

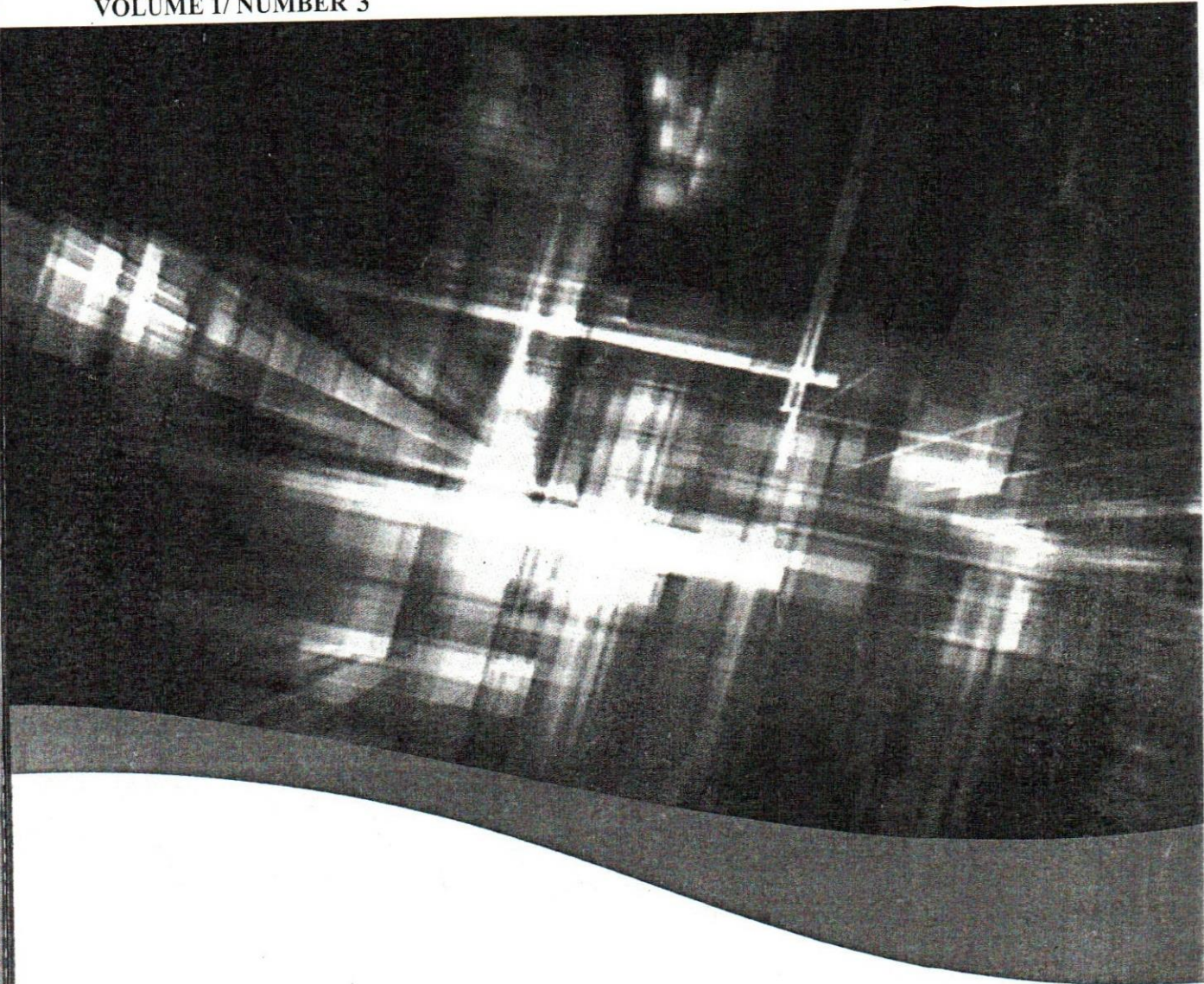


# REVIEW OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES



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MAY 2016



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*RCMS...advancing knowledge through innovative research.*

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AND  
MEDIA STUDIES (RCMS)**



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## 2015 COMBATIVE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS OF GOODLUCK JONATHAN AND MUHAMMADU BUHARI IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS

Muyiwa Popoola<sup>1</sup> Lukman Azeez<sup>2</sup>

Whereas several studies have focused on the score card of the media in reporting political conflicts, it seems that combative electoral campaigns which have been speculated as political conflict inducers, have not been adequately subjected to empirical investigation in terms of media reportage. This study, therefore, was carried out to determine the extent of reportage of the 2015 presidential combative campaigns of Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari in selected Nigerian national newspapers between November, 2014 and March, 2015 when their electioneering became heightened. The newspapers selected for the study were: *The Punch*, *The Nation* and *Daily Trust*. Content analysis method of mass communication research was used in determining quantitatively the reportage of the combative campaigns. The study revealed that the three selected newspapers published 273 editorial items on the combative campaigns during the period: *The Punch* published 34.4%, while *The Nation* and the *Daily Trust* carried combative contents that corresponded to 43.6% and 22% respectively of the 273 editorial items. Overall, the combative contents were evident in hate speeches accounting for 4.8%; abusive language, 11%; calumny, 26.4%; aggressive opposition, 27.1%; and vituperation, 30.8%. The reportage was much likely to have set agenda that could have heated the polity during the electioneering period. The Nigerian press needs to be conflict sensitive in reporting issues that could engender political conflicts in the country; this will stabilize the nation's democratic governance.

**Keywords:** *Combative campaign, Newspaper, Press*

### Introduction

The problem of examining the role of the mass media in political communications and their effects on national issues, election campaigns in particular, is not confined to Nigeria. Anywhere in the world, the press has always been involved in politics, formation of public opinion, perception of images of candidates for political offices, the definition of social reality and social norms, education, information, enlightenment and entertainment of the public. The issue of election has become very important in political discourse because it constitutes the platform on which the survival of democracy largely rests. The mass media as an important institution in the democratic process contribute to elections in Nigeria. As the 'fourth estate of the political realm' the media provide the platform for narratives and discourses in the service of elections, political negotiations and other features of the contestations among politicians and other civil organizations involved in election administration in the country (Popoola, 2014a; 2014b; 2015a and 2015b). In the process, the media

contributed to the successes and pitfalls that have been witnessed in the various elections in Nigeria. Since they are placed in a privileged position to access public information, to interact with parties in political conflicts and to reach destinations that the public is unable to reach, the media are able to shape mass opinions and influence agenda for public governance. Moreover, citizens reflect and articulate their opinions and feelings about elections in the media. This goes a long way in determining the outcomes of elections.

Meanwhile, scholars have been concerned for centuries with the possible influence of combative and conflict-inducing political campaigns on the formation of opinion and attitudes of the electorate. The past two decades have witnessed the increasing use of political advertising in Nigeria. Prior to this period, political rallies, personal contact and speeches have been popularly used for mobilizing electorates' support for elections (Adesola and Abimbola, 2014; Adaba, 2015). This probably might be as a result of development in information technology and the realization of the potent force of media communication in packaging not only products but ideas. However, in Nigeria smear campaigns against political opponents started a long time ago. This is most especially by the dominant political party against opposition parties. Electoral campaigns are marketing actions employed to get votes in election. It enables parties and their candidates know how to allocate their resources and develop better knowledge about how and why voters make their choices. However, most of these political adverts and campaigns have been said to be negative and consequently conflict-fueling (Chukwuma and Phillip, 2014).

However, while there have been divergent and diametrically opposed views on the subject in existing studies, available literature enormously hints at the score card of the media in political conflicts that might be rooted in prebendal and political godfather-son clashes; but these studies have not provided sufficient attention to combative electioneering campaigns, which have been speculated as political conflict inducers (Popoola, 2015b). Thus, such political campaigns have not been adequately subjected to empirical investigation in terms of how the media report such during elections. This study, therefore, was carried out to determine the extent of reportage of the 2015 presidential combative campaigns of Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari in selected Nigerian national newspapers between November, 2014 and March, 2015 when the electioneering campaigns became heightened in Nigeria. Expectedly, newspapers in Nigeria focused largely on the activities and speeches of presidential candidates in the 2015 presidential election; but, the focus of this study was the extent to which selected newspapers reported combative campaign speeches of two most prominent candidates who vied for the coveted and much-sought-after office of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

### Media and Combative Political Campaigns in Theoretical Context

Iyengar & Kinder (1987), in Mc Quail, (2007) have extended the agenda-setting theory with the idea of priming in the agenda-setting process. Priming explains the process by which the media deliberately draw attention to some aspects of political or social issues at the detriment of others, which could be much more important. This process could pose danger to the society, which could be deprived of the robust outcome of public discussions of the neglected but important issues. Lang & Lang (1983), cited in Mc Quail (2005, 2007) also came up with another extension of agenda-setting theory, which they tagged 'agenda-building.' They describe this as a collective process by which the media, the government and the citizens reciprocally influence one another when it involves formulation of public policies. The basic premise of agenda-building is that the media profoundly affect how societies determine what its important concerns are by mobilizing the various institutions towards a consensus. This idea suggests a whittling down of the power of the media to solely determine the social agenda for public discourses; nevertheless, the media remain key factors in that process because of their enormous influence on other social and political institutions.

A macro-level consequence of agenda setting function of the media was articulated by Noelle-Neumann (1984), in Mc Quail (2007) which she dubbed 'Spiral of silence' theory. This theory describes a process whereby people holding contrary opinions to the dominant views in the mass media keep such views to themselves because of fear of rejection or isolation. Thus, in a spiraling process, the dominant view spreads easily because the adherents are encouraged to proclaim them by the media, while the other views held by the minority gradually disappear from public consciousness because their adherents had chosen to remain mute. The long term consequence of the persistence of spiral of silence is articulated thus by Baran & Davis (2003) cited in Mueller (2011) thus:

*If various viewpoints about agenda items are ignored, marginalized or trivialized by media reports, then people will be reluctant to talk about them. As time passes, those viewpoints will cease to be heard in public and therefore cannot affect political decision making.*

What this tends to suggest is that during combative political campaigns or in election crises, if the media allow themselves to be drowned in the viewpoint of the dominant political elite at the detriment of the opinion or interests of the majority of the populace, such compromise could result into negative outcome in the confidence reposed in the media by the public and this may resonate in frustration in the political environment. (Popoola, 2014a; 2014b; 2015a; 2015b and 2015c).

Economic and ownership influence also tend to affect the action of the media during political and election conflicts. Journalists are mostly employees who are strongly influenced by those who own and control the media. Like other employees in capitalist enterprises, journalists are subjected to direct economic power of media owners. The fact that most news media organizations are constituted as lucrative capitalist enterprises, whose owners play key roles in the domestic economy and politics, sometimes turn media owners and their employees into pro-systemic individuals. In this process, the normative role of the journalist in a democratic society could be sacrificed to the business needs of the organization that employs him. This tendency could find expression in election coverage process and the direction taken by media organizations while reporting election activities. This could resonate during election violence. Consequently, understanding of the structure of ownership and control of newspapers is important for the obvious reason that he who pays the piper calls the tune. The influence of newspapers ownership on perception of journalists and newspaper editorial crew could colour their dispositions during coverage and reporting of elections and issues of political conflicts. This situation could influence the outcome of conflicts and may determine the posture of conflict parties during and after elections.

Consequently, this raises strongly the need for the media to adopt the conflict-sensitive approach in reporting the electoral process and particularly combative campaigns and hate speeches that may characterize such process. (Popoola 2014; 2015b and 2015c) To a large extent, such practice would be in consonance with the tenets of socially responsible and development oriented media as advanced by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956), and Mc Quail (2005), cited in Folarin (2006). The chief duty of the socially-responsible media is to raise conflict to the plane of discussion with proposals for resolution in order to bring about development, realizing that societal peace is a strong condition for development. This role of the press in reporting conflict has become reconstructed in literature as conflict-sensitive journalism which Howard (2004) has popularized. Conflict sensitive reporting is distilled from the canons of peace journalism which holds that the media must work towards realizing a system that successfully minimize violence and is able to promote peaceful behaviours in society and operate towards peacefulness by developing the ideals, ethos, mores, value systems and institutions that minimize violence and promote peace within the society.

However, the principles of conflict reporting enunciated in peace journalism have been criticized and therefore regarded as over prescriptive and consequently gagging objectivity in reporting conflicts, since peace journalism only encourages coverage of only aspects of conflicts that foster peace and discarding issues in a conflict that may promote violence and escalation of conflict. Popoola (2015b; 2015c). According to Howard (2004), peace journalism is unattainable due to how it limits objectivity in reporting conflict, where as, issues of conflict which might be left out in reportage of a conflict may not only be germane to understanding of such conflict, but more

importantly useful for reconciliatory and peace moves in conflict situations. Stemming from this perceived deficiency of peace journalism is conflict-sensitive journalism which now appears in the literature as a dominant paradigm in respect of how the media should handle conflict. Unlike the provisions of peace journalism, conflict sensitive journalism gives the media the latitude to cover all aspects of a conflicting issue, but emphasizes and gives prescriptions on the use of language in reporting the conflict, in such a way that the reportage would be tailored towards reconciliation by avoiding inflammatory words and expressions, by being gender sensitive and by using conflict analysis tools.

### **Scope and Methodology**

This study only focused on combative political campaigns in the newspaper reportage of the presidential election that took place within the period of November 2014 and March 2015. Specifically, hateful exchange of comments and speeches as reported by selected newspapers, between the two major contenders for the presidential seat in the 2015 elections in Nigeria, were examined. These two candidates were: Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP the ruling party then, and Muhammadu Buhari of the APC. These two candidates and their parties were selected because the parties on the platforms of which they contested were the most prominent political parties in the country as of the time of the elections. The study was conducted using quantitative content analysis because of the need to emphasize measurement and allow observations that were subjected to statistical analysis (Osuala, 1982; Imoisili 1996 in Bobade, 2003, p.97). Consequently, this method was used to ascertain the level of prominence and prevalence given to combative and conflict-fueling contents in the selected newspapers during the 2015 presidential elections.

The newspapers selected were The Daily Trust, The Nation, and The Punch. The selection of these newspapers was based on some factors. First, any rivalry involving individuals at the top hierarchy of government in federalism, such as Nigeria's would have implications for national development (Popoola, 2015b). Hence, newspapers that were chosen in this respect have to be national in their spread and circulation. This is the rationale behind the choice of the newspapers which are rated as national newspapers by the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigeria Guild of Editors (NGE) and Nigeria Press Council (NPC). Remarkably, The Daily Trust and The Nation newspapers selected had some form of political affiliations as a result of their ownership during the period of study, and this largely informed their selection for the study. Also, The Punch was chosen because of its wide spread and circulation and its prominent coverage of political issues. All the newspapers were also English language newspapers. This factor is important since most of the political discourses among political elites were conducted in English language, which makes the coverage of such discourses easier for journalists to report.

Also, purposive sampling was used to select 90 editions of the selected newspapers over a five-month period: November 2014, December 2014, January 2015, February 2015 and the election month, March 2015. Thus, for a segment of one month, starting from November to March, at least eighteen (18) editions of newspapers were sampled and as such there were at least six (6) editions of each newspaper per month and at least thirty (30) editions of each newspaper for the five-month frame. However, in order to ensure that the sampled editions were editions that carried stories on the political rivalry, purposive sampling was used to select editions of the newspapers that carried mainly stories that signified political rivalry. A total of 273 journalistic items of news, features, editorial comments and opinions were examined in the 90 editions. This was done to ensure that only the editions of the newspapers that carried combative contents in the said election were selected and examined.

**Research Question 1:**

To what extent did the selected newspapers carry stories on the 2015 combative presidential campaigns of Jonathan and Buhari?

**Table 1: Total Number of editorial Items**

Newspapers	Frequency	Percentage
The Punch	94	34.4
The Nation	119	43.6
Daily Trust	60	22
Total	273	100

Table 1 above and Figure 1 below show the number of editorial items that were used for reporting in respect of the 2015 Presidential combative campaigns of Jonathan and Buhari in the selected editions of the newspapers used for this study. Out of the 273 editorial items representing 100 percent, The Nation published the highest number of 119 stories, representing 43.6% followed by the Punch with 94 stories, representing 34.4 percent, while Daily Trust published the lowest number of 60 stories which amount to 22%.

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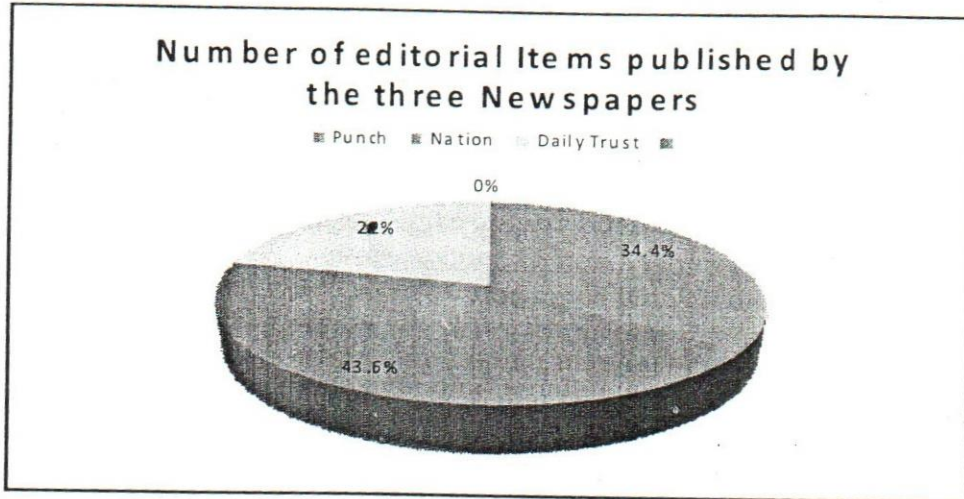


Figure 1: Pie Chart showing the total Number of editorial Items

**Table 2: Forms of combative Campaigns**

Form	The Punch		The Nation		Daily trust		Total	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Abusive Language	9	9.5%	13	11.2%	8	12.9%	30	11%
Aggressive Opposition	26	27.4%	33	28.4%	15	24.2%	74	27.1%
Calumny	32	33.7%	23	19.8%	17	27.4%	72	26.4%
Hate Speech	4	4.2%	8	6.9%	1	1.6%	13	4.8%
Vituperations	24	25.3%	39	33.6%	21	33.9%	84	30.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>34.8%</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>42.5%</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>22.7%</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Key: F= Frequency, P= Percentage**

Table 2 above and Figure 2 below reveal the forms of combative campaigns in the 273 editorial items. Out of the 95 journalistic items, representing 34.8% of all the editorial items published by the Punch newspaper, 9, representing 9.5% were on abusive

language; 26(27.4%) were on aggressive opposition; 32(33.7%) were on calumny; 4(4.2%) were on security issues; and 24, (25.3%) were on vituperations. In the same vein, out of the 116 editorial items representing 42.5% published by The Nation newspaper, 13, representing 11.2% were on abusive language; 33(28.4%) were on aggressive opposition; 23(19.8%) were on calumny; 8(6.9%) were on hate speech; and 39 (33.6) were on vituperations. For Daily Trust, of the 62 editorial items (accounting for 22.7%) published by the newspaper, 8, representing 12.9%, were on abusive language; 15(24.2%) were on aggressive opposition; 17(27.4%) were on calumny; 1(1.6%) was on hate speech; and 21(33.9%) were on vituperations.

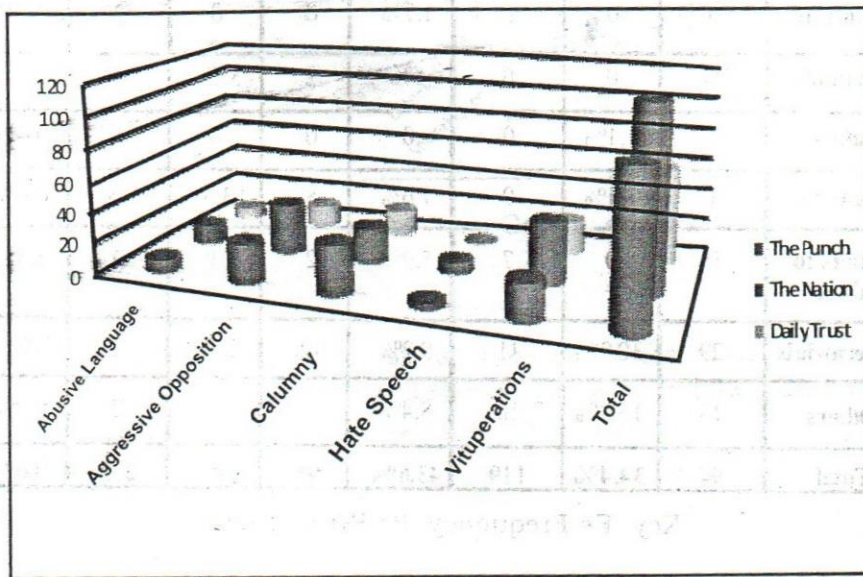


Figure 2: Bar Chart showing the Forms of combative Campaigns in the editorial Items of the selected Newspapers

**Research Question 2:**

What was the extent to which journalistic genres were used for reporting the 2015 presidential combative campaigns of Jonathan and Buhari in the selected newspapers?



**Table 3: Journalistic genres of editorial items**

Journalistic genre	The Punch		The Nation		The Daily Trust		Total	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
News Story	45	47.9%	63	52.9%	32	53.3%	140	51.3%
News Analysis	5	5.3%	11	9.2%	2	3.3%	18	6.6%
Editorial	0	0	2	1.7%	0	0	2	0.7%
Graphics	0	0	6	5%	2	3.3%	8	2.9%
Features	1	1.1%	0	0	0	0	1	0.4%
Columns	1	1.1%	9	7.6%	8	13.3%	18	6.6%
Letters to editor	0	0	7	5.9%	2	3.3%	9	3.3%
Advertorials	29	30.9%	11	9.2%	12	20%	52	19%
Others	13	13.8%	10	8.4%	2	3.3%	25	9.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>34.4%</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>43.6%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100%</b>

Key: F= Frequency, P= Percentage

Table 3 above and Figure 3 below reveal the proportions of journalistic genres of editorial items that were used in reporting the combative campaigns in the 2015 presidential election by the selected newspapers. In the Punch newspaper, out of 94 editorial genres used by the newspaper, 45, representing 47.9 percent were news stories, 5, representing 5.3 percent constituted news analysis, 1, representing 1.1 percent constituted features, 1, representing 1.1 percent constituted columns, 29, representing 30.9 percent constituted advertorials, while 13, representing 13.8 percent constituted other news items like interviews and comments. The Nation used 119 editorial items in all, distributed as, 63 (52.9 percent) news stories, 11 (9.2 percent) news analysis, 2, (1.7 percent) editorial, 6, (5 percent) graphics, 9 (7.6 percent) news analysis, 7, (5.9 percent) letters to the editor, 11, (9.2 percent) advertorials and 10, (8.4 percent) interviews and comments. The Daily Trust used 60 editorial items distributed as 32, (53.3 percent) news stories, 2, (3.3 percent) news analysis, 2, (3.3 percent) graphics, 8, (13.3 percent) columns, 2, (3.3 percent) letters to the editor, 12, (20 percent) advertorials, and 2, (3.3 percent) interviews and comments.

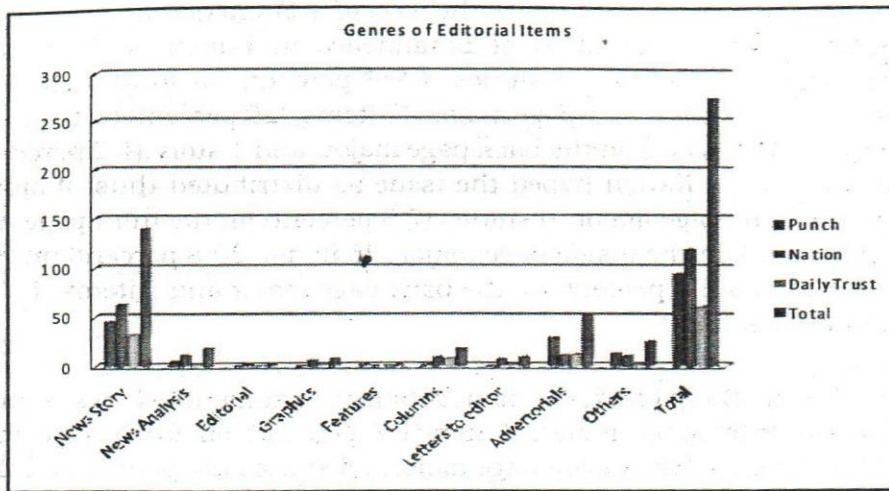


Figure 3: Bar Chart showing the journalistic Genres of editorial Items in the elected Newspapers.

**Research Question 3:**

What is the prominence given to items that reported stories on the 2015 Presidential combative campaigns of Goodluck and Buhari in selected newspapers in terms of story placement, depth of treatment and type of headline?

**Table 4: Story Placement of Editorial Items**

Prominence	The Punch		The Nation		The Daily Trust		Total	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Front Page Major	7	8.2%	9	7.5%	4	6.9%	20	7.3%
FrontPage Minor	8	9.4%	9	7.5%	1	1.7%	18	6.6%
Inside page major	51	60%	67	55.8%	34	58.6%	152	55.7%
Inside Page Minor	17	20%	25	20.8%	18	31%	69	25.3%
Back Page Major	1	1.2%	8	6.7%	1	1.7%	10	3.7%
Back Page Minor	1	1.2%	2	1.7%	1	1.7%	4	1.5%
Total	85	31.1%	120	44%	58	21.2%	273	100%

Key: F= Frequency, P= Percentage

Table 4 above and figure 4 below show the level of prominence given to the issue by the newspapers. The distribution of prominence in Punch is: 7 stories, ( 8.2 percent)on front page major, 9 stories, ( 9.4 percent) on front page minor, 51 stories(60 percent) on the inside page major, 17 items, (20 percent) on the inside page minor, 1 story,(1.2 percent) on the back page major, and 1 story,(1.2 percent) on the back page minor. The Nation hyped the issue as distributed thus: 9 stories, (7.5 percent) on the front page major, 9 stories,(7.5 percent) on the front page minor, 67 items (55.8 percent) on the inside page major, 25 items (20.8 percent) on the inside page minor, 8 stories(6.7 percent) on the back page major and 2 items (1.7 percent) on the back page minor.

With respect to The Daily Trust, the distribution of prominence shows: 4 stories (6.9 percent) on the front page major, 1 item(1.7 percent) on front page minor, 34 stories(58.6 percent) on the inside page major, 18 stories (31 percent) on the inside page minor, 1 story(1.7 percent) on the back page major, and 1story(1.7 percent) on the back page minor.

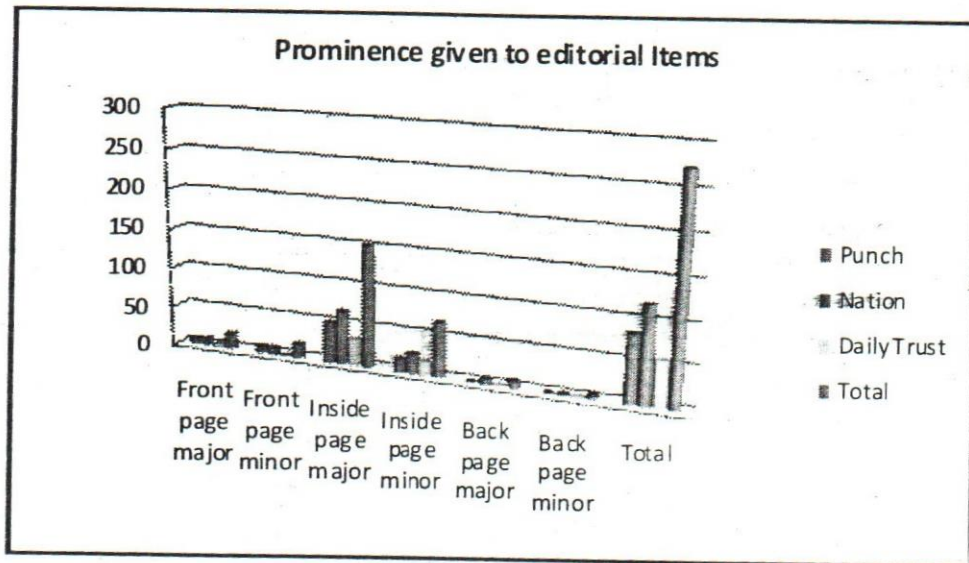


Figure 4: Bar Chart showing the Prominence given to editorial Items in the selected Newspapers

**Table 5: Depth of Editorial Items**

Depth of Editorial Items	The Punch		The Nation		The Daily Trust		Total	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Below 5 paragraphs	34	40%	17	14%	9	15%	60	22%
6-10 paragraphs	25	27.2%	45	37.2%	27	45%	97	35.5%
11-15 paragraphs	23	25%	36	29.8%	15	25%	74	27.1%
16 and above	10	10.9%	23	19%	9	15%	42	15.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>44.3%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100%</b>

Key: F= Frequency, P= Percentage

Table 5 and figure 5 show the newspapers used space in reporting the combative campaigns. Out of the 92 items, representing 33.7 percent editorial items published by the Punch newspaper, 34 representing 40 percent were below 5 paragraphs, 25 representing 27.2 percent were between 6 to 10 paragraphs, 23 representing 25 percent were between 11 to 15 paragraphs and 10 representing 10.9 percent had 16 paragraphs and above. With respect to the Nation newspaper, of the 121 representing 44.3 percent editorial items published by the newspaper, 17 representing 14 percent were below 5 paragraphs, 45 representing 37.2 percent were between 6 to 10 paragraphs, 23 representing 19 percent were between 11 to 15 paragraphs and 10 representing 10.9 percent had 16 paragraphs and above. In case of the Daily Trust, out of the 60 items representing 22 percent of stories by the newspaper, 9 representing 15 percent were below 5 paragraphs, 27 representing 45 percent were between 6 to 10 paragraphs, 15 representing 25 percent were between 11 to 15 paragraphs and 9 representing 15 percent had 16 paragraphs and above.

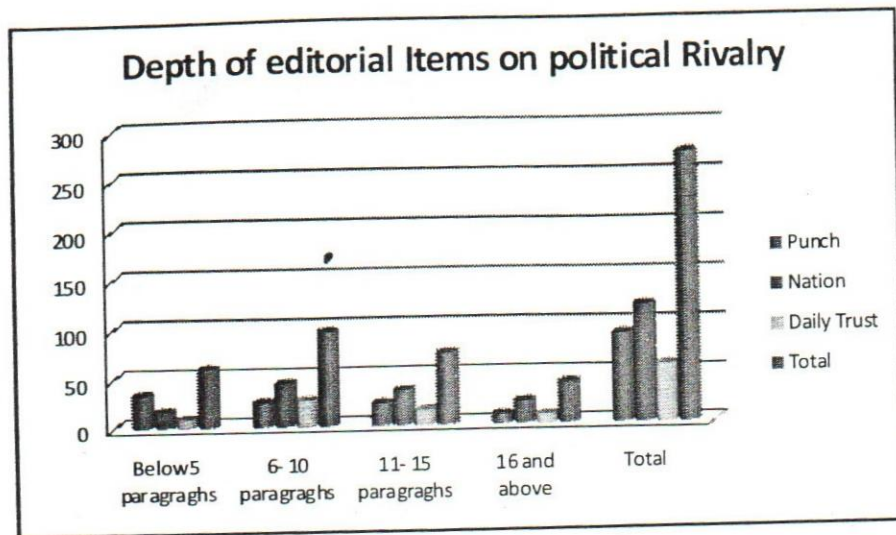


Figure 5: Bar Chart showing the Depth of editorial Items on political Rivalry in selected editions of The Punch, The Nation, and Daily Trust

Table 6: Types of Headlines used for editorial Items

Type of Headline	The Punch		The Nation		The Daily Trust		Total	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Banner	9	9.7%	15	12.6%	14	22.9%	38	13.9%
Kicker	59	63.4%	92	77.3%	40	6.6%	191	70%
Rider	4	4.3%	11	9.2%	6	9.8%	21	7.7%
All Caps	21	22.6%	1	0.84%	1	1.6%	23	8.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>34.1%</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>43.5%</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>22.3%</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100%</b>

Keys: F= Frequency, P= Percentage

Table 6 above and figure 6 below reveal the type of headlines used for the 273 editorial items on the combative campaigns. Interestingly, of all the 93 editorial items representing 34.1 percent, published by the Punch, 9 stories, representing 9.7 percent had banner headlines, 59 stories, representing 63.4 percent had kicker headlines, 4 stories, representing 4.3 percent had rider headlines and 21 stories, representing 22.6 percent had all caps headlines. The Nation published 119 editorial items representing 43.5 percent; 15 stories, representing 12.6 percent had banner headlines, 92 stories, representing 77.3 percent had kicker headlines, 11 stories,

representing 9.2 percent had rider headlines and 1 story, representing 0.84 percent had all caps headlines. The Daily Trust published 61 editorial items representing 22.3 percent; 14 stories, representing 22.9 percent had banner headlines, 40 stories, representing 6.6 percent had kicker headlines, 6 stories, representing 9.8 percent had rider headlines and 1 story, representing 1.6 percent had all caps headlines.

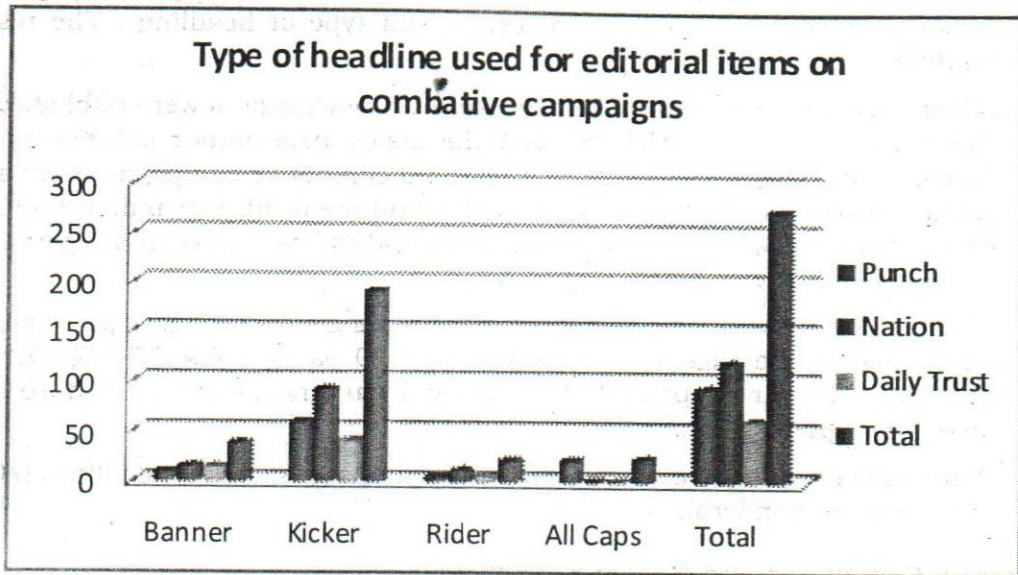


Figure 6: Bar Chart showing the Type of Headline used for editorial Items on combative Campaigns in the selected Editions of The Punch, The Nation and Daily Trust Newspapers.

### Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1 attempted to determine the extent to which selected newspapers carried stories on items that reported stories in respect of the 2015 Presidential combative campaigns of Jonathan and Buhari in selected editions of newspapers. The result indicates thus:

1. The three selected newspapers published 273 news genres on combative campaigns; the Punch published 34.4%, The Nation published 43.6% and the Daily Trust published 22 percent.
2. Most of the stories were news stories (51.3%); meaning that the newspapers reported the combative campaigns in very timely and perishable manner.
3. Most of the news genres were featured in the inside page major of the newspapers (55.7%).

Research Question 2 intended to ascertain the proportions in which journalistic genres were used for the reportage of the 2015 combative presidential campaigns of

Goodluck and Buhari in selected newspapers. In the selected editions of the newspapers, the results indicate that news stories had the largest percentage of stories used in reporting the combative campaigns.

Research Question 3 sought to determine the prominence given to the 2015 presidential combative campaigns of Goodluck and Buhari in selected newspapers in terms of story placement, depth of treatment and type of headlines. The result indicates thus:

1. Most of the news genres in the three selected newspapers were published in the inside page major (55.7%) and the inside page minor (25.3%) of the newspapers. The news genres that featured combative campaigns were also prominent on the front page major (7.3%) and the front page minor (6.6%) of the newspapers while the back page major and the back page minor garnered 3.7% and 1.5% news genres respectively.
2. The findings also indicate that most of the news genres that gave prominence to combative campaigns were between 6 – 10 paragraphs (35.5%). Others were 11 – 15 paragraphs (27.1%), below 5 paragraphs (22 %) and 16 and above paragraph (15.4%).
3. Regarding headline use for the combative campaigns, kicker headlines (70%) were used preponderantly.

### **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study was carried out to examine the 2015 Presidential combative campaigns of Jonathan and Buhari in selected newspapers in Nigeria. The study sought to ascertain the proportions in which journalistic genres were used for the reportage of combative campaigns and to determine the prominence given to political rivalry in terms of story placement, depth of treatment and type of headline. So, in achieving these objectives, the quantitative research method was employed. Content analysis was used to determine the extent of coverage and the prominence of news genres on political combative campaigns in the selected editions of the newspapers. Accordingly, analysis of the contents of sampled editions of three nationally circulated newspapers was carried out to obtain data that assisted in providing adequate insights into the nature of the reportage of political rivalry by the selected newspapers during the study period. The newspapers whose contents were analyzed included *The Punch*, *The Nation* and the *Daily Trust* between the periods of November, 2014 and March, 2015. From the findings, the selected newspapers gave high significance to the combative campaigns of Jonathan and Buhari in their reportage of the 2015 presidential election, considering the extent of coverage, prominence and the depth of treatment.

Overall, the study revealed that the three selected newspapers published 273 editorial items on the presidential combative campaigns during the period: the *Punch* published 34.4%, while *The Nation* and the *Daily Trust* carried combative

contents that corresponded to 43.6% and 22% respectively. Overall, the combative contents were evident in hate speeches, 4.8%; abusive language, 11%; calumny, 26.4%; aggressive opposition, 27.1%; and vituperations, 30.8%. The reportage was much likely to have set agenda that could have heated the polity during electioneering. The Nigerian press needs to be conflict sensitive in reporting issues that could engender political conflicts in the country. This will stabilize the nation's democratic governance.

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