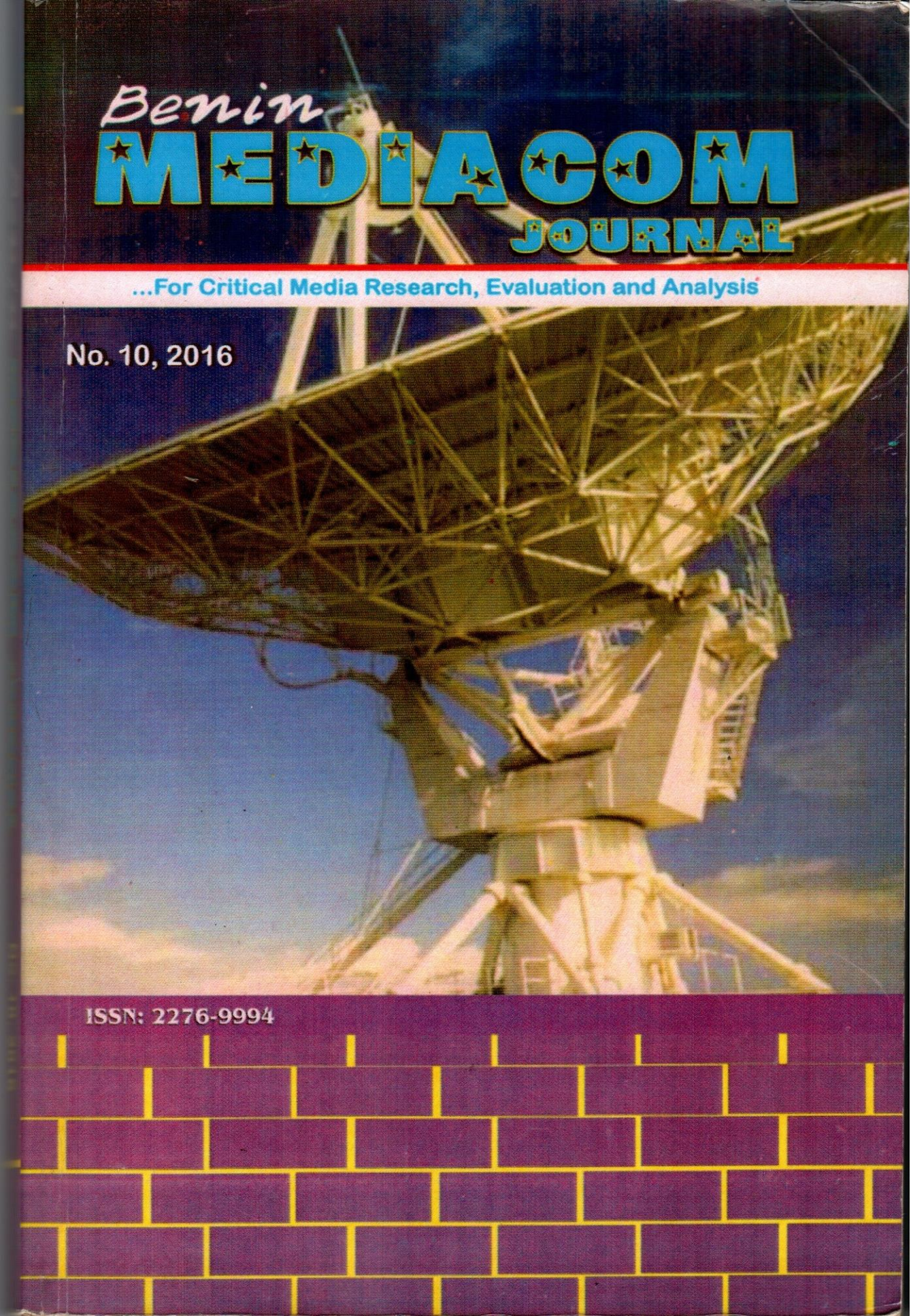


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Socially-Responsible or Calumnious Campaigns in the Press: Perspectives on the Coverage of the 2013 Governorship Electioneering Campaigns in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

It is a globally endorsed paradigm that the press as an important institution in the democratic process plays key role during elections. The press provides 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. This study investigated the reportage of 2013 gubernatorial electioneering campaigns in Anambra State. Four Nigerian national newspapers: Nigerian Tribune, The Guardian, The Nation and The Punch were purposively selected for the study. Also, the purposive sampling was used to select 38 editions of the newspapers published between the period of August and November 2013, when governorship elections took place in Anambra State. In these editions, a total of 42 journalistic items of News, Features, Editorial Comments and Opinions were examined and analysed qualitatively, using the dialectical hermeneutics method of textual analysis. Findings of the study indicate that reportage of the 2013 Anambra State governorship electioneering campaigns skewed along the two divides of a calumnious reporting and a socially responsible coverage. The manner in which the newspapers slanted the campaigns suggested that the newspapers were partisan and therefore ignored the noble role expected of them as a socially responsible and development oriented press. This is a constraint to Nigeria's democracy. The Nigerian press must adopt the principles of conflict sensitive journalism and eschew all forms of unprofessionalism in reporting the electoral process in Nigeria.

Keywords: Newspaper coverage, Electioneering Campaigns, Conflict-Sensitive Journalism.

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Introduction and Statement of Problem

It is evident in the political communication literature that the print media have a long history of playing important roles in contestations for political power in Nigeria. Right from the pre-colonial period, the first newspaper, *Iwe Irohin Yoruba*, which was established in Abeokuta in 1859, by Reverend Henry Townsend, was involved in the various political struggles among the sub-ethnic groups within the Yoruba nation. (Omu, 1965; Duyile, 1987). During the colonial period many other newspapers, such as *Lagos Weekly Record*, *The African Messenger*, *Lagos Daily News*, *West African Pilot*, established by private individuals, were involved in the struggle against colonial repression, racial and trading discrimination, abolition of colonialism and the struggle for independence. At independence, however, the nationalists struggle orchestrated by the press, terminated into sectionalism with the emergence of newspapers that advocated for political interests of sections of the country (Omu, 1978:248-250). It is remarkable to note, also, that it was not until after independence that government began to take active roles in running the media, in order to counter the powerful political influence of privately owned newspapers. This trend equally has an influence on the role of the media in the contemporary political processes in Nigeria. The broadcast media equally have powerful influence on the audience and political trend in Nigeria. However, while the electronic media may be playing pervasive roles in the contemporary political turf, the print media have been exerting such influence for almost a century before the electronic media. The first broadcasting station, a rediffusion relay station of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), was established in Nigeria in 1933. The first television station began operation in Ibadan in 1959, a clear century away from the time the first newspaper was established in the country. Subsequently, many other broadcasting stations were established by federal and state governments until 1992, when the first private broadcasting station was licenced and allowed to operate under strict regulations. This century-long gap between the print and electronic media has obviously put the former far ahead and enabled them to exert more influence on the political processes in Nigeria than the latter.

This influence has been exerted strongly by the print media of newspapers in their coverage of elections in Nigeria. In the country, the press has provided 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. Scholarly works on the activities of the Nigerian press in this regard have revealed the contributions of newspapers in Nigeria to the successes and pitfalls that have been witnessed in the various elections in Nigeria. However, while these existing studies seem to have paid attention to political party structures, voters' education and political candidatures, they have not satisfactorily focused on the role the Nigerian newspapers play in electioneering campaigns in the country in terms of ascertaining the merits and calumnies in the campaigns, and the implications which the slanting of the campaign statements may

have for a peaceful electoral process. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the reportage of 2013 gubernatorial electioneering campaigns in Anambra State. The linkages between contents of selected newspapers and societal-required political awareness and education on one hand, and attendant conflict arising from calumnious campaign statements on the other hand, are to be investigated in the study.

The Press and Electioneering Campaigns: A Social Responsibility Perspective

The activities of the press in the electioneering campaign context could be understood within a number of frameworks which expound the importance of the press in the governance process. The press is better understood as a public sphere which provides a space that mediates between the civil society and the realm of power. This was articulated by Habermas (1989), who defines the public sphere as:

Organs of information and political debates such as newspapers, journals as well as institutions of political discussion such as parliament, political clubs, literary salons, public assemblies, pubs, coffee houses, meeting halls and other public spaces where socio-political discussion took place.

The principle of the public sphere involves an open discussion of all issues of public concerns during which discursive argumentation is employed to ensure public goods. The principle, therefore, assumes freedom of speech and assembly, a free press and the right to freely participate in political debates and decision making. Habermas contends that after the democratic revolution of the 19th and 20th centuries, the bourgeois public sphere, which was the original public sphere, was institutionalized in constitutional orders which guaranteed a wide range of political rights, including the establishment of a judicial system which mediated between individuals, groups and the state. From these political rights also arises the freedom of the press to operate in the open society. However, the structural changes that have taken place in the contemporary era with the rise of capitalism, the culture industries and powerful economic corporations has prompted the big economic and governmental organizations to take over control of the public sphere, thus leading to its mutation. This development has reduced citizens to mere consumers of goods and services communicated through the media and have diminished the strength of the public sphere from a place of rational discussion, debates and expression of concerns for public interest into a realm of commercial transactions and administration by corporations and dominant political and economic elites (Habermas, 1989).

Having been established as an indispensable institution in democratic governance, Bryant and Thompson (2002:306) identified eight important functions which the press performs in a democratic society. These are:

1. Surveillance of contemporary events that are likely to affect citizens positively and negatively
2. Identification of key socio-political issues
3. Provision of platforms for advocacy for causes and interests
4. Transmission of diverse contents across the various dimensions and factions of political discourse
5. Scrutiny of government officials, their institutions and other agencies
6. Giving of incentives and information to allow citizens to become actively informed participants rather than spectators
7. Provision of principled resistance to external forces attempting to subvert media autonomy
8. Respectful consideration of the audience as potentially concerned, sense-making efficacious citizens

These functions inform press involvement in public activities and in influencing public policies in the electioneering process of governance. However, the press has been implicated in contemporary societal conflicts based on the effects that its activities produce in the electioneering campaign conflict dynamics. On this, Petterson and Wilkins (1994, p. 149) state inter alia:

Studies of press coverage of political campaigns have uncovered some disturbing trend; journalists function as a pack; there is seldom any really distinctive political reporting during elections. Further, journalists treat fore-runners differently than they do the remainder of the candidate pack. Fore-runners are the objects of closer scrutiny, but those examinations are seldom about issues, even-though it is issue oriented reporting that tends to provoke political interest and public participation. Instead electoral reporting focuses on personality, a key component of political leadership, but certainly not the only one.

Highlighting the importance of reportage of electioneering campaigns to national development and growth, Agba (2007:71), "acknowledges the fact that electioneering campaign for political power in Nigeria has become part of the problem of national cohesion and integration. It has therefore, become "part of a profound socio-political rot". He continues, "It is also an acknowledged fact that the press has a very important role to play in channeling electioneering campaign to serve the goal of national development. This is because the press is described as "a pivot of social interaction, seeking to use the power of mass information to solve the problem of national cohesion and integration, which are both critical to the growth of healthy electioneering campaign". What all these tend to suggest is that during electioneering campaigns, if the press allows itself to be used in propagating the mere viewpoints and idiosyncrasies of political candidates at the expense of political awareness and education with which the press should serve the electorate, then the

press becomes socially irresponsible.(Popoola, 2009; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015) This could result into negative outcome in the confidence reposed in the press by the electorate and this may resonate in frustration in the political environment. Thus, this study was carried out to investigate the reportage of the 2103 governorship electioneering campaigns in Anambra State Nigeria. The main objective of the study is to ascertain from the contents of selected newspapers if the reportage of the campaigns by selected newspapers was socially responsible or calumnious.

Scope and Methodology

The focus of the study was on reported campaign activities of four governorship candidates who contested on the platforms of four political parties in the 2013 governorship elections in Anambra State, Nigeria. These four candidates were: Willie Obiano of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), the ruling party in the state, Tony Nwoye of the People's Democratic Party(PDP), the ruling party at the federal level, Andy Uba of the Labour Party (LP) and Chris Ngige of the All Progressive Congress (APC). These four candidates and their parties were selected out of the total of 23 political parties in the state because the parties on which platforms the candidates contested were the most prominent political parties in the state as at the time of the elections. Four Nigerian national newspapers: *Nigerian Tribune*, *The Guardian*, *The Nation* and *The Punch* were purposively selected for the study. The newspapers were chosen because they cover elections, electoral campaigns and matters arising from elections prominently in Nigeria. Meanwhile, the affiliation of *The Nation* with the APC was another factor for its selection. The newspaper's proprietor and financier is an APC leader and party chieftain. Another reason for the choice of *The Punch* too was its acclaimed wide spread and circulation in Nigeria. A newspaper could have been chosen from the South-Eastern geo political zone in which Anambra State is domiciled, but none was selected because of low frequency of publication and less prominence given to issues of elections when compared with the chosen ones.

The study used the dialectical hermeneutics style of textual analysis in data gathering and analysis. This method was adopted for the study because it is used in the literary and cultural studies to interpret textual matters with a view to bringing out possible intentions of the writers of such text. This method was suitable for this study as it made it practically possible to interpret the intentions, opinions and dispositions of the selected newspapers to the speeches and statements of the candidates and party loyalists. Thus, subjective analysis was pivotal to the study especially for bringing out actually the merits, issues and calumnies in the campaigns as reported by the newspapers. To a large extent, the method was used to measure the extent of social responsibility displayed by the newspapers in reporting the campaigns.

Also, the purposive sampling was used to select 38 editions of the selected newspapers over a four-month period: August, September and October 2103 (the Pre

election) and November 2013(the election month). A total of 42 journalistic items of news, features, editorial comments and opinions were examined in the 38 editions. This was done to ensure that only the editions of the newspapers that carried campaigns during the said elections were selected and examined. Both the latent and manifest contents of the newspapers were subjected to hermeneutical interpretations organized around Jensen's semiotic framework, which is adopted in communication sciences and cultural studies (Baran and Davis, 2003: 356-357). This literary analytical method affords deeper and better understanding of the contents of the selected newspapers in relation to the socio-cultural and political environment within which the newspapers operated during the study period.

Socially Responsible or Calumnious Reportage of the 2013 Governorship Electioneering Campaigns in Anambra State Nigeria?

By the time the governorship elections were approaching, the selected newspapers published stories that had the potential of aggravating anxiety and panic in the Anambra State political terrain. Even during and after the elections, the newspapers served as megaphones and amplifiers of vituperations that could accentuate people's hope of quickly getting rid of some of the candidates even by means other than the election process, if such means were available. Stories published by the newspapers that showed perceived recklessness and insensitivity of the press during the election period are captured thus:

Newspaper: *Nigerian Tribune*

Anambra 2013: One Election, Many Troubles

APGA, being the ruling party in Anambra, commands an instant attention in the governorship contest. Yet the party appears rooted in crises.....The prospect of a fair contest of APGA primaries in Anambra still remains elusive as expected. **The reason is based on the allegations that the badly factionalized party was working in concert with the state governor**, Mr. peter Obi to anoint an aspirant at the expense of others, a possibility likely to create an incendiary effect among party members.(*Nigerian Tribune, August 19, 2013, pg 41*).

APGA, AN APPENDAGE OF PDP- NGIGE

We (APC) have seen the future; we know what is coming on. We cannot cocoon ourselves as a tribe and say we are doing a tribal party called the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), which is now a PDP component. We can't do that; we can't subscribe Ndigbo to be an appendage. In APGA, you hear of Victor Umeh and Peter Obi. It is the Agulu Peoples Grand Alliance that is why they are a PDP appendage and that is why we cannot allow the Igbo to

be hoodwinked. We tell the Igbo the truth. The destiny of the Igbo now can only be realized in APC. (*Nigerian Tribune, August 30, 2013, pg. 24*).

This reportage shows bias and is conflict inciting. The report measures the party in power APGA as insincere and mirrors the party as an appendage of the PDP party. A deliberate attempt is however made at emphasizing and projecting the opposition party, APC as the savior of the electorates and rendering the personality of APGA party as deceptive. Such contents are calumnious. The newspaper failed to perform its gate keeping functions in the above reportage. Such reportage could merely promote inter party warfare and conflict, which can lead to electoral crises in the state.

ANAMBRA'S FATHER OF ALL BATTLES:

Can PDP, APC upturn APGA's apple cart?

The politics of Anambra State could ordinarily come under the categorization of legendary American rap artiste, Calvin Broadus, more commonly known as **Snoop Dogg's description of himself: money, power, respect, street knowledge, leadership**".....the build up to the governorship election that would confer such authority on another citizen of the state.....has seen the display of all that **Snoop Dogg called himself. And according to side talk, there has been no limit to the display of money, power, street knowledge and respect in this contest. For instance rumors were that the leadership of the APGA, the party in power, received money.....** (*Nigerian Tribune, September 1, 2013, pg 43*).

This is capable of heating up the political climate. The headline subjectively asks if the opposition party can upturn APGA's rule. The excerpt is a clear attempt to ridicule the party in power by categorically describing its activities as those typical of *Snoop Dogg*.

Anambra 2013: Endless Intrigues over PDP Ticket

Between 2007 and now, the Ubahs have become a strong factor in Anambra politics, roaring from the PDP's flank. Suffice is it to say that the perceived anger of many in Anambra now is due to the alleged imposition of the Ubahs on the people of the state by certain powerful forces outside the state. Will PDP again lose Anambra to APGA or APC and even the Labour Party, where Chief Ifeanyi Uba, is making frantic efforts to clinch the governorship seat? (*Nigerian Tribune, September 10, 2013, pg 34*).

Anambra Guber Election: Fashola, Tinubu Drum up Support for Ngige

As the APC candidates for the November governorship election in Anambra state, Dr Chris Ngige, kicks off his campaigns, Lagos state governor, Mr. Babatunde Fashola and the national leader of the party, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, have called on the people of Anambra to vote enmasse for Dr Ngige, saying he is the most experienced of all the candidates being fielded by political parties for the position. (*Nigerian Tribune, October 17, 2013, pg 13*).

Anambra Stampede: Ngige Blames Obi for using Church as Campaign Ground.

Following the order of arrest of All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate for November 16, Anambra governorship election, Dr Chris Ngige, by the national chairman, All progress Grand Alliance (APGA), Chief Umeh, Ngige Campaign Organization has blamed Governor Peter Obi for using church ground as his campaign ground. It will be revealed how over 28 people died of stampede at the Holy Ghost Adoration Ministry Uke..... ‘It is rather unfortunate that the state governor and APGA factional national chairman chose to play politics with such a national tragedy, in which they were both principal actors,’ he said (*Nigerian Tribune, November 5, 2013, pg, 8*).

Anambra Deaths Caused by APGA, APC Desperadoes- Labour Party

The labour Party has condemned in strong terms, what it described as extreme desperation by leaders of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and All Progressives Congress (APC) to win the forthcoming governorship election in Anambra at all cost. **“As if their presence at the Adoration Ground was not enough assault.....Governor Peter Obi mounted the altar and began to reel out his achievements and make promises of greater accomplishments is if his party candidate is elected”** the party said. It said the action of the APGA leaders and the counter-action if the APC desperadoes were all planned and clinically executed. (*Nigerian Tribune, November 7, 2013, pg 3*).

Stage Set for Anambra 2013

In essence, an average Anambra electorate seems not to see the labour party as capable of up staging a party like APGA, which has for quite some time been coupling the Igbos interest in politics. In essence,

there seems to be no core interest by the Igbo in a party like LP. This is because in building a political consensus, the Igbo nation would any day have preferred to invest their interest in a regional party like APGA or a national Party like PDP. (*Nigerian Tribune, November 9, 2013, pg 45*).

Newspaper: *The Guardian*

Anambra 2013: Still a Contest of Raw Cash and Brawn

Fear of losing, desperation, lack of capacity and personal confidence; these are probably the underlying causes for the state of affairs in most of the 'viable political parties' in Anambra State, as aspirants chase the governorship tickets for the November 16 poll. As the combatants jostle for prime position on the party platform, the major consideration boils down to how much money is at the disposal of aspirants. The rat race is more defined within the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the ruling, but mending All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). For APGA, Governor Peter Obi has shown that he has become a master of intrigue and political craftsmanship. While he promises Anambra North Senatorial district that he would support them to mount the saddle as his successor, the Governor sings a different song in Abuja saying that could ride the storms of Anambra development by exceeding his achievements on the millennium development target goals targets. (*The Guardian, August 18, 2013, pg 51*).

My Agenda for Anambra, by Ubah

"I believe the interest of my people can be better represented than the way it is at the moment. Look at the number of people coming in wanting to be governor. You can even tell their addresses talkless of knowing their means of livelihood." (*The Guardian, August 29, 2013, pg 1*).

Anmabra 2013: No Easy Way

Despite the frenzy of activities and grandstanding tactics being displayed by front row political parties for the November 16 governorship election in Anambra state, there is no easy way for the electoral body, political parties and candidates.... The most prominent source of uneasiness about the forthcoming gubernatorial election is the existence of two candidates in both the ruling All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and the otherwise major opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP). For the newly registered amalgam All Progressives Congress (APC), the throwback to the governorship

primary is unsettling the party especially.....(*The Guardian, September 22, 2013, pg 58*).

Anambra Guber: Obiano Unveils 10 Point Agenda

The All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) candidate for the November 16, 2013, gubernatorial election in Anambra State, Chief Willie Obiano, has unveiled his blueprint tagged 10-point Agenda, saying it would encourage rapid development in the state. (*The Guardian, October, 5, 2013 pg 3*).

Ubah to Set up Liaison Offices Worldwide

A pledge has come from the Anambra State governorship candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Dr Ifeanyi Ubah that if elected, he would establish liaison offices in major cities of the world as a way to galvanise and harness meaningfully the contributions and development of Anambra People in the diaspora, back home. In separate statements yesterday, Ubah and Oraegbunam chided the incumbent governor for running the state government as a charity organization, stressing that the governor's style of disbursing funds to organizations diminishes the idea of modern governance by avoiding laid down procedure of checks and balances. (*The Guardian, October 14, 2013 pg 5*).

Anambra 2014: LP, APGA, APC Set Campaign Tone

As the ruling All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and the opposition, All Progressives Congress (APC) finally took to the roads, officially that is, to launch their governorship campaigns, the buzzword in the Labour Party (LP) is "Labour leads, others follow". This is an allusion to the fact that the LP officially flagged off its campaign on September 12 while the APGA and APC flagged off on October 8, respectively. It would seem that the APGA appropriated Awka, the administrative state capital, as the APC and LP found space in Onitsha, the Commercial capital of Anambra. (*The Guardian, October 16, 2013, pg 10*).

Ubah Pledges Better Deal for Anambra

Ahead of the November 16, 2013, Anambra State governorship election, the Labour Party (LP) candidate, Dr. Patrick Ifeanyi Ubah, has urged the people to join in the effort to build a better future for the state and her citizens by voting for him. (*The Guardian, October 22, 2013, pg 5*).

Is PDP Walking on Familiar Turf

The ominous signs were clear from the beginning of the preparation for the November 16 Anambra governorship election that the ruling People's Democratic Party has not shed off the toga of crises that had bedeviled the party in the state since 1999. This is despite the several efforts by the national leadership of the party in the past and present to broker peace in the party in the state. Who finally emerges the party's rightful candidate for the election is not what matters most to many members of the party in the state. The question is will PDP ever make any positive impact in the 2013 election or will it be like 2010 for the party again in the forthcoming election. (The Guardian, October 26, 2013, pg 54)

Newspaper: *The Nation*

Anambra Guber: Why Ngige's the Man to Beat

When Dr. Chris Nwabueze Ngige emerged the governorship candidate of the PDP in Anambra State in 2003 and subsequently declared the winner of the election in the state by INEC, many who did not know him could not believe that anything good will come out from his government. Only those who knew him from childhood and his tortuous path to greatness knew that his emergence signified a new dawn of an era in the politics of Anambra State. **As Ngige was about to settle down as the elected governor of the state, the buccaneers who had held the state ransom for their selfish interests struck again, causing confusion and distracting his government and the people of Anambra State....**Today he is reciprocating the people's support by offering them jobs and attracting federal projects to the state. What else do the people of Anambra need, if not a leader like Ngige as the clock ticks for Anambra governorship election slated November 18. (*The Nation, August 2, 2013, pg 21*).

Anambra: Tension in APGA over 'Anointed Candidate'

There is tension in the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) over alleged plot to impose a governorship candidate for the party in Anambra State. **Interrogations, however, revealed that the nomination process has generated tension following the preference of Governor Peter Obi for a technocrat to succeed him to be able to consolidate on his achievements.** It was gathered that Obi is likely to back an Executive Director of Fidelity Bank, Mr. Willy Obiano, who was dragged into race last Wednesday. Most APGA members in the state however prefer a political candidate to a technocrat. (*The Nation, August 7, 2013, pg 4*)

Who Succeeds Obi in Anambra?

Three parties- All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), All Progressives Congress (APC) and People Democratic Party (PDP) are warming up for the November 16 election in Anambra State. Although the Labour Party (LP) is also making efforts, but it is a party on the fringe. Observers contend that the race will not be a walk over for whichever party that eventually lifts the trophy. **In APC, the coast is almost clear for Senator Chris Ngige, The former governor, who was deposed by the court to pave the way for Obi.....his supporters are soaring daily. This attests to the fact that the senator from Anambra Central Senatorial District is popular.** After the primary hurdle, the APC will also have to brace for the campaigns. Already, APGA is sponsoring a media propaganda against the newly registered party, following the alleged deportation of 14 destitute to Anambra State by the Lagos State government. **APGA Chieftains have deliberately been inflating the figures to embarrass the APC, ridicule it before the people and score a cheap point.** (*The Nation August 21, 2013, pg 43*)

Anambra: Plot to Drop Nwonye as PDP Candidate Uncovered

There was anxiety yesterday over alleged plot to drop the governorship candidate of the People's Democratic Party, Dr. Tony Nwonye in the forthcoming November 16 Anambra state governorship election. Nwonye's name was submitted to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) last Wednesday by the PDP national secretariat. Some forces are however pushing for Dr. Andy Uba's candidature. (*The Nation, September, 9, 2013, pg 57*)

Ngige Tops in Anambra Gubernatorial Leadership X-Ray

In analyzing the leadership qualities of the candidates, **one borrowed the book *Leadership Transformed*, by Peter Fuda, a global authority on leadership. In the book, Fuda employed metaphors to illustrate leadership qualities. Ngige also topped in another of Fuda's methaphor, the transformation from amateur cook to master chef.** On this point, Ngige emerges tops, having revealed his true personality in his face-off with his past political associates. The incident left him an unrepentant, people-focused leader, who's three years in office made him a folk hero. (*The Nation, September 29, 2013, pg 22*)

Obiano is Copying Ngige's Manifesto

The Ngige Campaign Organisation has urged the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) candidate, Mr. Willie Obiano, to stop copying the manifesto of Senator Chris Ngige. It said this in a statement by the Media Assistant, Mr. Igboeli Arinze. The statement berated the APGA candidate for the "unethical duplication" of senator Ngige's manifesto. **It reads: we have with disgust and amazement watched how APGA candidate, Mr. Willie Obiano revised its manifesto to include the contents obtained from the impeccable manifesto Senator Chris Ngige. Mr. Obiano, in his abject lack of preparation to become a warrant chief, let alone governor of Anambra State, is making use of the promises of Senator Ngige to campaign at rallies and other places".** (*The Nation, October 22, 2013, pg 53*)

Ngige Dazzles Audience at Debate

It was a battle between the All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship candidate, Senator Chris Nwabueze Ngige and the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) standard bearer, Chief Willie Obiano at a debate, organized by the Nigeria Elections Debate Group (NEDG) yesterday in Awka.

Ngige dazzled the audience, who gathered at the Women Development Centre, Awka. Obiano did not give a good account of himself, but CPP's Augustine displayed qualities of a good contestant. (*The Nation, November 1, 2013, pg 9*)

All Eyes on Anambra as Ngige, Obiano, Nwoye, Ifeanyi Ubah Test Strength

Today is a decision day in Anambra State. It is a day to elect the man that will succeed Governor Peter Obi. Today's race is strictly a four horse one. And they are the candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Dr Chris Ngige; All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Chief Willie Obiano; Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Comrade Tony Nwoye and Labour Party (LP), Chief Ifeanyi Ubah. The fate of these four men would be decided by a total of 1,784,536 registered voters. Of the lot, 900,701, representing 50.5% are women, while 883,835, representing 49.5% are men. (*The Nation, November 16, 2013, pg 4*)

Newspaper: *The Punch*

Nwonye, Uba Groups Clash

Loyalists of the Peoples Democratic Party- recognized governorship candidate for the November 16 governorship election in Anambra State, Mr. Tony Nwonye, and that of court-recognised candidate, Sen. Andy Uba, engaged in a fight at the convention. The event happened at the stand allotted to the state inside the square. The shouts and the use of abusive words by the loyalists of the two men attracted delegates and journalists to the stand.....(*Punch, September 1, 2013, pg 5*).

Anambra 2013: Return of the Godfathers

Before incumbent governor, Peter Obi, assumed office in 2006, Anambra State had become a notorious haven for the politics of godfathers. The emergence of Obi as governor inspite of godfathers forced many into early retirement. The death of Dim Chukwuemeka Ojukwu ended an era where forces outside government played significant roles in determining state policies and programmes. Parallel Primaries were held in PDP which has a history of the overbearing influence of godfathers. **In one of them, Chief Chris Uba, who has become infamous for his exploits as a godfather in politics of state since 1999, superintended over the emergence of his brother, Senator Uba as candidate.** (*Punch, September, 12, 2013, pg 21*)

Anambra Poll'll be Fairer than Ondo's, says Jonathan

President Goodluck Jonathan has reiterated his administration's commitment to conducting a free and fair governorship election in Anambra state on November 16. He premised his optimism on the transparency and credibility of the previous governorship elections held earlier in Edo and Ondo states.....the presidential aide said he had been mandated by Jonathan to ensure that the feat achieved in Edo and Ondo states were repeated by conducting workshops for political parties on the need to have a free, fair and credible election. (*Punch, October14, 2013, pg 16*)

As Anambra People go to the Polls

From the reign of Dr. Chiwoke Madinuju and his acclaimed godfather, Chris Uba and then for the few days or was it months, that Dr. Nnamdi Uba took charge. **It has always been one story and another. Very murky manipulations by a handful of unrelenting villans that have given the state a bad name. if they are not**

breaking into factions, they are procuring one form of ruling or another in the court. Give it to them; they are very litigious and politically “innovative”.....it all started playing out when on August 14, the ruling People’s Democratic Party conducted a primary election that was duly monitored by a serving governor. The winner of that election was said to be one Dr. Tony Nwonye, However in another location in Awka, a factional state executive conducted a parallel congress and declared Senator Andy Uba as winner. (*Punch, October, 16, 2013 pg, 26*)

Anambra Govt Attacking Ngige-APC

“The first time we mentioned this, it might have passed for an allegation. It is no longer an allegation because those who are concerned, particularly the campaign manager of the All Progressives Grand Alliance candidate in the November 16 election, Mr. Joe-martins Uzodike have not denied it. Uzodike has instead, confirmed it and has gone ahead to give erroneous impression that our billboards are being destroyed because we had not paid certain amounts of money.”...“**it is not a question of just removing billboards and it ends there, they are removing the billboards and replacing them with Obiano’s billboards**” (*Punch, October, 27, 2013, pg, 10*).

Ngige is a Drowning Man-Commissioner

“.....**Ngige is a drowning man and he is only looking for something to hold to offer as excuse when he finally gets drowned.....**This matter has been over flogged. Ngige and his people are the ones destroying people’s billboards, trying to re-enact anarchy in the state. And we have promised we will not retaliate and we cannot do anything”. (*Punch, October 27, 2013, pg, 11*)

Controversial Anambra Governorship Poll

As the nation grapples with yet another shoddy election, this time the Anambra State governorship poll of last Saturday, it is incumbent upon the Independent National Electoral Commission to do the right thing: summon courage to cancel the flawed election.....Nigerians should stand up and demand that the right thing be done. Although the problem of election rigging in Nigeria is systemic and goes beyond the electoral body, the umpire itself has failed in its most basic assignment of conducting transparent polls. This is not the time to abandon the women who found their voice to protest the rerun poll on Sunday. Every Anambra citizen- and indeed every Nigerian – should

feel outraged about the shambolic poll Jega and co. superintended in Anambra State.

(Punch, November 21, 2013, pg, 20)

The cost of Anambra Governorship Election

The sudden Charitable disposition of some candidates who donated millions of naira to all kinds of 'philanthropic' purposes and candidates who offered material benefits to persons attending rallies and events also added up to the cost of the election, For state resources, the ruling party, the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), had no business appointing public officers paid at public expense to run its campaign. *(Punch, November 25, 2013 pg 28).*

Findings

There were strong evidences that the newspapers carried prominently inflammatory and inciting contents, in the build-up to and during the 2013 governorship elections in Anambra State Nigeria. *The Nation* owned by an APC party leader and chieftain Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, came out as a staunch supporter of Chris Ngige the APC's governorship aspirant at the elections. The newspaper reported from the prism of the APC and published acrimonious and abusive statements about other candidates and the parties they represented, as an indication of partisan posture for the APC. The newspaper published perilous headlines, and conflict igniting and political back-stabbing stories as megaphones and amplifiers of the voices of its owners who were players on the political scene. The reportage of both the *Nigerian Tribune* and the *Punch* skewed more in favour of the APGA, as the newspaper slanted the campaign statements and election speeches and activities that revolved around the party's candidate in ways that glorified him, while his opponents were demonized and somewhat castigated in the reportage. *The Tribune* apparently desecrated LP and APC mostly. Although, *The Guardian's* coverage could be said to be fair and seemingly socially responsible, it nevertheless displayed discreet allegiance to the side of the LP's Andy Uba for unclear reasons. It was speculated that the partisan and bias postures maintained by the newspapers which occasioned what they published were rooted in advertisement patronage from the governorship candidates, the contending political parties as well as party loyalists and supporters. Suppose it was certain whether profit making and economic reason was part of the motivations the newspapers had in reporting the electioneering campaigns during the period under study, there would have been more definite findings and positions on the relationship between ownership of the newspapers and the reportage.

Conclusion

Obviously, the selected newspapers' reportage of the 2013 Anambra State governorship electioneering campaigns skewed along the two divides of a calumnious reporting and a socially responsible coverage. However, a big chunk of the coverage is that of calumny and this is a blatant disregard for journalistic professional ethics and a breach of the canons of a conflict sensitive and socially responsible press. The manner in which the newspapers slanted the campaigns suggested that the newspapers were partisan and therefore ignored the noble role expected of them as a socially responsible and development oriented press. This is a constraint to Nigeria's democracy. The Nigerian press must adopt the principles of conflict sensitive journalism and eschew all forms of unprofessionalism in reporting the electoral process in Nigeria. In view of the liberal ownership structure of the media, the journalist has to strike a balance between his professional responsibilities and the political interests of media owners. Ultimately, the societal interests must override ownership consideration during coverage of political contestations because societal interest is superior to individual and group interests. The prosperity of the press is often linked to the credibility, trust and goodwill it is able to generate in the society. Ultimately, the prosperity of the society goes a long way in determining the survival of the media and destruction of societal values could translate into the termination of the activities of the press. Although the press will inevitably come under pressures from politicians and powerful interests seeking to manipulate them to gain political advantage, the media must resist pressures from all quarters. The media and its staff should exemplify independence in their actions. The Nigerian press also needs to examine its status-conferral functions by focusing more on credible individuals, who are more peace-oriented and peace-loving in the political process, rather than violent patrons and questionable characters who take politics as a zero-sum game. Such individuals who exhibit the tendency of capturing power by all means must be exposed and discouraged from capturing power by the press in the interest of the society and for the survival of democracy. The press should empower the citizens to exercise their right of asking questions about the credentials and antecedents of who is aspiring to govern them and how such an individual proposes to govern them. This involves providing citizens and civil society groups with access to the press to articulate their views and opinions, especially during preparation for elections.

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