

**PERCEPTION AND IMPLICATIONS OF NEWSPAPER FRAMES OF
CORRUPTION ON NIGERIA'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF
ACADEMICS IN AKWA IBOM STATE**

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1. Introduction

The mass media are seen to play a very critical role in consolidating democratic, governance, and development processes, as well as contribute to the fight against corruption in any country. Specifically, when it comes to the fight against corruption, the media present an important channel information about the activities of government, and the business sector to every member of the society. The implication of this assertion is that the mass media offer the public the platform through which they can hold those in power accountable. Also, by exposing, informing and educating the public about the harmful effects of corruption to the economy of a nation, the mass media can increase the political risk of those who are so exposed for their corrupt practices to a very great extent, and therefore, bring about the awareness of members of the society about the ills of corruption (Schauseil, 2019).

The above-painted scenario, therefore, suggests that an independent and vibrant mass media in any country form a very important channel of external control, with the ability to reveal and expose the misdemeanors of those who wield both political and economic powers in the society. It is also safe to add here that independent-minded journalists, who work in a free and plural media markets, have very strong motivations to uncover and expose stories of public, as well as private sector corruption. Such exposures are bound to act as a deterrent to public officials and stop them from mismanaging public resources. This is because media reports increase the probability of them being caught, exposed, and probably being punished for such corrupt behaviour. This way, the mass media such as newspapers can help to keep the political and economic sectors in the society transparent and accountable (Sam, 2024).

Meanwhile, Oghuvbu (2021), has observed that the enormous capacity of Nigeria to generate revenue from the oil and non-oil sectors, sadly contrasts with the decaying public infrastructures and the extent of institutional development recorded in the country. According

to him, corruption in Nigeria has made it impossible for Nigerians to enjoy good governance and the gifts of nature with which the country is abundantly blessed. This suggests fact corruption is so pervasive in the country, and that it has eaten deep into every facet of Nigerian life.

It is worthy of note here that the consciousness of Nigerians about the harsh effects of corruption on several aspects of the nation's corporate existence is rising. Even though no country is totally free from corruption, poor and underdeveloped, as well as developing countries such as Nigeria seem to be heavily affected by it (Adetayo, 2019).

It is against this background that this study was carried out, with the intent to find out how newspapers in Nigeria fared with regard to the coverage of incidents of corruption in the country, as well as to ascertain the perception of academics in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State had toward such coverage, and its implications to national development in Nigeria.

2. Statement of the Research Problem

Development is seen as an improvement in the socio-cultural, political, economic, and psychological well-being of members of a given society. In a truly developed nation, there is assurance of good quality of life, exercise of all human rights, and freedom to participate in the democratic process. The implication of this assertion is that development enhances quality of life, equity, as well as justice. It takes into consideration the well-being, growth and advancement of individuals within the society.

According to Sakalasooriya (2020), development in any given human society is a many-sided process. It implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being, at the level of the individual. It is not purely an economic phenomenon, but rather a multi-dimensional process, which involves the re-organisation and re-orientation of entire economic and social systems.

Development entails the process of improving the overall quality of human lives in a given society. Its three basic objectives include: i) raising the living conditions of a greater number of citizens such as levels of income and consumption, improved quality of food, accessible and affordable health-care services, and good and affordable education through relevant growth process; ii) creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem by establishing social, political and economic systems and institutions that promote human dignity and respect; iii) increasing people's freedom to choose, by enlarging the range of their choice variables such as a wide variety of goods and services (Sakalasooriya, 2020).

However, these objectives cannot be achieved in a country where there is widespread corruption. Corruption is a major impediment to national development anywhere in the world.

It is a global crime, and disregards national boundaries. It distorts business and economic growth, increases environmental degradation and threatens democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Its impact extends beyond the people involved in the corruptive activity; and may manifest itself as badly executed projects such as roads and bridges, ill-equipped schools and hospitals, and can ultimately lead to loss of lives (Chukwu and Ngban, 2019).

It is against this background that this study was carried out with the aim of ascertaining how newspapers in Nigeria performed their watchdog function of reporting incidents of corruption in the country; as they are seen to be the eyes and ears of members of the society at all times. They should act as the watchdog of the society, and ensure that they report incidents of corruption, and whatever the government is doing to reduce its effects on the society, back to the society.

One, therefore, wonders how newspapers in Nigeria framed the stories they reported about incidents of corruption in the country, and how such frames influenced the perception of the effects of corruption on national development among academics in Akwa Ibom State. Hence the question: How did newspapers in Nigeria frame their reports on incidents of corruption in the country; and, how did exposure to such frames influence the perception of academics toward national development in Nigeria?

3. Research Questions

- i. How did *Punch*, *DailySun*, and *The Nation* newspapers frame the reports on incidents of corruption in their reportage between 2019 and 2023?
- ii. To what extent were academics in Akwa Ibom State exposed to newspaper frames on incidents of corruption in Nigeria?
- iii. How did academics in Akwa Ibom State perceive the effects of the prevalence of corruption on Nigeria's pace of national development?
- iv. To what extent did newspaper frames on corruption influence the perception of academics in Akwa Ibom State towards the pace of national development in Nigeria?

4. Research Hypotheses

- i. There is a significant relationship between academics' exposure to newspaper frames on incidents of corruption in Nigeria and their perception of the prevalence of corruption in the country.

- ii. There is a significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of corruption prevalence in the Nigerian society and their perception of the effects of corruption on national development in the country.
- iii. There is a significant relationship between academics' perception of corruption prevalence in the Nigerian society and their perception that corruption is one of the factors that impede the pace of national development in the country.

5 Review of Literature

Corruption is a word derived from the Latin word *corruptus*, which means *corrupted*. It means the abuse of power entrusted to a government official, be it executive, legislative, or judicial, with the intent to obtain a benefit, which is legally not justified, either for oneself, or for others (Sumah, 2018). Abada and Onyia (2020), states that corruption manifests in various dimensions. It could be in the form of bribery (which is the exchange of cash and/or other monetary benefits) in order to get undue advantage or favour preferences. It could be by inflating contracts (over invoicing). It could be in form of someone in a position of authority using his position to promote certain parochial interests such as ethnicity, tribalism or even religion, as against merit, in job placement and political appointments. It could come in the form of outright diversion, or embezzlement of government revenues (Nzeribe, 2019).

Meanwhile, development is seen to be a process of social change in a society. Such a process is almost always intended to bring about advancement like greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities for the majority of the people through their gaining control over their environment. The process has to happen through the contribution and input from the people, by using their own environment to improve their situation, rather than expecting it to fall from heaven, as it were (Sam, 2024). According Asaju and Ayeni (2022, p. 70):

Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the individual level, it implies increased skill and capacity for greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being. The achievement of any of these aspects of personal development is very much tied in with the state of the society as a whole.

However, Obilor, Kenneth, Okoroafor, Chima and Bello (2018) note that national development refers to a sustainable growth and development of a nation to a more desirable one. It is people-oriented and its success is evaluated in terms of the impact it has had on improving the lot of the masses in a country.

What is really important when discussing national development is that there is a constant and joint effort toward harnessing the forces of nature and human potentials for the

material well-being of the generality of the majority of the population in a country. This is done to such an extent that there is more and better food for people to eat, better houses for people to live in, the communication and transportation systems are generally improved. Such efforts must also help the people to be generally healthier and happier physically, psychologically, and spiritually (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2019).

Perception, on its part, entails the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses. It also means the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted. The perception process consists of three stages of selection, organisation, and interpretation. Selection, as the first stage in the process, entails that the individual (perceptor) converts the stimuli obtained from the environment through the sense organs, into meaningful experiences. On a daily basis, human beings are constantly bombarded by an array of information. Thus, they hear words (both intentionally and unintentionally), witness disasters, become aware of various occurrences, and so forth. These are all types of stimuli, which arrive at the sensory organs of man simultaneously, and which all wait to be processed (Qiong, 2017).

Corruption has many negative effects on a country's economy. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2018) notes that corruption represents a severe impediment to a nation's sustainable development. Its cost on a nation's development is much more than mere diverting the resources from their rightful purposes. It destroys such a nation's socio-economic fabric, weakens its rule of law, undermines trust in governance, and wears away the quality of life of the people. In such a society, there is a higher tendency for organised crime, terrorism, and violent extremism to thrive.

Lagarde (2018) states that corruption hurts life outcomes of a country in different ways. It acts like a retrogressive element which supports the opulent lifestyles of the rich at the expense of everyone else in the society. It diverts resources away from their most productive uses, and serves as an incentive for the best and the brightest brains to wait on government to gamble with the system, instead of being personally involved in useful ventures that would help in the creation of new wealth.

One of the most damning effects or consequences of corruption is that it increases bureaucratic inefficiency. Corruption has saturated every aspect of the Nigerian society including the political realm. The level of corruption prevalence in Nigeria and the wanton disregard for the rule of law and established regulations have had negative impacts on the nation's development, and on its external reputation (Okon, 2018; Dimant & Tosato, 2018).

Meanwhile, it is worthy of note here that reports of corruption by the mass media may have tangible and intangible effects on the level of transparency and accountability in a country. Tangible effects include explicit mentions of corruption, such as commencing a formal investigation into, and removal of corrupt politicians and public office holders involved in corrupt practices. Intangible effects include where the media promote broader changes in governance such as accountability of public officials, politicians and institutions (Abba-Aji, Balabanova, Hutchinson & McKee, 2022; Oluwakemi, Olusegun & Ajilore, 2018).

Entman (1993) cited in Batta (2019, p.192) states that to frame is to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” Frames are principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what happens, and what matters. They help people to ascertain the parameters within which every meaning of reality contends. With frames, people are able to make meaning of media stories and to also identify the devices which allow frames to function.

6 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theoretical underpinnings – Framing Theory, and Corruption Likelihood Model. The major postulate of the Framing Theory is that the mass media are not just important in getting people to think about an issue; they influence *how* people think about such issue. One powerful way in which the mass media shape public opinion is by framing events and issues in particular ways. This involves a communication source presenting and defining an issue in a particular way. Journalists bring a perspective to bear on events, highlight certain aspects at the expense of others in order to create a coherent narrative. Such a narrative names protagonists and antagonists; identifies some of the causes of the event described; outlines moral judgments; and may suggest solutions (Schaffner and Sellers, 2010; Reese *et al.*, 2001).

Griffin (2011) cited in Sam (2019) asserts that framing implies that the mass media may not (only) tell us what to think about, they may also tell us how and what to think about it, and, perhaps, even what to do about it. This means that through framing, the mass media such as newspapers suggest to the people the perception of the event (or issue) and whether there is need for urgent actions to be taken or not (Anunne & Yan, 2019).

Tankard (2001) offers the most comprehensive empirical approach to identifying frames in a news report. There are eleven (11) framing mechanisms or focal points which can be used to identify and measure frames in a news report, including headlines, sub-heads,

photos, photo captions, leads, source selection, quote selection, pull quotes, logos, statistics and charts, and concluding statements and paragraphs.

The **Corruption Likelihood Model** was proposed by Godwin Sam in 2023; and is presented graphically thus:

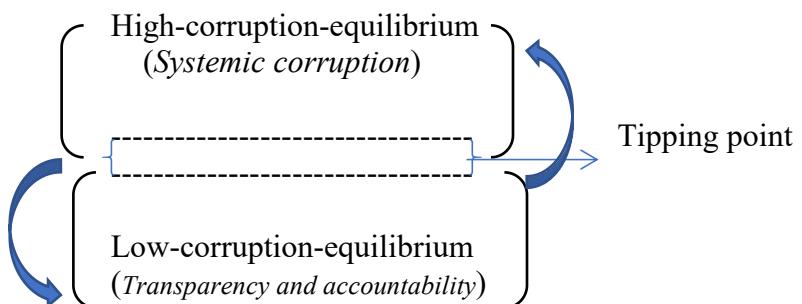


Figure 1: Corruption Likelihood Model by Sam (2023)

The postulations of the model are as follows:

- i. The more citizens in a country think that corruption is prevalent in the society, the more likely that corruption will be widespread in such a society, with the perceived notion that every other person is also corrupt;
- ii. The costlier the consequence of being caught or uncovered for a corrupt act, the less likely that members of the society would want to engage in corruption;
- iii. In a country where corruption is systemic, there is a high tendency for corruption to thrive. Such a country is termed *High-corruption-equilibrium country*;
- iv. In a country where there is high level of transparency and accountability, there is the likelihood that the level of corruption in such a country will be marginal. Such a country is termed *Low-corruption-equilibrium country*;
- v. At the region known as the *Tipping Point*, (somewhere at the middle point) something critical/crucial can happen which can take a country from a *High-corruption equilibrium country* to *Low-corruption equilibrium country*, and vice-versa.

Although there are certain individuals in the society who would never be tempted to engage in a corrupt act, no matter its potential benefits, many others have no scruples, whatsoever, when it comes to offering and receiving bribe. The higher the moral costs, the higher the corruption figure must be to compensate for the burden of violating such a person's moral principles.

Moreover, the thought of having to face public shame and reputational damage if the corrupt act is uncovered and publicised may also serve as a deterrent to morality-conscious individuals. This, therefore, suggests that the personal net benefit of corruption depends on the probability of being caught, as well as on the size of costs and benefits. However, this

cost-benefit analysis depends on the individual's perception of the magnitude or prevalence of corruption already present in the society (Moene & Soreide, 2019).

For instance, the likelihood of offering a bribe depends, to a very large extent, on the giver's expectation that he will be dealing with a corrupt (or corruptible) and "trustworthy" counterpart. A giver of bribe will be careful not to propose a corruption deal to someone who might report the incident to a law enforcement agency. In a society with widespread corruption, the estimated risk of being detected by an honest, incorruptible citizen in the society is lower than in a society where corruption is not. Moreover, the moral cost of corruption will be higher in a society where corruption is less prevalent. Hence, the temptation to accept a bribe depends on the extent that corruption is perceived to be prevalent in the society, among other factors. These perceptions may matter more than the rigour of the laws or the law enforcement system.

Furthermore, when corruption is built into the working system in a country (systemic), such a country may find itself in the *high-corruption-equilibrium* region, making it difficult to escape from the level of corruption in such a country. On the other hand, some countries may experience low levels of corruption. This suggests that with little effort, such countries manage to keep the problem of corruption in check. A low level of corruption makes monitoring and supervision more effective, and honesty more valuable. This kind of country enjoys a *low-corruption-equilibrium*, which helps to effectively deter some individuals from corrupt tendencies (Moene & Soreide, 2019).

Meanwhile, somewhere in-between the low-corruption-equilibrium and the high-corruption-equilibrium regions, there must be a critical threshold, a tipping point. As long as corruption does not exceed this threshold, the country remains in the low-corruption state, and vice versa. But once the threshold is crossed from below, corruption approaches the level associated with a high-corruption-equilibrium level.

At the Tipping Point, what might trigger development toward a more or less corruption likelihood, or shake a society to bring it out of an otherwise sustainable corruption equilibrium situation, could be a major scandal such as a revolution, or a military take-over in the country. Furthermore, a comprehensive anti-corruption programme initiated by a sincere new government in an otherwise *high-corruption-equilibrium* country might trigger a downward movement toward lower levels of corruption in such a country. For instance, if a new government comes into place in a *high-corruption-equilibrium* country, and begins to prosecute and sentence corrupt government officials to death by hanging, as is the case in

China, that may serve as a trigger which can bring such a country to a *low-corruption-equilibrium* region.

If these postulations about how corruption evolves in a society are correct, it is, therefore, important to discover what various stakeholders in the society think about the prevalence of corruption in such a society. Besides, the extent to which the society condemns corruption, and the sincerity in the anti-corruption fight of government, through the prosecution, and subsequent punishment of offenders, would also go a long way to help reduce the level of corruption in a country (James & Sam, 2023).

7 Methodology

7.1 The researchers adopted two research designs: content analysis, and survey in gathering and analysing the data for this study. Content analysis was adopted in order to investigate the framing that *Punch*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Nation* newspapers gave to reports on incidents of corruption between 2019 and 2023. A survey was also conducted to determine the perception of academics about corruption and its effects on national development in Nigeria. This, therefore, means that both quantitative and qualitative techniques were adopted for this study.

7.2 Population of the Study

This study had two sets of population. The population for the content analysis of this study consisted of all the editions of *Punch*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Nation* newspapers published between 2019 and 2023. This amounted 4,383 issues. The population for the survey aspect comprised 2,534 academics who teach in the four tertiary institutions selected for the study.

7.3 Sample size and Sampling Procedure

Philip Meyer's guideline for sample selection was used to select 357 copies of the newspapers as sample; while Taro Yamane formula was used to select 400 respondents for the survey. The sampling technique adopted for the content analysis aspect of the study was constructed week. Based on this principle, the researchers drew samples of the newspapers content based on the day of the week on which the newspapers were published. For the survey, the multi-stage sampling technique was adopted, where each of the four institutions was first clustered into strata. Furthermore, Probability Proportionate to Size (PPS) sampling technique was adopted to proportionately allocate number of questionnaire copies to each of the four tertiary institutions based on their staff strength. The clusters were as follows:

Table of Sample Cluster according to Academic Institution

Institution	Population	Percentage	Sample size
University of Uyo	1,191	47	188
Akwa Ibom State University	530	21	84
Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic	445	17	68
College of Education, Afaha Nsit	368	15	60
Total	2,534	100	400

7.4 Content Categories

The following content categories were formulated for the study based on the identified frames:

- Conflict Frame:** Conflict frame is distinguished through emphasis on the disagreement between individuals, parties, groups, institutions, or countries about the menace of corruption covered in the newspapers under study. This frame occurs through labeling and use of words which indicate blame, dispute, and debate on the causes and nature of the issue.
- Morality Frame:** Morality frames made references to the cultural and/or religious embeddings of corruption, and pinpoints certain social prescriptions and moral tenets (or beliefs) represented in the society which influence the practices of corruption. Moral frames are matters of right or wrong; and/or the respect for set boundaries. Morality frame, as used in newspaper reports, tells whether an action is good or bad; and gives the reasons why it is morally good or bad.
- Responsibility Frame:** This is the frame that is used to define social problems in terms of attributes to responsibility. It presents to the public who is responsible for the causes (looking into the past) and the treatment and/or solution (looking into the future) to the problem of corruption in Nigeria.
- Economic Consequences Frame:** This frame interprets and presents corruption in terms of the consequences it has on the economy of Nigeria. Economic consequences frame weighs the actual and potential effects of corruption on the country's economy.
- Action Frame:** The stories in this frame category stressed the action(s) and/or inactions of government at any level, anti-graft agencies and other law enforcement agencies against corrupt individuals in the society. Such actions include probing, prosecution, jailing, and/or confiscation or forfeiture of money and/or properties, and freezing of accounts.

7.6 Inter-coder Reliability

The inter-coder reliability was computed using the following formula:

$$CR = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

Where $2m$ = the total number of coding decisions in which the two coders agreed

Where N_1 = the total number of coding decisions reached by first coder

Where N_2 = the total number of coding decisions reached by second coder.

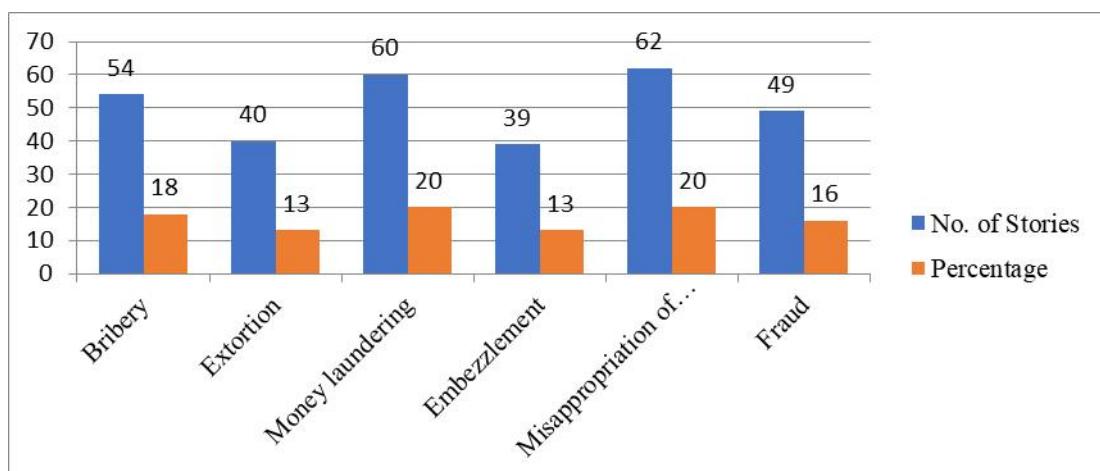
The inter-coder reliability score for the study after computation was 0.96.

7.7 Methods of Data Collection

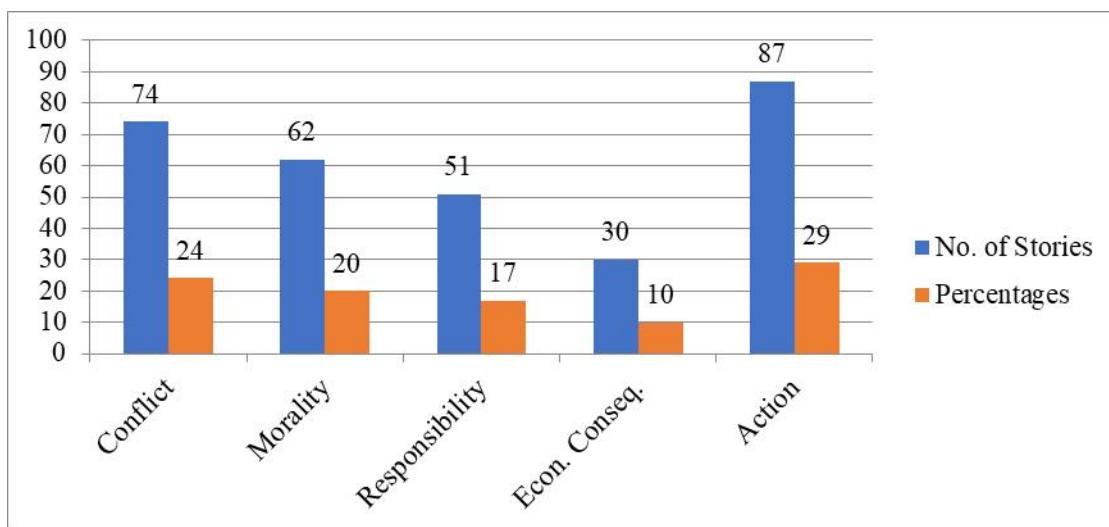
Data for the content analysis were obtained through the code sheet. This format made the presentation clear and calculation of percentage scores feasible. Data for the survey part of the study were obtained through the questionnaire administered on the respondents by the researcher in their offices.

8 Data Presentation and Analysis

Figure 2: Types of corruption stories reported by newspapers in Nigeria



The information presented in Figure 2 reveals that overall, Misappropriation of Public Funds was the type of corrupt practice that was most reported [62 stories (20%)], followed by Money Laundering [60 stories (20%)], and Bribery [54 stories (18%)] in that order.

Figure 3: Major frames used in presenting stories on corruption by newspapers

Information in Figure 3 indicates that the bulk of the corruption stories published in the three newspapers were framed using the Action frame [87 reports (29%)], followed by Conflict frame [74 reports (24%)], and Morality Frame [62 reports (20%)].

Table 4.1 Framing of stories on corruption according to newspapers

Sources/ Newspaper	Sun		Punch		Nation		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Conflict	34	11	18	6	21	7	74	24
Morality	29	9.5	16	5	18	6	62	20
Responsibility	23	7.5	13	4	15	5	51	17
Economic consequence	14	5	8	2	9	3	30	10
Action	40	13	22	7	25	8	87	29
Total	140	46	76	25	88	29	304	100

The data in Table 4.1 reveal that *DailySun* newspaper had 40 stories (13%) on corruption being framed using Action Frame; 34 stories (11%) were framed in the same newspaper using Conflict Frame; and 29 stories (9.5%) were framed using Morality Frame. Also, *The Nation* newspapers had 25 stories (8%) being framed using Action Frame; 21 stories (7%) using Conflict Frame; and 18 stories (6%) using Morality Frame; while *Punch* newspaper had 22 stories (7%) framed using Action Frame; with 18 stories (6%) framed using Conflict Frame.

Table 4.2 Types of stories on corruption reported according to frames under study

Categories/Frames	Conflict		Morality		Responsibility		Econ. Cons.		Action		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Bribery	13	4	11	4	9	3	5	2	16	5	54	18
Extortion	10	3	8	3	7	2	4	1	11	4	40	13
Money laundering	15	5	12	4	10	3	6	2	17	6	60	20
Embezzlement	9	3	8	3	7	2	4	1	11	4	39	13

Misappropriation	15	5	13	4	10	3	6	2	18	6	62	20
Fraud	12	4	10	3	8	3	5	2	14	5	49	16
Total	74	24	62	20	51	17	30	10	87	29	304	100

Data in Table 4.5 reveal that Bribery was reported most using the Action Frame [16(5%)], followed by the Conflict Frame [13(4%)], and Morality Frame [11(4%)]. Also, Extortion as Corruption was reported most using the Action Frame [11(4%)], followed by Conflict Frame [10(3%)], and Responsibility Frame [7(2%)].

Table 4.3: Academics' Exposure to newspapers frames on corruption incidents in Nigeria

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	372	100
No	0	0
Not sure	0	0
Can't say	0	0
Total	372	100

The data in Table 4.3 reveal that all the respondents (100%) affirmed that they read reports about corruption in newspapers in Nigeria.

Table 4.4: Academics perceived corruption as highly prevalent in Nigerian society

Responses	Number of Respondents	W. M. S.
Strongly agree	253	2.72
Agree	119	0.95
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	372	3.67

The data in Table 4.4 show a Weighted Mean Score (W.M.S) of 3.67. This implies that academics perceived corruption to be very highly prevalent in the Nigerian society.

4.5 (a): Academics perceived corruption as having a positive effect on the pace of national

development in Nigeria

Responses	Number of Respondents	W. M. S.
Strongly agree	7	0.07
Agree	11	0.08
Disagree	104	0.55
Strongly disagree	250	0.67
Total	372	1.37

The information in Table 4.5 (a) reveals a W.M.S of 1.37. This implies that academics very strongly disagreed to the assertion that corruption has a positive effect on the pace of national development as currently witnessed in Nigeria.

Table 4.5 (b): Academics perceived corruption as having a negative effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria

Responses	Number of Respondents	W. M. S.
Strongly agree	280	3.01
Agree	70	0.56
Disagree	7	0.03
Strongly disagree	15	0.04
Total	372	3.64

The data in Table 4.5 (b) indicate a W.M.S of 3.64. The implication of this result is that academics very strongly believed that corruption has a negative effect on the pace of national development as currently witnessed in Nigeria.

Table 4.6: Academics perceived corruption as one of the factors that impede the pace of national development in Nigeria

Responses	Number of Respondents	W. M. S.
Strongly agree	238	2.55
Agree	134	1.08
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	372	3.63

Information in Table 4.6 reveals a W.M.S of 3.63, which implies that academics very strongly believed that corruption is one of the factors that impede the pace of national development as currently witnessed in the country.

4.2 Testing of Research Hypotheses

4.2.1 Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between academics' exposure to newspaper reports on corruption in Nigeria and their perception of the level of corruption prevalence in the country.

The data for computation for the test of Hypothesis One were obtained Table 4.3(X) and 4.4 (Y). The independent variable was academics' exposure to newspaper report on corruption (X) (Table 4.3), while the dependent variable was their perception of the level of corruption prevalence in the country (Y) (Table 4.4). The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of Coefficient (PPMCC) was used for the calculation.

Table 4.7: Data for Testing Hypothesis One

X	Y	X²	Y²	XY
372	253	138,384	64,009	94,116
0	119	0	14,161	0
0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0
372	372	138,384	78,170	94,116

Degree of Freedom (df) = 372-2 = 370

Level of Significance = .05

Table value of 400 (which is closest to 370) = .098

Calculated value = 0.904

Decision Rule: Since the calculated value of 0.904 is greater than the table value of 0.098, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternate is upheld. Therefore, there is a very significant relationship between academics' exposure to newspaper reports on corruption and their perception that corruption very highly prevalent in the Nigerian society.

4.2.2: Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society and their perception of the effects of corruption on national development in the country.

The data for computation for the test of Hypothesis Two (a) which has it that corruption has a positive effect on national development in Nigeria were obtained Table 4.4(X) and 4.5(a)(Y). The independent variable was academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society (X) (Table 4.4), while the dependent variable was their perception that corruption has a positive effect on the pace of national development in the country (Y) (Table 4.5(a)). The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of Coefficient (PPMCC) was used for the calculation.

Table 4.8: Data for Testing Hypothesis Two (a)

X	Y	X²	Y²	XY
148	7	21,904	49	1,036
200	11	40,000	121	2,200
24	104	576	10,816	2,496
0	250	0	62,500	0
372	372	62,480	73,486	5,732

Degree of Freedom (df) = 372-2 = 370

Level of Significance = .05

Table value of 400 (which is closest to 370) = .098

Calculated value = 0.079

Decision Rule: Since the calculated value of 0.079 is less than the table value of 0.098, the null hypothesis is upheld, while the alternate is rejected. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption has a positive effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria.

4.2.2 (b) Testing of Hypothesis Two (b)

The data for computation for this hypothesis, which assert that corruption has a negative effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria, were obtained Table 4.4 (X) and 4.5(b) (Y). The independent variable was academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society (X) (Table 4.4), while the dependent variable was their perception that corruption has a negative effect on the pace of national development in the country (Y) (Table 4.5 (a). The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of Coefficient (PPMCC) was used for the calculation.

Table 4.9: Data for Testing Hypothesis Two (b)

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
148	280	21,904	78,400	41,440
200	70	40,000	4,900	14,000
24	7	576	49	168
0	15	0	225	0
372	372	62,480	83,574	55,608

Degree of Freedom (df) = 372-2 = 370

Level of Significance = .05

Table value of 400 (which is closest to 370) = .098

Calculated value = 0.768

Decision Rule: Since the calculated value of 0.768 is greater than the table value of 0.098, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternate is upheld. Therefore, there is a very significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption has a negative effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria.

4.2.3 Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between academics' perception of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society and their perception that corruption is one of the factors that impede the pace of national development in the country.

The data for computation for this hypothesis were obtained from Table 4.4 (X) and 4.6 (Y). The independent variable was academics' perception of the level of prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society (X) (Table 4.4), while the dependent variable was their perception that

corruption is one of the factors that impedes the pace of national development in the country (Y) (Table 4.6). The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of Coefficient (PPMCC) was used for the calculation.

Table 4.10: Data for Testing Hypothesis Three

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
253	238	64,009	56,644	60,214
119	134	14,161	17,956	15,946
0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0
372	372	78,170	74,600	76,160

Degree of Freedom (df) = 372-2 = 370

Level of Significance = .05

Table value of 400 (which is closest to 370) = .098

Calculated value = 0.997

Decision Rule: Since the calculated value of 0.997 is greater than the table value of 0.098, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternate is upheld. Therefore, there is a very significant relationship between academics' perception of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption is one of the factors that impedes the pace of national development in the country.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

4.3.1 Research Question One: How did *Punch*, *DailySun*, and *The Nation* newspapers frame the reports on incidents of corruption in their reportage between 2019 and 2023?

The answer to this question is provided in Figures 2 and 3, and Tables 4.1 and 4.2. The findings provided in Figure 2, reveal that overall, Misappropriation of Public Funds was the type of corrupt practice that was most reported by the newspapers under study [62 stories (20%)], followed by Money Laundering [60 stories (20%)], and Bribery [54 stories (18%)], Fraud [49 reports (16%)], Extortion [40 reports (13%)] and Embezzlement [39 reports (13%)] in that order.

More findings provided in Figure 3 pertaining to the way the newspapers under study framed incidents of corruption in their reportage revealed that the bulk of the reports on incidents of corruption published in the three newspapers were framed using the Action frame [87 reports (29%)], followed by Conflict frame [74 reports (24%)], Morality Frame [62 reports (20%)], Responsibility Frame [51 reports (17%)], and Economic Consequence Frame [30 reports (10%)].

These findings are supported by headlines of some reports published in the newspapers under study thus: An example of a report on **Embezzlement** of public funds written using the **Economic Consequence Frame** was published in *DailySun* newspaper of Tuesday, August 10, 2021, under the headline “**Nigeria loses ₦5.20 trillion to corruption at ports**” with the rider; “**ICPC, DSS, others team up to stem menace.**” The story reads in part that Nigeria lost a whopping ₦5.20 trillion revenue, annually, to corruption at Nigerian ports. The money, lost to the illicit financial flows at ports, weighed heavily on the economy as up to ₦1.01 trillion (about \$1.95 billion) in government revenue, and ₦4.1 trillion (about \$8.5 billion) in private revenue were lost annually due to corruption at the nation’s ports. However, those losses severely constrict government programme and the capacity to develop and improve much-needed public infrastructure.

Another headline still written using the **Economic Consequence Frame**, as published in *Punch* Newspaper of Wednesday, November 17, 2021, are “**Oil revenue plunges as Nigeria misses January OPEC quota**” with the rider; “**FG officials blame vandalism, PIA implementation delay, others.**”

These findings are supported by the Framing Theory used as an anchor for this study. Griffin (2011) cited in Sam (2019) asserts that framing implies that the mass media may not (only) tell us what to think about, they may also tell us how and what to think about it, and, perhaps, even what to do about it. This means that through framing, the mass media such as newspapers suggest to the people the perception of the event (or issue) and whether there is need for urgent actions to be taken or not

4.3.2 Research Question Two: To what extent were academics in Akwa Ibom State exposed to newspaper frames on incidents of corruption in Nigeria?

The answer to this question is provided in Tables 4.3 and 4.4. The findings in Table 4.3 revealed that all the respondents (100%) affirmed that they read reports about corruption in newspapers in Nigeria. Additional findings provided in Table 4.4 revealed a Weighted Mean Score (W.M.S) of 3.67. This finding implies that academics perceived corruption to be very highly prevalent in the Nigerian society.

These findings are supported by the result of Hypothesis One of this study as tested, which revealed that there is a significant relationship between academics’ exposure to newspaper frames on incidents of corruption, and their perception that corruption is very highly prevalent in the Nigerian society.

The findings are further supported by the first postulation of the Corruption Likelihood Model, which states that the more citizens in a country think that corruption is

prevalent in the society, the more likely that corruption will be widespread in such a society, with the perceived notion that every other person is also corrupt.

Sam (2024) further supports these findings when he states that the mass media, such as newspapers, can help to keep the political and economic sectors in the society transparent and accountable. Such assertion is borne out of the conviction that media reports can increase the probability of corrupt public officials being caught, exposed, and probably being punished for such corrupt behaviour.

4.3.3 Research Question Three: How did academics in Akwa Ibom State perceive the effects of the prevalence of corruption on Nigeria's pace of national development?

The answer to this question is provided in Table 4.4 and 4.5 (a and b). The findings provided Table 4.4 show a Weighted Mean Score (W.M.S) of 3.67; which by implication revealed that academics in Akwa Ibom State perceived corruption to be very highly prevalent in the Nigerian society. More findings in Table 4.5 (a) reveals a W.M.S of 1.37. The implication of this findings is that academics in Akwa Ibom State very strongly disagreed to the assertion that corruption has a positive effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria. Additional findings in Table 4.5 (b) showed a W.M.S of 3.64; which implies that academics in the State very strongly believed that corruption has a negative effect on the pace of national development in the country.

The result of Hypothesis Two (a) as tested, further buttress the findings of this study. It states that there is no significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption has a positive effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria.

These findings are supported by the third stage in the process of perception which has to do with interpretation. At this stage of perception, the preceptor attaches meaning to the selected stimuli. Once the selected stimuli have been categorised into structured and stable patterns, sense is made of patterns by assigning meanings to them. However, different people may have different interpretations of the same stimulus (Naydenov, 2023). It may not be surprising, however, to see some politicians argue about the pace of national development, contrary to what the findings of this study reveal.

4.3.4 Research Question Four: To what the extent did newspaper frames on corruption influence the perception of academics in Akwa Ibom State towards the pace of national development in Nigeria?

The answer to this question is provided in Table 4.6. findings provided in this table reveal a Weighted Mean Score of 3.63, which implies that academics very strongly believed that corruption is one of the factors that impede the pace of national development in Nigeria.

Supporting these findings is the result of Hypothesis Three of this study, as tested, which states that there is a significant relationship between academics' perception of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption is one of the factors that impedes the pace of national development in the country.

These findings are further buttressed by the result of Hypothesis Two (b) which states that there is a significant relationship between academics' level of awareness of the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society, and their perception that corruption has a negative effect on the pace of national development in Nigeria.

The findings are further supported by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2018) who states that corruption represents a severe impediment to a nation's sustainable development. Its cost on a nation's development is much more than mere diverting the resources from their rightful purposes. It destroys such a nation's socio-economic fabric, weakens its rule of law, undermines trust in governance, and wears away the quality of life of the people. In such a society, there is a higher tendency for organised crime, terrorism, and violent extremism to thrive.

5 Conclusion

From the findings of the study as analysed above, it is safe to conclude here that Nigeria, as a nation, is in the *High-corruption-equilibrium* region in the Corruption Likelihood Model, as evidenced from the high level of corruption prevalence in the country. Also, the very high level at which academics in the Akwa Ibom State perceived corruption to be prevalent supports the postulations of the Model. More so, newspapers in Nigeria did creditably well in the way they framed the reports on incidents of corruption covered within the study period. This, they did by selecting words and describing in details the actions taken against corrupt officials, the economic consequences of such corrupt practices, and the moral implication of such acts. They also did well to bring to the fore the conflict between the parties involved, and by identifying and naming the people responsible for the different corrupt practices in the country.

6 Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered, based on the findings of the study.

- i. News reporters and editors are advised to continue to frame reports on incidents of corrupt practices in the country in such a way that members of the audience would

easily understand the import of such reports and take the necessary actions necessary to reduce the level of corruption in the country.

- ii. Academics are urged to continue to expose themselves to reports on corruption as published in newspapers in the country as a way of keeping abreast with happenings in this regard. Such exposure may help to reduce the level of corruption prevalence in the country since reports on the consequences of being caught on corrupt practice may serve as a deterrent.
- iii. Since the findings of the study reveal that the level of corruption prevalence in the country is very high, it is advised that the consequences of being caught or exposed for a corrupt act be made more severe. For instance, to make involvement in corrupt practices less attractive, life imprisonment, or even the capital punishment should be enforced on corruption offenders as is the case in countries like China and South Korea.
- iv. To reduce the level of corruption prevalence in Nigeria, law enforcement agencies such as EFCC, ICPC, the courts, and governments at all levels should do more than pay lip service to the fight against corruption. They should take decisive actions such as confiscation and/or forfeiture of properties acquired through corrupt means to the government. In addition, such confiscated or forfeited properties should be used for the overall benefit of the general public, and not to be re-embezzled by those in positions of authority, as is sometimes the case.
- v. To achieve a Tipping-Point as postulated in the Corruption Likelihood Model, where Nigeria would be moved from a *High-corruption-equilibrium* nation, that it is currently, to a *Low-corruption-equilibrium* nation, Nigerians should ensure that they adopt a ballot revolution approach, where corrupt and inept leaders are voted out, while people with impeccable character are voted in subsequent elections. The researchers of this study believe that only people with such character, who have track records of transparency and accountability, would have the moral justification to fight and reduce the level of corruption prevalence in the country.

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