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ANALYSIS OF THE NATION AND DAILY TRUST NEWSPAPERS COVERAGE OF POLITICAL DEFECTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

We carried out a study on selected newspapers coverage of political defections in Nigeria in 2014. The purpose of the study was to analyze how selected Nigerian newspapers frame stories on political defections. Using framing theory, we purposively selected two newspapers; *Daily Trust* and *The Nation.* We adopted qualitative content analysis as a method for the study. We descriptively analyzed stories in terms of the pattern of frames and tone (positive, negative or neutral). Findings show writers' use of different frames in their stories and this vary and the pattern of frames show elements of bias based on political affiliation. The study concluded that there is apparent bias in most of the defection stories reported in *The Nation* while those carried in *Daily Trust* are neutral. On the strength of findings, the study recommended among other things that writers should avoid obvious framing of stories which reflect bias on the basis of their political inclinations for the sake of an informed citizenry.

Keywords: Bias, framing, newspaper, political defection, political party.

Introduction

Any discernible mind abreast with developments in the political landscape of Nigeria in 2014 would admit that political defection was a dominant feature. This is not to conclude that defections did not take place in the previous 54 years of Nigeria's political independence. As a matter of fact, defections in Nigeria began even in the pre-independence era and continued steadily in the successive post-independence administrations that ensued. Few examples will suffice.

In 1951, elected members of National Convention of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) defected to the Action Group (AG) on the floor of the Western Nigeria House of Assembly. During the first Republic, the former Premier of the defunct Western Region of Nigeria, Chief Ladoke Akintola left the then Action Group (Okparaji, 2010). Records also have it that in the old Ondo State during the Second Republic, Chief Akin Omoboriowo, the then deputy governor of United Party of Nigeria (UPN) government of Chief Michael Ajasin defected to join the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and became its gubernatorial candidate (Okparaji, 2010). From 1999 to the period under review, several political party defections had taken place. These defections were mainly to secure party platform or nomination to contest elections.

Peculiar to the 2014 defections was the consistency and preponderance with which they rapidly occurred involving particularly two dominant political parties; the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the leading opposition All Progressives Congress (APC). Marking the crescendo of defection was when the five PDP governors defected to All Progressives Congress (APC). On December 17, 2013, the political crisis rocking the PDP took a turn for the worse as its 37 House of Representatives members announced their defection to the rival APC. "When 37 lawmakers left the PDP on December 18, APC emerged as the new majority party with 174 to PDP's 171 members in the House" (Eme & Ogbochie, 2014, p.20). But the number kept changing since the resumption of the House from recess on Tuesday, January 7, 2014. That day, four defections happened in favor of PDP, two of which were from APC. The two APC members who cross-carpeted to the PDP were Mr. Titsi Ganama and Mr. Haske Hananiya from Adamawa State. As if in a swift reaction to their defection, on the same day, Benue PDP lawmaker, Emmanuel Jime and Democratic People's Party (DPP) member, Yahaya Kwande, from Plateau moved to the

APC. Other key politicians caught in the web of defection were Chief Tom Ikimi and some founding members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) like Alhaji Attahiru Bafarawa, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, Brig-Gen Buba Marwa (rtd), Mr. Marcus Gundiri among others who helped to nurture the APC to mega status left it to the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Several reasons are responsible for political defections. These range from personality clash to disagreement on party's position on issues. According to Falodi (2014), dumping one political party for another had become the trade in stock of many of the nation's politicians and as expected, they have always justified their actions by canvassing phrases such as "irreconcilable difference and lack of internal democracy in their previous parties" as the basis for their action.

An explanation of the numerous reasons for the spate of 2014 defections is personal interest rather than party ideology which serves as the drive. This probably inclined Ejiofor (2014, para. 4) to conclude that:

> The latest tendency of political defections is contrasting to what was obtained in the First Republic when major political parties of the era (like the Action Group (AG), the Northern People's Congress (NPC), the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC)) had a clear-cut ideology. Even in the Second Republic, the five major parties also had definite ideologies which they pursued fervently. The Third Republic, when the country experimented a two-party system (the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC)) saw a great distinction in policies and ideologies. Political analysts and historians posited it was the last time political parties operated along ideological lines.

While political defections take place, newspapers are always alive in covering the phenomena. This is living up to their constitutional duty with a view to shaping people's conception on issues. One generally acknowledged manner which newspapers shape perceptions of key political events including defections is the act of 'Framing'. Through news framing, "journalists recount a story in a limited amount of space and place an event within its broader context" (Hallahan, 1999, p.207). One reason for this, according to Auerbach and Bloch-Elkon (2005) is that the public's lack of awareness, along with their reliance on media for information and decision-making, make them more likely to be influenced by framing. They observed that:

> When the media place stories in specific frames, they lend a different meaning to the news. The media increase or decrease the salience of issues, which allows the public to remember and make judgments on such issues. Framing assumes that subtle changes in the wording of the description of a situation might affect how audience members think about the situation (p.13).

By so doing, newspapers help in revealing the role of the media in the selection, interpretation, and communication of perceived reality concerning political defections. In doing this the tendency of the media to shape people's perception and opinion cannot be ruled out.

Conceptual Clarification

The term political party defection, otherwise known as carpet-crossing or party switching simply means moving from and denouncing one's political party to another for certain reasons. It is also used to refer to the "departure of a member of a political party to join another political party, typically because of discontent in his existing party" (Eme & Ogbochie, 2014, p.22).

Statement of the Problem

Political defection has become a dominant feature in Nigeria's political history. At every democratic dispensation, series of defections come to play at local, state and national levels. These defections are not peculiar to a single party as members of all existing parties are always involved. Over the years, researchers have developed an interest in political defections in Nigeria. Much of the literature dwells on prominence and frequency of coverage. The implication is the obvious lack of frames employed by the newspaper in such coverage. Consequently, studies that center on prominence and frequency which ignore framing fail to help in revealing the role of the media in the selection, interpretation, and communication of perceived reality. Similarly, Kee, Ibrahim, Ahmad, and Khiang (2012) reiterate that comparatively, the method of building media frames that journalists carry out in the newsrooms has not received enough attention from researchers. In the same manner, scholars (Kee, et al. 2012; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007) suggest to researchers to pay a closer attention to how message frames are generated.

Premised on this insufficiency, this study set out to ascertain the patterns of news framing of political defection in Nigerian newspapers and to determine the tone of the frames in the newspaper coverage of political defection in Nigeria between in 2014.

Objectives of the Study

i. To analyze the pattern of frames Nigerian newspapers use to construct stories on political defection in 2014.
ii. To determine the tone of newspapers reports on the 2014 political defections.
iii. To investigate if there is a significant difference in the way Nigerian newspapers framed stories on political defections in 2014.

Research Questions

i. In what ways did Nigerian newspapers frame stories on political defection in 2014?
ii. What is the tone of newspapers reports on the 2014 political defections?
iii. Is there any significant difference in the way Nigerian newspapers framed stories on political defections in 2014?

Theoretical Framework

This study uses media framing theory propounded by Erving Goffman in 1974. Framing is used here to explain how the mass media promote a particular definition of an issue through selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2010 cited in Okoro & Odoemelam (2013) p.89). Also, Chew, Ahmad, Ibrahim, and Chang (2012) conceptualize framing as a model which is concerned with the appearance of media contents.

Scholars like McCombs (2004, p. 87) defined media framing as "the selection of, and emphasis upon, particular attributes for the news media agenda when talking about an object (the fact of cutting and trimming news stories in order to filter it and shape it as the sender wishes)." The implication of this is that the media could frame subjects by placing various degrees of emphasis on the attributes of an event, person, public issue or other objects while reporting. Writing on media framing theory, Ojebuyi and Ekennia (2013, p.5) noted that "when the news media supply the context, select what to emphasize or exclude information, they show us how to think about an object/issue/candidate." Ojebuyi and Ekennia (2013, p.5) went on to explain that as the media frame, they could:

> Manipulate readers' cognition or sense of judgment when reporting certain issues of public interest; say a conflict between two prominent politicians, by providing false benchmarks with which the readers gauge the stands of the political actors in the conflict, hence making the readers take side with the favored party.

Given that framing is one of the media effects theories, largely used "to analyze how the mass-media filter information and, thus, influence the public's reactions to a whole range of external stimuli" (De Vreese, 2007 cited in Okoro & Odoemelam 2013, p.89), its suitability for this study is germane.

Literature Review

People receive a stream of information from various sources every day. Constituting the sources people receive information is the newspapers. Although newspapers have been found to play significant roles in purveying political information, their fidelity is sometimes questioned. The reason is that newspapers are sometimes used as proxies between rival political groups and actors. Therefore, presenting an objective and balanced report becomes impossible (Allan & Zeiller, 2004).

The way newspapers transfer information to their recipients is by framing stories to meet the goals of the providing source. According to Cissel (2012, p.67), "in communication, framing defines how news media coverage can shape mass opinion by using these specific frameworks to help guide their reader to understanding". That is to say, the formation of words used in a news article creates a vehicle for persuasion that has the opportunity to influence the minds of its readers.

Researchers like (Entman (1993), Scheufele (1999) and McQuail (1994) among others, have not only written extensively but undertaken studies on how framing works. The bottom line of their postulations is that by the deliberate framing of stories in a patterned manner, readers can better comprehend the direction of the message. To further provide evidence on how newspapers framing works, Okoro and Odoemelam (2013) carried out a study on print media framing, though not on politics, but on Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. The study has provided evidence for the differences in newspaper reporting and framing of the Boko Haram crises as well as showing

both the dominant and prevalent frames used by the newspapers. His study was, however, limited to quantitative content analysis of the dominant frames rather that textual analysis.

Azlan (2012) has analyzed how public attitudes are shaped as a result of media framing of a subject. He noted further that there are two factors that facilitate the adoption of frames; "the accessibility of an issue, and the correlation between a subject and the audience's pre-existing opinions." In other words, framing effects are not independent (Azlan, 2012, p 320). That is to say, there is a connection between what people know or think about an issue and what the media present the way they present it.

In a study by Shuck and de Vreese (2006), findings show that attitudes and knowledge that exist before media exposure play an important role in determining the framing effects. This implies the extent to which media frames affect subject to some extent depends on their deposit of knowledge about the issue or event under consideration. In an attempt to widen the frontiers of previous studies, Auerbach and Bloch-Elkon (2005) have found correlations between low levels of political information, on one hand, and the predisposition to adopt frames, on the other hand. They, however, failed to address the issue as to whether members of the public are more vulnerable to negative frames than the positive frames. This seems to form the basis to which Adair (2007) undertook a study which findings have shown that, in general, the public is more affected by negative frames than by the positive ones.

Departing from other studies on media framing that are generic or skewed to other areas, Ojebuyi and Ekennia (2013) carried out a study on media frames and politics and concluded that "the media were completely immersed in the current partisan politics, and were unable to develop the required ethos of professionalism, impartiality, responsibility, objectivity and balance in reporting the political conflict issue" (p.114). In view of the near absence of literature on media frames and political defections, the researchers are motivated to establish the pattern of frames Nigerian newspapers framed some serial cases of defections that took place in Nigeria in 2014.

Methodology

Under the consideration of framing theory, the researchers conducted content analysis by explaining the pattern of frames to see how they are then incorporated into their audiences' schemata (Entman, 1993). Content analysis is essential to finding patterns, based on which scholars and researchers can methodically evaluate news media and its use of framing. In turn, this allows for the comparison of possible bias of the writers expressed in a tone of presentation. The population of the study was two national dailies namely; *Daily Trust* and *The Nation* which were purposively selected due to their regularity, wide reach and the dominant interest they serve. In line with this, Riffe, Lacy and Drager (1996) confirmed the accuracy of purposive sampling in the selection of relevant media for analysis. Using the systematic approach, the researchers selected one month from each quarter of 2014. Starting with January 2014, the researchers selected given issues at the interval of the 12th number which they analyzed in the selected stories. Unit of the study was a collection of news, interviews, editorials and analysis or opinion articles, and columns.

Data Analysis and Presentation

RQ1: In what ways did Nigerian newspapers frame stories on political defection in 2014?

The newspapers adopted different patterns of frames in covering political defections in Nigeria between January and December 2014. These frames included but not limited to conflict frame, human interest frame, and attribution of responsibility frame identified by Iyengar (1991). Essentially, conflict and human interest frames constitute the hallmark of political defections because almost all the reports on defections reflect crisis and evoke people's psychological faculty.

In a lead story of *The Nation* dated Thursday, April 3, 2014, titled "House halts plot to force 37 APC lawmakers out", the newspaper reported that:

> House of Representatives Speaker Aminu Waziri Tambuwal prevented yesterday a major crisis in the lower chamber when he insisted that the case on the defection of 37 lawmakers must run its full course (p.1).

The frames used in the story are verbs, "halts", "force", "prevented", "insisted", and "must" as well as an adjective, "major crisis". Looking at the story holistically, one could see elements of crisis and human interest frames. While reporting on similar issue, *Daily Trust* of April 3, 2014, which story is titled "As Reps avoid debating court ruling on defection" reported that:

> In the wake of the court pronouncement against 37 defected members of House of Representatives by an Abuja High Court on Monday…There were indications that the ruling would lead to a rowdy session and a lot of drama on the floor of the House the following day with some of the PDP and APC lawmakers planning to bring the matter to the floor of the House (p.18).

The pattern of frames used in this story includes a label, "37 defected members"; adjective, "rowdy"; and catchphrase, "a lot of drama". Also, in its lead story on Wednesday, January 22, 2014, titled "Uproar in House as APC members claim majority", *The Nation* reported that:

> Members of the House of Representatives returned from the Christmas/New Year break to a rowdy session yesterday.
>
> The session also saw members crisscrossing from one party to the other. APC lost two members – Francis Hananiya and GanamaTitsi, who moved to PDP, Adamawa. PDP also lost two members to the APC, with Emmanuel Jime (PDP) moving to APC (Benue) and Yahaya Kwande (PDP) to APC (Plateau) (p.1).

From this report, the writer used verbs, "claim" and "Uproar" which are colorful words as contained in the title of the story. Also, the newspaper makes use of an adjective, "rowdy" to present the chaotic session at the Lower Chamber of the National Assembly. Implicitly, there is an element of conflict and human interest frames in the report as it reflects disagreement as well as stimulates the psychological pulse of people. The *Daily Trust* of Thursday, April 3, 2014, reported on a story titled "We remain in APC – Marwa associates" that:

> Stakeholders of the defunct Congress for Progressives Change (CPC) in Adamawa State said they did not defect with Buba Marwa to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) (p.19).

Frames used in the story are a metaphor, "stakeholders"; and verb, "defect". In another report, *Daily Trust* of Thursday, April 3, 2014, reported a story titled "Muazu will bring defectors back to PDP" that:

> There has been an appreciable level of stability and unity has been restored as party stalwarts and supporters have rekindled faith and trust to the party again. The wind of transformation in the party brought by Mu'azu was also blowing back aggrieved members of the party who had defected earlier to the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) and those who were planning to leave the party (p.19).

Deducing from the report frames the writer used include metaphors, "defectors" and "stalwarts"; adjectives, "appreciable", "rekindled" and "aggrieved"; catch phrase, "wind of transformation in the party brought by Mu'azu was also blowing back aggrieved members of the party who had defected earlier". *The Nation* of Wednesday, January 22, 2014, reported in its story titled "Defections good for Nigeria, says Senator Adeyeye" that:

> Vice-Chairman, Senate Committee on Education, Senator Olusola Adeyeye, said yesterday that the defections to the All Progressives Congress (APC) is (sic) good for the country's development… He insisted that Senators would soon defect to the APC (p.65).

Evidently, frames used in the story are a noun, "defections"; verb, "insisted"; and adjective, "soon". As the wave of defections continued, newspapers did not relent in providing reports on such defections. For example, when 236 PDP members decamped to APC, *The Nation* of Wednesday, January 22, 2014, filed a report on the development which it titled "236 PDP members join Kwara APC". In the body of the story, the newspaper stated that: *The defectors attributed their decision to PDP leaders' insensitivity to their plight* (p.54). In this report, the writer used two frames to construct the story. These were a label, "defectors" and attribution of responsibility frame, "The defectors attributed their decision to PDP leaders' insensitivity to their plight".

RQ2: What is the tone of newspapers reports in the 2014 political defections?

The tone of presentation of the two newspapers shows varying degrees of bias. This is predominantly noticed in reports carried in *The Nation* where almost all its stories are in favor of the All Progressives Congress, APC. For example, in *The Nation* of Thursday, April 3, 2014 titled "House halts plot to force 37 APC lawmakers out", the newspaper uses verbs "halts", "force", "prevented", "insisted", "must" as well as an adjective "major crisis" to frame its story. The writer's deliberate choice of these words clearly reveals his intent which is to downplay efforts of the opposing party and at the same time foist the impending dominance of APC on the public cognition.

Similarly, *The Nation* of Wednesday, January 22, 2014, reports in its story titled "Defections good for Nigeria, says Senator Adeyeye", affirms the element of bias. To further, a report in favor of APC, *The Nation* of Wednesday, January 22, 2014, filed a report on the development which it titles "236 PDP members join Kwara APC". In the body of the story, the newspaper states that: *The defectors attributed their decision to PDP leaders' insensitivity to their plight* (p.54).

The only report that appears neutral is the one in *The Nation* of Wednesday, January 22, 2014, titled "Uproar in House as APC members claim majority". In the story, *The Nation* reports that two members of the House of Representatives each from the two political parties defected to the opposing party. However, the Writer's use of the verb, "roared" and adjective, "rowdy" goes to a large extent to explain the undignified character of the House as an institution.

Certainly, the noticeable bias in *The Nation*'s reports amplifies findings by Ojebuyi and Ekennia (2013) that, "the media were completely immersed in the current partisan politics, and were unable to develop the required ethos of professionalism, impartiality, responsibility, objectivity and balance in reporting the political conflict issue" (p.114).

The apparent lack of positive or neutral coverage in *The Nation* of PDP is eminently evident in reports carried in the *Daily Trust.* For example, *Daily Trust* of April 3, 2014, reports a similar story carried in *The Nation,* which it titles "As Reps avoid debating court ruling on defection". The pattern of frames used in this story include a verb, "avoid"; label, "37 defected members"; adjective, "rowdy"; and catchphrase, "a lot of drama". By using these frames, *Daily Trust* appears neutral serving as a balance for the two dominant political parties.

RQ3: Is there any significant difference in the way Nigerian newspapers frame stories on political defections in 2014?

Noticeable differences manifest in a choice of words to frame stories. A good example is a report which both newspapers carry on April 3, 2014. Whereas *The Nation* makes use of verbs "halts", "force", "prevented", "insisted", "must" as well as an adjective "major crisis" which are

strong and colourful words to frame its story, *Daily Trust* mildly uses verb, "avoid"; label, "37 defected members"; adjective, "rowdy"; and catchphrase, "a lot of drama". Apart from this, most stories the two newspapers cover are at variance. That is to say, the stories covered in *Daily Trust* are almost completely lacking in *The Nation* and *vice versa*.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of this study are quite revealing. The newspapers make use of different frames in the various stories they report. In the story carried in *The Nation* dated Thursday, April 3, 2014, the newspaper uses multiple frames like verbs "halts", "force", "prevented", "insisted", and "must" as well as an adjective "major crisis" to construct the story. Similarly, *Daily Trust* of April 3, 2014, which reports on the same story employs such frames as a label, "37 defected members"; adjective, "rowdy"; and catchphrase, "a lot of drama". Much as both newspapers cover the same story using multiple frames, a cursory look at the pattern of frames differs.

In an attempt to present the chaotic session of the House of Representatives, report in *The Nation* of Wednesday, January 22, 2014, titled "Uproar in House as APC members claim majority" is instructive. The writer's use of the verb, "uproar" alone epitomizes the unruly conduct of the honorable members. This is reinforced by the writer's use of the adjective, "rowdy" to bring to perspective the crisscrossing of certain members from one party to the other. The newspaper goes on to identify the defectors as Francis Hananiya and GanamaTitsi, who moved to PDP, from APC while Emmanuel Jime Yahaya Kwande both from PDP to APC. From the entire report, it could be inferred that the reporter features conflict frame and human interest frame. The reporter's use of these frames is consistent to what Semetko and Walkenburg (2000) reveal that the conflict frame is the second most common frame that could be found in news reports on crisis events, and the more serious the newspaper, the more the conflict frame is evident.

It is instructive to note that, despite the obvious lack of reasons advanced for their defection, the rationale could be linked to what Falodi (2014) posited that, dumping one political party for another had become the trade in stock of many of the nation's politicians and as expected, they have always justified their actions by canvassing phrases such as "irreconcilable difference and lack of internal democracy in their previous parties" as the basis for their action.

In some of the stories, the newspapers advance justification for the defections. For example, *The Nation* of Wednesday, January 22, 2014 reports in its story titled "Defections good for Nigeria, says Senator Adeyeye" that: *Vice-Chairman, Senate Committee on Education, Senator Olusola Adeyeye, said yesterday that the defections to the All Progressives Congress (APC) is good for the country's development… p.65).* Although the newspaper does not provide opinion of the opposing party, which is an element of bias, the report affirms Niven's (2003) assertion that "positive coverage in the face of a party switch extolled such laudatory notions as independence, courage, and political invincibility" (p.317).

A further justification why politicians defect can be found in *The Nation* of Wednesday, January 22, 2014, where the newspaper filed a report on defectors from PDP to APC. In the story titled "236 PDP members join Kwara APC", the writer uses label frame, "defectors" and attribution of responsibility frame, "The defectors attributed their decision to PDP leaders' insensitivity to their plight". By providing a reason for their defection, the story contradicts what *Tribune* (2001) cited in Niven (2003) reports that:

> When Winston Churchill switched from the Tory Party to the Liberal Party in 1904, he said, "Some men change their party for the sake of their principles, others their principles for the sake of their party." Last week, for the sake of no principle, but rather out of personal pique and political petulance, Sen. James Jeffords of Vermont changed political parties (p.317).

On the tone of the presentation, *The Nation* notoriously presents PDP negatively while almost all its reports favor APC. This is not too surprising considering the fact that ownership exerts considerable influence on the way news is framed. Meier (2002) poignantly declared that "the most common concern among media scholars concerning media ownership is that owners have the ability to influence the content and form of media" (p.300).In this context, *The Nation* is linked to Ahmed Bola Tinubu as one of the stakeholders, who at the same time is an influential figure in APC. The noticeable bias in the reports carried in *The Nation,* therefore, confirms the dictum, "who pays the piper dictates the tune". Entman (1973) cited in Aruguete (2011) reiterates that news frames are the imprint of the exercise of power over texts. It registers the identity of

actors or interest that competed to dominate the text. Implicitly, the harsh tone *The Nation* presents PDP regarded as an arch rival of APC which it has an interest in cannot be overemphasized.

On the contrary, reports in *Daily Trust* are neutral. Its neutrality could be seen in stories as the one dated Thursday, April 3, 2014, titled "We remain in APC – Marwa associates". In this report, the writer uses a metaphor, "stakeholders"; and verb, "defect" to construct the story.

While the examples above illustrate the sometimes extreme nature of coverage in the face of party switching, the analysis reveals that the overall tenor of the coverage does not appear to be affected by party distinctions. This invalidates what Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) posit that "the basic approach assumes that the locus of effect lies within the description of an issue or the label used in news coverage about the issue" (p.14).

In terms of whether there is a significant difference in the way the two newspapers frame their stories, it does not require many efforts to conclude that there is a significant difference in the way the newspapers construct their stories. A reflection on the stories under review shows that, apart from the remarkable difference in the tone of reports, both newspapers feature seemingly varying stories. Even in few instances where they cover similar stories, they make use of different frame patterns to achieve their objective of shaping public perception of an issue or object. It could be observed that the deliberate choices of frames the writers of both newspapers adopt incidentally are a product of their orientation. This affirms Price and Tewksbury's (1997) declaration that framing focuses not on which topics or issues are selected for coverage by the news media, but instead on the particular ways those issues are presented. "This is not to say that reporters and editors are consciously seeking to delegitimize collective actors, but rather that the process of creating the news often leads to this result" (Ashiekpe & Kingdom, 2014, p.20)

Recommendations

Newspapers should sustainably provide balanced reportage on the defection of politicians across different political parties. A situation whereby some defectors of political parties are given positive coverage at the expense of others is an indication of bias reporting which negates one of the cardinal journalistic principles of fairness and balance reporting.

Politicians should exercise patience and show maturity in the way they play politics otherwise if the defection is tilted to the advantage of the ruling party it may lead to one party system which is not healthy for the political development of the nation.

Against the backdrop that Nigerian political parties lack ideology, it becomes imperative for political parties to have clearly defined programs and policies which will serve as a compass to their members and discourage them from defecting to other political parties.

Politicians should try as much as possible to fulfill their campaign promises to have control over their constituents. To do this begins with the transparent process they emerge victorious at elections. In event of elections, politicians should play the game according to the rule. Once due process is observed to the latter, candidates will be free from apron-strings to deliver on their campaign promises. Losers will also appreciate the level of transparency that underscores the electoral process and accept defeat in good faith. Therefore, there will be no room for ill-feeling and defection.

There should be a constitutional review to the effect that any politician, irrespective of political party and in whatever capacity, should be constrained to defect to another party, violation of which should amount to a forfeiture of his or her seat. This has become necessary since Nigerian politicians; more or less abuse the privilege to defect as a means of expressing political grievances. Apparently, the manner in which people defect from one political party to another nowadays suggests that conscience, morality, and principle no longer plays a role in the decision-making of defectors.

It is recommended that further studies could be expanded to include other forms of media to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the media cover an issue. This is more so, because most studies limit their analysis of manifest content categories to frequency, prominence and depth of coverage. This study notes that these categories do not exhaustively unveil the pattern of media coverage hence, the need for category expansion,

Summary and Conclusion

The study was carried out to evaluate how selected newspapers cover what could be described as the nagging issue of political defection in Nigeria. In doing this, the study which is anchored on framing theory developed the following three objectives:

i. To analyze the pattern of frames Nigerian newspapers use to construct stories on political defection in 2014.
ii. To determine the tone of newspaper reports on the 2014 political defections.
iii. To investigate if there is a significant difference in the way Nigerian newspapers framed stories on political defections in 2014.

A review of literature and analysis of data provide insight into how newspaper frames operate. Based on findings, the study provides evidence into the various patterns of frames and the differences in newspapers reporting and framing of the political defections in Nigeria in 2014. On the basis of findings and literature reviewed, the study makes some recommendations for improvement in newspaper framing of political framing as well measures to discourage defection. A significant contribution of this study, not found in previous efforts, is the analysis of the way frames could contribute to the understanding of the role newspapers play in the understanding of political defection not only in Nigeria but globally.

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