

# A comparative content analysis of the coverage of arms deal scandal in three Nigerian newspapers

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## Abstract

Generally, mass media especially print has the potential of providing information on current happenings in the society. It is obvious that fighting corruption is one of the priorities of the government of President Muhammadu Buhari. The media therefore has the task of covering and reporting all issues related to corruption effectively. This quantitative content analysis showed that arms deal scandals were reported in the *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers from January-May, 2016. The variables of frequency, location, and direction were used to measure the coverage of arms scandal as reported by these papers. Both news stories and feature articles were considered as the units of analysis. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the newspapers while stratified random sampling by days of the week to select the editions which amounted to 120 stories in the three newspapers. Moreover, Issue-Attention Cycle Theory was used as the theoretical framework. The findings of the study indicated that *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers had given prominence forming, 82.5% in the inside page in *Daily Trust*, 70% in the front page in *The Nation* and 85% in the inside page in *The Guardian*. The study concluded that *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers have substantially covered stories on arms deal scandal by reporting 93.3% of their stories on the issue under study.

**Key Words:** Nigerian Corruption, Arms deal, Scandals, Coverage and Newspapers.

## Introduction

The investigation of *arms deal scandal* by President Muhammad Buhari led government has opened serious integrity challenges among high profile military officers and politicians. The alleged diversion and theft of about \$2.1 billion meant for purchase of arms for the fight against *Boko Haram* and other insurgencies during the administration of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan perpetuated by top military officers through the office of the President's National Security Adviser (NSA). Among those arraigned by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) were: the former National Security Adviser, Sambo Dasuki, the former Minister of State for Finance, Bashir Yuguda, and the former Director of Finance at the office of the NSA, Shu'aibu Salisu. Also accused was the former Governor of Sokoto State, Attahiru Bafarawa, and his son, Sagir

Bafarawa among others (*Premium Times*, 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2015 cited in Kurfi, 2016).

The administration of President Goodluck Jonathan was accused by the present government of spending billions of dollars on efforts to equip the Nigerian military against *Boko Haram*, but there was rampant "abuse of trust" which cost the nation lives and properties as stated by President Muhammadu Buhari. It is on record that one of the campaign promises of Buhari's administration is fighting corruption which is paramount for Nigeria's development. It is against this background that the government instituted series of investigations into the arms scandal through the EFCC with a view to uncover the stolen funds. From the beginning of the investigation to the present time, it has been reported by many national and international media organizations.

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JCMR Journal of Communication and Media Research, Vol. 10, No. 1, April 2018 28-37

The mass media being the watchdog of the society as described by Lasswell (1976) has the responsibility of informing the citizens on issues of national interest. Considering the elements in determining what news is news worthy or otherwise, scandals of whatever form attract media attention. This could be the reason why Vasterman, (2005) states that scandals gain prominence when the news media manage the public debate by revealing problems, failures, and scandals. This indicates that without the media, majority of scandals tend to have low profile.

Camerer (2009) also observes that since the majority of citizens, including policy makers, report that they receive their information about corruption from the media, analyzing the type of information about corruption that is available to the public domain is one step towards developing a profile on corruption as these types of studies do not report on actual levels of corruption but rather present an overview of how the print media reports on corruption. Furthermore, Andvig (cited in Camerer 2009, p. 9) also posits that investigative journalists are in many ways in a better position to collect data than social scientists as the public exposure gives them a larger supply of informants, meaning that stories from the media are important sources of information, also for social research on corruption when it comes to establishing facts.

Thus, due to the heightened media coverage surrounding arms deal from the time the scandal was first reported, this study seeks to analyse how three Nigerian daily newspapers namely, *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* report arms deal scandal, focusing on news stories and feature articles.

### Problem Statement

Even though many researchers have investigated different aspects of arms scandal, there appears to be paucity of literature on the press coverage of arms deal scandal in Nigeria. Previous studies by Balkin (1998); Puglisi and Snyder (2008) and Kurfi (2016) found that arms scandal focused more on the mass media as a watchdog of the society by subjecting governments to accountability in the process of discharging their official functions. It is therefore the duty of the mass media to report issues of national and international interests to the citizens in the society. Reports on arms deal scandal is one of

such issues. A study by (Kurfi 2016) also revealed that the challenges of press in reporting such issue could be attributed to the fact that Nigerian press are divided along religious, ethnic and sectional lines. Therefore, scholars have articulated in their study that most of Nigerian newspapers do not engage in investigative journalism which digs deep into issues to expose the hidden arms scandal, but mostly rely on information coming from anti-corruption agencies like ICPC and EFCC. Therefore, it is pertinent to embark on a study to find out whether the media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are living up to this task of enlightening the masses or engaging the citizens to speak out and collectively hold their elected representatives accountable, since they are all stakeholders in Nigerian project and as a nation.

### Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the coverage of arms deal scandal in the *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers. Thus, the following serves as the basic tools of inquiry in the study:

1. What is the frequency of arms deal scandal stories in the *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers?
2. What is the dominant location for the placement of stories on arms deal scandal in the *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers?
3. What is the direction of the stories on arms deal scandal by *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers?

### Operationalisation of Key Concepts

*Arms Deal Scandal*: It means the embezzlement of money meant for the purchase of arms to fight Boko Haram in Nigeria which was diverted into individual pockets published in the *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* between January-May, 2016.

*Direction*: This is the tone of arms deal scandal stories reported in the *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* between January-May, 2016 which could be positive, negative or neutral.

*Frequency*: This refers to the number of arms deal scandal stories reported in the *Daily*

*Trust, The Nation and The Guardian* between January-May, 2016.

*Prominence:* The prominence refers to the location and placement of the arms scandal in the selected newspapers which could be front page, inside page or the back page.

### **Nigerian Corruption in Perspective**

It may not be feasible to specifically select a date that marked the beginning of corruption in Nigeria but it is believed that it can be traced as far back as the colonial era. According Storey, (1953), before independence, there have been cases of official misuse of resources for personal enrichment. This may be the reason why subsequent governments starting from the First Republic under the leadership of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister, and Nnamdi Azikwe, the President, were characterized by widespread corruption. Government officials looted public funds with impunity. Federal Representatives and Ministers flaunted their wealth with reckless abandon.

Ogbeidi (2012) argues that, the level of corruption in that epoch served as an excuse for young officers like Major Nzeogwu Chukwuma to launch the nation's first coup in 1966 which sacked the Nigerian First Republic politicians from power. The coup was a direct response to the corruption of the First Republic; and the popular support the military received for the coup showed that Nigerians were long expecting such a wind of change to bail them out from the claws of the politicians of that era. Interestingly, despite the killings of some major First Republic politicians, there were widespread jubilations in the country. The new government then came on board to investigate the corrupt activities of the past government and discovered that some Ministers formed companies and used their influence to secure contracts under some parastatals, especially the Nigeria Railway Corporation, Nigeria Ports Authority, and the defunct Electricity Corporation of Nigeria and Nigeria Airways. Okonkwo (2007) further reveals that they were found guilty of misappropriation of funds as well as disregarding laid down procedures in the award of contracts by parastatals under their Ministries.

While the Aguiyi Ironsi was trying to punish the corrupt officials of the previous government, another coup was launched by Yakubu Gowon which toppled the government.

Unfortunately, corruption tendencies of the new government manifested as they began to embark on white elephant projects which was a means of looting the wealth of the nation at the end of which funds were not accounted for. Apart from the mismanagement of the economy, the Gowon regime was enmeshed in deep-seated corruption. By 1974, reports of unaccountable wealth of Gowon's military governors and other public office holders had become the crux of discussion in the various Nigerian dailies. Coup d'état became a regular feature in the Nigerian polity as Murtala Muhammed also toppled the corrupt Gowon government. Murtala's asset declaration panel discovered that ten out of the twelve states of the previous administration were guilty of corruption (Okonkwo, 2007).

The culture of corruption continued in Nigeria as the second republic under the first democratically elected president Shehu Shagari witnessed a resurgence of corruption. According to Ogbeidi (2012):

The Shagari administration was marked by spectacular government corruption, as the President did nothing to stop the looting of public funds by elected officials. Corruption among the political leaders was amplified due to greater availability of funds. It was claimed that over \$16 billion in oil revenues were lost between 1979 and 1983 during the reign of President Shehu Shagari. It became quite common, for federal buildings to mysteriously go up in flames, most especially just before the onset of ordered audits of government accounts, making it impossible to discover written evidence of embezzlement and fraud (P.8).

The Nigerian situation is such that while a government tries to fight the menace of corruption, another government topples it or vice-versa. In this respect, the administration of General Muhammadu Buhari was willing and ready for anti-graft war with little respect to human right. Just as this fight was about to start yielding results, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida came forth to reignite the corruption regimes in Nigeria. It was so bad that Maduagwu (cited in Gboyega, 1996) was quoted saying:

Not only did the regime encourage corruption by pardoning corrupt officials convicted by his predecessors and returning their seized properties, the regime officially sanctioned corruption in the country and made it difficult to apply the only potent measures, long prison terms and seizure of ill-gotten wealth, for fighting corruption in Nigeria in the future (p. 5).

Even though General Babangida's administration succumbed to pressure by handing over to an interim government, General Sani Abacha came on board to continue the corrupt activities of his predecessor. According to Ogbeidi (2012), General Abacha's corrupt practices became blatant and systematic that his family and associates looted the Nigerian coffers with relative ease to the extent that it was compared to other notorious government of *Mobutu SeseSeko* of Zaire (now called the Democratic Republic of Congo). It was estimated that the embezzlement of public funds and corruption proceeds of General Abacha and his family amounted to USD four billion (International Centre for Asset Recovery, 2009). This assertion is likely to be correct as even up till today, Nigeria is still trying to recover the loots of the late General from Swiss Banks.

Up till today, despite the inauguration of anti-corruption bodies like the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), corruption remains a thorn on the flesh of the Nigerian system.

### **Arms Deal in Nigeria**

With an estimated one to three million arms in circulation in Nigeria, these weapons pose a significant challenge to law and order and a high risk to personal security. The majority of these arms are illegally possessed, due to highly restrictive national laws on possession (Jennifer and Jonas, 2007). While this does not necessarily indicate intent to use these weapons in an illegal fashion, as self defence is a primary motive for possession in some cases, it does mean that there are few records of the number of weapons in the country and ineffective means of controlling the importation and distribution of arms in Nigeria. The military and police are increasing their stocks of weapons in an effort to

modernize their forces and to combat rising armed violence in the country, while illegal civilian importation is also continuing. The problem is one of demand (Jennifer and Jonas, 2007).

There are several security agencies operating in Nigeria. While all of these agencies play a role in either the internal or external security of the country, not all of them or their members are authorized to carry arms. The primary agencies authorized to carry arms are the armed forces, the intelligence agencies, the Nigeria Police Force, and some specialized units within the other agencies. Those official persons authorized to bear arms numbers over 400,000, but other agencies are pressing to be allowed to carry arms. In 2000 one report suggested that of the one to three million arms in Nigeria, only a few hundred thousand weapons were in official stocks (Obasi, 2002, p. 69). According to the current personnel figures and recent orders of weapons for the police and the military, this estimate is likely to be outdated, and the actual number of official arms is likely to be higher.

Given the difficulty in legally owning a gun, majority of arms in Nigeria are believed to be held illegally. Their illegality makes it difficult to track flows and possession. Sources of arms include arms dealers, serving and retired military and police officers, returning peacekeepers, armed groups across borders, and other individuals. These weapons transit into the country across land borders and via sea ports and into the hands of armed groups, national dealers, political and community leaders, and individuals. Craft production provides a domestic source of arms. Demand is the key to understanding the trade: as long as insecurity persists, and economic and political opportunities for gain exist through the use of force, demand for arms will continue (Jennifer and Jonas, 2007).

### **Scandals**

Scandals possess an inherent emphasis on morality that holds individuals to an idealised standard of social conduct, consolidating their fulfillment of watchdog imperatives. Robert (2012) examines the relationship between scandals and the watchdog function of the media. His investigation revealed that news media are falling short of fulfilling watchdog imperatives, as the magnitude of scandal news often fails to align with the social costs of

transgressions. Scandals fulfill newsworthiness imperatives by satisfying a number of Galtung and Ruge's, and Harcup and O'Neill's news values. In addition, the media's use of a personalised narrative in scandal narration serves to fulfill newsworthiness imperatives.

It is necessary to maintain a critical awareness of the way in which media mediate transgressions and their role in framing scandal. Scandals are not simply reported by the media and exist independently of them: the media in fact constitute an event and produce its meanings through processes of inclusion, exclusion, emphasis of a perceived reality, and through the use of certain types of discourses (Hall 1949). As Thompson (1997, p. 49) observes, the very nature of scandals are shaped by the media, "their emergence, their developmental logic, their prominence, the ways in which they are experienced by both participants and non-participants, and their consequences".

Johannes (2011) articulates that media publication constructs an act in a particular way, which therefore effects the construction of public opinion, judgment, and the consequences for social institutions and social actors. Critical researchers, including Kirk (1999) consider media framing to be an important tool of power in the struggle to define whose worldview predominates. The ability of the media to raise the importance of attributes and to frame values indicates comparatively strong effects that go further than agenda-setting. Indeed, Silvio (2004) boldly contends:

No other institution can compete with the media as arbiters of publicity, deciding what acts of corruption and subsequent developments merit public attention. No public space can successfully compete with the media as the ringmaster of scandals. Societies come to know about the existence of scandals through the media (p. 78).

As a result of the media's clear and crucial narrational role in scandals, they play a key role in determining whether newsworthiness imperatives are prioritised over watchdog imperatives.

## Literature Review

Many scholars have studied corruption related issues at different levels and perspectives. Like Righter and Burge (2007); Canel and Sanders (2006). According to corruption studies using some African countries as a case, there seem to be some historical and cultural linkages due to their former colonial masters. It was discovered that African countries involve in one form of corruption or the other which ranges from collection of gratification for jobs, individuals or groups suffer from different forms of corruption. This is also similar to the way and manner journalists also collect gratification to undermine the profession.

Di Tella and Franceschelli (2011) examines coverage of government corruption in four newspapers in Argentina from 1998 – 2007. The study measures the extent to which the four main newspapers in the country report government corruption cases on their front pages and correlate them with government advertising. The study uses content analysis as a methodology, agenda setting theory, news stories and feature articles are unit of analysis and stratified random sampling by days of the week as sampling techniques. The results are robust to the inclusion of newspaper and month fixed effects and of government-newspaper interactions, suggesting that within a particular newspaper, and during a particular government, adverse coverage is negatively correlated with government advertising. The study concludes that the media is potentially important in exercising control over abusive government, particularly in countries with high levels of corruption and weak legal systems. Accordingly, governments often try to influence the media through actions that range from outright censorship and intimidation, to favours and transfers.

Chiluwa's (2007) study focused specifically on Weekly magazines like *Tell*, *The News* and *Newswatch*. Apart from the rhetoric and strategies used in the headlines of these magazines, the study concluded that news headlines are however influenced by personal bias of the individual journalists as well as the overriding professional and social ethics of the news magazine itself.

From the studies above, it is evident that there is a lacuna in the literature worthy of empirical investigation especially the way and

manner the media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century do cover and report corruption scandal.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study espouses the theoretical paradigm of 'issue attention cycle theory'. The theory's origin is traced to the work of Down (1972) and Richard (2013) who also contributed to the development of the theory.

The assumption of the theory is that, issues regarding the environment tend to "suddenly leap into prominence, remain there for a short time, and then gradually fade from the center of public attention." He calls this process the "issue-attention cycle," one of the most intriguing theories regarding environmental public opinion. Downs' theory contains crucial insight into what is currently happening with public opinion about the environment today. Ultimately, the issue-attention cycle has the potential to aid in our understanding of how the arms deal scandal is reported towards improving the quality of the environment which are shaped, sustained, and lost. In order to analyze the public's current opinions on the environment, it is critical to first understand how Downs defines the issue-attention cycle, specifically his description of the stages that are involved. Essentially, and rooted both in "the nature of certain domestic problems and in the way major communications media interact with the public," there are five stages of the issue-attention cycle.

The first stage, known as the pre-problem stage, takes place when a highly undesirable condition or situation occurs that has not yet caught the attention of the public, regardless of whether or not experts or interest groups were already aware of the problem. The second stage, known as the stage of alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm, consists of the public suddenly becoming both "aware of and alarmed about the evils of a particular problem." This awareness is usually accompanied by what Downs refers to as "euphoric enthusiasm," due to the common belief that one can "solve the problem" or achieve something effective within a relatively short time. Thus, the third stage of the issue-attention cycle is realizing the cost of significant progress. This entails the spread of a gradual realization that the cost of solving the problem is much higher than originally expected. More specifically, it would take a great deal of money and resources, as well as

"major sacrifices by large groups in the population." This results in a realization by the public that the problem is usually a direct result from some extremely beneficial aspect of their lives.

Downs succinctly puts it, the previous stage "almost imperceptibly" transforms into the fourth stage; the gradual decline of intense public interest. Essentially, and as more and more people realize the difficulties and time consumption involved with solving the problem, several reactions take place. Some people may get discouraged, others feel "positively threatened by thinking about the problem," and still others simply become bored with the issue. The fifth and final stage, the post-problem stage, occurs when an issue has been replaced and "public concern moves into a prolonged limbo." Furthermore, sporadic instances or recurrences of interest are likely to occur, especially due to the fact that during the time of interest on a given topic, new institutions, programmes, or policies may have been created that contain the possibility to have continued, albeit to a much smaller degree, aiding in discovering solutions to the issue. What is key to understand here is that any major problem that was once elevated through the previous stages of the issue-attention cycle has the potential to "sporadically recapture public interest" once in the post-problem stage. The problems that have managed to go through the cycle contain a much higher average level of attention, public effort, and general concern than those still in the pre-discovery stage.

The link between this theory and the study is that, issue-attention cycle theory contains crucial insight into what is currently happening with public opinion about the arms scandal today. Therefore, the issue-attention cycle as presented by Down contains many practical uses within the understanding of public opinion and environmentalism. Over long periods of time, arms deal scandal in Nigeria has potentially pique and drop on multiple occasions, with the media playing an influential role in exactly where and when this occurs. Thus, the theory holds a vital position in our understanding of how the press cover and report arms deal scandal in Nigeria.

### **Research Procedure**

The study employs content analysis as the primary approach of data generation. It is an

approach used in social science to examine the manifest content of media messages. It is a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables (Kerlinger, 2000).

According to Nigerian Press Commission (NPC) three hundred and ten Nigerian newspapers exist in the country. Therefore, the population of the study consists of the three national newspapers-*Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian*. The sampling technique used in selecting the three newspapers is purposive sampling, because all the newspapers have daily circulations running between 100,000 and 250,000 copies and 64 (*Daily Trust*) 48 (*The Nation*) and 67 pages (*The Guardian*). Consequently, stratified sampling by days of the week was adopted in selecting the editions with two days interval per week, eight (8) editions was sampled in every month. It means that from January to May we have forty (40) editions from each paper respectively; meaning if you multiply 40 by 3 it will sum up to 120 editions. As such, 120 editions form the sample size to be examined from the three newspapers under investigation.

Below is the sample stories studied for the three newspapers:

January 2016 Stories: (4, 7, 11, 14, 18, 21, 25, 28,) = 8 days

February 2016 Stories: (1, 4, 8, 11, 15, 18, 22, 25,) = 8 days

March 2016 Stories: (7, 10, 14, 17, 21, 24, 28, 31,) = 8 days

April 2016 Stories: (4, 7, 11, 14, 18, 21, 25, 28,) = 8 days

May 2016 Stories: (2, 5, 9, 12, 16, 19, 23, 26,) = 8 days

The study also considered some units of analysis which consists of all news stories and feature articles on arms deal scandal reported in *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers. The content categorisation or themes were base on the typology of corruption as developed by Weber (1964) such as Political corruption, economic corruption, administrative corruption, grand corruption, petty corruption and systematic corruption. Data gathering instrument was through the creation of a coding scheme, while quantitative content analysis was use to present the findings in tabular format, use of figures, percentages which takes account of numerical values or the frequencies with which the various delineated items of the content analysis occurred.

#### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The study examines the coverage of arms deal scandal in the *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers. Data were analysed through the creation of a coding scheme, to a sample of 120 editions as covered and reported in the three newspapers below:

*Table 1* presents data on stories covered by the three newspapers

Newspapers	<i>Daily Trust</i>		<i>The Nation</i>		<i>The Guardian</i>		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
News Stories on Arms Scandal	37	92.5%	39	97.5%	36	90%	112	93.3%
Features Articles	3	7.5%	1	2.5%	4	10%	8	6.7%
Total	40	100	40	100	40	100	120	100

Table one indicates that news stories on arms scandal accounts for 112 with 93.3% in the three selected newspapers that is *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* and *The Guardian*, followed by features stories with a total coverage of eight which

represent 6.7%, on arms deal scandal in the three selected newspapers. This result shows that majority of the news reported on arms scandal are in form of news stories.

Table 2: Frequency of stories on arms deal scandal in the three newspapers

Variables	<i>Daily Trust</i>		<i>The Nation</i>		<i>The Guardian</i>		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
News Stories	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1-5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6-10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11- above	37	92.5%	39	97.5%	36	90%	112	93.3%
Feature Articles	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1-5	3	7.5%	1	2.5%	4	10%	8	6.7%
6-10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11- above	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	40	100	40	100	40	100	120	100

The above table indicates how often the three newspapers covered stories related to arms deal scandal. *Daily Trust* accounts for 37 representing 92.5%, *The Nation* accounts for 39 which constitute 97.5% and *The Guardian* 36 which represents 90%. On the other hand, *Daily Trust* reports three stories on feature article representing 7.5%. *The Nation* reports one

feature article which constitutes 2.5% while *The Guardian* reports four stories on feature article representing 10%. Based on the instrument that was developed for the course of measuring frequency, the data point that the coverage of arms scandal by the three newspapers was very high (11-above) in terms of news stories and low coverage (1-5) on feature articles.

Table 3: Dominant location and placement of stories on arms deal scandal in the three newspapers

Variables	<i>Daily Trust</i>		<i>The Nation</i>		<i>The Guardian</i>		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
News Stories	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Front Page	4	10%	28	70%	2	5%	34	28.3%
Inside Page	33	82.5%	10	25%	34	85%	77	64.2%
Back Page	-	-	1	2.5%	-	-	1	0.8%
Feature Articles	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Front Page	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Inside Page	3	7.5%	-	-	4	10%	7	5.8%
Back Page	-	-	1	2.5%	-	-	1	0.8%
Total	40	100	40	100	40	100	120	100

The table indicates that stories covered by the three newspapers have the following sequential results: the *inside page* has the score of 33 representing 82.5% and *front page* accounts for four with 10%, while nothing was recorded at the *back page* of *Daily Trust*. *The Nation* has the highest score of 28 with 70% in the *front page*, 10 representing 25% accounts for the *inside page*, while one with 2.5% at the *back page*. *The Guardian* records two with 5% in the *Front page*, while 34 representing 85%

accounts for the *inside page* and nothing at the *back page*. From the above data, the study found that there is an element of prominence given to the stories particularly by *The Nation* newspaper which presents its stories on the front page, unlike *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* which buried their stories in the inside page. On the other hand, low level of coverage was given to feature articles by the three newspapers under investigation.



Table 4: Direction of stories on arms deal scandal in the three newspapers

Variables	<i>Daily Trust</i>		<i>The Nation</i>		<i>The Guardian</i>		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
News Stories								
Positive	4	10%	27	67.5%	2	5%	33	27.5%
Negative	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Neutral	33	82.5%	12	30%	34	85%	79	65.7%
Feature Articles								
Positive	1	2.5%	-	-	2	5%	3	2.5%
Negative	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Neutral	2	5%	1	2.5%	2	5%	5	4.2%
Total	40	100	40	100	40	100	120	100

The table indicates that majority of the news stories on arms scandal by the three newspapers was on neutral ground in direction. For instance, positive stories in *Daily Trust* accounts for four representing 10%, negative stories score 0% and neutral stories score 33 with 82.5%. *The Nation* has the highest in terms of positive stories with 27 representing 69.5% and 12 from the neutral section with 30%. *The Guardian* records two positive news representing 5% and with the highest neutral of 34 representing 85%, while nothing was recorded from the negative section in the three newspapers under study. It is clear that from the news direction within the period under review there was high level of neutralism in the three newspapers, while low coverage was given to feature articles by the three selected newspapers.

### Findings

The selected newspapers under investigation report issues relating to arms deal scandal within the period under review with 93.3%.

There are some slight differences in the way and manner the stories were presented in the three newspapers. While *The Nation* covered the arms scandal in the front page with 97.5%, *Daily Trust* reported 92.5% in the inside page and *The Guardian* 90% in the inside page.

The location of stories on arms scandals were placed in the inside pages of *Daily Trust* with 82.5%, *The Guardian* 85% and *The Nation* 70% in the front page while feature articles were given paucity of publication.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study are not at significant variance from the findings of the previous studies in the area.

The findings of the study indicate that the three newspapers under investigation report arm

deal scandal with 93.3%. This affirmed the position of Lasswell (1976) that the media has the responsibility of informing the citizens on issues of national interest. Considering the elements in determining what news is news worthy or otherwise, scandals of whatever form attract media attention.

Similarly, the second finding revealed that there is a slight difference in the way and manner the stories were presented in the three newspapers. This confirms the positions of Kurfi (2016) that there is a slight difference in the way and manner the stories were presented. While *The Nation* covered almost all aspects of the arms scandal, *Daily Trust* concentrated on few issues.

The last finding revealed that the location of stories on arms scandals were placed in the inside pages of the three newspapers. This coincided with the position of Fadairo, Anjolaoluwa and Aminu (2014), that there is an increase in the coverage of news stories on corruption by the media but such stories are concentrated more on the inside pages of newspapers and space allotment to corruption articles is small as majority of these articles occupied one-quarter page of the newspapers. This also confirms the tenets of issue-attention cycle theory which emphasizes crucial insight into what is currently happening with the public opinion about the arms scandal today.

### Conclusion

The three newspapers under investigation have covered and reported corruption scandal, which shows that there is an increase in the coverage of news stories on arms scandal in Nigeria. The implication is that, lack of newspapers coverage of arms scandal can make such scandal to remain hidden in the society but constant reportage of arms scandal in Nigerian

newspapers will expose those involved to public domain and action may be taken on them.

### Recommendations

Base on the conclusion reached, the study recommends that Nigerian newspapers should ensure that issues on arms deal scandal are imperative and should be reported in the front pages, with equal proportion to feature articles.

The study recommends the replication of the study in different parts of Nigeria and using different methodological and theoretical approaches as to enrich the available literature in the area.

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