

## **Nigerian Newspapers Coverage of the 78 Days Presidential Power Vacuum Crisis under President Umaru Yar’adua: Managing or Manipulating the Outcome**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Nigerian press has always been accused of manipulating political crisis to the gains of their owners or the opposition. This accusation was repeated during the long 78 days (November 23 2009 – February 9 2010) that Nigerian late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua was incapacitated due to ill-health. In fact, observers believed that the kind of media war, power play and intrigue that hailed the period almost cost Nigeria her hard-earned unity and democracy. Eventually, Yar’Adua and his handlers irrefragably lost to ill-health and public opinion. However, the late President’s ‘kitchen cabinet’ believed that he lost ultimately to public opinion manipulated by the press. How true was this? How far can we agree with the kitchen cabinet bearing in mind that this type of accusation came up during the scandals of President Nixon of the United States and the ill health of late President John Attah-Mills of Ghana. Based on these complexities, the researchers embarked on this study to investigate the kind of coverage newspapers in Nigeria gave the power vacuum crisis during Yar’ Adua’s tenure in order to establish whether they (newspapers), indeed, manipulated events during those long 78 days. In carrying out this study, four national dailies (The Guardian, The Sun, New Nigerian and Daily Trust Newspapers), were used. Using five units of analysis (news, features, editorials, cartoons and opinion articles) and seven content categories, findings revealed that Nigerian newspapers gave the presidential power vacuum crisis prominence. The results also showed that the issue was adequately covered and took a positive direction. However, it was, also, discovered that Nigerian newspapers frequently covered the power lacuna in their reports which were influenced by regional and ownership factors. Based on these, it was recommended that ownership and regional affiliations should not impact on media reports. And that the media should provide leadership in times of national conflict by setting and consolidating agenda.*

**KEYWORDS:** Political Crisis, President Yar’Adua, Newspaper, Manipulation, Public Opinion

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the annals of Nigeria’s political history, the presidential seat had never been made vacant for any reason whatsoever. The sickness of Late President Umaru Musa Yar’ Adua generated much rumbles in the press and political circles in Nigeria to the extent that the unity of the country was threatened. The hospitalization of a sitting president should, no doubt, be headline news material anywhere in the world, but it became worrisome and strange with the level of undue sensational exaggeration, politicizing and controversy making round over Yar’ Adua’s 23rd November, 2009 journey to Saudi Arabia (Alabi, 2010, p19).

Late President Yar' Adua left Nigeria on November 23, 2009, and was reported to be receiving treatment for pericarditis at a clinic in Saudi Arabia. He was not seen in public again, and his absence created a dangerous power vacuum in Nigeria (McConnell, 2010, p.14).

Umaru Musa Yar' Adua was the President of Nigeria and the 13th Head of State. He served as governor of Katsina State in North Western Region of Nigeria from 29th May, 1999 to 28th May, 2007. Consequent upon the election of 21st April, 2007, he was declared winner and sworn in on May 29, 2007 as President and Commander in Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces. He emerged the president under the platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). At the time of his nomination, he was an obscure figure on the national stage, and was described as a 'puppet' of former president Obasanjo who could not have won the nomination under fair circumstances (Steve, 2006, p.19). According to Ocherreome (2010, p.8), Obasanjo knew a lot about Yar' Adua's poor health condition but went ahead to foist him on Nigerians. Ocherreome (p.8), said "I am convinced that he (Obasanjo) deliberately gave the presidency to the weakest Northerner to spite the North after the failure of his third term."

Shortly after winning the nomination, Yar' Adua chose Goodluck Jonathan, then governor of Bayelsa State, as his vice presidential candidate.

In 2007, Yar' Adua, who suffered from a kidney condition, challenged his critics to a game of squash in an endeavour to end speculations about his health condition. His reign as the president of Nigeria witnessed a series of health conditions. On 6th March, 2007, he was flown to Germany for medical reasons, further fomenting rumours about his health. His spokesperson, Mr. Olusegun Adeniyi, said that that was due to stress, and quoted Yar' Adua as saying he was fine and would soon be back to campaign then (Emewu, 2009,p.14).

Another report, which was rejected by Yar' Adua's spokesperson, claimed that Yar' Adua collapsed after suffering a possible heart attack (Tom, 2007, p.28). Six months after his ascension to power, precisely on April 14, 2008, he utilized the opportunity of gracing the G-8 Summit in Germany to receive medical attention.

The third sojourn of Yar' Adua's in the search for treatment occurred on August 28, 2008 when he aborted a scheduled trip to Brazil and jetted to a hospital in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. During his trip to Saudi Arabia, Yar' Adua spent more than two weeks in the Holy Land. This trip challenged his media handlers who couldn't explain his actual whereabouts, coupled with their apparent inability to provide his photographs to lend credence to the then Lesser Hajj story.

The late president's fourth trip, again to Saudi Arabia, was on August 14, 2009. Unlike the previous one, that was announced in advance that he was honouring the Kingdom's Monarch's special invitation to attend the commissioning of a new university in Saudi Arabia Yar' Adua was away for seven days. That trip, like the previous one, was in place of attending the United Nations General Assembly Session in New York, a development that generated serious criticisms against his administration (Adeyemo, 2010,p.21).

His fifth medical trip abroad was on November 23, 2009. The President received medical treatment in King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre (KFSHRC), in the Kingdom's port city of Jeddah (Adeyemo, 2010, p.21).

Late Yar' Adua's fluctuating health was believed not to be without some consequences on governance in Nigeria then. This was apart from the belief in some quarters that the Late President was always slowed down by ill-health, because he had no energy to handle the

complexities of the office of the President. Apart from this, the country missed ample bilateral opportunities, which most people averred, are requisite for the country's tortuous journey to prosperity as captured in his administration's Seven-Point Agenda and Vision 20:2020 (Abdallah, Lazarus, Machika and Salkida, 2009, para. 15).

His obvious absence at important national assignments, including the FIFA U-17 World Cup tournament where he was unable to attend the final match on November 15, 2009 at the National Stadium, Abuja, and the launching of Sardauna Foundation in Kaduna for the immortalization of the late premier of Northern region and Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, was, also, attributed to his failing health then (Abdallah, Lazarus, Machika and Salkida, 2009, para. 17).

The ill-health of president Yar' Adua did not even spare an important duty like the formal presentation of the national budget proposal to the joint session of the National Assembly. The late president, in an unprecedented manner, decided to send the copies of the 2010 budget to the two chambers of the federal legislature through his aids, rather than make a formal presentation. This went down as the first in the nation's history (Abdallah, Lazarus, Machika and Salkida, 2009, para. 17). In all these, the late president's ill-health took a toll on the country's corporate existence and heated up its polity. The absence of the president affected the inner workings of the administration, because many policy decisions which were to get the attention of the President were left out.

Before 1982, when he was flown to Germany for a graft surgery in his left hand, an injury he sustained as a result of his involvement in a car accident, not much was known about his medical history. "His intermittent coughing whenever he spoke and the eczema-like skin diseases that dotted his body rarely raised any suspicion that he had an internal health problem, despite his smoking habit, but this was to change when he was elected governor of Katsina State in 1999" (Abdallah, Lazarus, Machika and Salkida, 2009, para. 18). Even though he had a smooth free campaign unlike what later happened during his 2007 presidential campaign, he was said not to be in good shape (Adeyemi, 2009,p.5).

In the year 2001, he had to abandon his duty post as a governor for about a month, where he was said to have died when he travelled to Germany to treat a kidney related ailment. This was a development that later led to the sacking of his deputy, Alhaji Tukur Jikamshi. As an evidence that he had problem with his kidney and needed constant attention, the German construction giant, Julius Berger Nigeria Ltd. built and donated a dialysis centre to Katsina State which is located at the Katsina General Hospital (Adeyemi, 2009,p.5 and Abdallah et al. 2009, para. 16).

The construction of the dialysis centre brought to the open the fact that Yar' Adua, then as a governor, had kidney problems. Before then, he used to go to Kano to receive medical attention pertaining to his kidney. It was because of his kidney problem that he picked Dr. Salisu Banye as his personal physician, who was then a permanent secretary in the state, to be attending to his health needs. However, when he was picked as the PDP's presidential candidate in 2007, his health condition became a national issue (Adeyemi, 2009,p.5 and Abdallah et al. 2009, para. 16).

While the Late President was far away in Saudi Arabia receiving treatment, some Nigerians started making troubles out of the entire event. Most of them had actually told Yar' Adua on his sick bed that he should put his house in order in preparation for the inevitable embrace of

the cold hands of death. In this group of ‘prophets’ are notable politicians in the opposition, some die-hard public critics of his administration as well as some notable press goons.

The first to report the absence in a sensational manner in press was Reuben Abati of *The Guardian Newspaper* who barely two days after Yar’ Adua’s departure came out in a alarmist and sentimental article entitled “*who is in charge of Nigeria?*” to lament the creation of a vacuum by the late president’s absence as if the whole presidency was hospitalized. That was an article that opened the flood gate to the various angles of reports by the Nigerian newspapers on the *78-day power vacuum* in Nigeria then (Nigerian Muse, 2009, para. 4).

When Yar’ Adua was flown out of the shores of Nigeria on November 23, 2009, and was reported to be receiving treatment for pericarditis at a clinic in Saudi Arabia, he was not seen in public again, and his absence somehow created a dangerous power vacuum in Nigeria (McConnell, p.5).

In December 2009, Oluwarotimi Akereolu, ex-president of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), stated that Yar’ Adua should have handed over power to the then vice-president, Goodluck Jonathan in an acting capacity during his illness. That statement was backed up by the NBA national executive committee. On 22nd January, 2010, a federal high court in Nigeria ruled that the Federal Executive Council (FEC) had 14 days to decide on a resolution about whether Yar’ Adua “is incapable of discharging the functions of his office. That ruling, also, stated that the Federal Executive Council should hear testimonies of five doctors, one of whom should be Yar’ Adua’s personal physician” (Onyedika & Ughebe, 2009,p.16).

On 9th February, 2010, the Nigerian senate declared that presidential power should be transferred to the then Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan, and that he would serve as Acting President, with all the accompanying powers, until Yar’Adua returned to full health. The Senate said its pronouncement was based on the **Doctrine of Necessity**, but that power transfer had been called a “*coup without the word*” by opposition lawyers and lawmakers. However, there were people that felt that the power vacuum would have led to instability and a possible military takeover (Daniel, 2010,p.8).

On 24 February 2010, Yar’ Adua returned to Abuja in a very dramatic manner that left many wondering if he came back alive. His state of health was unclear, but there was speculation that he was still on a life support machine. Various political and religious figures in Nigeria had visited him during his illness, with assurances that he was gradually recovering and would soon be fit to continue with his presidential duties (Nnamdi & Sam, 2011,p.381).

However, the whole drama came to an end with his death on May 5, 2010 at the Aso Rock Presidential Villa. An Islamic burial took place on 6th of May, 2010 in his hometown, Katsina (*The Nation*, 2010, p.10).

All these were the key areas that the Nigerian Newspapers focused on in their reportage of the Yar’ Adua’s 78-days medical sojourn in Saudi Arabia with all other adjoining issues. In reporting the issue, a lot of frames were used which may have influenced most of the decisions made by the national Assembly at that time. This is because media framing of issues can determine to a large extent the direction people might likely go (Golc’evski, Engelhardt and Boomgaarden, 2013, p.121).

### **Statement of Research Problem**

The mass media have been adjudged in various societies as the backbone of a democracy such that the importance of the media is recognized by every democratic nation as reflected in the fact that it is referred to as the ‘Fourth Estate’ – the fourth organ of the government (Zhongdang, Lijiang, Shen, and Ye, 2006).

That the Nigerian newspapers gave coverage to the 78-days presidential power vacuum in Nigeria resulting from the ill-health of late President Yar’ Adua is never in doubt. The crises that grew from the lacuna were equally not debatable. After all, political crises are prominent features of the environment, and every nation has the potential to experience one. The manner in which the news media frame and cover such national challenges can alter a nation’s reputation, and ultimately affect the way the world perceives that nation (Zhongdang, Lijiang, Shen, and Ye, 2006).

There is no denying the fact that the media often thrive in a crisis situation. It means that in a crisis, the media get more attention than they get in normal times. Crisis increases people’s (readers) hunger for information, they feel unsafe to remain ignorant about the state of the nation. The press (newspapers) can play a crucial role in defusing tension during the crisis by creating awareness among the people about the nature of the problems, its origin and ways of resolving it or it may decide to mismanage and manipulate the situation (Bird and Dardenne 2009). It is, however, expected to play a role which might help resolve the crisis without causing much damage to the nation’s socio-political fabrics (Niederdeppe, Farrelly, Thomas, Wenter, and Weitzenkamp, 2007).

In performing these roles, the Nigerian press either due to administrative control or policy decision, at times, manipulate the news and at other times they tend to manage it. This could be evidenced by the previous cases of Hon. Salisu Buhari’s Torontogate certificate saga and Hon. Patricia Etteh’s financial scandal in which the press was accused of blowing the cases’ stories out of proportion, thereby leading to their political downfall (Umeh, 2010,p.7).

In view of the above scenario, what is of concern here is how the coverage took shape and the extent of the coverage of the 78 days presidential power vacuum vis-à-vis the ability of the press to discharge its social responsibility roles in the nexus that exists between the Nigerian media, the Nigerian government and the Nigerian society. In other words, we took a critical look at how the Nigerian newspapers covered the 78 days presidential power vacuum and the extent of the coverage vis a- vis the allegation made by Yar’Aduas’s ‘Kitchen Cabinet’ in which the press was accused of magnifying and manipulating the crisis. That, indeed, was the problem of this study.

The motivation for this study was informed by the fact that the researchers believe that most studies on news coverage of governance and democracy in Nigeria are a localized version of the ever continuously discussed issue of news flow controversy in which we hear of charges and counter charges of over reportage, under reportage and negative reportage coming from all corners of the world’s divide.

### **Research Questions**

- (1) How was the 78 days presidential power vacuum covered by the selected newspaper in terms of prominence?

- (2) What direction of coverage did the selected newspapers take in their coverage of the 78 days presidential power vacuum?
- (3) What volume of coverage did the 78 days presidential power vacuum receive from the selected newspapers?
- (4) What frequency of coverage did the sampled newspapers give to the power vacuum under late Yar'Adua?

### **Research Hypotheses**

Based on the research questions raised above and the climate of opinion in the material reviewed, the following hypotheses were raised and tested for relevant results.

#### **Hypothesis One**

Ho: The 78 days presidential power vacuum under late President Yar'Adua did not receive prominence in the selected newspapers.

Hi: The 78 days presidential power vacuum under late President Yar'Adua received prominence in the selected newspapers.

#### **Hypothesis Two**

Ho: The selected newspapers' coverage of the 78 days presidential power vacuum did not take a positive direction.

Hi: The selected newspapers' coverage of the 78 days presidential power vacuum under Yar'Adua took a positive direction.

#### **Hypothesis Three**

Ho: The 78 days presidential power vacuum under Yar'Adua did not receive much volume of coverage from the selected newspapers.

Hi: The 78 days presidential power vacuum under Yar'Adua received much volume of coverage from the selected newspapers.

#### **Hypothesis Four**

Ho: The 78 days presidential power vacuum was not frequently covered in the sampled newspapers.

Hi: The 78 days presidential power vacuum was frequently covered in the sampled newspapers.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is most likely to add to the available small pool of literature on how the press covers political crisis in Nigeria. More importantly, since press coverage of presidential vacuum controversy has not received attention in academic research in Nigeria as the Yar'Adua's case is the first ever case of presidential vacuum of this magnitude, the outcome of this study will add to the available literature. However, media coverage of presidential vacuums has remained a major research area in countries like the United States, Britain, Costa Rica, among others,

because of the public expectations of the role the press plays in democracy and public administration. Take for instance, the cases of President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, and Prime Minister Henry Pelham of Great Britain, which were all given publicity by the media (<http://en.wikipedia.org/diedheadofstates>).

As one of the few pioneering works on presidential power crisis in Nigeria, it has added to the few available literatures in this area.

The study will, also, serve as a platform for researchers to build on in the event of another political crisis.

The study has also that contrary to the opinion being held down here in the Southern Nigeria that all the Northern papers supported the absence of Yar'Adua from the presidential seat during those long days, it was discovered that not all of them really supported Yar'Adua's long absence, as shown by the Daily Trust (see page 78 under direction) which was even more positive than the Southern papers of The Guardian and ThisDay.

The findings of this inquiry will equally give Nigerian print media journalists an idea of how they covered the power vacuum crisis in order to either consolidate or take corrections on how they frame and report such issues.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Nigerian Newspapers' Reportage of President Yar'Adua's 78 days Absence Crisis**

The mass media, no doubt, are citizens' most important source of information during political crisis. Everyone expects the media to play key roles in resolving any political crisis that has the tendency to snowball into lawlessness or system collapse (Puglisi and Snyder, 2008, p.1). This was the kind of role Nigerians and indeed the international community expected mass media institutions in Nigeria to play during the late Yar'Adua's power vacuum crisis. As is the practice round the world, the print media are expected to play more roles in situations like that, because of their elitist and detailed nature.

During the 78 days power vacuum, a lot of reports were put across to the audience by the various news organizations within and outside. Both broadcast and print media were awash with developments on the vacuum crisis. During this period, allegation was made by observers that the mass media, especially, the print were manipulating instead of managing the crisis (Umeh 2010, Bello, 2010 and Yakubu 2010). In this review, the editorial contents of some of Nigerian newspapers are reviewed to see the direction reports on the crisis took.

The first report in this series was that written by Reuben Abati of the *Guardian Newspaper* on the 29th of November 2009. Abati, then a board chief of the *Guardian Newspaper* entitled his article, "who is in charge of Nigeria?" In this piece, he tried to tell the entire world that President Yar'Adua did not put anybody in charge before he jetted out to Saudi Arabia in line with the provisions of the 1999 constitution. According to Nigerian Muse (2009, para.5).

The first to fire the shot among the big boys of the press was Reuben Abati of the Guardian who barely two days after the president's departure came out in a poorly articulated alarmist and sentimental article titled 'who is in charge of

Nigeria?’ to lament the creation of a vacuum by the president’s absence as if the whole presidency was hospitalized.

*Nigerian Muse* (2009, para.5) further maintained that such an article was not befitting of Abati’s status. In fact, *Nigerian Muse* (para.5) maintained that:

That highly prejudiced article was the height of insensitivity and irresponsibility for a man who heads the editorial board of a foremost newspaper in Nigeria. There are certain things the editor of New York Times won’t just say about an American president no matter his personal conviction.

Even though one might not agree with *Nigerian Muse* completely, a critical look at Abati’s article may suggest that. The title of the article, “who is in charge of Nigeria?” actually suggests that the identity of the country’s commander in chief was contentious. The third paragraph of his article actually reveals this point. It reads:

Has Nigeria now been reduced to a country managed by proxy, run by telephone conversations from a hospital in Saudi Arabia? In the president’s absence, it looks as if a committee is running Nigeria with nobody actually exercising authority. How do we safeguard and inspire belief in our national security, investment drive and international repute under this circumstance – where no one is sure who exactly is in charge? It is an unfair way to treat a country of over 140 million people (Abati; 2009, p.42).

The full text of this article, might be said to be sensational. However, other similar articles by Abati during the period under review leaves more to be desired. On the 15th of January 2010, Abati came up with another article entitled, “Yar’Adua: lost but found” (Abati, 2010, para 1). Also the same Abati published another article, entitled “Yar’Adua: The game is up” on the 7th of February 2010. In this article, Abati suggested that the “political strategy of president Yar’Adua was over” (Abati, 2010, para.4).

Dele Momodu in *Thisday Newspaper* of 5th December 2009, also came up with an article similar to that of Abati’s. In that article, “A Nation on Auto pilot” published on page 72 of the paper, Dele Momodu claimed that Nigeria had no leader. According to him:

Meanwhile, our nation continues to haemorrhage away. Everyone is calling for prayers, as if we’ve not been praying and fasting enough. Everything has gone quiet in the seat of power. Nothing is moving. But everyone has been involved in one permutation or the other, from the sublime to the supine (Momodu, 2009, p.72).

Basically, Momodu was trying to paint a picture of the vacuum that existed in the nation’s seat of power. However, one can argue that the entire content of his piece was rather sensational.

Tunde Rahuman of *Thisday Newspapers* equally came with an analysis which may be described as unwarranted. That story which was published on page 6 of *Thisday Newspaper* of 8th February 2010, described how the absence of the president was telling on the entire country. Rahuman argued that Anambra State’s electoral problem was connected to the president’s absence. In fact, the title of the story “Anambra falls victim of Yar’Adua’s Absence” may not be the best of headlines (Rahuman, 2010, p.6).

However, newspapers in the Northern part of the country appeared to be in support of the vacuum crisis or, at least, sympathized with Yar'Adua.

For instance, most stories published by these papers were not sensational or alarmist like those of their Southern Nigerian counterpart. Some of these stories' headlines read:

**Yar'Adua's resignation will upset political equation – senator** – *Daily Trust* 11 December 2009.

**No power vacuum at presidency – PDP insists**–*New Nigerian* 29th January 2010

- **Yar'Adua: ACF Disagrees with FEC** – *New Nigerian*, February 1, 2010
- **Yar'Adua: senate never discussed impeachment** – Mark. *Daily Trust*, February 3, 2010
- **Yar'Adua recovering fast, PDP BOT says** – *The New Nigerian*, January 2, 2010
- **Yar'Adua speaks on BBC today** – *Daily Trust*, January 12, 2010
- **Court: VP can wield Yar'Adua's powers** – *Daily Trust* – January 14, 2010

The above headlines, like many others, show that the Northern newspapers were very mild on the issue. Writing about the role the media, especially, the print played during the crisis, Ijeoma Nwaogwugwu of *Thisday Newspaper* asserts that:

Gratifyingly, several media organizations, particularly the print media, have taken strong positions on the leadership vacuum in the country and written persuasive editorials recommending that the president hand over to Dr. Goodluck Jonathan until he (Yar'Adua) is of sound mind and body to execute the functions and duties of his office, unfortunately, not all the stories published by the Nigerian media in the last 57 days have been correct. Quite a few have been false and misleading (Nwogwugwu, 2010, p.74).

In conclusion, one can argue that the print media in Nigeria managed the Yar'Adua's vacuum just as they manipulated the issue.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Every research activity in this area of learning usually relies on a theoretical base on which the study stands. Some decades ago; an American humorist, Will Rogers averred thus, "All I know is just what I read in the papers" (Udeze, 2002, p.29). In all sense of sincerity, this aphorism holds true in the context of the Nigerian environment. Most of what people knew about the Late Nigerian President, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's ill-health came principally from the newspaper.

Sequel to the above context, Agenda Setting theory became fit in giving this study a theoretical support.

During the 78-days presidential lacuna occasioned by the ill-health of Late Yar' Adua, the Nigerian people, most especially the literate ones, got knowledge of the ill-health and all its adjoining implications from the reportage of the press.

According to Graber (1990,p.74), proponents of this theory, Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, strongly believe that;

*Not only do they learn factual information about Public affairs and what is happening in the world, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis placed on it by the mass media. Graber (1990,p.74).*

In their essay, McCombs and Shaw describe how and to what extent the topics selected by news reporters for presentation by the mass media become the issues the public regards as important. Their findings have been confirmed by numerous other studies demonstrating that issues featured by the media become correspondingly important to the public. By contrast, issues receiving little media coverage are unlikely to arouse public concern or to engender any action. This is the advocacy of the Agenda Settings theorists.

Between November 23, 2009 and February 9, 2010, the Nigerian newspapers played an important role in setting the agenda for the people. The national assembly, federal executive council, the judiciary, pressure groups, civil society and the international community were all directed into the absence of Yar' Adua from his presidential seat. The importance placed on Yar' Adua's ill-health and consequent constitutional logjam then was a product of the angle the newspapers gave to it. This explains why Sandman et al. (1976, p.19) opined that:

The editorial decision that a particular event is not News is a self fulfilling judgment. If the mass media ignore it, then it cannot be news. Conversely, any event given major play in the mass media become, by definition, a major event. In this sense, even when the media do not tell us what to think, they tell us what to think about.

Similarly, McComb and Shaw (1972, p.28) believe that the mass media have the ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agenda to the public agenda. They also opined that people look to news professionals for cues on where to focus attention, so, that is, "we judge as important what the media judge as important" McCombs and Shaw (p.176).

The notion of agenda setting of the mass media is traceable to Lipmann who suggested that the media act as a mediator between "the world outside and the pictures in our heads," Lippmann (1922,p.3).

However, Cohen (1963,p.13), averred that the press may not be successful most of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.

In supporting the idea of Cohen, Defleur and Bill-Rockeach (1978,p.218) noted that "the mass media still play a major role in the social learning process, and have influence on how individuals acquire news, ideas, attitudes and change orientation in society."

The Nigerian newspapers is believed to have agenda for the Nigerian readers with their reportage of late President Yar' Adua's treatment sojourn in Saudi Arabia for 78 days. Accordingly, Edeani (1990,p.18) averred that:

The mass media have the ability to create and nurture vivid images of events in people's mind through the amount and style of coverage they give to the events. Events that are important in themselves are often easy to distinguish from others in terms of the prominence given to them by the mass media and the frequency with which accounts of those events are presented to the mass media audience.

This exposition on Agenda Setting Theory above, clearly gives the complete picture of how the theory is relatively supportive of the problem being investigated in this social study. This theory became one of the bases upon which this research work stands (Ragas and Tran 2013).

This theory also explains three out of the four hypotheses raised in this study. In hypothesis one, the researchers sought to find out whether Nigerian newspapers gave prominence to the 78 days presidential vacuum crisis. This theory explains the fact that agenda cannot be set if the papers did not give the vacuum crisis prominence in their reports. In fact, it can be concluded that through constant repetition and projection of an issue, agenda are set. Close to this, is the fact that the frequency with which an issue is reported can determine whether agenda will be set or not. Therefore, the last hypothesis in this study which has to do with frequency of coverage is better explained by the agenda setting theory. It is equally possible that the volume of a particular coverage can determine whether agenda will be set or not. For agenda to be set, theoretically, the issue must be covered adequately.

Another theory that can explain how the Nigerian press covered the crisis is the social responsibility theory.

### **The Social Responsibility Theory**

The universal demand for a socially responsible press is a direct result of the strong belief that sentiments, bias, deliberate distortion of facts or genuine errors of misinformation could threaten the guaranteed sovereignty, peace, security and progressive development of a nation (Ngwu, 1996,p.11). This perceived threat may not be limited to the nation's social fabrics alone. It could even affect, to a large extent, the nation's information dissemination system. That could be why, in its social responsibility theory, the *Hutchins Commission* of 1947 states that every responsible press devotes itself to the service of public interest.

In view of the above, it is right to argue that the Nigerian press should be socially responsible to the Nigerian publics, particularly as it pertains to its reportage of the 78 days presidential power vacuum crisis in Aso Rock Villa. This is because these mass media are obliged, to inform, educate, and protect the general public's interest at all times, especially on topical matters which affect their social fabric, hence their accountability to the general public.

Based on the above scenario, therefore, this study was, also, guided by the press Theory of Social Responsibility. The second hypothesis which deals with the direction of coverage can be better understood from the angle that it is the responsibility of the media institution to take a direction that is in conformity with the ethics of journalism. One expects that all journalists should take positive direction in their coverage of the Yar Adua presidential vacuum crisis.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The essence of this study was to analyse existing contents of data as it related to this research work. Putting the study in its appropriate context, content analysis research method was adjudged to be the most suitable and appropriate research method when studying the quantitative description of existing content material in communication.

Content analysis, according to Monette, Sullivan and Dejong (1998, p. 201) is a “method of transforming the symbolic content of a document, such as words or other images, from a qualitative, unsystematic form into a quantitative, systematic form”. Walizer & Wiener (1978), as cited in Ogbuoshi (2006, p.45), opined that content analysis is any systematic procedure designed to examine the content of recorded information. In relation to the idea of Ogbuoshi and Berelson, Scott (1985, p.17), sees content analysis as a study based on secondary data. Here, the data are derivable from newspapers, magazines, journals, books and other printed matter.

### Population of the Study

The population of the study encompasses all the newspapers published in Nigeria within this study period (83 newspapers) ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)). However, the researchers purposively selected four dailies of *The Guardian*, *New Nigerian*, *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers. *Daily Trust* and *New Nigerian* newspapers which are published in the North were selected to represent the Northern voice while *Thisday* and *The Guardian* newspapers represented the Southern voice. The study covered between November 23, 2009 and February 9, 2010. The import of the above revealed that each selected daily had 78 editions within the period under study. The summations of all the published editions are as follows.

<i>Thisday Newspaper</i>	78 editions
<i>The Guardian Newspaper</i>	78 editions
<i>New Nigerian Newspaper</i>	78 editions
<i>Daily Trust Newspaper</i>	78 editions
<b>Total</b>	<b>312 editions.</b>

The statistics above shows that the total population for the study is 312 editions of all the publications of the four purposively selected newspapers.

The rationale for the selection of these four national dailies are:

1. They represent the voices of both the North and the South of Nigeria.
2. They are daily tabloids in size, but broadsheets in content
3. They are inclusive of weekend publications
4. They have wide readership
5. The corporate reputations of the newspapers are high

### Determination of Sample Size

For the sake of statistical convenience as it concerns the management of complex data in manifest content form, the researchers took a representative sample out of the population of 312 editions of the four selected newspapers. The essence was to take a sample size that was analyzable within the purview and context of this research.

Consequent upon this premise, the researchers aligned themselves with Nwanna's (1998, p.44), stipulation of 40% for few hundreds in sample size determination (percentage formula).

$$n = \frac{312 \times 40}{100} = 124.8$$

$$n = 124.$$

The 0.8 left over is within the tolerable error margin (0.8 sampling error) since approximation into 125 cannot be divisible by the 4 newspapers selected. Therefore, the sample size is 124

### Sampling Techniques

Systematic random sampling method was used as the sampling procedure in order to select a true representative sample of the editions of the newspapers studied.

Firstly, the researchers numbered the days (24th November, 2009 to 8th February, 2010) and grouped them into 11 weeks.

#### November

23	(24)	25	26	(27)	(28)	29	<b>week 1</b>
(30)	1	2	(3)	4	(5)	6	<b>week 2</b>
7	8	(9)	10	(11)	(12)	13	<b>week 3</b>
14	(15)	16	(17)	(18)	19	20	<b>week 4</b>
21	22	(23)	24	(25)	26	27	<b>week 5</b>
28	29	(30)	31	1	2	(3)	<b>week 6</b>
(4)	5	(6)	7	(8)	9	(10)	<b>week 7</b>
11	12	13	(14)	(15)	16	(17)	<b>week 8</b>
18	19	(20)	(21)	22	23	(24)	<b>week 9</b>
25	26	(27)	28	(29)	30	31	<b>week 10</b>
1	(2)	3	(4)	5	(6)	7	<b>week 11</b>

The researchers subjected the 78 days into 11 constructed weeks so as to pick 3 days publications to represent each week. But the need to take out 31 issues for each daily to match the 124 sampled editions made the researchers to number the weeks into 11, and 2 weeks were randomly selected for 2 editions' representation, while the other 9 weeks produced 3 editions each, totalling 31. This was done in order to give all the weeks an equal chance of being selected.

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At the randomization of the weeks, weeks 5 and 10 produced only 2 day's publications, while the other weeks produced 3 day's editions each.

In week 5 and 10, Monday to Sunday were written down and 2 days were randomly selected to represent the week's edition each and in other weeks, 3 days each, were randomly selected.

The overall randomized sample is presented below.

<b>November, 2009:</b>	24,	27,	28					
<b>December, 2009:</b>	1,	3,	5,	9,	11,	12,	15,	17, 18,
		23,	25,	and 30				
<b>January, 2010:</b>	3,	4,	6,	8,	10,	14,	15,	
	18,	20,	21,	24,	27	and 29		
<b>February, 2010:</b>	2,	4	and 6.					

All this brought the number of days selected within the 78 – days absence of Late Yar' Adua from office to 31. The publications for these days multiplied by the 4 selected newspapers brought the statistics in tandem with the 124 sample representation selected.

### Units of Analysis

This is the smallest unit of a content analysis, but, also, one of the most important. "In written content, it might be a word or symbol, a theme, (a single assertion about one subject), or an entire article or story" (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 164). Units are wholes that analyze, distinguish and treat, as independent, variables (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 97). Krippendorff, further says that "the wholeness of a unit suggests that it is not further divided in the course of an analysis or at a particular stage of an analysis" (p. 97).

Berelson (1952,p.77), noted five major units of analysis when embarking on a study of this kind. They are: words, theme, character, time of publication, items and space. Also, Bruce (1989), cited in Babbie (2007, p.322), points out that units of analysis "might be words, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, (such as books or letters), concepts, semantics, or combinations of these."

Sequel to the position of Berelson and Babbie, the researchers focused their analysis in this study on **News, Editorials, News Features, Cartoons, and Opinion Articles**. Here, the entire contents of these units including headlines were used in relation to total newspaper content. The coding was done word for word. For cartoons, everything about them that relates to the subject matter was coded.

### Content Categories

In this study, the variables analysed were content categorized into the following:

**Table 3.1: Content Categories and Units of Analysis**

Items	Description	Assigned Code
<b>Newspaper</b>	<i>The Guardian</i>	1
	<i>Thisday</i>	2
	<i>Daily Trust</i>	3

	<i>New Nigerian</i>	4
<b>Months</b>	November 2009	5
	December 2009	6
	January 2010	7
	February 2010	8
<b>Story Type</b>	Straight News	9
	Editorial	10
	News Feature	11
	Cartoon	12
	Opinion articles	13
	<b>Placement</b>	Front page ( <i>front page banner lead stories=5 points, other front page stories= 4 points</i> )
Back page ( <i>back page banner lead stories= 3 points, other back page stories= 2 points</i> )		15
Inside page ( <i>all inside page stories= 1 point</i> )		16
<b>Direction</b>	Positive	17
	Negative	18
	Neutral	19
<b>Frequency</b>	Week1	20
	Week 2	21
	Week 3	22
	Week4	23
	Week 5	24
	Week 6	25
	Week 7	26
	Week 8	27
	Week 9	28
	Week 10	29
	Week11	30
<b>Volume</b>	0'' – 15''	31
	16'' – 30''	32
	31'' and above	33

### Measuring Instrument

The code sheet was designed and used as the instrument for the collection of data in this study. The justification for the use of this instrument was that it is the best in the collection of manifest content of communication, in line with the demands of this study.

### Intercoder Reliability

The inter-coder reliability test was used to assess the degree to which the coders agreed. The higher the percentage of agreement between and among the coders, the more reliable the analyzed content becomes.

The researchers engaged the services of 2 coders whom they trained for four weeks. Within these weeks, the coders were able to familiarise themselves with the study methodology, the objectives of the study, the code sheet and the coding instruction. Various results gotten during the training sessions were analysed and areas of disagreement studied and addressed.

Efforts were made to guard against agreement of coders by chance. In this regard, Scott's (1988, p.55), P1 index formula was adopted to scale the percentage of agreement between the 3 coders in this research work.

$$P_i = \frac{\% \text{ of observed agreement} - \% \text{ of expected agreement}}{1 - \% \text{ of expected agreement}}$$

The justification for the Scott's pi index formula was to guard against the Holsti's formula that is frequently used by researchers, which eventually and always produces faulty agreement (by chance) between and among independent coders. The intercoder reliability test was attached as an appendix. Nominal Scale Measurement was, equally, used to denote content categories as 0 and 1.

The intercoder- reliability test using Pi Index formula revealed thus:

*Cummulative Average Pairwise Percentage of Agreement for all tables /*

$$\text{AVG Percentage of Agreement} = 94.75\%$$

The reliability test done at the end of the entire coding showed that there was 94.75 agreement among the three coders. This means that the coding error was just 6.6 percent. This, according to researchers (Creswell, 2002 and Wimmer and Dominick, 2011), is acceptable. Details of this calculation is attached as an appendix

### Presentation of Content Data

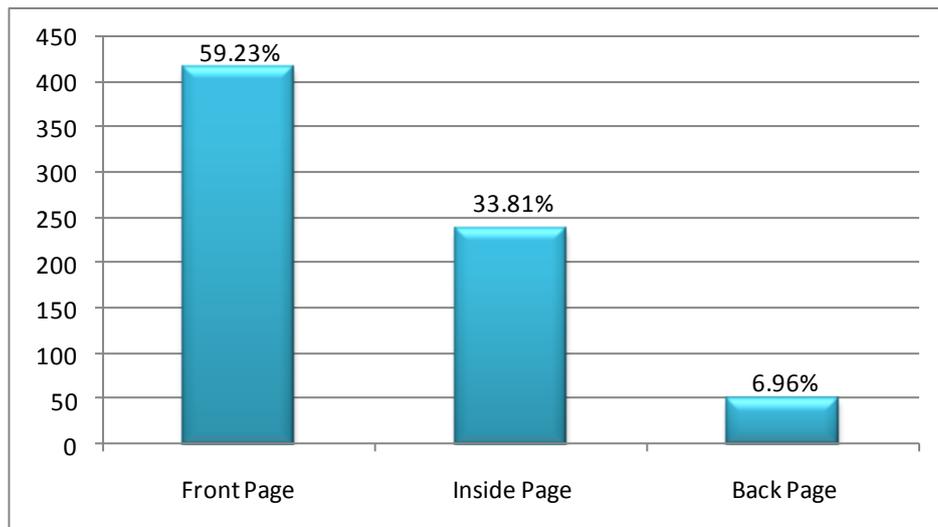
Here, data which form part of the content categories that reflected the four (4) research questions and hypotheses raised were analysed. They are presented in the tables and charts below according to the research questions.

**Research Question 1: How was the 78 days presidential power vacuum covered by the selected newspapers in terms of prominence?**

**Table 4.1 :Prominence (Placement)**

Newspapers	Front page	Inside page	Back page	Total	%
<i>The Guardian</i>	131	75	30	236	<b>33.52%</b>
<i>Thisday</i>	105	49	12	166	<b>23.58%</b>
<i>New Nigerian</i>	71	38	3	112	<b>15.91%</b>
<i>Daily Trust</i>	110	76	4	190	<b>26.99%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Content Analysis 2012

**Figure: 4.1**

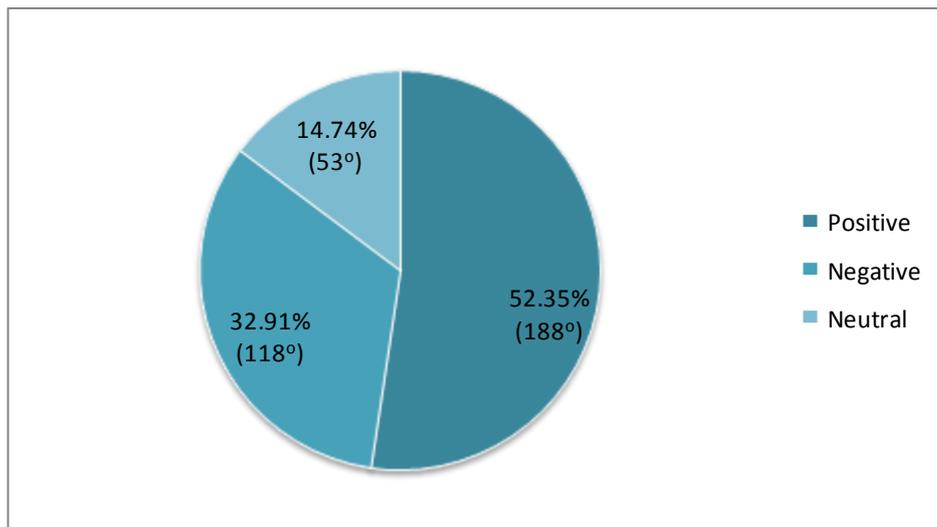
The table and chart above show the degree of prominence given to the presidential power vacuum under late president Yar'Adua by the selected newspapers. From the table, all the editorial contents of the selected papers that were published on the front page, scored a total of 417 points; those published in the inside page scored 238 points, while items on the back page got 49 points. *The Guardian* Newspaper scored 131 points on the front page; *Thisday* Newspaper got 105 points on the front page, *New Nigeria Newspaper* scored 71 points; while, *Daily Trust* scored 110 points on the front page. On the inside page, *The Guardian Newspaper* scored 75 points for all editorial contents on the issue under review; *Thisday Newspaper* scored 49 points; *New Nigeria* scored 38 points; while *Daily Trust* scored 76 points. On the back page, *The Guardian* scored a total of 30 points for all the editorial contents published on the presidential power vacuum; *Thisday Newspaper* scored 12 points; *New Nigeria* scored 3 and *Daily Trust* scored 4 points.

**Research Question 2: What direction of coverage did the selected newspapers take in the coverage of the 78 days presidential power vacuum crisis?**

**Table4.2: Direction of Coverage**

Newspapers	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total	%
<i>The Guardian</i>	99	26	16	141	<b>30.12</b>
<i>Thisday</i>	44	36	19	99	<b>21.15</b>
<i>News Nigerian</i>	12	43	8	63	<b>13.46</b>
<i>Daily Trust</i>	90	49	26	165	<b>35.26</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>245(52.35%)</b>	<b>154(32.91%)</b>	<b>69( 14.74%)</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Content Analysis 2012

**Figure: 4.2**

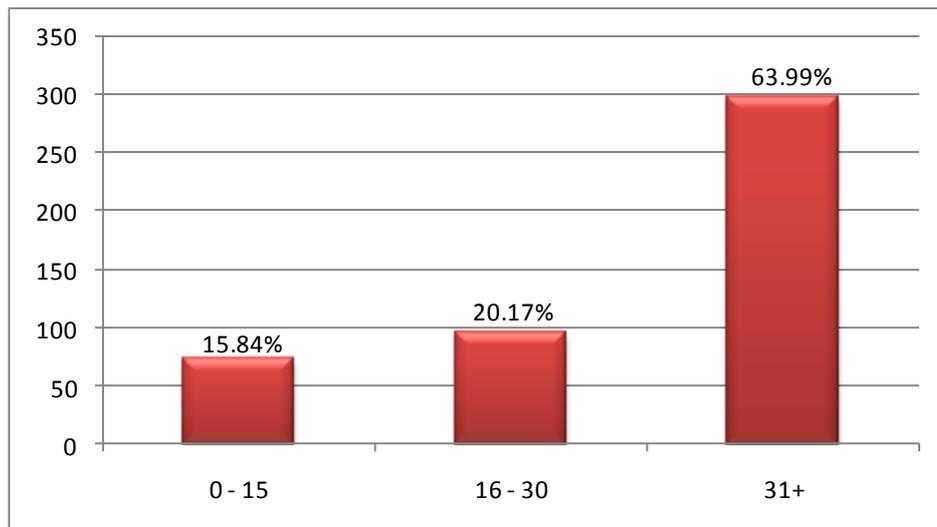
The data in the table and chart above show the direction the selected newspapers took in their coverage of the power vacuum. A total of 242 reports published by the dailies were positive, 154 reports were negative, while 66 reports were neutral. The interpretation is that 242 reports were against the president's absence, 154 reports were in support of his absence, while 66 reports were neither for nor against the power vacuum

**Research Question 3: What volume of coverage did the 78 days presidential power vacuum receive from the selected newspaper?**

**Table 4.3: Volume of Coverage (Adequacy)**

Newspapers	0-15	16-30	31+	Total	%
<i>The Guardian</i>	8	18	115	141	<b>30.13%</b>
<i>Thisday</i>	25	24	50	99	<b>21.15%</b>
<i>New Nigerian</i>	3	12	48	63	<b>13.46%</b>
<i>Daily Trust</i>	37	42	86	165	<b>35.26%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>73 (15.60%)</b>	<b>96 (20.51%)</b>	<b>299(63.89%)</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Content Analysis 2012*



**Figure: 4.3**

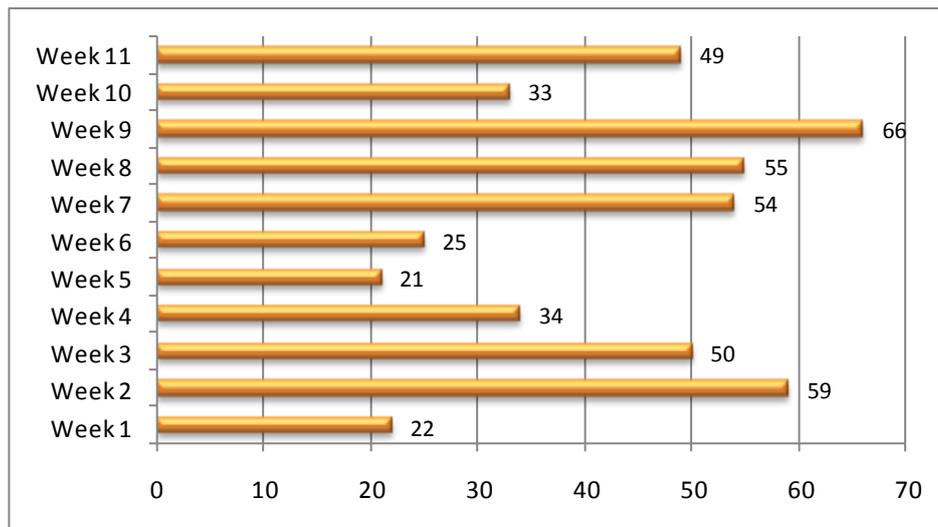
The data in the table and chart above show the amount of space allotted to the presidential power vacuum in the selected newspapers. A total of 73 issues were published in spaces occupying between 0-15 inches; 93 issues were published in spaces between 16-30 inches; while those published in spaces occupying 31 inches and above were 295. This table also shows that 63.99 per cent of all the issues published occupied between 31 inches and above.

**Research Question 4: What frequency of coverage did the sampled newspaper give to the power vacuum under late Yar'Adua.**

**Table 4.4: Frequency of Coverage**

Newspapers	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Total
<i>The Guardian</i>	5	18	7	7	4	8	23	19	26	11	13	141
<i>This Day</i>	8	9	11	11	3	6	10	9	13	8	11	99
<i>New Nigeria</i>	2	10	6	6	3	2	7	7	6	4	10	63
<i>Daily Trust</i>	7	22	26	10	11	9	14	20	21	10	15	165
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>468</b>

*Source: content analysis 2012*



**Figure: 4.4**

In the table and chart above, 22 issues were published in the first week of the power vacuum; 59 in the second week; 50 in the third week; 35 issues in the fourth week; 17 issues in the fifth and sixth week. In the seventh week, 50 issues were published by the selected newspapers; the eighth week had 55 issues; week nine has 64 issues; week ten had 33 issues while the eleventh week had 49 issues

### **Discussion of Findings**

The discussion in this section is guided by the four research hypotheses raised in this study which were re-stated at the beginning of every test of the hypotheses. Each hypothesis was discussed based on the findings as obtained from the test of the hypothesis. These findings are linked to other similar studies and theories used in order to give the findings empirical backing.

In hypothesis one, the researchers sought to find out whether the presidential power controversy under late president Umaru Musa Yar Adua received prominence in Nigerian newspapers. After the hypothesis was subjected to an empirical test, using Chi-square formula, it received statistical support. This means that the alternate hypothesis was supported. The implication of this is that the presidential power vacuum controversy received prominence in the selected newspapers. From the analysis, the calculated value (25.4163) was greater than the table value (12.592). Going by the statistical rule of Chi-square, it means that the alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) should be accepted and the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) rejected.

Apart from this, the coded data which were presented in contingency Table 1 showed that issues published on the presidential power vacuum that came on the front page, scored a total of 417 points, those that came on the back page scored 49, while those published on the inside page had 238 points. Going by the benchmark set by the researchers, the number of issues published on the front and back pages (466) were enough to say that the issues received prominence.

The Findings is supported by the writings of the McComb and Shaw (1972 p.28). These scholars found in their studies that the media have the ability to transfer the salience of items on their news by placing them prominently. The work of Graber (1996 p.257), also, supports the outcome of the hypothesis test. Graber (1990 p.257), found that the prominence given to

the Watergate Scandal contributed to the political down fall of President Nixon of the United States in the early 70s. It was observed by Graber that the press “has a way of placing issues prominently to attract attention especially during national crisis.” The work of Umeh (2010, p.11) equally supports this result. She found that newspaper usually lift issues above the market place of ideas when it comes to political crisis.

The Agenda Setting theory as put forward by McCombs and Donald in 1972, also, gives strong backing to this finding. The theory holds that an agenda can be set by placing an issue prominently (McCombs and Shaw, 1972, p.28).

In hypothesis two, the researchers tested whether the presidential power vacuum controversy under late President Yar’Adua took a positive direction in Nigerian newspapers. This was done by looking at the directions the coded issues took. At the end of the test, the alternate hypotheses ( $H_1$ ) received statistical support, while the null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) did not. This means that the presidential power vacuum controversy took a positive direction in the selected papers.

Statistically speaking, the calculated value (59.812) was greater than the table value (12.592). This, therefore, means that the  $H_1$  received statistical support and hence is accepted. The data coded, also, showed that the issue took a positive, direction in the selected newspapers. From the Contingency Table 2, 245 published issues were positive as against 154 issues that were negative. 69 issues were neither against nor in support (neutral). Therefore, looking at these figures, one will readily see that more positive stories were published by the four selected newspapers on the issue. By positive, we mean that a majority of the published items were against the absence of the late president from office. Negative reports mean those supportive of the absence.

This finding is supported by the writing of Edeani (1990, p.18). According to him, the mass media have the ability to create and nurture vivid images of events in the people’s minds through the direction they take. Edeani (1990, p.18), added that the press, most often than not, takes a positive direction in its reports.

The social responsibility function of the media calls for a well-behaved press. It is expected, going by the Social Responsibility theory of the press, that the media should remain socially responsible. The positive direction taken by the selected newspapers on the Yar’Adua issue showed that the papers were socially responsible during the period. By not aligning themselves with the propaganda of late Yar’Adua’s kitchen cabinet shows how socially responsible they were.

Hypothesis three is on the volume of coverage given to the presidential power vacuum controversy under late president Yar’Adua. This hypothesis was tested specifically to find out whether the issue was adequately covered by Nigerian newspapers. The test revealed that the alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) received statistical support while the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) did not receive any support. This means that the presidential power vacuum controversy was adequately covered by the selected newspapers.

The result gotten from the test of the hypothesis is supported by the findings of Umeh (2010, p.29). According to her, the Nigerian press will always give controversial issues adequate coverage. Bello (2010, p.30), equally found in his study that only controversial issues get enough space in Nigerian newspapers.

In hypothesis four, the researchers sought to find out whether Nigerian newspapers frequently covered the 78 days presidential power vacuum. The test revealed that the selected papers frequently covered the 78 days power vacuum.

In the test, the alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) was accepted while the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected. This is, because the calculated value (**53.4793**) is greater than the table value (43.773). This finding is supported by the findings of Park (1993.p.11), who found that most newspapers' are frequently covered in order to increase sales. Umeh (2010, p.22), equally lend credence to the findings of park. According to her, the mass media, especially the print, frequently carry controversial reports in a bid to increase sales. Yakubu (2010, p. 34) in his study of Yar Adua's absence equally found that the press covered the issue more frequently.

### **Summary of Findings**

To empirically ascertain how Nigerian newspapers covered the 78 days presidential power vacuum controversy under late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, four (4) national dailies (*The Guardian, ThisDay, New Nigerian and Daily Trust Newspapers*) were content analysed. In doing this analysis, four research hypotheses were raised and tested using Chi-square statistical formula. After the test, all the hypotheses received statistical support.

The test revealed the following results:

- (1) The selected newspapers gave the 78 days presidential power vacuum controversy prominence in their coverage.
- (2) The selected dailies took a positive direction in their coverage of the 78 days power vacuum crisis under late President Yar'Adua
- (3) The 78 days presidential power vacuum crisis under late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was given much volume of coverage which can be taken to be in-depth.
- (4) Nigerian newspapers frequently covered the 78 days presidential power vacuum controversy.

### **CONCLUSION**

After a thorough analysis of the data, results gotten and literature reviewed, the researchers reached the following conclusions

That Nigerian newspapers gave prominence to controversial issues, especially when they have national implications. This is so, judging from the way the 78 days presidential power vacuum under Yar'Adua and other issues were covered.

The researchers, also, conclude that Nigerian newspapers took a positive posture in their coverage of the presidential power vacuum under late President Yar'Adua.

Again, the researchers conclude that the power vacuum controversy, like any other power vacuum in the world, was adequately covered by Nigerian newspapers.

It was finally concluded that Nigerian newspapers covered the presidential power vacuum crisis under late President Musa Yar'Adua more frequently.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the analysis made, the literature reviewed, and the results gotten, some recommendations were made.

1. First, a wider study covering more dailies and magazines should be carried out by interested researchers. This will help to have a wider understanding of how the Nigerian press covered the presidential power vacuum issue under late Yar'Adua.
2. More so, ownership or geographical location of a print medium should not be seen to affect editorial contents.
3. Also, desirable is a comparative study of the Northern and Southern axis of the Nigerian newspapers coverage of the power vacuum crisis under late president Yar'Adua to see if there could be other salient points like the credibility score sheet of the newspapers of these geographical divides of Nigeria.
4. On the final analysis, we recommend that the mass media, especially, the print, should go beyond setting agenda to consolidating agenda. A whole lot of times, the mass media set agenda only for it to collapse because it was not consolidated. From past experiences, the media set agenda that do not stand the test of time, because they were not consolidated. In fact, if agenda are not consolidated, the public soon move away from the set agenda and this, most times leads to serious confusion.
5. In the light of recommendation 5 above, the researchers are proposing *Agenda Consolidation Hypothesis*. This hypothesis is saying that when agenda are set, they should be consolidated to avoid agenda collapse or lack of streamlining. Consolidation of agenda will effectively guide public opinion.

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