the candidates, issues, and processes of elections. Newspapers can also monitor the fairness and integrity of the electoral system, and hold the elected officials

accountable for their promises and actions. However, the frequency and quality of newspaper coverage can vary depending on various factors, such as the availability of resources, the level of press freedom, the degree of political polarization, and the influence of misinformation. These factors can affect the impact of newspapers on the public opinion, participation, and trust in elections (Jones 2020).

One possible impact of newspaper frequency is that it can increase or decrease the level of public awareness and interest in elections. Frequent and comprehensive coverage can help voters learn more about the electoral context, and motivate them to engage in the democratic process. On the other hand, infrequent and superficial coverage can leave voters uninformed or confused about the electoral context, and discourage them from participating in the democratic process (Project 2023).

Another possible impact of newspaper frequency is that it can enhance or undermine the credibility and legitimacy of elections. Frequent and responsible coverage can help voters verify the accuracy and reliability of the electoral results, and accept the outcome as fair and valid. On the other hand, infrequent and irresponsible coverage can expose voters to misinformation and manipulation of the electoral results, and erode their confidence and satisfaction with the outcome (Democracy 2022).

Newspaper frequency can have significant impacts on the public perception and behaviour in elections. Newspapers should strive to provide frequent and quality coverage that informs, educates, and empowers voters, and supports the democratic values and principles of elections.

The Perception of Nigerians on Nigerian Newspapers Coverage of Pre And Post Election Preparations and Proceedings

Newspapers are important media for informing and educating the public about the candidates, issues, and processes of elections. They can also monitor the fairness and integrity of the electoral system, and hold the elected officials accountable for their promises and actions (E 2020). However, the perception of Nigerians on Nigerian newspapers coverage of pre and post election preparations and proceedings may vary depending on various factors, such as the political affiliation, the quality of reporting, and the frequency of coverage (Adade-Yeboah, A. & Agbeleoba 2020).

Political affiliation of the newspapers: Some newspapers may be aligned with one of the main political parties contesting the elections, such as the People's Democratic Party

(PDP) or the All Progressives Congress (APC), and may report favorably or unfavorably on their candidates and activities. This may affect the trust and credibility of the newspapers among the readers, who may perceive them as biased or objective (Conversation 2020).

Quality of reporting of the newspapers: Some newspapers may adhere to the professional standards and ethical principles of journalism, such as accuracy, balance, and credibility, and provide comprehensive and critical coverage of the electoral context. Others may violate these standards and principles, and provide superficial and sensational coverage of the electoral context. This may affect the awareness and interest of the readers, who may perceive them as informative or misleading (Olijo 2015).

Frequency of coverage of the newspapers: Some newspapers may provide frequent and timely coverage of the pre and post election preparations and proceedings, and alert the readers of any potential problems or irregularities. Others may provide infrequent and delayed coverage of the pre and post election preparations and proceedings, and expose the readers to misinformation and manipulation. This may affect the participation and satisfaction of the readers, who may perceive them as supportive or undermining of the democratic process (Demarest, L. & Langer 2019).

The perception of Nigerians on Nigerian newspapers coverage of pre and post election preparations and proceedings can have significant impacts on the public opinion and behaviour in elections. Newspapers should strive to provide quality and frequent coverage that informs, educates, and empowers the readers, and supports the democratic values and principles of elections.

A study by Galadanci, and Abdulwahab (Galadanci, B., & Abdulwahab 2020) on the impact of permanent voters cards in reducing election rigging in Nigeria. This study found that the introduction of PVCs and card readers reduces the level of rigging during the accreditation exercise but the other forms of rigging during registration, voting and vote counting can still substantially modify the results.

Olijo (Olijo 2015) study on public perception of Nigerian newspaper coverage of xenophobia revealed that the public perceived the Nigerian newspapers as promoting dominant positive frames in the portrayal of Nigerians affected by the xenophobia in South Africa. This result could be because of the location of the media and the people concerned. Naturally, Nigerian media are most likely to have bias for the Nigerian

citizens. It was also reported that most of the perpetrators were largely represented by Nigerian newspapers in the negative frames. The result of this study revealed that the government of South Africa was perceived to have been portrayed as incompetent in handling xenophobia which is gradually becoming a way of life in the Rainbow Nation. A study done by Amiebaho et al. (Ukato, Emeke, and Ezekiel 2023) on press coverage of electoral violence in the 2023 general election in Nigeria found that the newspapers gave more prominence to electoral violence stories on their front pages (40.7%) than on their inside pages (59.3%). The study also revealed that the newspapers used more pictures (51.9%) than charts (48.1%) to illustrate electoral violence stories.

Oyero and Oyesomi (2023) study found that newspapers focused more on the issues of corruption, economy, and security than on the other issues. The study also showed that the newspapers used more positive than negative frames to portray the candidates. A study done by Gentzkow et al. (Gentzkow, M., Shapiro, J.M.&Sinkinson 2011) found no evidence that partisan newspapers affect party vote shares, with confidence intervals that rule out even moderate-sized effects. We find no clear evidence that newspapers systematically help or hurt incumbents.

Agbu (2016) study opined that the true winners in the 2015 Presidential election were the electronic biometric device and the Nigerian voter. It was found that the 2015 elections recorded 10 million voters less than in the 2011 elections, begging the question of where all the votes came from in the 2011 elections. The presidential election was won by a margin of only 2.5 million votes, the smallest margin in presidential elections since the Fourth Republic. This technology therefore has considerable potential for national planning and the verification of existing national data.

Mordi and Ogbu (Mordi, F. & Ogbu 2017) study found that that media owners, and not the editors, appear to be the gatekeepers. The paper recommends proper regulation of media organisations in the country to ensure that they meet stipulated ethical standards. A study by Ugondo (Ugondo 2018) found that 93.1% of the respondents anticipated violence during the polls; however, voting behaviour exhibited during accreditation, voting, collation and announcement of results by INEC was largely cordial and peaceful. Pearson Correlation coefficients of .983, .904, .959 and .981 showed high correlation between editorial stand on issues and voter attitude during the 2015 general elections.

This study was underpinned on agenda setting theory. This theory proposes that the media can influence the public's perception of what issues are important and salient, by giving more or less attention and prominence to certain topics (Ide, J.E., Ojiakor-Umenze, I. & Etumnu 2024; Scheufele, D. A., & Tewksbury 2007). In the context of newspaper coverage of Private voters card registration and collection, this theory could help explain how the media can affect the public's awareness, interest, and participation in the electoral process, by highlighting or downplaying the importance and benefits of registering and collecting their voters cards (McCombs, M. E., & Shaw 1972). This theory could also help examine how the media can shape the public's attitudes and opinions towards the candidates, parties, and policies, by emphasizing or ignoring certain aspects of their platforms and records². Furthermore, this theory could help explore how the media can interact with other factors, such as political affiliation, social norms, and personal values, in influencing the public's voting behavior and preferences (Leidecker-Sandmann 2022; Oyero, O., & Oyesomi 2023).

According to a study by Oyero and Oyesomi (Oyero, O., & Oyesomi 2023) which examined the agenda-setting role of newspapers in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, the newspapers sampled (The Punch, The Guardian, and The Nation) gave more attention to the presidential candidates than to the other candidates. The study also found that the newspapers focused more on the issues of corruption, economy, and security than on the other issues. The study also showed that the newspapers used more positive than negative frames to portray the candidates. This theory is suitable for this study based on the fact it helps to explain the extent of prominence given to the issue under investigation in this study. In a nutshell, the media report issues that have to do with PVC registration and collection people will tend to talk more about it because the agenda of discourse has been set.

METHOD

The researchers employed the descriptive content analysis research design. The researchers limited this study to two Nigerian Newspapers, namely: *The Guardian* newspaper and *Daily Sun* newspaper. These newspapers were selected because of their wide national coverage and wide readership. This study is as well limited to these newspaper publications from March 2022-February, 2023, which is one year, towards the

time election preparations were ongoing. The contents to be coded from these two newspapers are strictly on PVC registration and collection, against the 2023 Presidential election in Nigeria. The researchers used a population of 730 editions of two newspapers to represent the one year of the study, since the researcher is studying two newspapers *the Guardian* newspaper and *Daily Sun* newspapers, 730 editions represents 730 days of these two newspaper publications. The researchers used a sample size of 168 editions of newspaper editions for this study. The for the sampling technique, the composite week sampling technique was used to arrive at a sample size to be used in the study. In all, seven editions were selected for a month making it eighty-four (84) editions for the twelve (12) months of the study on a particular newspaper edition. 84×2 (which represents: *The Guardian* and *Daily Sun*) = 168. The composite month sampling technique was designed in such a way that the dates randomly selected for the first newspaper, was applied for the other two newspapers.

For validity, the researchers subjected the instrument to Mass communication research experts who made sure the instrument measure what it tends to measure. There corrections were incorporated in the final draft of the instrument. Meanwhile, for the inter-coder reliability the researchers employed the service of a research professional to make sure that the items in the code sheet align with the study's objectives. The researchers employed two (2) extra trained coders used for this content analysis study. The researchers sampled 20 editions of a newspaper and then coded it with the trained coders. The results of the coding were presented and Krippendorff's Alpha was used to calculate these instrument reliability among coders per variable. The results of the sampled coding were calculated using the Krippendorff's Alpha. The reliability scores were arrived at below: for frequency 0.9, for prominence 0.8, for depth 0.8, whereas for direction 0.9 was gotten. These results are reliable since the scores are good, therefore, they are considered valid to be used for this study.

Tabel 1
Selected Content In Two Newspapers Over 12 Months

Days	Months											
	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov.	Dec.	Jan	Feb.
Sunday	28	17	1	19	3	14	11	23	6	4	15	5
Monday	1	11	9	20	11	22	5	3	28	26	9	13
Tuesday	9	5	17	14	19	9	6	11	15	6	17	21
Wednesday	23	13	11	1	13	17	28	5	23	21	4	8

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Thursday	17	7	26	23	21	4	1	13	10	8	12	2
Friday	4	22	20	3	8	26	23	7	18	30	6	10
Saturday	12	9	7	11	30	6	10	22	5	3	14	4

Fieldwork, 2024

The above selected days in each of the twelve months guided how the contents were selected in the two newspapers used.

The code guide and sheet was used as instruments for data collection in this study. The unit of analysis were news, features, columns, editorials, and cartoons. The content category used for the code sheet and guide were same with the research objectives of the study: the frequency, prominence, depth and direction of coverage in these two selected newspapers for the days to be content analyzed. The data was got using two coders and was done off-line on the two selected newspaper edition copies. The data got were analysed in simple frequency percentage tables.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data gotten from the newspapers content analysed were presented below as follows:

Table 2
Frequency of Newspaper Reports on Variables coded (March 2022-February, 2023)

Newspapers	Government Corruption	Crime	PVC registration and collection	Total (%)
<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	47	105	18	170
<i>Daily Sun</i>	45	109	13	167
Total	89	214	31	100

Source: Newspaper Content coded, 2024

The above table data showed that there were more stories on crime reported, followed by government corruption, the least covered by the two newspapers coded was the issue of PVC registration and collection. Among the reportage done on government corruption, *the Guardian* newspaper published a slight higher frequency of stories than *Daily Sun*.

Table 3
Frequency of Newspaper Reportage

Unit of analysis	Newspapers	Government Corruption	Crime	PVC registration and collection	Total (%)
News	Guardian Newspaper	24	71	9	104

	Daily Sun	20	40	5	65
	Newspapers	Government Corruption	Crime	PVC registration and collection	Total (%)
Editorial	Guardian Newspaper	1	2	1	4
	Daily Sun	1	1	2	4
	Newspapers	Government Corruption	Crime	PVC registration and collection	Total (%)
Feature	Guardian Newspaper	9	42	3	54
	Daily Sun	12	31	2	45
	Newspapers	Government Corruption	Crime	PVC registration and collection	Total (%)
Column	Guardian Newspaper	6	5	2	13
	Daily Sun	3	7	2	12
	Newspapers	Government Corruption	Crime	PVC registration and collection	Total (%)
Cartoon	Guardian Newspaper	7	6	2	15
	Daily Sun	6	9	3	18
	Total	89	214	31	334

Source: Newspaper Content coded, 2024

The data shown revealed that there were 104 Guardian newspaper reported news story and 65 Daily Sun reported news story. There were 4 editorial stories for both the *Guardian* newspaper and *Daily Sun* newspapers. There were 54 coded feature stories reported in the *Guardian* newspapers and 45 feature stories in *Daily Sun* newspapers. There were as well 13 reported column stories by the *Guardian* newspaper and 12 reported column stories by the *Daily Sun* newspaper. The above table data finally revealed that *the Guardian* newspaper published 15 cartoon stories whereas *Daily Sun* published 18 cartoon stories. The highest reported issue for the duration coded and covered for this study was crimes, this had a total of 214 stories, followed by government corruption, which had 89 reported stories. Finally, there was low reportage of PVC registration and collection, as only 31 stories were reported by the two selected newspapers coded.

Table 4
Prominence given to coverages

Unit of analysis	Newspapers	Full page	Inside page	Centre-spread page	Back page	Total (%)
News	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	0	6	0	1	7
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	1	5	0	1	7

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	Newspapers	Full page	Inside page	Centre Spread Page	Back page	Total (%)
Editorial	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	0	2	0	0	2
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	1	0	0	1
	Newspapers	Full page	Inside page	Centre Spread Page	Back page	Total (%)
Feature	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	0	1	1	0	2
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	2	1	0	3
	Newspapers	Full page	Inside page	Centre Spread Page	Back page	Total (%)
Column	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	0	2	0	0	2
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	1	1	0	2
	Newspapers	Full page	Inside page	Centre Spread Page	Back page	Total (%)
Cartoon	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	1	1	0	0	2
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	2	0	1	3
	Total	2	23	3	3	31

Source: Newspaper Content coded, 2024

The data shown revealed that there were 7 *Guardian* newspaper reported news story and 7 *Daily Sun* reported news story. There were 2 editorial stories for *Guardian* newspaper and 1 *Daily Sun* newspaper. There were 2 coded feature stories reported in the *Guardian* newspapers and 3 feature stories in *Daily Sun* newspapers. There were as well 2 reported column stories by the *Guardian* newspaper and 2 reported column stories by the *Daily Sun* newspaper. The above table data finally revealed that the *Guardian* newspaper published 2 cartoon stories whereas *Daily Sun* published 3 cartoon stories. The highest reported issue for the duration coded and covered for PVC registration and collection stories had more inside page stories, this was seen at a 23 frequency, others on centre spread and back page had 3 frequency scores, whereas full page stories were the lowest at 2 frequency score.

Table 5
Depth of Coverage

Unit of analysis	Newspapers	Full page	1/2 page	1/4 page	More than 1/4 page	Total (%)
News	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	0	2	5	1	8
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	2	3	1	6
	Newspapers	Full page	1/2 page	1/4 page	More than 1/4 page	Total (%)
Editorial	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	0	0	1	1	2

	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	0	1	0	1
	Newspapers	Full page	1/2 page	1/4 page	More than 1/4 page	Total (%)
Feature	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	0	1	2	0	3
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	1	0	1	2
	Newspapers	Full page	1/2 page	1/4 page	More than 1/4 page	Total (%)
Column	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	0	1	0	1	2
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	1	1	0	2
	Newspapers	Full page	1/2 page	1/4 page	More than 1/4 page	Total (%)
Cartoon	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	0	0	2	1	3
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	0	1	1	2
	Total	0	8	16	7	31

Source: Newspaper Content coded, 2024

The data shown revealed that there were 8 *Guardian* newspaper reported news story and 6 *Daily Sun* reported news story. There were 2 editorial stories for *Guardian* newspaper and 1 *Daily Sun* newspaper. There were 3 coded feature stories reported in the *Guardian* newspapers and 2 feature stories in *Daily Sun* newspapers. There were as well 2 reported column stories by the *Guardian* newspaper and 2 reported column stories by the *Daily Sun* newspaper. The above table data finally revealed that the *Guardian* newspaper published 3 cartoon stories whereas *Daily Sun* published 2 cartoon stories. The highest reported issue depth for the duration coded and covered on PVC registration and collection stories had more 1/4 page story depth, this was seen at a 16 frequency, others on more than 1/4 page depth and 1/2 page depth had 7 and 8 frequency respectively.

Table 6
Direction of coverage

Unit of analysis	Newspapers	Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Total (%)
News	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	1	0	7	8
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	0	5	5
	Newspapers	Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Total (%)
Editorial	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	0	0	2	2
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	0	1	1
	Newspapers	Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Total (%)
Feature	<i>Guardian Newspaper</i>	0	0	3	3
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	0	1	2	2

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	Newspapers	Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Total (%)
Column	<i>Guardian</i>	1	0	1	2
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	1	0	1	2
Cartoon	Newspapers	Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Total (%)
	<i>Guardian</i>	0	0	2	3
	<i>Daily Sun</i>	1	0	2	3
	Total	4	1	26	31

Source: Newspaper Content coded, 2024

The data shown revealed that there were 8 *Guardian* newspaper reported news story and 5 *Daily Sun* reported news story. There were 2 editorial stories for *Guardian* newspaper and 1 *Daily Sun* newspaper. There were 3 coded feature stories reported in the *Guardian* newspapers and 2 feature stories in *Daily Sun* newspapers. There were as well 2 reported column stories by the *Guardian* newspaper and 2 reported column stories by the *Daily Sun* newspaper. The above table data finally revealed that the *Guardian* newspaper published 3 cartoon stories whereas *Daily Sun* published 3 cartoon stories. The highest reported story direction on PVC registration and collection coded showed that more neutral stories were reported, this was seen at a 26 frequency, there were only 4 favourable news stories reported, and 1 unfavourable story on PVC registration and collection.

Result showed that the *Guardian* and *Daily Sun* newspaper covered more of crime beats and government corruptions than they cover PVC registration and collection. Crime was covered in 214 stories, followed by government corruption, which was covered in 89 stories, whereas PVC registration and collection, was covered only in 31 stories. Among the reportage done on government corruption, the *Guardian* newspaper published a slight higher frequency of stories than *Daily Sun*. Generally, there is low coverage of PVC registration and collection compared to other stories covered within the same period as indicated by the findings. Perhaps this could be that the newspapers did not prioritise the issue of PVC registration and collection. In a situation as this, the newspaper's agenda-setting function will not yield optimal results because of the level of prominence given to it. Also, it may be because people are more interested in stories that have to do with crime and government corruption than PVC registration and collection because people have lost interest in any issue concerning politics. Researchers like Adetoro and Omiyefa (Adetoro, R., & Omiyefa 2017) and Obiagu and Ajaps

(Obiagu, A., & Ajaps 2022) in their studies found that political participation is low in Nigeria. As hinted earlier, the lack of interest in politics could be adduced as the reason these newspapers pay low attention to the issue of PVC registration and collection. Galadanci and Abdulwahab (Galadanci, B., & Abdulwahab 2020) finding adds that voting and vote counting substantially modify's the election results. Oyero and Oyesomi (Oyero, O., & Oyesomi 2023) study found that Nigerian newspapers focused more in covering more issues on corruption, economy, and security than on the other issues. The finding of this study helps to paint a clearer picture of the agenda setting theory this study was framed on. That is, how it works.

Finding showed that stories coded on PVC registration and collection stories had more inside page stories, this was seen at a 23 frequency. The reason for this finding is that the selected newspapers studied prefer other stories, like government corruption, to appear on their prominent pages because it will attract more attention and readership, unlike stories on PVC registration and collection. In as much as the newspapers have the social responsibility of informing the people, they are also established to make a profit; hence they need to pay more attention to stories that interest the people. According to results, items PVC registration and collection were measured with an upper hand. No newspaper editor would leave where more interest abounds and go for the ones without interest. This explains why most of the stories concerning PVC registration and collection appeared inside the pages of newspapers. However, when it has to be negative stories, newspapers pay more attention because bad news is good news for the news editor. Negative stories always have the tendency of attracting prominent pages in newspapers. This is why Amiebaho et al. (Ukato, Emeke, and Ezekiel 2023) in their study as reviewed in this study, found that Nigerian newspapers gave more prominence to electoral violence stories on their front pages (40.7%) than on their inside pages (59.3%). In a similar vein, Oyero and Oyesomi's (Oyero, O., & Oyesomi 2023) study found that newspapers are more concerned on issues that bother on security, corruption, and economy other than issues as PVC registration and collection.

Findings showed that the reported stories on PVC registration and collection were given more than 1/4 page depth, and on other occasions were given less than 1/4 page depth. The implication of this finding is that The Guardian and Daily Sun newspapers deem the stories on PVC registration and collection as not so important,

hence the depth of reports given. If there were issues of government corruption or crime, more pages would have been dedicated to them. What this means is that most of the stories on PVC registration and collection were shallow and devoid of details. Irrespective of the level of political participation in the country, newspapers as prominent as *The Guardian* and *Daily Sun* ought to dedicate several pages of newspaper where they talk about the implications of PVC registration and collection because of how important it is to the success of democracy in any given society in line with their agenda-setting function. Resonating with this, Agbu (Agbu 2016) in a study, believes that when newspapers give enough depth to their stories on elections and PVC, they tend to record more voters during the election. In other words, newspaper establishments have a great role to play in ensuring high voter turnout during elections. In view of this, Nwamara and Etumnu (Nwamara, C.A & Etumnu 2022) in their study, revealed that the mass media play a significant role in electoral participation in Anambra State and, by extension, Nigeria.

The result also showed that *The Guardian* and *Daily Sun* newspapers had a neutral direction of coverage on PVC registration and collection. What this implies is that the newspapers studied were neither favourable nor unfavourable in their coverage of PVC registration and collection. Inasmuch as they gave the PVC registration and collection low coverage, the little they report, they tried as much as possible to be neutral to avoid taking sides or even portraying the whole process in a negative light in their coverage. Perhaps they understand the influence they possess, as any report termed negative may affect the process, thereby contributing to the already existing low political participation in the country. The study of Olijó (Olijó 2015) revealed that the perpetrators who represent Nigerian happenings were represented by Nigerian newspapers, hence, end up reporting most stories in a negative frame, which in the long run has negative consequences.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigerian newspapers have in most occasions given some topics much coverage more than others. Sometimes it is needful that it should be like that, on other occasions some topics like PVC registration before election and its collection is supposed to be given much coverage on a regular basis so as to motivate the people to take the who idea

seriously. Finding from this study haven shown that the Guardian and Daily Sun newspaper gave the issue of PVC registration and collection low coverage before the 2023 presidential general election. It can be concluded that most Nigerian newspapers give less space, depth and frequency when reporting private voter card registration and collection.

In view of the findings, it is recommended that journalists who work for newspapers need to be prepared, professional, and responsible in their reporting, and adhere to the principles of accuracy, balance, and credibility, this will help them to frequently cover all election related matters and preparations, especially in getting people prepared to partake in the election process. That he prominence newspapers give to issues they cover should be intentionally worked on since where they place stories they report end up indirectly telling their readers that such stories are important and should be given attention and possibly adhered to. Also, Nigerian newspapers should strive to provide quality and frequent coverage that informs, educates, and empowers the readers, and supports the democratic values and principles of elections. Finally, the direction of newspaper coverage is important, so we recommend that newspaper owners and journalists working with them should always remember to give election topics like permanent voters card (PVC) registration and collection much depth, to help their readers understand better how important it is that they get their PVC so as to vote during election.

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