



## ARTICLE

# Comparative Analysis of Anti-corruption Reporting by Daily Trust and the Nation Newspapers in the First and Second Tenure of Nigeria's Muhammadu Buhari Government

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**Abstract:** Studies on corruption coverage by newspapers in Nigeria during the Buhari administration focused on broad corruption issues, his first tenure, and almost zero studies on anti-corruption during his ongoing second tenure to lapse in 2023. This study aims to examine anti-corruption reporting by two Nigerian newspapers, Daily Trust and The Nation, within the first and second tenures of the Buhari administration. The study content-analyzed 475 editorial contents covering the first year in each of the first and second tenures (2015/2016 and 2019/2020). Findings revealed that The Nation reported more stories on anti-corruption than the Daily Trust in both the first and second tenures. However, both newspapers recorded a significant drop in corruption coverage in the second tenure. News stories took the lead in the first and second tenures, with 72.4% and 84.4%, respectively. The study found that both newspapers published more front and back page contents in the first tenure than in the second tenure, but published less front and back page reports on corruption compared to reports on the inside pages during the period of study. The newspapers also published more stories, measuring more than 100 lines during the second tenure than the first. In contrast, more uncritical reports of anti-corruption were published in the first tenure than in the second by the two. The study concluded that poor investigative journalism drive, among other factors, was responsible for the decline in corruption reports, especially during the 2019/2020 period. It recommends that newspapers strive not to allow ethno-religious interests to influence editorial responses on corruption and increase their investigative journalism drive to win the corruption war in the country.

**Keywords:** anti-corruption; reporting; Nigeria; newspapers; Muhammadu Buhari

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## 1. Introduction

Corruption has remained a memorable feature of Nigeria's national life and given their ascribed constitutional role of upholding the accountability of government to the people ([The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria \(1999, as Amended in 2011, Section 22\), 2011](#)), the newspapers should give consistent coverage to it and ensure effective handling of the cankerworm. However, the extent to which newspapers are committed to the anti-corruption war through coverage has continued to be a subject of scholarly inquiries. Of particular interest to researchers is corruption coverage during the Muhammadu Buhari administration that rode to power on the anti-corruption mantra.

Many Nigerians saw the Buhari government as possessing the magic wand to end the menace of corruption. During his inauguration in 2015 as Nigeria's president, Buhari promised to take on the corruption war 'head on' ([The Guardian, 2019](#)). Nigerians, therefore, expected relief from decades of pervasive corruption and a definitive commitment of the government in this regard. However, the corruption challenge still exists under the Buhari administration. Some notable examples of corruption under the Buhari administration include the N22 million Grass Cutting Scandal involving former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, David Babachir Lawal ([Innocent Odoh, 2019](#)). The subject mismanaged the sum meant for the welfare of internally displaced persons in the North-Eastern part of the country ravaged by the Boko Haram insurgency.

In addition, in 2016, Buhari's Chief of Staff, Abba Kyari, allegedly received a bribe of N500 million from MTN Telecommunication Company to help reduce the fine imposed on it by the government of Nigeria ([Omonobi, 2016](#); [Sahara Reporters, 2016](#)). Thus, despite the efforts of civil society and the passive or selective efforts of government, corruption is fighting back aggressively, as President Muhammadu Buhari was quoted as saying ([Agency Report, 2016](#); [NAN, 2016](#)).

The role of the media in checking corruption abounds in literature. Justifying the role of the media in exterminating corruption, Chêne (2019, as cited in [Schauseil, 2019](#)) reported a 2018 OECD study, which revealed that foreign bribery cases resulted from previous media reports on corruption allegations. The Nigerian media operates as the fourth estate of the realm, acting as a check on the other three arms of government. The newspaper is an important coalition partner in the campaign against corruption ([Abba-Aji et al., 2020](#)). Nigeria has a vibrant and free press, able to take on the government on national and regional issues at any time. However, with known and veiled interests and regional, ethnic, and religious affiliation, ownership and advertising influence may pressure content ([Aliagan, 2006, 2019, 2020a, 2020b](#); [Cordero, 2016](#); [Yusha'u, 2010](#)) on corruption. The freedom enjoyed by journalists in Nigeria to operate, not minding the challenges they may face, and the Freedom of Information Act's passage place the media at a vantage position to report on corruption without visible hindrance.

Although newspaper reports on corruption in Nigeria increased significantly between 2006 and 2010 ([Abba-Aji et al., 2020](#)) and thereafter ([Adisa et al., 2018](#); [Komolafe et al., 2019](#)), there are obvious gaps in the pattern and dimension of the studies that make the current study imperative. For instance, most studies on corruption during the Buhari administration focused on broad corruption issues, his first tenure, and near-zero study on anti-corruption during his ongoing second tenure to lapse in 2023.

Specifically, while some studies by scholars such as [Abba-Aji et al. \(2020\)](#) focused on broad corruption issues, most others like [Abubakre \(2017\)](#), [Adisa et al. \(2018\)](#), [Edmond and Wilson \(2018\)](#), [Obi \(2018\)](#), [Okon \(2018\)](#), [Okon and Ekpe \(2018\)](#) and [Komolafe et al. \(2019\)](#) focus on periods within the first tenure of the Buhari administration. Even for a study such as [Apuke and Uhwe \(2020\)](#) that included the second tenure of the Buhari government, it only covered the first three months of the second tenure (2019). This study takes a different course by comparing coverage

patterns during the first and the second tenure to identify the possible change in the focus and direction of newspaper reports on corruption.

Secondly, on the choice of newspapers, Daily Trust and The Sun were the most explored newspapers in studies on corruption reporting between 2016 and 2020, while The Guardian, The Punch, The Nation, and Nigerian Chronicle had equal but lesser attention. This study adopts a more constructive approach in the selection of newspapers for the study, taking note of the geographical area of strength of each newspaper and the perceived regional interest as well as ownership influence that tends to pressure content (Abubakre, 2017; Adisa et al., 2018; Aliagan, 2006, 2019, 2020a; Cordero, 2016; Okon & Ekpe, 2018; Yusha'u, 2010) on corruption. This study, therefore, chose Daily Trust, a privately-owned national daily with strong northern regional interest, funded by media professionals and businessmen, and The Nation, also a privately-owned newspaper with strong ethnic cum regional interest funded by a politician from the south-western part of Nigeria, who is also a member of the ruling party, the All Progressive Congress (APC). The corruption-reporting pattern by the two newspapers allows inferences on perceived influence on corruption reporting.

To this end, a comparison of corruption reporting by Daily Trust and The Nation newspapers within Buhari's first and second tenures is imperative in finding out whether there is consistency in the coverage pattern within the two periods. This serves to advance and update discoveries in previous studies that concentrated mostly within the first tenure of the Buhari administration and near-zero attention to the second tenure, especially with the much-touted decline in the anti-corruption crusade of the Buhari administration in the second tenure (Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2020). In addition, the study will enrich previous findings on corruption reporting patterns in Nigerian newspapers.

Therefore, this study will explore the scope and pattern of corruption reporting in two purposely-selected national dailies in the country across the study periods (2015/2016 and 2019/2020). Specifically, the study will determine how often the Daily Trust and the Nation newspapers reported anti-corruption stories during the first and second tenures of President Muhammadu Buhari. It will also determine the genres of the stories on corruption and the level of prominence the newspapers gave to coverage of corruption in the two tenures. In addition, the study will confirm the magnitude of corruption reporting by the newspapers. Finally, it will define the slant or direction in the reporting of corruption by the two newspapers.

## 2. Methods

The researchers purposely selected two newspapers for the study, Daily Trust and The Nation. These were among the 10 top national dailies (Zus Bureau Limited, 2009). Both newspapers were also selected because they had a national outlook (available nationwide), strong in the regions they covertly represent, and available for ease of use by the researchers. The newspapers were accessed in the repository in the main library of the Kwara State University, where the researchers accessed them. The print editions of the newspapers were bound month by month, with 12 volumes representing entire editions for a year. The universe of the study were the editions of the newspapers published between 2015/2016 and 2019/2020, totaling 730 editions at 365 editions a year.

Ward (as cited in Abdullahi, 2020) advised that when a researcher employs the quantitative technique, systematic sampling is utilized to ensure that the results are generalizable to a broader population. Thus, the researchers employed the systematic sampling approach – which is probabilistic – to randomly choose Monday editions of the Daily Trust and The Nation newspapers for every week of the months in the coverage period. With the method, the researcher has large control over who/what is selected and the procedures used to select them through probability sampling (Neville, 2007). The researchers used systematic sampling because not all editions of

the two newspapers could be content-analyzed, as doing so would be virtually impossible given the study's period.

In order to arrive at the sample size, the researchers used the calendar to mark the Mondays in June, July, August, September, October, November, December 2015, and January, February, March, April, and May 2016 for the first tenure. Also, Mondays of the months of June, July, August, September, October, November, December 2019, and January, February, March, April, and May 2020 were picked for the second tenure. This resulted in 53 Mondays' editions in the 2015–2016 period and 52 for the 2019–2020 period, totaling 105 Mondays' editions for each of the two newspapers and 210 editions for the two-year study period (2015–2016 and 2019–2020).

The study examined editorial contents of two Nigerian newspapers, Daily Trust and The Nation, on corruption coverage during Buhari's first and second tenures. It investigated the genres, scope, and frequency of the coverage of corruption stories by the two newspapers, the level of prominence of the reports, the magnitude and slanting of the anti-corruption stories.

In line with the proposition by [Wimmer and Dominick \(2011\)](#) that a unit of analysis could be a single word, a symbol, a theme, or an entire story, the unit of analysis for this study consists of the news stories, opinion articles, columns, editorials, letters to the editor and cartoons. These exclude editorial matters like advertising, photographs, political news, and sports. Content categories were analyzed with attention score, namely frequency of coverage, genre, prominence, magnitude, and direction/slanting. The frequency of the coverage of corruption stories was measured numerically to determine how often an editorial report on corruption recurs in the study. The genre of the report was to find out in which of the editorial format (news, feature, opinion, letters, or cartoon) the corruption story was conveyed.

Similarly, investigation of the level of prominence given to corruption stories was determined by the section of the newspaper in which the corruption story was displayed (front, back, or inside pages). Placement is an important criterion used to determine the level of importance of a particular issue. Since the front page is not just the first page but also the face of a newspaper, its stories are of utmost importance in the news value judgment. They also indicate stories the newspaper wants to set as public agenda. In the order of importance, the back page follows the front page.

The depth of the report in length determines the magnitude of the reports on corruption. Thus, a report with less than 50 lines is considered to be of lesser importance, while a corruption report between 50–100 lines in length is considered less important than a report above 100 lines in length. Magnitude is, therefore, calculated by counting the number of lines in a story to determine the value placed on the report by the newspaper.

The direction of the reports on corruption was defined by determining whether a report on corruption was critical or uncritical of the government effort. Critical reports were classified as those that raise questions on the government's sincerity in prosecuting the anti-corruption war, especially against the background of accusations of selective prosecution and witch-hunting of the opposition by the government. Uncritical reports were categorized as apologetic or passive reports in raising issues about the conduct of government on corruption war. The direction of corruption reports enables the researcher to gauge the newspapers' commitment to the anti-corruption war.

The data collection instrument was the coding sheet suggested by [Kothari and Garg \(2014\)](#). Each content category was coded as well as the attention score. The coding was designed to record the findings from the content analysis quantitatively or in other ways that may be evaluated and understood. The content analysis yielded 475 editorial contents, covering news, editorials, opinions, letters, and cartoons for the examination, with Daily Trust recording 202 materials and The Nation, 273. A reliability test of the coding instrument used two independent coders who were guided on the materials to content analyse and the research objectives, was

conducted using the Holsti formula. The coding sheets prepared to generate data for this study were used to conduct the reliability test.

Daily Trust and The Nation editions for the month of September 2015 were adopted for the reliability test. The one-month edition used for the reliability test represents 4.7 % of the total sample. Therefore, the reliability coefficient for Daily Trust was 0.96 or 96%, calculated as the sum of agreements between the two coders divided by the number of coding decisions by each of the two. Also, the reliability coefficient for The Nation was 0.76 or 76%, calculated as the sum of agreements between the two coders divided by the number of coding decisions by each of the two coders. The reliability test is, therefore, justified in light of the submission by O'Connor and Joffe (2020).

The study examined editorial contents of two Nigerian newspapers, Daily Trust and The Nation, on corruption coverage during Buhari's first and second tenures. It investigated the genres, frequency of the coverage of corruption stories by the two newspapers, the level of prominence of the reports, the magnitude and slanting of the anti-corruption stories. In the study proper, the proportion a category takes were quantified in figures. The frequencies were converted to a numerical value. These numerical values were analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Data presentation was undertaken using descriptive statistics, tables, and percentages, complemented with analysis from existing literature, which assisted in better comprehension and understanding of the data.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Frequency of Coverage of Corruption Reports by Daily Trust and the Nation Newspapers

The study investigated the frequency of reports on corruption by the two newspapers and the genres in which corruption matters were conveyed. By employing the frequency analysis, it was found that more news stories were published on corruption than any other editorial matters, followed in descending order by opinions and columns, cartoons, letters to the editor, and editorials, as indicated in Table 1. The Nation newspaper reported more issues about corruption than the Daily Trust newspaper, as shown in Table 1. Specifically, The Nation led in all the content categories, except in the case of the cartoon in which Daily Trust published more. The study further revealed that the newspapers published more news stories than other editorial matters on corruption in the 2019/2020 period, representing the second tenure of the Buhari administration, as shown in Table 2. Comparatively, as shown in Table 3, The Nation newspaper published more corruption-related matters than the Daily Trust, which published 23 news items against The Nation's 54. This shows that as it was in the first tenure, The Nation demonstrated greater effort in covering corruption stories than the Daily Trust. The comparative analysis of the frequency of the coverage of corruption by both newspapers across the first and second tenure shows that in the first year of the first tenure, both newspapers published 398 stories on corruption, while the two in the second tenure published 77 as reflected in Table 3. This indicates that both newspapers published more content on corruption in the first tenure than in the second tenure, with the first tenure leading by a margin of 321 contents. It also implies a significant drop in the corruption coverage by both newspapers in the second tenure. Conclusively, both newspapers only followed the momentum in the administration's anti-corruption campaign during the first tenure and did not sustain the drive in the second tenure, as the anti-corruption campaign efforts of the administration waned in the second tenure (Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2020).

Interpretatively, therefore, the trend in coverage by both Daily Trust and The Nation during the first tenure, which indicates a high level of coverage, demonstrates the importance both newspapers attached to the anti-corruption crusade during that period. This finding is consistent with the argument of McQuail and Windahl (as cited

**Table 1.** Corruption Reports by Daily Trust & The Nation in the First Tenure of Buhari's Administration (2015–2016)

Content Category of Corruption Reports	Daily Trust		The Nation	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
News	135	75.4	153	69.9
Editorials	2	1.1	5	2.3
Opinions & Columns	20	11.2	37	16.9
Letters to the Editor	5	2.8	11	5
Cartoons	17	9.5	13	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

**Table 2.** Corruption Reports by Daily Trust & The Nation in the Second Tenure of Buhari's Administration (2019–2020)

Content Category of Corruption Reports	Daily Trust		The Nation	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
News	18	78.3	47	87
Editorials	0	0	2	3.7
Opinions & Columns	3	13	3	5.6
Letters to the Editor	0	0	0	0
Cartoons	2	8.7	2	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

**Table 3.** Corruption Reports by Daily Trust & The Nation in the First and Second Tenures of Buhari's Administration

Content Category of Corruption Reports	First Tenure		Second Tenure	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
News	288	72.4	65	84.4
Editorials	7	1.8	2	2.6
Opinions & Columns	57	14.3	6	7.8
Letters to the Editor	16	4	0	0
Cartoons	30	7.5	4	5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

in Edmond & Wilson, 2018) that frequency is a key component of the agenda-setting role of the media. Conversely, the significant drop in the frequency of coverage by both newspapers during the second tenure demonstrates that the newspapers probably followed the trend on the general lull in anti-corruption activities by the Buhari government during the first year of his second tenure. It equally confirms Edmond and Wilson's (2018) assumption that media in Nigeria tended to treat corruption issues passively. In general, this indicates poor investigative journalism (Abba-Aji et al., 2020; Edmond & Wilson, 2018; Obi, 2018) driven by the newspapers and dependence on government and official sources to expose corruption (Obi, 2018).

Additionally, among all the editorial matters studied, news stories took the lead in both the first and second tenures followed by opinions and columns, then cartoons, letters to the editor, and editorials in that order, with 72.4% (first tenure) and 84.4% (second tenure). This agrees with what Edmond and Wilson (2018) found in their analysis of the Daily Trust and The Nation coverage of Nigeria's anti-corruption war in 2016. They observed that news items top the list of editorial matters published by the two newspapers during the period. This revelation also conforms to Abba-Aji et al.



(2020) finding in their study of corruption reporting in Nigeria's health systems and Komolafe et al. (2019) study on corruption reporting by the media during the 2015 Nigerian elections. This finding also agrees with the similar ones by Obi (2018), Okon (2018), Okon and Ekpe (2018), and Apuke and Uhwe (2020). Both newspapers did not publish any letter to the editor for the first year of the second tenure. This shows that the two newspapers published fewer editorials than any other editorial matters, indicating a lack of organizational commitment in adding their voice to halting the corruption cankerworm.

### 3.2. Level of Prominence of Corruption Coverage by Daily Trust and the Nation

The study investigated how the two newspapers treated corruption reports through placement on newspaper pages. Prominence in this study was calculated by analyzing corruption stories placed in specific sections of the newspaper, such as the front page, back page, and inside pages. As shown in Table 4, The Nation published more front page (16%) and back page stories (5.9%) than the Daily Trust in the first year, although both newspapers published more contents on the inside pages (85.4%) than on the front and back pages. In addition, as reflected in Table 5, the study found that in the first year of the second tenure of the Muhammadu Buhari administration, The Nation again published more front-page stories (18.5%) than the Daily Trust (17.4%), even as both newspapers did not publish any back page stories during the period. However, this trend is not different from what was obtained in the first tenure, as it implies a drop in the momentum of anti-corruption efforts in the second tenure (Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2020).

**Table 4.** Level of Prominence of Corruption Coverage by Daily Trust and the Nation During Buhari's First Tenure (2015–2016)

Prominence of Corruption Reports	Daily Trust		The Nation	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
Front Page	5	2.8	35	16
Back Page	5	2.8	13	5.9
Other Pages	169	94.4	171	78.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

**Table 5.** Level of Prominence of Corruption Coverage by Daily Trust and the Nation During Buhari's Second Tenure (2019–2020)

Prominence of Corruption Reports	Daily Trust		The Nation	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
Front Page	4	17.4	10	18.5
Back Page	0	0	0	0
Other Pages	19	82.6	44	81.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

**Table 6.** Level of Prominence of Corruption Coverage by Daily Trust & The Nation in Buhari's First and Second Tenures

Prominence of Corruption Reports	First Tenure		Second Tenure	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
Front Page	40	10.1	14	18.2
Back Page	18	4.5	0	0
Other Pages	340	85.4	63	81.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

However, as shown in Table 6, it was found that during the first tenure, both newspapers had 14.6% of their reports on corruption on the front and back pages, while placing 18.2% of such reports on the front page and none at all on the back pages during the second tenure. This demonstrates that while more reports on corruption were published in the first tenure than in the second tenure, on average, there were more front-page contents published by both newspapers in the second tenure, indicating a rise in prominence during the latter (Table 6). It should be noted, however, that numerically, both newspapers published more front page and back page contents in the first tenure than in the second tenure. Conclusively, we can deduce that both newspapers did not attach a significant level of prominence to anti-corruption stories overall because most of the corruption stories were published on the inside/other pages (85.4% in the first tenure and 81.8% during the second tenure).

However, the discovery that both newspapers published fewer front page and back page reports on corruption than reports on the inside pages during the study period indicates that they both did not attach a significant level of prominence to the corruption war overall. This is consistent with the findings of Edmond and Wilson (2018) that both Daily Trust and the Nation reported more stories on corruption on the inside pages than on the front and back pages, but disagrees with their finding that Daily Trust featured more reports on the front page than The Nation. The finding from this study corroborates Okon and Ekpe (2018), which recorded that Daily Sun and Nigerian Chronicle had 13.24% and 2.86% of their report on corruption on the front page. It, however, disagrees with that of Apuke and Uhwe (2020) who recorded that both the Daily Trust and Daily Sun had most of their stories on corruption (56.1%) on the front page, although their period of study only covered the first three months of Buhari’s second tenure.

### 3.3. Magnitude of Corruption Reports by Daily Trust and the Nation

By calculating the number of lines in the reports of the two newspapers, it was shown, as reflected in Table 7, that The Nation published more lengthy reports on corruption (52.2%) than the Daily Trust (16.1%) during the first tenure. While the majority (52.2%) of the reports published by The Nation were lengthy, the reverse was the case with Daily Trust as most of its reports (43.5%) were shorter in length. In addition, Daily Trust, compared to The Nation, published more stories that measured shorter in length (less than 50 lines). This demonstrates the level of importance both newspapers attached to corruption reports. Impliedly, The Nation emphasized the fight against corruption more than the Daily Trust.

**Table 7.** Magnitude of Corruption Reports by Daily Trust & The Nation in the First Tenure (2015–2016)

Length of Reports	Daily Trust		The Nation	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
Less than 50 lines	70	43.5	31	15.1
Between 50 & 100 lines	65	40.4	67	32.7
Above 100 lines	26	16.1	107	52.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

Also, by calculating the number of lines in corruption reports in the two newspapers, it was shown that during the second tenure, The Nation published more lengthy reports (56.6%) than the Daily Trust, which published only 25% of reports measuring above 100 lines. On the other hand, The Nation equally published fewer reports that measured below 50 lines than Daily Trust, whose largest percentage of reports on corruption measured below 50 lines (see Table 8). It could, therefore, be inferred that The Nation placed greater emphasis on the coverage of corruption than the Daily Trust, which did not allocate much space to the coverage of the issue. This



further indicates that there were lengthier reports on corruption by both newspapers in the first than in the second. Averagely (based on percentage), however, more stories measuring above 100 lines (the lengthiest) were published by both newspapers in the second tenure than in the first tenure (see Table 8), indicating a rise in the magnitude attached to the subject matter during the second tenure.

**Table 8.** Magnitude of Corruption Reports by Daily Trust & The Nation in the Second Tenure (2019–2020)

Length of Reports	Daily Trust		The Nation	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
Less than 50 lines	7	35	2	3.8
Between 50 & 100 lines	8	40	21	39.6
Above 100 lines	5	25	30	56.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

Based on this, we can conclude that more emphasis was placed on corruption coverage by the two newspapers in the second tenure than in the first tenure, as shown in Table 9. Overall, both newspapers' performance in the magnitude of corruption reports in the first and second tenures was appreciable. With most of the reports published by both newspapers on corruption measuring above 100 lines in length, it is safe to conclude that both publications attached importance to (in-depth) coverage of the menace. This discovery buttresses the assertion by McCombs and Shaw that "the media attach certain weights to news stories through placement, size, and frequency of appearance of such stories (Okon, 2018)."

**Table 9.** Magnitude of Corruption Reports by Daily Trust & The Nation in the First and Second Tenures

Length of Reports	First Tenure		Second Tenure	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
Less than 50 lines	101	27.7	9	12.3
Between 50 & 100 lines	132	36.3	29	39.7
Above 100 lines	131	36	35	47.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

### 3.4. Slanting of Reports on Corruption by Daily Trust and the Nation

The researcher determined slanting in the corruption reports by the two newspapers by calculating the number of stories that were critical and those that were uncritical of the government's anti-corruption efforts. The study revealed that reports critical of the anti-corruption crusade were more than those uncritical during the first tenure. However, The Nation published more critical reports (74.9%) than the Daily Trust (71.5%), while Daily Trust published more uncritical reports on the subject matter than The Nation as reflected in Table 10. This implies that more than the Daily Trust, The Nation portrayed corruption more in the negative light.

**Table 10.** Slanting of Reports on Corruption by Daily Trust & The Nation in the Buhari's First Tenure (2015–2016)

Category of Corruption Reports	Daily Trust		The Nation	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
Critical	128	71.5	164	74.9
Uncritical	51	28.5	55	25.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

It was further found that during the second tenure, The Nation published more critical reports on the anti-corruption war than Daily Trust, while Daily Trust published more uncritical reports than The Nation (see Table 11). However, the study found that in terms of numerical value, both newspapers combined published more critical reports on corruption war during the first tenure than in the second tenure (see Table 12). However, based on percentage (on average), more critical reports were published during the second tenure than in the first tenure (see Table 12). This implies a rise in setting a positive agenda on the anti-corruption drive. Conversely, in terms of percentage and numerical value, more reports that are uncritical were published in the first than in the second tenure. It can, therefore, be concluded that the newspapers were more critical of corruption and its perpetrators during the second tenure than in the first tenure.

**Table 11.** Slanting of Reports on Corruption by Daily Trust & The Nation in the Buhari’s Second Tenure (2019–2020)

Category of Corruption Reports	Daily Trust		The Nation	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
Critical	20	87	48	88.9
Uncritical	3	13	6	11.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

However, that Daily Trust published less critical reports on corruption than The Nation during both tenures (see Table 12) could be due to regional and religious influence. It is inferred that because The Nation newspaper is owned by the national leader of the ruling party, the All Progressives Congress, which claimed power on the promise to stamp out corruption from the nation, the newspaper by its coverage pattern might want to portray the party as doing well in that regard. On the other hand, Daily Trust is a northern newspaper, and the majority of the culprits in the biggest corruption scandals were from the northern part of the country. This could indicate that the newspaper might be sympathetic to the Northern elites who feature prominently on the country’s corruption blacklist. Thus, it might mean that the Daily Trust underreported the corruption scandal involving key elites from the north while The Nation massively reported it. This assumption conforms to the assertion by Komolafe et al. (2019) in their study that corruption coverage was influenced by newspapers’ affiliation or sympathies to the subject of corruption stories. The same assertion is dominant in the study by Yusha’u (2010), while inferences on ethnic and religious interest in corruption were also made in studies by Abubakre (2017), Adisa et al. (2018), and Okon and Ekpe (2018).

**Table 12.** Comparison of Slanting of Reports on Corruption by Daily Trust & The Nation in the Buhari’s First and Second Tenures

Category of Corruption Reports	First Tenure		Second Tenure	
	Frequency	Average %	Frequency	Average %
Critical	292	73.4	68	88.3
Uncritical	106	26.6	9	11.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content analysis data, 2021

Generally, the prominence attached to corruption reporting and the magnitude and the slanting of corruption stories by the newspapers demonstrate their stance on stamping out the cankerworm from the nation. Arnold and Lal (2012) and Starke et al. (2016) argue that the media contribute to public opinion formation and, by so doing, generate public pressure to force corrupt politicians to resign and to lose political power. Also, Rose-Ackerman (as cited in Haque, 2012) concur that “by drawing attention to behavior that is usually perceived as acceptable and exposing

unacceptable behavior as corrupt, media have the potentiality to raise public awareness, activate anti-corruption values, and generate outside pressure from the public against corruption." To some extent, the newspapers in this study demonstrated this posture in their pattern of reporting corruption in Nigeria.

#### 4. Conclusion

Corruption is still endemic in Nigeria despite the vow by Muhammadu Buhari, its current president, at his inauguration in 2015, to stamp it out. The newspapers in this study did their best to draw attention to the menace in their coverage through the prominence given to the reports, the magnitude, and the slanting of the reports, which revealed their organizational position. The study generally found that The Nation demonstrated more commitment to the anti-corruption war in Nigeria than the Daily Trust. Specifically, the newspaper led in all categories investigated. It had more news reports on corruption in the first and second tenures of Muhammadu Buhari than the Daily Trust. As for the genres (news, features, editorial, letter to the editor) of the reports devoted to corruption, The Nation newspaper also published more. In terms of prominence given to corruption reports, The Nation published more front- and back-page stories than the Daily Trust during both tenures of Muhammadu Buhari. In addition, the newspaper published more lengthy reports on corruption than the Daily Trust, whose most of its reports were shorter in length. Finally, The Nation published more critical reports than the Daily Trust on the anti-corruption war. This implies that The Nation showed greater effort in covering corruption stories than the Daily Trust.

The inference that could be drawn from the dominance of The Nation in the corruption reports and the inadequate commitment shown in the Daily Trust reports is that political and regional interest influenced the attitude of the two newspapers to corruption reporting. Politically, the owner of The Nation is the National Leader of the ruling party, the All Progressive Congress; hence support for the anti-corruption war by the newspaper was a service to the government and the party. As for the Daily Trust, drawing attention to corruption through its reports, that might mean exposing the elites of its constituency who feature prominently in corruption cases.

However, the preponderance of news over other editorial matters indicates that the two newspapers did not show sufficient organizational commitment through having a strong voice to halting the corruption cankerworm. Added to this, most of the reports on corruption in the first tenure and the second tenure were on the inside pages. However, the performance of both newspapers on the magnitude of corruption reports in the first and second tenures was appreciable.

Finally, the study is not without its limits. First, the limit of the newspapers in the study to two weakens the generalization of its findings to other newspapers. Including more newspapers might throw up more discoveries on the performance of Nigerian newspapers on corruption reporting. Secondly, the first year on each of the first and second tenures and only Mondays in the months covered in the study are also limitations. As corruption cases happen all the time, widening the period and increasing the number of days in future studies will yield more representative data.

In order to effectively tackle the corruption scourge in Nigeria, the study recommends that newspapers design editorial responses that transcend all partisan sentiments and institute training for journalists on the best techniques for exposing corruption and driving the war against the cankerworm in the country.

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