

PANIC AND SOLUTION JOURNALISM FRAMING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE REPORTAGE AND SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS BY NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

The study examined panic and solution journalism framing and assessment of Nigerian newspapers' reportage and spread of coronavirus. A triangulation method consisting of content analysis and a survey was adopted. For content analysis, the sample size involved three Nigerian newspapers *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Trust*. Purposive and multistage cluster sampling techniques were used for the survey. The study found out that Vanguard, with the news placement, Punch newspaper reported forms of news with the use of solution tone in their reportage and patterns of frames, which helped Nigerians to understand the framing of coronavirus and how to prevent themselves from the virus and reduce the spread of the pandemic. The study concludes that the framing and assessment of the reportage and spread of coronavirus in respect of creating panic and solutions by *the Punch*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Trust* newspapers created panic in the readers' minds using sensitive words in their publications. The study recommends that *The Punch*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers' reporters should do more by critically analysing, interpreting, and investigating issues of a pandemic nature, reporting pandemic news positively, and being cautious of the language and words used in reportage.

Keywords: social media, Freedom, Regulation, Nigeria and Communication

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1. INTRODUCTION

A crucial threat to human health that ravaged the whole world with numerous economic and health implications is the novel Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) (Omaka-Amari et al., 2020). Indeed, with all the global security measures, "diseases do not recognise national borders" (Cottle, 2008, p.8). In December 2019, the first Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was discovered in Wuhan, China. It emerged as a

respiratory tract infection with significant global public health implications. After initially suspecting animal-to-human transmission in previous cases, the paradigm has shifted to human-to-human transmission via droplets, contacts, and vomit (Sahu et al., 2020).

Due to the severity and elevated death rate caused by this virus, which caused it to spread quickly and drew media attention, it resulted in a worldwide lockdown on all

social and economic activities. (Sahu, et. al., 2020). The countries with the most confirmed SARS-CoV-2 cases are the United States of America, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, China, Iran, Turkey, Belgium, the Russian Federation, Canada and Brazil (WHO, 2020). Media outlets in the United States, including The Wall Street Journal (WSJ), The New York Times, and The Washington Post, consistently followed Trump's "America First" policy in their coverage of Covid-19. Despite posing as neutral, objective observers of society and affairs, they showed a clear political leaning and employed rhetorical strategies like naming, shaming, blaming, and taming in their reporting of China (Jia & Lu, 2021).

Despite the proximity of South Korea to China, the South Korean media reportage did not result to name tagging. It did not make use of panic framing in the face of the spread of COVID-19; rather, the government of South Korea minimised the death toll and stopped the spread of the virus from affecting the whole nation (Parvin et al., 2020). Despite a gradual increase in cases, coronavirus was under control after the first COVID-19 case was identified in South Korea on January 20, 2020. (Dudden & Marks, 2020). Singapore print media also has a different approach to the pandemic. *The Straits Times*, on January 23, 2020, reported that coronavirus, the first COVID-19 infection in Singapore, was detected by a Wuhan visitor (Young et al., 2020). Immediately after that, *The Straits Times* published regular concerns about the virus outbreak (Parvin et al., 2020). Some Indian media outlets, including Mumbai Edition, blamed Muslims for the spike in Covid-19 cases in the second half of March based on the assumption that some attendees at a Muslim religious gathering in early March 2020 turned out to be Coronavirus carriers (Suruchi, 2021). Even though the event had occurred before the lockdown and numerous other religious gatherings had taken place during the same period, India Today, a weekly English-language news magazine, referred to the Muslim religious congregation as a "super-spreader of Coronavirus in India" (Suruchi, 2021).

With the outbreak of COVID-19, Russia also adopted broad restrictive measures. However, Putin neither utilises existential threat framing of the situation with COVID-19 nor did he use an outright "war" assertion, but Putin, in his April 28, 2020, speech, describing the pandemic as a "threat" and a "danger," to the entire globe (Beblavy, 2020; Steno, 2020). To flatten the curve, most countries, including those in Africa, implemented stringent preventative and control measures to stop

the spread of the virus. These measures included general lockdowns, mandatory home quarantines, bans on public gatherings, restrictions on international flights, education campaigns about proper hand washing, hygiene, and sanitation, as well as social seclusion (Bruinen de Bruin et al., 2020).

In Nigeria, an Italian in Lagos tested positive for the virus on February 27, 2020, becoming Nigeria's first known case of the disease. (Mustapha et al., 2020), As a result, several cases were reported in Nigeria, particularly among the political elite, such as Abba Kyari, the late Chief of Staff, several governors, and other high-ranking government officials, which caused panic among citizens (Ebenso & Otu, 2020). According to Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (2020), the elite political class contributed to the spread of the disease nationwide by blatant disregard for health regulations and refusing isolation for at least 14 days upon their arrival from high-risk areas such as Europe (Odoemelam, 2021). The media is known for critically analysing issues such as the COVID-19 outbreak to help the public understand the ideas associated with news events. News framing in the Nigerian newspaper can be influenced by several factors, which include the emphasis on the reader's interest in the news, the economic motive of the reporter, and the collapse of media competition (Adelakun & Adnan, 2017; Odoemenam & Okoro, 2013; Suleiman & Ojomo, 2019).

According to Nude et al. (2016), news frames refer to the nuances, biases, opinions, and meanings that journalists inject into their stories to unravel the complex realities that readers and viewers absorb. Framing describes media power structures and uses pre-defined narrow contextualisation to craft news stories to improve comprehension or uses cognitive shortcuts to link stories to the big picture (Oso, 2017). Solution journalism is "a new form of journalism that applies positive psychology techniques to the mechanics of news to create more productive and engaging news while concentrating on the core function of journalism" (McIntyre, 2015).

The publication titled "How to Protect Yourself Against Coronavirus - WHO" by Punch Newspaper correspondent Olufemi Atoyebi on February 28, 2020, provides readers of the publication with solutions on how to protect themselves against the deadly virus, noting that;

by washing their hands frequently
with an alcohol-based sanitiser or

with soap and water. Maintain social distancing of at least one meter between yourself and another person. And also, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth because hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early. Follow the directions of your local health authority (Punchonline, 2020).

According to Wilson and Chen (2020), media panic spread faster than the COVID-19 outbreak. An example of such media panic can be found in an online publication by Punch mainstream newspaper on February 3, 2020, by Akasike et al., **in a report on** Panic in NYSC headquarters and camps as resident officer NYSC DG, Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim dies of Coronavirus (Punchonline, 2020). This submission implies that the media can influence news content by subtle submission to downplay the perceived negative effect of the story on the public by choosing a particular frame pattern; thus, the volume of reports given to an issue in the media explains the public knowledge, understanding and perception of the issue. Within this context, it is apparent that one way of keeping in touch with our contemporary world is through the media (Ekeanyanwu, 2011).

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, at the Munich Security Conference on February 15, 2020, said, "We're not just fighting an epidemic; we're fighting an infodemic," with a global epidemic of misinformation spreading rapidly through social media platforms and other outlets poses a serious problem for public health (Zarocostas, 2020). Therefore, considering the trends and the dynamics of the media in handling the issue, it becomes imperative to examine the reportage and framing of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria by Nigerian newspapers with cogent views on panic and solution journalism.

2. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

One of the essential services of mass media in critical health challenges like the novel Coronavirus pandemic is to monitor the event adequately by regularly providing the public with updated information (Ogbodo et al., 2020). The media uses various channels, including online platforms, to inform, educate and sensitise the target audiences about the pandemic.

However, information on the pattern of frames used by Nigerian newspapers in framing the Coronavirus pandemic is very low (Onwe et al., 2020). Presently, the coronavirus outbreak has changed how Nigerians perceive information, framing and the coverage of happenings and events such as the Coronavirus pandemic that happen worldwide (Onwe et al., 2020). The Nigerian newspapers deployed all available means of disseminating information, such as; editorials, news stories, features, columns, articles, and cartoons, to educate and sensitise people about the deadly and contagious Coronavirus pandemic. The media has done this with the help of giving the audience a daily count of those states with new coronavirus cases. These people have been released from isolation centres in different countries, and several people have lost their lives from the deadly virus. The Federal government of Nigeria affected certain measures to curb the spread of coronavirus. For example, the available information on the virus via the Nigerian mass media and the welfare of her citizenry were guiding beacons in periodic restrictions to maximise containment, particularly in educational and religious institutions were the first bodies restricted before containment measures extended to non-essential services (Onyeji, 2021).

Despite these measures by the government and the mass media, the spread of coronavirus was on the increase, with the death toll and new cases which come up in every State of the country. Although Nwakpu et al. (2020) conducted a study on Nigerian media framing of coronavirus and audience response, likewise Sam et al. (2020) also did a study on content analysis of mass media reportage on Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Nigeria from six widely circulated Nigerian newspapers. Nevertheless, none of these studies looked at the reportage and framing of the spread of Coronavirus by Nigerian Newspapers to understand if the reportage created panic or proffered Solutions on how to curb the pandemic. However, due to the lack of studies and literature on the reportage and framing of Coronavirus by Nigerian Newspapers, this study seeks to fill the gap of panic and solution journalism framing and assessment of the reportage and spread of Coronavirus by Nigerian newspapers.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study has the following objectives

1. To determine the forms of news used in the

reportage of coronavirus, *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers with a focus on editorials, news stories, features, columns, letters-to-the-editor, and picture placements.

2. To determine the degree of prominence accorded to Coronavirus stories by *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers with a focus on news placement such as; front page, back page, inside front page, inside back page, center-right and center-left.
3. To determine the tone of reportage of Coronavirus stories in *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust*, focusing on whether the stories were reported in either panic or solution tone.
4. To determine the pattern of frames used by *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers to construct Coronavirus news.
5. To determine the assessment of Nigerians on the framing of Coronavirus by Nigerian newspapers.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Media in Pandemic

The mass media have important roles to play in communicating health information to the public because people know about health issues through media messages. Many decades ago, Flora et al. (1989), as cited in Ogbonne (2021), suggested four roles the media can play in health communication. The first role is known as the media educator role. This role requires the media to provide information that educates the general public on health issues. Within the context of this study, this requires the media to educate the masses on issues related to COVID-19. Information on the virus could include symptoms, causes, prevention, and treatment (Ogbonne, 2021).

According to Flora et al. (1989), as cited in Ogbonne (2021), the second role is the media as a supporter. Here, the media are expected to support efforts to control health issues' negative impact. Within this study, the media are expected to support efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 (Ogbonne, 2021). The third is the media as a programme promoter. Here, the expectation is for the media to promote programmes targeted at combating health issues. From the perspective of the current study, the media are expected to promote programmes aimed at combating

COVID-19 (Ogbonne, 2021).

In the view of Flora et al. (1989), as cited in Ogbonne (2021), the last role is media as a supplement. It requires the media to augment the efforts of health promoters. The media can achieve this through coverage of health issues (Ogbonne, 2021).

Media and Covid-19 Spread

The nationwide spread of the virus led to the Federal government of Nigeria affecting certain measures to contain the virus. The available information on the virus and the welfare of her citizenry guided beacons in periodic restrictions to maximise containment. Educational and Religious institutions were the first bodies restricted before containment measures were extended to non-essential services (Onyeji, 2021).

COVID-19 is caused by a single-stranded RNA virus belonging to the Coronaviridae family. This disease is similar to the previously emerged SARS-CoV and the Middle East respiratory syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Still, unlike these, its outbreaks have taken a global pandemic course. Since the first report of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China, the world has witnessed unprecedented mortality and morbidity due to this disease resulting in serious public health emergencies (Oyeranti & Sokeye, 2020).

A new case causes the virus. Over 2,068,371 people recovered from the disease, while there had been the more virulent types of coronaviruses known as severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Ozili, 2020). The virus, SARS Cov2 is the main causative organism of COVID-19, with shortness of breath, dry cough, and fever as its most common symptoms. As of May 21, 21, 2020, COVID-19 has affected 213 countries and territories around the world, with about 5, 171, 936 globally around 333,100 deaths (WHO, 2020).

Despite the level of advancement in health systems in high-income countries, some of the world's most developed nations appeared to be the worst hit in terms of disease burden and total COVID-19-related deaths. The epidemic curve is still rising in Russia and some low- and middle-income countries like India, Peru, and Chile. It is a strong warning to the low- and middle-income countries in Africa, especially with the enormous socioeconomic and health-related challenges observed in the continent. No proven treatments or vaccines are available to control COVID-

19 and thus pose a significant threat to healthcare delivery (Oyeranti & Sokeye, 2020).

Solution Journalism

Solutions journalism is an aspect of journalism where news stories are not only about a social phenomenon but about feeding the audience report on how best to solve the mysteries of social phenomena. In essence, solution journalism stories are embedded on the premise of credible evidence for the necessity of solutions by giving reasons why and how responses are working and not working. This approach aims to present a complete view of these issues to help readers drive effective citizenship. Wenzel, et al., (2016) argued that there is an accepted understanding of "if it bleeds, it leads" continues to resonate in the journalistic environment. In other words, journalists' bias favours reporting on violence, crime, police brutality, and other negative issues, as readers are more interested in these negative stories (Ciftci, 2019).

Solutions journalism differs in interviewing, framing, and using the five W's to gather information, "who?" "when," "where," and "why?" and adding "how?" allows journalists to create new conversations with their subjects. Slightly different phrasing of questions shift the tone, opening opportunities for solutions-oriented discussions. Framing a solutions story includes examining information from the angle of "howdunnit" as opposed to the traditional approach of "whodunnit" (Porter, 2017). Focusing on "how" instead of "who," journalists must delve deeper into how programs function, outcomes are achieved, and other often overlooked details (Thier, 2016).

Four qualities must be met to qualify as a solutions journalism story (Thier, 2016). First, the piece should present a social problem and a response to the issue. Secondly, in addition to introducing the problem and response, the story should offer evidence of results linked to the response or the how-to's" of problem-solving.

Discovery during the process of sharing responses provides insight into successes and failures and, as a result, includes the third required quality, conveying an insight or teachable lesson. It does not include "good intentions" but effectiveness backed by evidence and results. Lastly, to produce a solutions journalism piece, a journalist should explain the limitations of a response. It helps expose risks and limitations that are present with even the best solutions (Bansal & Martin, 2015). The presence of these qualities is what

differentiates solutions journalism from advocacy (Thier, 2016).

Media and Covid-19 Panic

It is common knowledge how news on COVID-19 is conveyed through mass media. However, some of the information shared through mass media can be misinformation. Wrong information, especially about the coronavirus, is likely to cause panic (Ahmad & Murad, 2020; Kushner, 2020). With over 3 billion viewers and users of mass media, and with the number of subscribers increasing daily, mass media provides a ground for information that would otherwise be spread by people, as mass media travels information much faster than Corona (Depoux et al., 2020). A few weeks after the virus outbreak in China, there were misleading information and conspiracy theories about the source of COVID-19. The rumours spread in various parts of the world, creating fear among the populace (Demuyakor, 2021). The information was associated with the current Infomedia systems of the 21st Century, which are dominated by mass media and social media alike (Aisha et al., 2015; Depoux et al., 2020).

A striking distinctiveness of the current crisis can be termed as a coincidence of virology and virility because the virus did not just spread at a high rate. Still, information about it also spread like a bushfire, creating a lot of panic among the public members (Demuyakor, 2021).

Sharing and spreading timely and transparent information, especially when the news is unfavourable and predicting uncertainty, is an integral part of managing large-scale epidemics and other emergencies (Carey et al., 2020). All such interactions should be routine between government agencies and the public to develop trust that becomes critical during epidemics (Sahni & Sharma, 2020).

In today's world, reaching the general population, especially in times of public health crisis, takes more than common mass media, like some of the channels behind paywalls (Hsu et al., 2020). Subsequent public contact from China and other parts of the world and the knowledge exchange strengthened the response to the outbreak (Sahni & Sharma, 2020).

Similarly, Singapore's approach to public risk communication, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's speech on February 8, 2020, was lauded by experts in health care as they developed a model for reducing panic and rumours among their people (Heijman et al., 2020).

5. METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive research design and a triangulation methodology. The population for the content analysis comprised the entire Newspapers in Nigerian which is 51 as of September 2022 (Nigeriafinder.com, 2021), while the population for the survey consists of consenting Nigerians from the six geo-political zones (North-east, North-west, North-central, South-west, South-east, and South-south) (Figure 3.1) who are adults between 18 years and above with access to daily newspapers and internet, irrespective of gender and cultural background. Therefore, this study's survey population was 213,033,098 Nigerians as of November 2022 (worldometer.info, 2022).



Figure 1. Image of Nigeria's Geopolitical Zone and Their States
Source: <https://www.legit.ng/1094595-geopolitical-zones-nigeria-states.html>

Three Nigerian newspapers were purposively selected as this study's sample size, including *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Trust* newspapers. The criteria adopted in choosing these newspapers to align with the classification of the Nigerian Press Council (2013), which includes language, frequency, and scope.

The study sample was drawn using the continuous week's format. A sample size of seventy-two (72) editions of newspapers was selected from February–April 2020 for *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, and

Daily Trust (i.e., three months). Each of the newspapers had 29 editions on February, 31 in March, and 30 in April, respectively. While the sample size for the survey is a total of 384 Nigerians, which was subjected to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size from a given population, with the formula.

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2 P(1-P)}$$

$$n = \frac{z^2 * p * (1 - p) / e^2}{[1 + (z^2 * p * (1 - p) / (e^2 * N))]}$$

Where: $z = 1.96$ for a confidence level (α) of 95%, $p =$ proportion (expressed as a decimal),

$N =$ population size,

$e =$ margin of error.

$$z = 1.96, p = 0.5, N = 213033098, e = 0.05$$

$$n = \frac{[1.962 * 0.5 * (1 - 0.5) / 0.052]}{[1 + (1.962 * 0.5 * (1 - 0.5) / (0.052 * 213033098))]}$$

$$n = 384.16 / 1 = 384.159$$

$$n \approx 384.$$

Thus, the sample size (with finite population correction) equals 384.

The study utilised the purposive or judgmental sampling technique for the content analysis, and the survey used a multistage cluster sampling technique which encapsulates, stratified, purposive, and available to ensure an equal representation of the variables for the study. However, proportional sampling, based on the population of each State selected for this study, was adopted in choosing the respondents. Out of the six geo-political zones, which are North-east, North-west, North-central, South-west, South-east, and South-south, six states were randomly selected, which are; Abia (South-East), Abuja (North-Central), Borno (North-East), Delta (South-South), Lagos (South-West), Kano (North West) from which a proportionate sample was drawn.

Data were collected through a coding sheet for content analysis. Data were collected through an online questionnaire designed on Google form, and its link hosted on the Survey Monkey Platform (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/home/>) was utilised to collect data from consenting study participants soliciting for Nigerians to respond to the Online questionnaire via WhatsApp through the help of research assistant in all of the selected states.

Table 1 Forms of News Reportage.

Forms of Reportage	Newspapers Frequency			Total
	Punch	Vanguard	Daily Trust	
News Forms				
Editorials	5	8	6	19 (1.7%)
News stories	367	263	251	881 (77.2%)
Features	24	20	19	63 (5.5%)
Letter -to-the -Editor	13	23	15	51 (4.5%)
Pictures	36	20	20	76 (6.7%)
Columns	17	21	13	51 (4.4%)
Total	462	355	324	1,141 (100%)

Table 1 indicates that in all aspects of the forms of news used in the reportage of coronavirus with a focus on editorials, news stories, features, columns, letters-to-the-editor and picture placements, *the Punch* newspapers reported more forms of news in terms of features, pictures, editorials, and opinions. In comparison, *Vanguard* newspapers reported more forms of news than *Daily Trust* on the reportage of Coronavirus news from February to April 2020. It implies that *The Punch* newspapers reported 462 forms of news, while *Vanguard* newspapers reported 355, and *Daily Trust* reported 324.

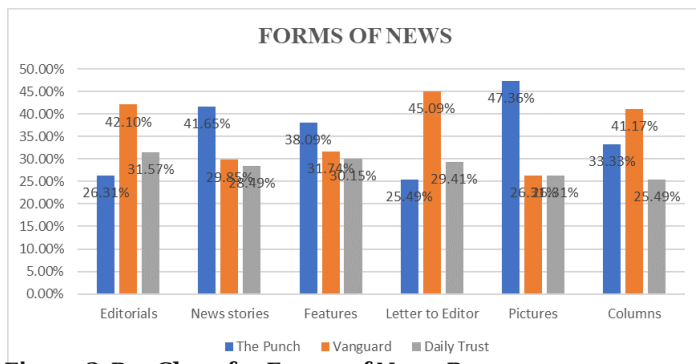


Figure 2: Bar Chart for Forms of News Reportage.

Table 2: Story Placement

Forms of Reportage	Newspapers Frequency			Total
	Punch	Vanguard	Daily Trust	
Story Placement				
Front Page	65	46	45	155 (40.1 %)
Inside Front Page	25	11	11	47 (12.1 %)
Centre right	13	16	6	35 (8.8 %)
Centre left	7	11	12	30 (7.8 %)
Inside back page	14	41	17	72 (18.6 %)
Back page	13	18	17	48 (12.5 %)
Total	136	143	108	387 (100%)

Table 2 indicates that in all aspects of the degree of prominence accorded to Coronavirus stories with a focus on news placement such as; front page, back page, inside front page, inside back page, centre right, and centre left, *Vanguard* newspapers reported the highest degree of prominence news placement. In contrast, *the Punch* newspapers reported more prominent news placement than *Daily Trust* on the

reportage of Coronavirus news stories page placement from February to April 2020. It implies that *Vanguard* newspaper has 143 news placements while *Daily Trust* reported the *Punch* newspapers 136 news placements and 108 news placements.

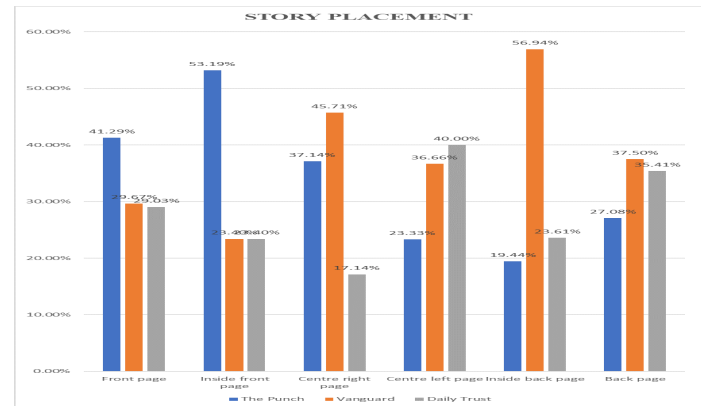


Table 3: Tone of Reportage

The tone of Reportage	Newspapers Frequency			Total
	Punch	Vanguard	Daily Trust	
Tone				
Panic Tone	209	207	197	613 (53.7%)
Solution Tone	253	149	126	528 (46.3%)
Total	462	356	323	1141 (100%)

Table 3 indicates that in all aspects of the degree of tone, whether the stories were reported in either panic or solution tone accorded to Coronavirus stories by *The Punch*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers; *The Punch* newspaper reported more tone regarding panic or solution while *Vanguard* newspapers reported more panic or solution tone than *Daily Trust* on the reportage of Coronavirus news tone from February to April 2020. It implies that *The Punch* newspapers reported 462 tones regarding Coronavirus stories, *Vanguard* newspapers reported 356 tones, and *Daily Trust* reported 323 tones.

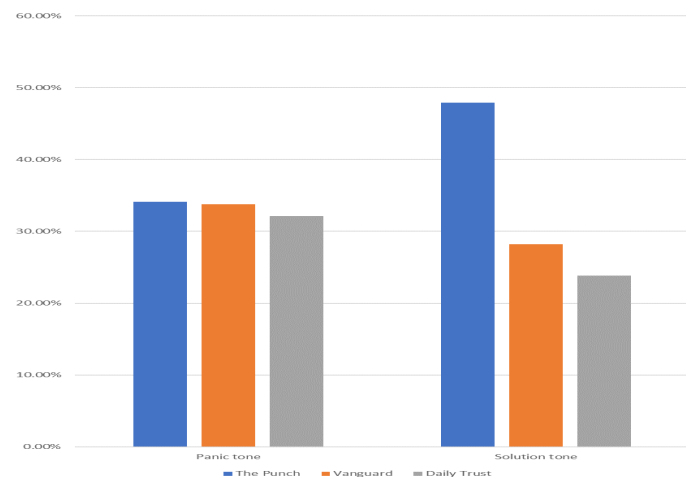


Table 4: Pattern of Frames

The pattern of Frames Tone	Newspapers Frequency			Total Daily Trust
	Punch	Vanguard		
Responsibility Frame	33	35	32	100 (8.8%)
Economic Frame	42	35	31	108 (9.5%)
Misinformation Frame	11	9	8	28 (2.5%)
Awareness Frame	67	55	63	185 (16.2%)
Solution Frame	96	62	50	208 (18.2%)
Panic Frame	122	113	107	342 (29.9%)
Stigmatised Frame	9	12	6	27 (2.4%)
Support/Aids Frame	82	35	26	143 (12.5%)
Total	462	356	323	1141 (100%)

Table 4 indicates that in all aspects of the pattern of frames, *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Trust* newspapers used to construct Coronavirus news such as responsibility frame, economic frame, misinformation frame, awareness frame, solution frame, panic frame, stigmatised frame, support/aids frame, *The Punch* newspapers reported the highest. In contrast, *Vanguard* newspapers reported more patterns of frames than *Daily Trust* on the reportage of Coronavirus news from February to April 2020. It implies that *the Punch* newspapers reported 462 patterns of frames regarding Coronavirus stories, while *Vanguard* newspapers reported 356 patterns of frames and 323 patterns of frames reported by *Daily Trust*.

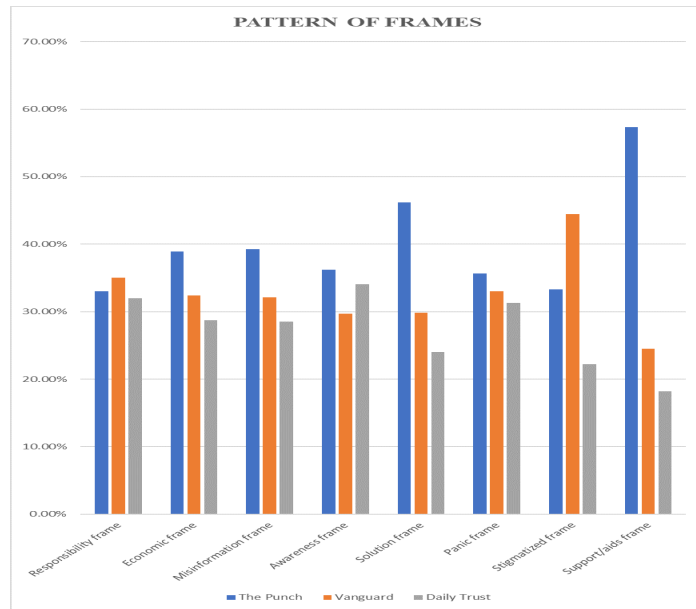


Figure 5: Bar Chart for Pattern of Frames

Assessment of Nigerians on the framing of coronavirus by Nigerian newspapers	Level of Agreement*0%					Overall		
	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	%
The reportage of Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust newspapers on the effect of misinformation on social media platforms about coronavirus, which led to the overdose of hydroxychloroquine to cure Coronavirus created panic.	7.0	11.2	27.6	40.9	13.3	3.43	1.07	68

The reportage of coronavirus in the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust newspaper masked healthy behaviours and promoted erroneous practices that increased the spread of the virus and ultimately result in poor physical and mental health, thus creating panic.	7.3	24.2	24.4	34.9	9.1	3.14	1.10	62
Framing and reportage of Coronavirus in the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust newspaper fuelled panic buying of groceries and stationaries which disrupted the supply chain and food insecurities among individuals with low socioeconomic status.	5.5	14.8	18.8	48.2	12.8	3.48	1.06	68
Framing and reportage of Coronavirus in the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust the newspaper created hoaxes about Coronavirus, which in turn created a social stigma, which has resulted in reduced compliance with home quarantine and social isolation.	4.2	18.2	29.4	34.9	13.3	3.35	1.05	66
The rise in the daily fatality report of Coronavirus in the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust newspapers created fear in the minds of the readers.	7.0	9.4	15.9	46.9	20.8	3.65	1.12	72
The reportage of Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust newspapers on the importance of staying indoors reduced the high risk of contracting the virus.	5.2	8.9	14.6	48.4	22.9	3.75	1.06	74
The reportage of Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust newspapers on the use of A nose mask and hand sanitiser helped in reducing the risk of contracting the virus.	4.4	3.1	20.3	43.0	29.2	3.89	1.00	76
The reportage of Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust newspapers on the border and air closure gave ample information on the dangers of traveling outside the country during the outbreak of the virus.	4.4	5.5	17.7	46.6	25.8	3.84	1.01	76
Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust newspapers played their social responsibility roles during Coronavirus by recognising the importance of proximity, and as such, constantly reporting the event surrounding the deadly outbreak in their immediate environment than the distant outbreaks in China	3.4	6.0	25.0	49.5	16.1	3.69	0.92	72

Table 1.7 examined how Nigerians assessed the framing and reportage of coronavirus by *the Punch*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Trust* newspapers. Respondents' agreed that the reportage of *Punch*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers on the effect of misinformation on social media platforms about coronavirus led to the overdose of hydroxychloroquine to cure coronavirus, created panic with the mean (M=3.4, SD=1.0). Respondents also agreed that reportage of coronavirus in *the Punch*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Trust* newspapers masked healthy behaviours and promoted erroneous practices that increased the virus's spread and ultimately resulted in poor physical and mental health, thus creating panic with the mean (M=3.1, SD=1.1).

Respondents' of this study agreed that framing and

reportage of coronavirus in *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers fuelled panic buying of groceries and stationaries, which disrupted the supply chain and food insecurities among individuals with low socioeconomic status with a mean of (M=3.4, SD=1.0) and respondent's also agreed that framing and reportage of coronavirus in *the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspaper created hoaxes about coronavirus which in turn created a social stigma which has resulted in reduced compliance with home quarantine and social isolation with the mean (M=3.3, SD=1.0).

Respondents' perceptions denote that they approved that the rise in the daily fatality report of coronavirus in *the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspapers created fear in the minds of the readers with the mean (M=3.6, SD=1.1). Respondents also agreed that the reportage of *Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspapers on the importance of staying indoors reduced the high risk of contracting the virus with the mean (M=3.7, SD=1.0).

The reportage of *Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers on the use of Nose masks and hand sanitiser helped in reducing the risk of contracting the virus made respondents of this study agree with the mean of (M=3.8, SD=1.0), respondents of this study also agreed that reportage of *Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspapers on the border and air closure gave ample information on the dangers of travelling outside the country during the outbreak of the virus with mean of (M=3.8, SD=1.0).

Respondents' perceptions denote that they approved that *Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers played their social responsibility roles during the coronavirus by recognising the importance of proximity and, as such, constantly reporting the event surrounding the deadly outbreak in their immediate environment than the distant outbreaks in China with the mean (M=3.6, SD=1.0) and respondents' also agreed that the reportage of *Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspapers gave affirmation on the confirmation of how deadly the virus is by recognising the importance of proximity by reporting the death of a key prominent person in the country to stress further how deadly the virus is with the mean (M=3.7, SD=1.0).

The findings above imply that the *Punch* newspapers, *Vanguard* newspapers and *Daily Trust* newspapers have helped Nigerians understand the framing of coronavirus and ways to prevent themselves from the virus and reduce the spread of the pandemic.

1. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The main objective of this study seeks to assess panic and solutions through print media reportage and framing of the spread of Coronavirus disease in Nigeria. Generally, several scholars and researchers of framing theory (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015; Matthes, 2009; de Vreese, 2012) posit that media framing places emphasis and salience on media messages, which in turn, shapes and affect individuals' perception. Therefore, the findings from this study support the emphasis on media framing.

The result of the study found that, for the analysis of data collected using a coding sheet, a total of 1141 news stories dominated the reportage and framing of the spread of Coronavirus disease in the *Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers from February to April of 2020. It posited that the *Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers fed readers information on the subject-matter, but follow-up details and interpretations were minimal.

The study found that the frequency indicating all aspects of the forms of news used in the reportage of coronavirus with a focus on editorials, news stories, features, columns, letters-to-the-editor, and picture placements, *the Punch* newspapers reported 462. In contrast, *Vanguard* newspapers reported 355 forms and *Daily Trust* with 324 forms of news on Coronavirus news from February to April 2020. This finding aligns with the study of Smith et al. (2020), whose study found that the most common form of news in national newspapers about COVID-19 was news, and this has been consistent with outbreak reportage of cases.

The study found out that in terms of the degree of prominence accorded to Coronavirus stories, *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers with a focus on news placement such as; front page, back page, inside front page, inside back page, centre right and centre left, *Vanguard* newspapers reported 143 degrees of prominence news placement. In contrast, *the Punch* newspapers had 136 and the *Daily Trust* newspapers with 108 on Coronavirus news page placement from February to April 2020.

The study also found out that in terms of the tone, whether the stories were reported in either panic or solution tone accorded to Coronavirus stories by *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers, *the Punch* newspapers reported 462 tones regarding panic or solution. In comparison, *Vanguard* newspapers

reported 356 tones than *Daily Trust*, with 323 on the reportage of Coronavirus news tones from February to April 2020. The findings on panic and solution journalism framing and assessment of the reportage and spread of Coronavirus by Nigerian newspapers in respect of the tone of reportage aligns with the findings of Nwakpu et al. (2020), who opined that the majority of the respondents (audience) rated containment and fatality frames as the most frequent or dominant themes in the newspapers, which induced panic in the minds of the readers.

More so, this study also agrees with Apuke & Omar's (2020) study found that most of the stories were alarming and induced panic with much focus on the increasing cases in Nigeria, death rates, and concerns about Nigeria's preparedness. Only a few stories were reassuring and comforting, suggesting that COVID-19 is not a death sentence but could be managed and prevented when the appropriate measures are followed.

The study also found out that in terms of the pattern of frames, *the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspapers used to construct Coronavirus news in terms of prominence frames such as responsibility frame, economic frame, misinformation frame, awareness frame, solution frame, panic frame, stigmatised frame, support/aids frame, with *the Punch* newspapers reported 462. In contrast, *Vanguard* newspapers reported 356 patterns of frames than *Daily Trust*, with 323 on Coronavirus pattern of frames from February to April 2020.

On the other hand, the survey showed that readers assessed the reportage and framing of the spread of coronavirus by *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers. Respondents' assessment shows that the reportage of *Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers on the effect of misinformation on social media platforms about coronavirus led to hydroxychloroquine overdose to cure coronavirus, creating panic. That reportage of coronavirus in *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers masked healthy behaviours and promoted erroneous practices that increased the virus's spread and ultimately resulted in poor physical and mental health, thus creating panic.

Respondents agreed that framing and reportage of coronavirus in *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers fuelled panic buying of groceries and stationaries, which disrupted the supply chain and food insecurities among individuals with low

socioeconomic status. Framing and reportage of coronavirus in *the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspapers created hoaxes about coronavirus, which in turn created a social stigma which has resulted in reduced compliance with home quarantine and social isolation.

Respondents believed that the rise in the daily fatality report of coronavirus in *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers created fear in the minds of the readers and also the reportage of *Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers on the importance of staying indoors reduced high risk of contracting the virus.

The reportage of *Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers on the use of Nose masks and sanitiser helped in reducing the risk of contracting the virus; respondents of this study also agreed that reportage of *Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers on the border and air closure gave ample information on the dangers of travelling outside the country during the outbreak of the virus.

Respondents approved that *Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers played their social responsibility roles during the coronavirus recognising the importance of proximity and, as such, constantly reporting the event surrounding the deadly outbreak in their immediate environment than the distant outbreaks in China. The reportage of *Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers confirmed how deadly the virus is, recognising the importance of proximity by reporting the death of a key prominent person in the country to stress further how deadly the virus is.

This finding aligns with a major assumption of framing theory. The theory states that how newspapers present the news creates a frame for that information and significantly influences readers' perception, interpretation, and understanding of the phenomenon. More so, the findings of this study are in tandem with Kostadinova (as cited by Chime-Nganya, Ezeji & Ezegwu, 2017) observes that frames influence people's understanding, opinions, and attitudes toward issues, institutions, and events.

Despite the efforts of *the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspapers in framing stories on Covid-19, a lot need to be done to gain government and public support on Covid-19 pandemic since the stories framed by the selected papers are negative and in the form of economic and political oriented. The study's findings

coincided with the position of Greenslade (2015) who notes that much of the media coverage is tilted towards the negative rather than the positive.

2. CONCLUSION

Based on the above findings, this study concludes that the media play a pivotal role as the fourth estate of the realm, performing their social responsibility role effectively by frequently reporting and framing issues that have to do with the public interest, such as the Coronavirus pandemic. The media, irrespective of location, present an issue the way they find it suitable for several reasons. The Covid-19 pandemic shows how media sway narratives. Hence, *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers present issues such as the Covid-19 pandemic the way they deem fit to the public irrespective of whether the public holds contrary or not.

The present study examined panic and solution journalism framing and assessment of the reportage and spread of coronavirus by *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers. The study settles that *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers, despite being one of the most-read newspapers in Nigeria with the ability to frame readers' minds on a particular event or issues, framed the issue of the Coronavirus pandemic in a more panic oriented news frame in this study.

In the same vein, concerning readers' assessment of the reportage and framing of the spread of coronavirus by *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers revealed that *the Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust* newspapers framing of Coronavirus pandemic has a very high influence on readers in terms of the panic it created, and the solution proffered by the Nigerian newspapers.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

1. Further studies should consider the incorporation of affected audience groups, such as those infected and others who are actively involved in the treatment of those infected, particularly in hospitals, and isolation centres in all parts of Nigeria, as a diversified population could yield results that would be of immense theoretical and practical significance.
2. More studies should be conducted to examine

how broadcast or print media panic and solution journalism frame and assess the reportage and spread of coronavirus.

3. The present study's content analysed only three newspapers. Increasing the number of newspaper outlets would be essential to trap the overall media framing of the entire media system. It may broaden this nature's study scope and enhance its validity.
4. Further studies should go beyond three newspapers regarding the study's scope.

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