

‘Beyond Buhari, Jonathan’: An Assessment of Four Nigerian Newspapers’ (*The Guardian, Vanguard, Independent and Leadership*) editorial coverage of the 2015 Nigerian General Elections

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the knees that prayed for me.

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Abstract

The success of Nigeria's 2015 general elections was unexpected, given the tense political and security climate in which the polls were conducted. It is against this backdrop that this study explores the contribution of four newspapers (*The Guardian, Vanguard, Independent* and *Leadership*) and, in particular, their editorials, to the relatively peaceful and mostly credible 2015 general elections in Nigeria. This qualitative study, located with an interpretivist tradition, draws on both in-depth individual interviews with editorial writers, and thematic content analysis of selected editorials to explore three themes: – violence-free polls, rational voting and credible electoral process. These newspaper editorials made moral and ethical appeals urging “supra-national” and patriotic attitudes as well as more detailed process interventions. Drawing from the theories of argumentation, the research suggests that three kinds (forensic, epideictic and deliberative) of arguments were made and three modes of argumentation (logos, pathos and ethos) were used by editorial writers to advance their arguments. This study examines what the editorial writers hoped to achieve and the normative ideals they drew on in the discharge of what they saw as their editorial duties. Drawing on theoretical insights from normative theories of journalism, and particularly social responsibility theory, this research posits that editorial writers hoped to arrest the spate of violence in the Nigerian polity, raise the level of discussion and redirect the attention of politicians in particular to core issues confronting ordinary Nigerians. The study finds a correlation between the editorials written and the normative ideals embodied in the social responsibility theory, which, the study finds, is the most influential normative ideal in the ‘mainstream’ Nigerian news media, at least in print. This study thus argues that in view of the range and frequency of focus on three core themes, and the persuasive power of writing, a case can be made for the editorials of these four major newspapers playing a constructive and positive role and making some contribution to the eventual peaceful and credible outcome of 2015 national elections in Nigeria.

Acronyms

Action Congress of Nigeria – ACN

Action Group – AG

All Progressives Congress – APC

Association for Better Nigeria – ABN

British Broadcasting Corporation – BBC

Chief of Army Staff - COAS

Department for State Security – DSS

European Union – EU

Federal Electoral Commission – FEDECO

Independent National Electoral Commission – INEC

National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons – NCNC

National Human Rights Commission – NHRC

National Party of Nigeria – NPN

Northern Elements Peoples Union – NEPU

Northern Peoples Congress – NPC

Peoples Democratic Party – PDP

Permanent Voter Card – PVC

Temporary Voter Card –TVC

United Middle Belt Congress – UMBC

United Progressives Grand Alliance – UPGA

Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front – ZANU – PF

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Chapter One

Context

Journalism in general, editorial writing in particular, is more than another way of making money. It is a profession devoted to the public welfare and to public service. The chief duty of its practitioners is to provide the information and guidance toward sound judgments which are essential to the healthy functioning of a democracy (Aggarwal 2006:329).

1.1 Introduction

Nigeria has had a tortuous electoral history since gaining independence from the United Kingdom in 1960 (Orji 2015). The country has conducted nine general elections and several regional, state or local council elections in the past fifty-five years (Orji 2015). Three (1979, 1993 and 1999) of these were organised by the military to hand over power to civilian administration (after previous *coups d'états*) while the others facilitated a transfer of power between civilian governments (Orji 2015). Elections organised by incumbent administrations have been particularly problematic (Agbaje & Adejumobi 2006). Excluding the 2011 and 2015 general elections, previous elections have been characterised by the ruling party's monopolisation of state and other media, and other electoral spaces for their own advantage (Orji 2015). This trend played out in the landslide victories recorded in 1964, 1983, 2003 and 2007 elections by the then ruling parties (Ibeanu 2007).

For many observers, the 2015 elections in Nigeria posed grave danger to the peace of the country owing to the manner in which the two main political parties – Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC) – conducted their campaigns. From the beginning of the electioneering period in November 2014, the campaigns were marred by reports of violent attacks by rival political groups (NHRC 2015). Following the Department of State Security Services' (DSS) raid on APC offices in Lagos, which was instigated by the allegation of illegal duplication of voter cards, the then opposition party, APC accused the PDP of engaging in state-sponsored violence. Far from being issue-based, the two parties engaged in “negative campaign tactics involving fierce personal attacks on the candidates and prominent party members” (Orji 2015:77). In addition, the long-term political rivalry between the north and south became particularly acute during this period. With the PDP's

presidential candidate, President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from south and the APC's candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, a Muslim from the north, the contest took on ethno-religious coloration (Dode & Edet 2015). A well-known northern leader, Lawal Kaita threatened that Nigeria could only remain as one nation if the Presidency returned to the North in 2015 (Dode & Edet 2015). Conversely, an ex-militant warlord in the Niger Delta region, Chief Government Ekpemupolo reportedly said that, "... President Jonathan 'must' win this election for Nigeria to continue to stay together" (O'Neil et al 2015: 1). In addition to verbal exchanges, violent attacks from both political parties increased (NHRC 2015). APC accused the PDP of killing APC supporters travelling to a campaign rally in Bori, Rivers State (Ezigbo 2015). Counter-accusations that the party's supporters set ablaze President Jonathan's campaign vehicles in Plateau and Niger States were levelled against the APC by the PDP. Similarly, the campaign train of President Jonathan was pelted with stones in four states in the run up to the elections (Dode & Edet 2015).

1.2 Statement of the problem and objectives of the study

The 2015 Nigerian general elections were held in charged political atmosphere. Despite this, the elections and the outcome were more peaceful and credible than anticipated. As a Nigerian and close observer of Nigerian politics, I was particularly intrigued by the outcome of the polls. I wondered what factors could have contributed to the surprisingly peaceful and relatively credible polls? As an avid consumer of news media, I also wondered what roles the media played, in particular, I wondered about what roles newspaper editorials played in the results of the elections? While acknowledging other factors may have had an impact on the positive outcome of election, an initial cursory look at newspaper coverage at the time and newspaper editorials more specifically, indicated that the media had been making an unusually earnest appeal to Nigerians, and to Nigeria's political elites in particular (who are the main readers of daily papers in Nigeria (Salawu 2004) to eschew violence, ensure credible electoral process and to respect the wishes of the people. It is these initial observations that have led to this study. Editorials themselves often capture the general tenure of the paper's coverage. While this study does not look closely at the relationship between editorials and various newspapers' overall coverage, I was aware that the editorially expressed 'opinion' of key newspapers in Nigeria seems to carry some weight. While it may not be possible to work out how much weight, or what precise impact through this study (or possibly any study), the objectives of this study is therefore to examine why these editorials were shaped in the way they were. What were the patterns, or key themes covered? How were the appeals made, and

to whom were they addressed? Furthermore, what were the writers hoping to achieve through their editorials?

This study seeks, among other things, to investigate the possible contribution of key newspapers, and their editorials, to the unexpectedly successful and largely peaceful polls. Thus, this study explores both the editorials themselves, and the views of some of the writers of these editorials, drawing on a selection of four national newspapers. In particular, this study examines the normative ideals and beliefs that underpinned the creation of these editorials during the four-month period – December 2014 to March 2015. This study therefore focuses on the delicate interplay between news media (and editorialising in particular) and democracy in the specific national context of the 2015 Nigerian general elections. The election was held on 28th March, 2015. The key research questions for this study are:

- (1) What is the content of these editorials? More specifically what were the key editorial themes in the run-up to the election?
- (2) What normative ideals did editorial writers draw on in constructing these editorials?
- (3) What did editorial writers hope to achieve through their editorials?
- (4) What rhetorical strategies did editorial writers employ to advance their argument?
- (5) Is it possible to draw any conclusions about the contributions the editorials made to the peaceful nature of the elections and relatively smooth transition of power in 2015?

This study employs qualitative research methodology as it is concerned with getting insights into what editorial writers hoped to achieve through their editorials and the normative ideals they drew on in the discharge of their duties. The study also examines the themes that emerged from the editorials and the rhetorical strategies used to make the editorials persuasive. To this end, this work is inductive (Elo & Kyngas 2008). This is because as the researcher, I am approaching the editorials with an open mind, as to identify the themes that will emerge from my immersion in the text (Holsti 1969).

This study employs a three-part research design:

- Thematic content analysis will be used to identify the key themes that emerged from the editorials;
- Rhetorical analysis will be employed to tease out the strategies editorial writers used to further their arguments;
- In-depth individual interviews with editorial writers will be used to explore what they hoped to achieve, and the normative ideals they drew on in creating these editorials in the run up to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria.

1.3 A brief history of selected Newspapers

The Nigerian newspaper industry is a vibrant one (Babalola 2002) and is often adjudged the freest on the African continent (Bourgault 1995). However, recently, the press in Nigeria has witnessed growing government interference in its operations. A 2015 freedom of the press report published by the Freedom House highlights incidences of harassment, intimidation and obstruction of press by state security agencies in Nigeria ([Freedomhouse](#) 2016). After the 1859 debut of *Iwe Irohin*, Nigerians have been deluged with different newspapers, most of which are privately-owned (Babalola 2002). The press is arguably the unsung hero of Nigeria's democracy, fighting to entrench a democratic ethos in the country. Below is a brief account of newspapers selected for this study:

1.3.1. *The Guardian*

The Guardian was established in 1983 by Alex Ibru with the aim of presenting balanced coverage of events and of promoting the best interests of Nigeria (Guardian 2016). Fuller (2004) notes that the paper is reputed to have pioneered the introduction of quality journalism in Nigeria with its incisive editorial contents. *The Guardian* hit newsstands on 22 February 1983 as a weekly paper. On 4 July 1983, *The Guardian* began its daily publication ([Wikipedia](#) 2016).

The paper is guided by its commitment to upholding the traditions and principles of republican democracy (Guardian 2016). It claims it firmly believes that the duty of the state is not only to protect and defend the citizens, but also to create the necessary political, social, economic and cultural conditions, so that all citizens may realise their full potential ([Guardian](#) 2016). The pursuance of these ideals has frequently put the paper on a collision course with the authorities, especially military dictatorships. *The Guardian* was shut down by the military administration of Gen. Sani Abacha at the height of June 12 crisis (Ibelema 2003). The paper has remained true to its motto, "Conscience, Nurtured by Truth" inspired by Uthman Dan Fodio's saying, "Conscience is an open wound; only truth can heal it" ([Guardian](#) 2016).

1.3.2. *Vanguard*

Vanguard newspaper was founded in 1984 by Sam Amuka (a renowned veteran journalist who wrote a column called Sad Sam Fame) under the name Vanguard Media Limited. Amuka was previously the editor of *Sunday Times* and the pioneer Managing Director of the

Punch newspaper (Vanguard 2016). The *Vanguard* launched on 3 June 1984 as a weekly title before going daily on 15 July 1984.

In pursuance of its motto, “Towards a better life for the people,” the paper aspires to serve the people through a stated commitment to the ideals of free enterprise, the rule of law and good governance (Vanguard 2016). *Vanguard* prides itself as the most entertaining, refreshing, authoritative, detailed and reader-friendly newspaper in the nation (Vanguard 2016). Its target audiences are the upwardly mobile executives and captains of industry. In over three decades of operation, *Vanguard* has had five editors – something the current owners say is a testament to its stable management style. There is an array of media products in Vanguard Media Limited: *Daily Vanguard*, *Saturday Vanguard*, *Sunday Vanguard*, *Financial Vanguard*, *Allure*, *Sweet Crude*, *Hitech*, *Vanguard Sports and Cyber life* (Vanguard 2016). To encourage public debate about the myriads of challenges confronting the Nigeria and Africa in general, *Vanguard* has organised series of conferences where intellectuals within and outside the country were invited to speak on diverse issues (Vanguard 2016).

1.3.3. *Independent*

Independent was incorporated into Independent Media Limited on 17 July 2001. It began publication on 1 October 2001. Independent Newspaper Limited publishes *Independent*, *Independent Saturday* and *Independent Sunday* (Independent 2016). Its vision is “To be Nigeria’s First Independent National Quality Newspaper.” With a mission to produce a high quality, vibrant and viable newspaper that will inform and shape the nation’s present and aspiring political, business, economic and cultural leadership, *Independent* seeks to challenge and inspire the nation’s journalists to advance and defend the public good and deliver superior value to all stakeholders (Independent 2016). The editorial thrust guiding the newspaper holds that “the paper shall be independent on all matters, but never neutral on any matter especially those pertaining to the well-being of the people of Nigeria” (Independent 2016).

1.3.4 *Leadership*

Leadership newspaper entered the Nigerian newspaper market on 1 October 2004 (Leadership 2016). Published by Sam Nda-Isaiah, *Leadership* started as a weekly newspaper. After more than a year of publication, *Leadership* went daily on 1 February 2006 (Leadership 2016). Based in Abuja, *Leadership* newspaper has a number of titles in its stable: *Leadership*, *Leadership Friday*, *Leadership Weekend*, *Leadership Sunday* and *Leadership Hausa*. In

addition, the paper publishes *Cognescenti* - a 16-page magazine pull-out on *Leadership Weekend – CEOConfidential* – a 12-page magazine pull-out in *Leadership Sunday* – and *Government* – a weekly paper on governance and leadership (Leadership 2016).

The objectives of *Leadership* are anchored by the need to stand up for good governance and defend the interest of the Nigerian State against even its leaders (Leadership 2016). The paper pledges to “raise her pen at all times in defence of what is right”. *Leadership*'s target audience are those interested in the political, cultural, business, religious and other affairs of the nation (Leadership 2016).

The next section discusses the complex relationship among media, democracy and election.

1.4 Media, democracy and election: exploring a complex relationship

Media's roles in a democracy are complex, intricate and difficult to unravel (Hyden & Okigbo 2002). Additionally, it is to be noted, that what constitutes a democratic state is a contentious subject. Randall (1998) notes that the conceptions of democracy differ and have less consensus around its defining criteria. This study applies democracy in an “elemental” or “minimalist” sense (Storm 2008). According to this definition, a society is democratic insofar as it has the following generally accepted qualities: periodic and inclusive free and fair elections; elected representatives that have effective power to govern; and the guarantee of key and basic civil liberties (Collier & Levitsky 1997). The centrality of the media in democracy has been widely acknowledged by a number of scholars (Curran 1977; Berman & Witzner 1997; Stromback 2005; McConnell & Becker 2002). Lichtenberg observes, “This role is, after all, a primary reason freedom of the press has been thought a necessary safeguard in a democratic society” (1990:1). Berman and Witzner (1997) contend that free access and transfer of information is vital to the concept of democracy. The authors maintain that an important component of any democratic society is the idea of free and open communication characterised by a variety of channels (1997). Garnham (1992) insists that some form of communicative action lies at the heart of both the theory and practice of democracy. Taking this further, Gunther and Munghan (2000:1) refer to the mass media as the “connective tissue” of democracy. McQuail (1994) argues that the practice of democratic politics is largely dependent on mass media.

There is a commonly made argument by those engaged in media development projects, that the freedom of expression and of the press, are vital to democracy (McConnell & Becker

2002; Gurevitch; Blumer 1995; Lichtenberg 1990 & Curran 1977). According to this argument, without these basic freedoms, authoritarian and other forms of undemocratic societies cannot become fully democratic (McConnell & Becker 2002). Scholars have noted the overlapping 'roles' of journalism and certain core practices of democracy (Lichtenberg 1990; O'Neil 1998; Randall 1998). These roles, it has to be pointed out, are most times normative, that is, they are aspirations that are not always realised in practice. According to Randall (1998), the media is to act as conduits of vital political information. This may mean providing guidance by way of interpretation of that information in order to enable citizens to participate fully in public political life. Randall (1998) notes that this role is particularly crucial during elections. Secondly, the media should constitute a means of expression for the full range of political interests and viewpoints, and a forum for public discussion. This is closely related to Habermas' notion of the media as a facilitator in the public sphere to be discussed in chapter two. The media should act as mobiliser by providing incentives to citizens to become more informed and involved. Lastly, Randall (1998) states that the media must act as guardians against abuse of power by public authorities. For his part, O'Neil (1998: 1) made a similar observation when he described the media as "a vital conduit of relations between the state and society." He further argues that the media should provide its watchdog role by critically assessing state action as well as provide such information to the public (O'Neil 1998).

Elections are an integral part of any democratic process, providing a mechanism for leadership succession and change. Elections are seen as a means towards the attainment of political power in democracies as it (democracy) is founded on aggregation and articulation of people's interest (Awopeju 2011). Liberal democracy is a political arrangement marked by periodic elections wherein politicians organise themselves into parties to vie to form a government that is authorised by the vote of the majority (Sandbrook 1988). Ideally, elections are expressions of a social contract between the state and the people, providing the basis for political authority, and state legitimacy (Adejumobi 2000). In addition, elections are central to the conception of political accountability and act as a mechanism for guaranteeing reciprocal exchanges between the rulers and the ruled (Adejumobi 2000; Frere 2011).

There is a consensus among media scholars that the media perform certain key roles in an election (Frere 2011; Nyamnjoh 2005) that accentuate the media's democracy facilitating role during non-election periods. This is because much of what the electorate learn of the political process, and about political parties offerings, is mediated through the media (Dalton et al

1998). In her study of post-conflict elections in central Africa, Frere (2011) asserts that the media's involvement in the electoral process starts before the commencement of campaigns, with clearly defined functions set out in the electoral law. The law outlines the steps the media should take to inform voters as well as the regulatory framework that will guide media's actions. During the election campaign, Frere (2011: 127) observes that the task of the media is to "offer citizens a clear distinction between electoral information, political information, political communication and advertising." Far from being mere mouthpieces of political parties and candidates, journalists must ensure that they treat all contestants equally, identify the challenges at the core of the campaign and emphasise the solutions offered by the politicians to the voters.

In Nigeria, this is set out in the Nigerian Media Code of Election Coverage: guidelines for media activities throughout the electoral period (INEC 2014). Olukotun (2000) posits that the media (press inclusive) play the role of provision of information to the voters about candidates, the electoral process, the voting dates and the processes that govern the exercise. Writing elsewhere, Olukotun (2014) notes that at elections, the media are the main channels through which the voters receive information regarding the political parties, their platforms, the voting process, the electoral umpire and other concerns relevant to the performance of their fundamental rights. According to him, the media are vital to the dissemination of credible information in addition to offering equal communication access to main contenders and the electoral commission (Olukotun 2014). For his part, Okoro (2010) lists surveillance, interpretation and political socialisation as functions that are provided by the media through news reports and analyses directed to the electorate. Adepaju (2015) notes that given that election in a democratic society affects everyone directly or indirectly, the people should be empowered with relevant information in order to take active part in elections. Carey (1976:50) writes: "an election campaign exists in the public consciousness largely the way it exists in mass media presentation of campaign events." For this reason, Okigbo (1992) argues that elections are largely a media event.

Given that many of the functions mentioned above are normative, it comes as no surprise that it has been the subject of inquiry for a number of media scholars. Willems (2012) notes that research on media and elections are marked by a predisposition towards elections in the United States. But there is growing interest among African scholars in media and elections (Frere 2011; Kadhi & Rutten 2001). Scholarship on media and elections in Africa has largely focused on media's role before, during and after election. In this respect, scholars have tended

to investigate media coverage of elections (Kadhi & Rutten 2001; Temin & Smith 2002; Teshome-Bahiru 2009; Ismail & Deane 2008; Ogenga 2008), often neglecting longer-term coverage. Others have been more explicit in their assessment of media's performance during elections. There has been a focus on journalists' professional conduct (Frere 2011), framing of elections in selected newspapers (Chuma 2008), assessing the influence of opposition papers on election campaign agenda (Waldahl 2005b) and the condition in which the media have operated prior to elections (Moyses 2009).

Literature on media and elections in Nigeria is quite similar to that elsewhere in Africa. Most of the studies have been done to appraise media coverage during elections (Umechukwu 2004; Okigbo 1992; Olayiwola 1991; Panter-Brick 1979). Some studies have examined gender, such as Oyesomi and Oyero (2012) and, Kehinde (2011) has investigated how Nigerian press covered women participation in 2007 and 2011 general elections. With the rise of mobile telephony penetration in Nigeria (Adomi 2005), social media is becoming an important area of research because of its potential to galvanise political support during elections (Okoro & Nwafor 2013; Kushin & Yamamoto 2010; Ifukor 2010).

On this basis, this study seeks to assess the possible contributions of newspaper editorials to the relatively peaceful and credible 2015 general elections and the ideals editorial writers drew on in the discharge of their duties. This is quite significant because rarely has the success of an election suspected to be a consequence of media's contributions. This resonates strongly with Nyamnjoh's view that "research on media and elections suggests that the media have not performed this role properly" (Nyamnjoh 2005: 56).

1.5 Brief overview of elections in Africa

To understand elections in Nigeria we need to understand the context of post liberation Africa. In addition, we need to consider how many inaugural democratic systems were subverted by coups and take-overs by dictators, that is, the elimination of democracy, or the adaptation of democracy to African circumstances. Many have argued that this was usually a cover for power grabs and elite domination. The complex nature of the history of elections in Africa is a reflection of the diversity of the continent's colonial past. It also constitutes part of general history of world politics. Huntington (1990) asserts that the political institutions in the modern world developed in three waves of democratization. The first wave of democratization, which occurred between 1828 and 1926 (Huntington 1990), had its roots in the French and America Revolutions. The second wave of democratization started at the

beginning of the Second World War in 1939 and ended in 1962. Flint (1983) observes that the process of decolonisation originated as a movement for colonial reform in British Africa. Flint (1983) explains that the consideration of policies to decolonise Africa were completely inspired by the British authorities and predated the outbreak of war. Insisting that nationalist elements played no role in these developments until the plans had reached an advanced stage. Flint (1983) posits that the emergence of nationalist political parties was actually a consequence of the decisions to decolonise and was a creation of imperial policy. According to him, there were no significant ideological differences between nationalist and imperial policy once colonial reform planning started after 1938. The only disagreement related to the timing of the decolonisation process. On the alignment of nationalist and imperial vision of the decolonisation process, Flint (1983: 390-391) writes:

The ‘nationalist’ wished to inherit the colonial state, the colonial frontier and the colonial apparatus of power in all its ramifications. The British had equal need of ‘nationalist’ cadres who could carry through exactly such aspirations, and if the nationalists were not there they would have to be created and nurtured.

Such was the marriage of two needs that culminated in the independence of many Africa states. Though many independent African states emerged through competitive elections characteristic of a multi-party electoral system in a process of decolonising the continent (O’Neil 1998), these states inherited weak institutions that could not support democracy (Flint 1983). Opposed to competitive elections, the leaders argued that competition was a threat to political stability, development and national cohesion (Kpundeh & Reiley 1992; Nohlen et al 1999). Chazan et al (1999: 46) explain this as an attempt by the new state leaders to “overcome the constraints of the colonial legacy by reorganizing public institutions and concentrating power at the political center.” This consequently curtailed political competition and centralised decision-making processes around the head of state and his cohorts (Chazan et al 1999).

The media were not spared in this process as most African states still operated under the repressive media laws instituted by the colonists (Martin 1998). In fact, Mohan Jitendra describes African states shortly after independence in the following words, “African self-government was, in short, colonial administration by Africans” (1967: 191). As Martin (1998) noted, the laws and administrative mechanisms instituted by the British to impede free expression were maintained and in some cases, enhanced. For instance, in Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah, the criminal offences of sedition and treason were redefined and expanded by the creation of a new crime: publishing defamatory material about the president of the

republic (Martin 1998). Similarly, amendments to the colonial Newspapers Ordinance were carried out in Tanzania under Julius Nyerere. These gave the president the authority to stop a newspaper's publication whenever he was of the view that it was in the public interest or in the interest of peace (Martin 1998). Apart from Botswana, Gambia and Mauritius, Nohlen et al (1999) argue that virtually all African states introduced what were effectively one-party systems or military regimes. Elections that were held had little or no consequence as the electorates were denied the opportunity of choosing from several candidates or different parties (Ansprenger 1997 in Nohlen et al 1999). Expectedly, several political leaders stayed in power throughout the period of one-party system until the return of multi-party elections in the early 1990s (Nohlen et al 1999). This "third wave" in the 1990s was marked by the return of multi-party elections, or better and more independent monitoring of elections. In addition, this period saw increased freedom for the news media. (Nohlen et al 1999; Adejumobi 2000).

On a continental scale, a push for democratisation resulted in seventy-five percent of sub-Saharan African countries (37 out of 48) conducting multiparty elections between 1990 and 1996 (Nasong'o 2005). As Bratton and Posner (1999) observe, these elections provided the electorates real opportunity of deciding who would govern them, most times for the first time since independence. By the turn of the 21st century, 43 of the 48 sub-Saharan African countries representing, 89.56% (that is, all countries except Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Rwanda, Somalia, and Swaziland) had held putative multiparty elections (Nasong'o 2005). On the whole, between 1991 and 2000 Africa had witnessed 78 fairly free general elections. About a quarter (26.92%) resulted in the ouster of incumbent heads of government (Nasong'o 2005).

Many scholars have attempted to account for the revival of multi-party democracy in Africa in the 1990s. As an established paradigm of governance in Africa, single-party authoritarianism was confronted by both political dynamics internal to the African states as well as by external exigencies (Nasong'o 2005). Relatedly, Adejumobi (2000) notes the return to multi-partyism in Africa was prompted by the falling economic fortune of most African states, which consequently weakened the legitimacy of one-party governments. For his part, Young (1993) argues that the end of the Cold War foreclosed the possibility of exploiting the conflict between the super-powers, hence making it possible for the West to abandon client regimes that it previously protected. For example, Daniel arap Moi in Kenya, and Jerry Rawlings in Ghana represent leaders that were compelled to embrace multi-partyism in order

to access foreign aid (Hempstone 1996; Quaye 1995b) and secure sufficient levels of internal legitimacy to govern (after having both governed one-party states).

However, since the year 2000, some scholars have suggested that the overall trend in many African countries is a shift away from democracy. After more than a decade of a more authentic and deeper multi-party system, Adejumobi (2000: 66) argues that elections are fast becoming a facade, or what he terms ‘an expedient political exercise for ruling regime’ in many African states. Adejumobi suggests elections are held only in order to secure the continued flow of foreign aid and as a public relations mechanism aimed at shoring up administration’s image on the international scene (Adejumobi 2000). Some of the ways they achieved this façade of democracy include compromising the electoral process (Ihonvbere 1996a), weakening opposition parties and engaging in outright rigging of elections. This last point was exemplified by Ibrahim Barre Mainassara of Niger who, in the middle of elections, dissolved an electoral body only to reconstitute another so as to declare him the winner of the poll (Adejumobi 2000). This trend accounts for the growing cases of disputed elections which often result in violence across Africa. Key examples of this includes Kenya in 2007/08, Zimbabwe in 2008, and Nigeria in 2011 (Omotola 2010; Orji & Uzodi 2012).

1.6 The nature of elections in Nigeria

This section outlines key issues that have shaped Nigeria’s electoral past. As of 2016, Nigeria’s population is in excess of 188 million people, making the country the most populous country in Africa (and the seventh in the world). Nigeria is home to more than 250 ethnic nationalities (Agbu 2004), with about 380 languages (Graf 1988). The main languages are Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, while English language is the official language. Nigeria is divided roughly in half between a predominantly Christians South and a predominantly Muslim North, while a minority of the population practise animist religions (Graf 1988). In view of Nigeria’s diversity, there is little to suggest that the people share much in common. The press in a multi-ethnic and multicultural nation such as Nigeria is expected to help foster unity and oneness. The extent to which this role has been fulfilled in Nigeria is a subject of controversy among media scholars (Omenugha 2004). While some accuse Nigerian press of facilitating the escalation of tension among ethnic groups (Galadima & Enighe 2001), others have argued that the press is doing its possible best given the environment in which it operates (Okemefuna 2001). The latter build their defence on the argument that the press does not create the events but merely report them. Edeani (1970) maintains that the Nigerian press has

striven to foster national unity by emphasising the things that unite and de-emphasising the things that divide the Nigerian nation.

Historically, elections in Nigeria can be broadly divided into two kinds of exercises: one organised by the military for the transfer of power from the military to civilian elected administration, and election for the transfer of power from one civilian administration to another, commonly referred to as election for consolidation of democracy (Orji & Uzodi 2012). Identified as “guided democratisation”, elections for the transfer of power from the military to civilian government is one of the six types of democratic transition as conceptualised by Guy Martin (1993). Schraeder (1994) explains that the model of guided democratisation process is one in which military leadership exerts firm control on the transition process. According to Schraeder, the key feature of this process is a powerful military leader, who in the absence of major competing centres of power, is able to gradually institute “democratisation from above” at his own pace and choice (1994:81). The 1979, 1993 and 1999 elections are guided democratisation transitions in Nigeria. While citing the European Union (EU) Election Group, which monitored the 2003 elections, Iyayi (2004) observes that 1979, 1993 and 1999 elections were the most free, fair and peacefully conducted elections in Nigeria. Providing explanation for the positive evaluation of transitional elections in the country, Iyayi (2004) submits that these elections were conducted by presumably disinterested military leadership whose main goal was to disengage from governance.

Conversely, elections for ‘consolidation’ have often been plagued by abuse of power of incumbency. This problem surfaced quite early in the nation’s electoral history. As Orji and Uzodi (2012) observe, elections for political consolidation have been problematic in Nigeria due to the vested interests of the incumbent leaders and parties in the process. The 1964 Federal election was characterised by the influence of the incumbent on the process. Iyayi (2004) notes that the northern Balewa-led government began its political manoeuvring by cancelling the 1961 census results. These showed that the south had a higher population than the north and called for a recount in 1963, just a few months from elections. The result of the recount showed the north had 55% of the population of the country effectively paving way for Northern Peoples Congress-led (NPC) government to have majority seats in the parliament (Iyayi 2004). The meddlesomeness of the Balewa government in the electoral process was quite evident in the north. Ademoyega (1981) recounts that United Progressives Grand Alliance (UPGA), a coalition of National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC), United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), Northern Elements Peoples Union (NEPU) and

Action Group (AG), candidates in the north were so frustrated that many of them could not file their nomination papers resulting in sixty-seven NPC candidates declared unopposed. The ensuing violence which trailed the polls made military incursion on January 15, 1966 inevitable (Ogbeidi 2010).

Excessive influence of the incumbent in the 1964 elections (Ademoyega 1981) re-emerged in the 1983 elections. However, what seemed to have happened in the 1983 election was a change of strategy for the worse. Ogbeidi (2010) reports that members of the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) boasted about their landslide victory ahead of the polls. Iyayi (2004) recalls that in an apparent move to achieve this, the ruling NPN in collusion with the electoral umpire, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), perpetrated all kinds of electoral fraud. The voting process, voter registration and actual votes cast were massively distorted (Iyayi 2004). In order to benefit, probably, from bandwagon effect that was likely to occur from landslide victory of NPN presidential candidate, the order of election which provided that the presidential election be held last was changed, with the presidential election coming first. Inflation of voter registration was common. For instance, in Modakeke, a suburb of Ife in a western region of Nigeria, voter registration skyrocketed from 26, 000 to 250, 000 voters thereby making the voting population there more than the voting population of entire Ife (Iyayi 2004). The same scenario was replicated at the national level with registration figures rising from 48, 499, 097 in 1971 to 65, 304, 818 in 1983 (Iyayi 2004). To show that the figure was massively inflated, after thirty-two years, voter registration for the 2015 election was put at 68.8 million. This was lesser than the 2011 election figure which stood at 74.6 million (*Guardian* 2015).

The last sixteen years of unbroken democracy in Nigeria has seen varying degrees of the 'incumbency factor' on the conduct of elections in Nigeria. Though the election management body, INEC, goes by the appellation "Independent National Electoral Commission," it is neither completely independent nor free from executive influence (Ijim-Agbor 2007). INEC is not financially independent. Adejumobi (2010) posits that it is the prerogative of the executive to determine funding for INEC. With such tight financial control over INEC by the executive, it is almost impossible for INEC not to be influenced by the executive. By the law establishing INEC, the chairman of INEC is to be nominated by the president and his nomination ratified by the national assembly (Badejo & Obah-Akpowoghaha 2015). Ijimi-Agbor (2007) argues that this does not provide sufficient protection against executive influence as the president's party usually controls majority seats in the national assembly, thus

rendering ratification of president's nomination a mere formality. Ijim-Agbor (2007) contends that INEC has operated as a stooge of the Peoples Democratic Party-led (PDP) government, making it impossible for it to conduct the elections without adhering to the dictates of the government. Ijim-Agbor further writes:

INEC's partiality manifested itself in several ways which we strongly believe showed deliberate collusion between the commission and the presidency. As observed in an editorial in the *News Magazine* of 30 April 2007, President Obasanjo was the chief instigator of the hijacking of the electoral process and the weakening, if not destruction, of democratic tenets in the past eight years (2007: 89).

Similarly, Iyayi (2004) remarks that the 2003 elections conducted under Obasanjo government will go down in the annals of elections in Nigeria as the most fraudulent and equal only to a *coup d'état* against the people. INEC's partiality was shown in a number of ways. According to Ijim-Agbor (2007), the commission ensured maximum confusion regarding the candidature of those representing opposition parties, particularly stronger ones. For example, the image of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the presidential candidate of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) was left out of the ballot paper, a ploy designed to make PDP look as the only party prepared for the election (Ijim-Agbor 2007). Ijim-Agbor (2007) observes that areas considered to be opposition stronghold have witnessed deliberate absence of INEC officials or non-release of election materials thus disenfranchising opposition supporters.

The monopolisation of electoral spaces by incumbents has often had two consequences: post-election violence and disputation of election results. In an analysis of election violence in Africa which particularly resonates with Nigerian experience, Orji and Uzodi (2012) identify two broad factors categorised as internal and external issues that fuel electoral violence. On external factors, Orji and Uzodi (2013) attribute the outbreak of electoral violence in Africa and in this case, Nigeria to identity politics that results in communal crisis. Owing to what Orji and Uzodi (2012:395) term the "prebendal" nature (a kind of politics in which political positions are seen as prebends, that is, opportunities to be exploited by one's kin groups) of politics in which groups and communities seek state power so as to appropriate state resources, it is difficult to separate sectarian and electoral conflict. They argue that a pervasive culture of impunity has continued to encourage violent behaviour during elections because the legal system has failed to prosecute offenders in the past. This would likely embolden perpetrators of these violent acts to commit more. Apart from the culture of

impunity, economic vulnerabilities exemplified by illiteracy, unemployment and poverty, provide ready fodder that feed election violence in Nigeria (Orji & Uzodi 2012).

With regard to internal factors to electoral violence, Orji and Uzodi (2012) suggest that lack of confidence in the election management bodies to conduct elections in an impartial, transparent and professional way may lead political actors to reject the outcome of the polls. Similarly, erosion of trust in the electoral justice system may force contenders to take laws into their own hands, even by means of violence (Orji 2012). Orji and Uzodi (2012) note that lack of internal democracy in many political parties across Africa, lead to electoral violence. This is because 'political godfathers' who violate party rules to favour their anointed political sons often charge those who speak up against this process with engaging in anti-party activities. As witnessed in the 2003 elections in Nigeria, party primaries were anything but democratic, occasioned by the imposition of candidates by incumbent executives (Okonta 2005). These factors, among others, join to make violence a common feature in Nigerian elections.

The second consequence of the influence of power of incumbency on the electoral process is protracted post-election litigations. When candidates feel unfairly treated as cited above in an election contest, the normal recourse is to seek redress in the courts. It is instructive to note that all the presidential elections conducted in Nigeria in which an incumbent won have been contested in court. For instance, President Buhari has contested 2003, 2007 and 2011 presidential elections over what he perceived as election malpractices which he alleged characterised the polls (BBC News 2011; Joe 2011). Beyond the presidential polls, election outcomes have equally been challenged in courts for electoral offices such as governorship, senatorial and House of Representatives seats. Lack of internal democracy which is often a consequence of the overbearing influence of incumbents, leading to the abandonment of party procedure in order to favour the preferred candidates, is attributable to post election litigation. A classic example is Amaechi versus Omehia case in which Mr. Rotimi Amaechi was nominated as the governorship candidate of his party in Rivers state, the PDP, but was later substituted by Mr. Celestine Omehia as the party's standard bearer (Adekeye 2007). After the election, Amaechi took the matter to court where the legal battle was fought up to the Supreme Court (Adekeye 2007). In a unanimous ruling, the Supreme Court held that Amaechi was wrongly replaced by Omehia and consequently ordered that Amaechi be sworn in as the governor (Adekeye 2007). Thus Amaechi became governor without his name appearing on the ballot paper.

Apart from the influence of the incumbents on the electoral process, the win-at-all-cost syndrome among political actors in Nigeria also contributes to the chaos in elections across the country. Given that the system does not guarantee a level playing field for all contenders, election becomes survival of the fittest in which various political actors employ unorthodox means in their desperation to win election. Such desperation is manifested in vote buying, thuggery, ballot box snatching and stuffing and outright falsification of results (Bratton 2008; Adebayo & Omotola 2007; Nwolise 2007).

This section has outlined two forms of political transition in Nigeria, as identified by various scholars. Guided transitions are arguably more credible due to the more dispassionate manner in which military leadership oversees elections. On the other hand, elections for political consolidation are replete with challenges often arising from executive interference in the process. A lack of “level playing field” was identified as one of the factors that has been shaping elections in Nigeria. The next section takes a more in-depth look at the development of the news media and of newspapers in Nigeria.

1.7 A brief history and current overview of the Nigerian media

To adequately investigate the possible contributions of editorials to the success of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, it is important to outline how the Nigerian press has evolved over the years with a view to locate presently. Attempts to chronicle media trajectory in Nigeria have often taken different dimensions by various authors. Uche (1989) approaches the subject by separating print and broadcast media historical accounts, while Ogbondah (1992) argues that the Nigerian journalism history is broadly bifurcated into colonial and post-independence times. For his part, Ibelema (2003) posits that the history of the press in Nigeria can be seen through four lenses: the nationalist, regionalist, state-oriented, and independent press periods. On closer examination of the different classifications by different scholars, it is clear that they are largely referring to the same thing though with different approaches. This study situates itself in the print medium, newspaper in particular, and so will draw on periodization of historical development of the press in Nigeria as espoused by Ibelema (2003).

There is a general agreement among scholars that the first newspaper to be established in Nigeria was *Iwe Irohin* by Rev. Henry Townsend in 1859 (Uche 1989; Omu 1978; Umechukwu 1997; Ogbondah 2003). The object of newspaper, writes Uche (1989: 93), “is to get the people to read... to beget the habit of seeking information by reading.” *Iwe Irohin* was

non-political, having as its main thrust the inculcation of reading habits among the Egba speaking part of Yoruba (Umechukwu 1997).

As Oso (1991) rightly points out, most of the Nigerian newspapers of the time were clearly political in nature and deeply involved in anti-colonial struggle. Following the footsteps of *Iwe Irohin*, Richard Beale Blaize set up *The Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser* in 1880 under the editorship of Andrew Thomas. The paper made its political stance known in its maiden editorial when it asserted in unequivocal terms that:

We are not clamouring for immediate independence ...but it should always be borne in mind that the present order of things will not last forever. A time will come when the colonies on the West Coast will be left to regulate their own internal and external affairs (Uche 1989:93).

However, the paper quickly went under after a three-year period of existence, only to re-emerge in 1890. A number of nationalist newspapers did emerge at that period and as Uche (1989) noted, many of them did not survive for a long time. But two papers deserve mentioning in this study: *The Lagos Weekly Record* and *The Lagos Daily News*. *The Lagos Weekly Record* had a forty-year life span, from 1891-1930, with incisive editorials that were directed at the colonial administration (Ibelema 2003). Similarly, *The Lagos Daily News*, established in 1925 by the founding father of Nigerian nationalism, Herbert Macaulay, was pungent in its criticism of the colonial powers (Uche 1989). In his submission, Olayiwola (1991: 35) notes that in the colonial era, the Nigerian press operated as “a medium of sustained public debate and political reforms, and a seething critic of the excesses of the colonial order.” Unlike other newspapers of the time, *Daily Times* was established in 1926 as a commercial enterprise by a group of businessmen (Uche 1989; Okafor & Malizu 2013; Oso 1991). It set forth its policy in its first editorial on 1 June 1926 in which the paper asserted that:

Like our great contemporary, the *London Times* – the Nigerian *Daily Times* is a national newspaper and will be attached to no particular creed or party... except, occasionally, and in particular, grave matters, we shall perhaps for several years to come maintain a detached attitude towards local politics which have never up to now risen above petty personal squabbles (Oso 1991: 43-44)

A new epoch dawned in Nigerian press following the establishment of *The West African Pilot* by an American-trained Nigerian journalist, Nnamdi Azikiwe (Oso 1991; Uche 1989). Azikiwe introduced the concept of chain of newspapers into the newspaper industry in the country with the setting up of newspapers in major Nigerian cities (Oso 1991; Uche 1989). He

also pioneered a new style of journalism which endeared itself to her readers. As attested to by Anthony Enahoro in Uche (1989:95) “*The West African Pilot* blossomed into every corner of the country as the champion of the common man... the teacher. The trader, the clerk... it went right to the top.” Inspired by the French Declaration of Rights of Man and America’s 1791 Bill of Rights and the proclamation of independence from Great Britain by the American colonies, Azikiwe was emboldened to fight for independence and purge Nigeria and indeed Africa, of all that is left of colonialism and racial inequality through the agency of newspapers. By 1960, *The Western African Pilot* and other nationalist papers achieved that objective through Nigeria’s attainment of independence from the United Kingdom.

In the late 1950s and during the early years of Nigeria’s independence, there was a burgeoning regionalist pressure, as this was the time in which the country comprised of three regions: Eastern, Western and Northern regions (Ibelema 2003). Blazing the trail, the Eastern region established the *Eastern Outlook* (subsequently renamed *Nigerian Outlook*). In 1961, the federal government floated the *Morning Post*. In a similar development, Western region founded the *Daily Sketch* in 1964 while the Northern region established the *New Nigerian* in 1966. With the exit of the colonial administration, policy of these newspapers shifted from nationalist ideology to regional or ethnic advocacy (Ibelema 2003). Like the politics then, these newspapers became the mouthpieces of their regions. Ibelema (2003: 173) aptly renders it this way:

The vibrancy of the press reflected a political structure in which four powerful ethnic-oriented regional governments competed among themselves for resources, while vying for control of or influence at the federal government.

Describing the press in early years of Nigeria’s independence, Olayiwola (1991) argues that ownership-influence affected the coverage of important national issues, such as the census, election campaigns and regional crises. Corroborating this view, Ainslie (1967) asserts that the political loyalties of Nigerian press in the 1960s tended to produce polemical journalism of personal abuse instead of debate on issues.

In view of the bitter ethnic rivalry that characterised the first republic, the military government that took over power in 1996 reasoned that state creation would help de-emphasize ethnic sentiment and foster national cohesion (Sklar 2004). To this end, twelve states were created to replace existing four regions (Ibelema 2003). Some of the newly-created states soon established state-owned newspapers namely *Chronicle*, (South-Eastern state), *Daily Sketch* (Western), *Nigerian Herald* (Kwara), *Nigerian Standard* (Benue Plateau),

Renaissance (East Central), and *Nigerian Tide* (Rivers). On its part, the federal government secured 60 percent equity in the *Daily Times* and 100 percent shares in the *New Nigerian* in 1976 (Ibelema 2003). Government ownership of the press did not weaken the critical posture of the Nigerian newspapers. Olayiwola (1991) writes that the relationship between General Yakubu Gowon's administration and the press was not cordial. Panter-Brick (1970) suggests that the press played an important role in preparing ground for the eventual ouster of Gowon regime through the reportage of the growing discontent among Nigerians with the administration.

The last period in newspaper development in Nigeria is the independent era (Ibelema 2003). Characterised by the rise and dominance of newspapers and magazines established by wealthy entrepreneurs and groups of journalists, the two major papers established during this period were *The National Concord* (1980) and *The Guardian* (1983) (Ibelema 2003). Though independent, *National Concord* was heavily sympathetic to the cause of National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the then ruling party. Olayiwola (1991) posits that among the newspapers that emerged during the Second Republic, only *Punch* could rightly be addressed as independent because its publisher, Chief Olu Aboderin was not known to have any political leaning.

The independent press was at the forefront of the struggle for the return of Nigeria to democratic rule. Ojo (2007) observes that in 1992, when pro-democracy groups and the media found that General Babangida's transition programme which commenced in 1986 was heading nowhere, the independent press such as the magazines *Tempo* and *Tell* as well as newspapers *Concord*, *The Guardian* and *Punch* began to critique the policies and actions of the dictator by searching official documents, classified memos and interviews from those close to seats of power. Ojo (2007) explains that each time the media published materials from such investigation, the government reacted by whisking away the reporters and shutting down the media house on the orders of the head of state. Some of the closed media houses began underground operations which kept military authorities on their toes (Ojo 2007). Olukotun (2002) submits that the vibrancy of the underground media in the struggle for Nigerian democracy, was impressive as they became advocates of openness, human rights and democracy.

On the whole, the Nigerian press has had a long history of struggle: struggle for independence, struggle for press freedom and struggle for democratic governance in Nigeria. History is replete with the exploits of the Nigerian press during the dark years of military rule

and its efforts to strengthen fledgling democracy in Nigeria (Uche 1989; Ibelema 20003; Umechukwu 1997; Olukoyun 2003; Ekeanyanwu 2007). Little wonder Golding and Elliot (1979: 31) averred that the “Nigerian journalism was... created by anti-colonial protest, baptised in the waters of politics, and mature in party politics.”

From the foregoing, it is clear that journalistic roles in Nigeria have evolved with time, mirroring the different historical contexts and different ownership structures: the nationalist press carried out adversarial role in fighting for independence; the regionalist press advocated for the regions of their owners; the independent press mostly owned by people with little or no political leaning deployed adversarial role to fight violation of human rights and power abuse as well as to mount pressure on the military to relinquish power; and having secured democratic governance, the press has shifted its role to that of social responsibility as Tiri’s (2013) study suggests. This study argues that part of the media’s performance of social responsibility function of servicing the political system is in the contribution the news media made to the unexpected success of 2015 general elections. This study further argues that this was achieved through the creation and deployment of fiercely argued and well-reasoned editorials that appealed for peaceful and credible elections.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the context in which this study is set. It addressed the tense nature of events in the lead-up to 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The study also **outlined** the complex interplay of media, democracy and elections globally, in Africa and in Nigeria. It explored the symbiotic relationships between media and democracy in most countries. While the media ‘needs’ democracy as the key form of government that protects a free press, democracy ‘needs’ the media to ensure flows of information that are required for public deliberation and the performance of the watchdog role against abuse of power. A historical overview of elections in Africa was undertaken to provide context to history of elections in Nigeria. Finally, a brief discussion on the history and current overview of the Nigerian media was outlined to demonstrate how the media have evolved over the years in the country and what major issues that have shaped their roles.

1.9 Thesis Structure

This is a six-chapter thesis. In this chapter, an initial background to the study – looking at the complex relationship among media, democracy and election, and exploring histories of

elections in Africa and Nigeria – has been outlined. A historical overview of the press was undertaken to provide rationale for and context to the study. Chapter Two outlines the theoretical framework that underpins the study, and looks particularly at the normative theory that informs actions of journalists. Chapter Three broadly outlines the research methodologies, and the actual methods (and some of the dilemmas) used in this research. Chapter Four focuses on the presentation of data from the editorials, while chapter Five is devoted to the presentation and analysis of data from the field work undertaken in Nigeria in March to May 2015 (mostly interviews with editorial writers). The final chapter provides a summary of the findings and conclusion of the study.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

To understand the role that editorials played in the 2015 Nigerian elections, we will draw from theoretical traditions that suggest that journalism, and its role in society, is best understood as something that is constituted and ‘exists’ in a discourse. In other words, it is understood as a socially constructed set of ideas and allied practices, which are never ‘settled’. Instead, they are continually contested, recreated, and re-established. This discursive approach is useful because it captures just how contingent notions of journalism are. Further, it aids the conceptual development of approaches that help scholars investigate how journalists (and editorial writers) conceptualise, and actualise, or put into practice, their roles.

As part of this conceptualisation, and as part of the discursive creation of journalism, is the key role of normative theory. In this globalised era, local ideas are always part of broader global contestations about specific ideas of journalism. These develop as specific ideas of democracy, accountability and social compacts in society are negotiated/contested. Much of the academic theorising helping to conceptualise and explain these dynamics also takes place within theorising and exploring the development of the public sphere. This is achieved by exploring how media facilitates a public sphere where public opinion is shaped. This includes shaping public expectations, and boundaries of what is legitimate and what is illegitimate. As such, this chapter explores how discursive construction of journalism, via strongly held norms and expectations of journalism’s role in the public sphere can be conceptualised. These theories are then used to explore the specific role of the editorials in the run-up to the Nigerian election in 2015.

This chapter thus outlines the key theoretical approaches of this study through which an inquiry into the possible contributions of newspaper editorials to the relatively peaceful and credible outcome of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria will be interrogated. The study seeks, to examine in particular the normative ideals editorial writers drew on while writing these editorials. Though social responsibility media theory is one of the four normative media theories propounded by Siebert et al (1956) and so, should, ordinarily, come first if the order of theoretical development is to be maintained, this study adopts an approach which moves from broader concepts, in this case, Hanitzsch’s process model, in which normative role is

just a part to the particular concept, social responsibility media theory. Hence, this chapter begins with an examination of journalistic roles using the process model advanced by Hanitzsch (forthcoming) and Christians et al's (2009) normative role of the media. Thereafter, this chapter hones in on social responsibility theory, and further explores the concept of the modern public sphere. It concludes with an overview of theory about editorials and an outline of rhetorical analysis.

2.2 Journalism as discourse: Hanitzsch's Process Model

The question of what role journalism plays in a society is at the heart of journalism studies. As Hanitzsch has argued, thinking about this involves making inquiries into what a given society broadly expects of the roles journalism ought to play in that society (normative expectations of journalism, as expressed by both journalists and other important social actors), what journalists themselves think they are doing (imagined role), what journalists want to do (cognitive role) and what journalists actually do (practiced role) (Hanitzsch forthcoming).

The study of how journalists conceive and think about their work and how they express and enact their ideas about their work has engaged journalism scholars. This is because understanding of this explains a great deal about the specificity of journalism in a particular country. Despite the substantial recent research work on the roles of journalism, Hanitzsch observes a number of deficiencies in the theorisation of journalistic roles. First, he observes that the terminology deployed to describe journalism role is often slippery and imprecise. Reflecting on the variation of how journalism is conceived and spoken about, Deuze (2005) explains that although these evaluations change subtly over time, they still function to sustain the dominant sense of what is and what should be journalism. Deuze conceptualised this as occupational ideology. The second weakness, according to Hanitzsch, is that journalistic roles have been weakly theorised. This, he acknowledges, is a consequence of penchant for inductive and descriptive approach to research. Hanitzsch explains that much of what is known about journalism emerges from what is described as a methodological individualism, a process in which aggregation of survey responses by journalists is used to arrive at conclusions about conceptualisations of journalism and its role in society. As Hanitzsch (forthcoming) argues, the normative, cognitive, practiced and imagined roles are often confused in several studies such that journalists experience difficulty in responding to survey questions when it is unclear which dimension they are being asked to report on. These discrepancies, Hanitzsch suggests, are more difficult to reconcile as they appear in view of the

fact that news content is shaped by an array of factors external to the journalist (forthcoming). In other words, journalists do not have full control over what they choose to cover, how other factors influence the coverage, and even how they are edited etc. Hence, it is unlikely that journalists' values, as they might articulate them, might be fully enacted in practice (forthcoming).

This latter point derived from Hanitzsch's summation is particularly important to this study, as the study suggests that editorial writing is a different form of journalism to that of news writing/reporting/photojournalism etc. There are arguably fewer of Reese and Shoemaker's 'constraints' or, rather, these constraints are 'felt' in different ways. This is explored further below when the specificity of news editorial, as an expression of a discursive construction of journalism, is examined. The idea that editorials might express a particular conception of journalism roles – especially during elections – more starkly, or more freely, is considered further at the end of this chapter.

It is for this reason that Hanitzsch argues for a 'discursive turn' to more adequately capture the relationship between journalists' professional views and journalism's identity. He argues that the conception of journalism as a discourse is in tandem with discursive institutionalism. By this, Hanitzsch draws on Sparrow's (2006:155) notion of the news media as "an ordered aggregate of shared norms and informal rules that guide news collection." These norms determine how journalism is conducted in a particular society. As Schmidt (2011) explains, discursive institutionalists treat institutions as both given (which means structural context within which actors think, speak and act) and contingent (that is constructs of meaning that arise from actors' thoughts, words and actions). As a form of social interaction, discourse is a site where identity can be formed, transformed, contested, legitimised and de-legitimised (van Dijk 2011). Within this perspective, journalism is not static but dynamic, constantly negotiated between the 'given' and the 'contingent'. Hanitzsch (n.d: 10) makes this point when he avers that discursive work "creates an institution, recreates it as new actors are socialized, and reshapes it during discursive contestation or reflection." For instance, he explains that what is known as the appropriate journalistic practice in the West, arose from discursive interchange which drew largely from shared social values such as democracy and modernity. This why James Carey could equate journalism with democracy suggesting that anything less than that, the practitioner is a mere information provider (Joseph 2005). Hanitzsch (forthcoming) suggests that such understanding is a product of socialisation whereby journalists become members of the discursive community. Within this space, they

are discursively exposed to the intellectual scripts and meaning systems that enable them to perform the roles.

In offering solutions to the three shortcomings of journalistic roles in literature, Hanitzsch proposes what he termed a “process model” (n.d: 1). This model not only conceptualises journalistic roles as a set of normative and cognitive roles but also takes into account the actual and perceived journalistic practices located and understood in the context of institutional framework of journalism. He emphasized the need for analytical separation of distinct categories of institutional roles into four elements: normative, cognitive, practiced and imagined. These categories, Hanitzsch points out, could be broadly housed into two general levels of analysis: those of “role orientation” and “role performance”. In terms of role orientation (normative and cognitive), Hanitzsch (n.d : 13) explains these as related to “discursive constructions of the institutional values, attitudes and beliefs,” in respect to the place of journalism in society and the resultant communicative norms journalists are incorporating into their work. Hanitzsch (forthcoming) explains that the four analytical categories of institutional journalistic roles – normative, cognitive, practiced and imagined – correlate to conceptually distinct features: what journalists *ought to do*, what they *want to do*, what journalists *actually do in practice* and what they *think they do*. The relationship of the four categories is such that normative roles shape cognitive roles which in turn spur journalists’ actual roles that also influence how the roles are perceived (Hanitzsch forthcoming). In other words, these four categories are linked in a circular structure in which how journalists “ought” to do their job then affects how they “want to” do it, which in turn impacts on how they “actually do it” and ultimately, shapes how they perceive what they do (Hanitzsch forthcoming).

Providing further analytical depth to this process, Hanitzsch (forthcoming) notes that the four elements are linked by processes that include what he describes as internalisation, role enactment, narrativisation, normalisation and negotiation. Hanitzsch (forthcoming) posits that normative roles, do not turn to cognitive roles. Rather, they are selectively imbibed by journalists through the process of role internalisation. As he explains, during the process of role internalisation, norms are refracted in many ways and only some of these norms are made manifest in daily work. Hanitzsch (forthcoming) states that role enactment relates to the process by which cognitive roles of journalists and by extension, normative roles, translate into action. A key idea here is that a given journalist *takes a position* in the discursive construction of journalism’s identity in the process of role enactment (Hanitzsch). The

circumstances of news production to some extent determine the process of role enactment, as journalists rarely realise their occupational ideas fully when external controls impose restrictions on their editorial autonomy (Hanitzsch).

Regarding role narrativisation, Hanitzsch (forthcoming) submits that it is a process by which journalistic practices and their observation, interpretation and categorisation are expressed in a coherent narrative. For instance, investigative journalism derived its name from the reporting practices where journalists acted as detectives and watchdogs to unearth, for example, the abuse of office (Hanitzsch). The images journalists have about their professional practice are vitally important in the process model of journalistic roles (Hanitzsch). These images, Hanitzsch (forthcoming) observes, are fed back into journalism discourse in two ways: one goes back to cognitive role orientation while the other to normative roles. As Hanitzsch (forthcoming) rightly noted, these feedback mechanisms are crucial to appreciating the formation and dynamic of journalistic roles.

In addition to exploring internalisation, enactment and narrativisation, Hanitzsch also explores role “normalisation”. This refers to the way journalistic practices are transformed into norms (Hanitzsch). Two processes by which normalisation takes place are through consolidation and contestation. Hanitzsch elucidates both. Journalistic roles can be consolidated when it is believed to be the “right” practice and enjoys general acceptability thus reinforcing it as an established norm (Hanitzsch). The second feedback mechanism, role negotiation, relates to the way journalists perceive and frame their practice.

According to Hanitzsch, there are three key processes involved, what he describes as assimilation, appropriation and exit. Through assimilation, a journalist is integrated into journalism culture by constant exposure to practices of his colleagues and professional ideas shared by members of his community (Hanitzsch). By appropriation, the journalist may come to the realisation that his practice does not measure up to the desired standards set by his cognitive roles. Hanitzsch explains that one way to respond to this is by adjusting his professional aspirations in a manner that makes his cognitive role cohere with actual practice. The other option is for the journalist to exit the field of journalism on realisation that his professional aspirations are at odds with the actual practice.

In some ways, all journalists are always assimilating some norms and practices, contesting them somewhat, appropriating them somewhat and, sometimes, unable to resolve certain

conflicts, exiting the attempt to be a journalist or to do a piece of journalism. This study will draw on the ideas making sense of the data from the interviews with editorial writers.

2.3 The Normative Role of the Media

How does this process model meet the needs of this research project whose context is Nigeria and Nigerian elections in particular? This model does not discount attempts at theorising normative roles of the press. Rather it offers theoretical clarity to existing literature and tries to show how the process of discourse-making and discourse-disrupting are key to understanding where normative roles of the media are located in the broader process of discursive construction. Normative roles – what journalism and journalists *ought to do* – are a key area of both contestation, and a key reference point for journalists in doing their work. This study, to locate these normative roles more firmly, and, in so doing provide the basis for looking at over 100 editorials and examining the views of eight key editorial writers, also invokes and seeks to deploy normative media theory, particular the model developed by Christians et al (2009) to illuminate our understanding of media's normative roles.

Normative media theory is preoccupied with highlighting the role the media ought to play in society. In the thinking of Fourie (2005), normative theory of the media offers a conceptual benchmark against which news media performance, accountability and quality can be assessed. Unlike other theories, Baran and Davis (2011) explain that normative theories do not depict things as they are, neither do they offer systematic explanation, instead they argue about how things should be. An initial and influential outlining of normative theories of the media as conceptualised in the 1950s *Four theories of the press* by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956), has variously been described by scholars as outdated as it proves incapable of responding to a changing environment (Huang 2003; Josephi 2005 and Wasserman 2006). Reflecting on its inadequacy, Christians et al (2009) observed that the outline of the four theories was not adequately open to the entire range of values, traditions and socio-political philosophies underlying universal public communication.

As a way of circumventing the pitfall of grounding the conception of the normative theories of the press by Siebert et al (1956) on the west, Christians et al (2009) argue that professional journalism should not be biased toward any point of view or interest group. Instead it should aspire to reflect the social world as much as possible. In line with this thinking, Christians et al (2009) posit that media institutions are not the sole source of normative purpose or of evaluation. They listed other sources to include the authoritative opinions of respected persons

or bodies in the society, pressure groups, appeals to patriotism and public need, personal moral principles and conscience (Christians et al 2009). According to them, the media are connected to the “surrounding society by various ties of attachment, obligation and even subordination, that affect how purposes are determined” (Christians et al 2009). They explain that these influences function through means of internal lines of control and also by way of interaction with external agents.

In view of the above, Christians et al (2009) identify four main roles of the press in any society. These include the monitorial, facilitative, radical and collaborative roles. They explain that these roles relates to “composite of occupational tasks and purposes that is widely recognizable and has a stable and enduring form.” They argue that a role has dual aspects: the functions that journalists actually perform, and the purpose it should serve which contributes to the significance accorded to them. The authors list four main activities which news journalists are engaged in as “discovery, collection, and selection of information; processing into news accounts; providing background and commentary; and publication” (Christians et al 2009). These activities are largely followed in the process of producing editorials. It should be noted that these activities are carried out within the four roles listed above and which are discussed below.

The monitorial role relates to every facet of information gathering, packaging and distribution of current events as well as offering warnings about future occurrences. Its latitude of operation is dependent on the level of its involvement in the society (Christians et al 2009). The radical role is geared towards exposing power abuse and creates awareness of wrongdoing, inequity and prospect for change. Its main objective is to inspire change in the society through advocacy of opinions and policies along partisan lines (Christians et al 2009). The collaborative role, as Christians et al (2009) suggest, stipulates and values media functions occasioned by situations of inescapable commitment to social events and processes. In situations of severe emergency, collaboration between the media and the state is demanded and in extreme cases, commanded. Both enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship where the media have information network while the government controls the supply of news. The facilitative role has not received much scholarship attention though it is embedded in functionalist theories of media and society (Christian et al 2009). It draws on the idea of social responsibility theory and on the idea of the press as the fourth estate of the realm in democratic societies that encourages debate and people’s decision making. The facilitative

role of the press enhances the public sphere as it encourages public deliberation and debate (Christians et al 2009).

For this study, the facilitative role of the press offers what I believe is the most illuminating theoretical concept for studying what editorial writers hoped to achieve through their editorial in the lead-up to 2015 elections in Nigeria. There are two reasons for this. First, the development of the facilitative role drew extensively from social responsibility theory which resonates particularly strongly with journalists' role perception in Nigeria. Tiri (2013), who interrogated the self-perceptions of journalists in Nigeria, found that the self-perception of the journalists' roles had changed from an adversarial position, characteristic of military era, to a democratically-defined but social responsibility emphasising role. This study further explores this idea. Again, deliberation is at the core of an electoral process in a democratic setting and this is facilitated in the public sphere and in the case of this study, editorials are one way the press takes part in the public sphere. In the following, a brief sketch of social responsibility theory is provided as a benchmark against which assessment of the normative ideals editorial writers drew on will be gauged.

2.4 Social Responsibility Theory of the Press

Social responsibility theory owes much of its origins to the US's 1947 Hutchins Commission of Inquiry into the proper functioning of the media in a democracy (Siebert et al 1956; Nerone et al 1995). The main rationale for the Commission's inquiry was to investigate the freedom of the press in the US. The inquest observed a lack of diversity in media in accommodating divergent voices, the inability of the press to be independent and the undermining of responsible reporting largely due to the growing monopolisation of press ownership (Siebert et al 1956; McQuail 1987). The Hutchins Commission recommended five standards of media performance needed for a free and responsible press. First, the press should provide a "full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning". Second, the press needs to serve as a "forum for the exchange of comment and criticism". Third, the press is charged to offer a "representative picture of constituent groups of society". Fourth, the press should present and shed light on the "goals and values of society". Lastly, the press is required to provide "full access to the day's intelligence" (Siebert et al 1956: 87-92). The recommendations were later named "social responsibility theory" by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956). The theory has as its main premise that freedom carries with it concomitant obligation and that the press which enjoys a privileged position

under the government is obliged to be responsible to society for discharging important functions of mass communication in modern society (Siebert et al 1956).

As Siebert et al (1956) explain, press functions under social responsibility theory are essentially the same as those found in the libertarian theory. The following are the six functions the press is expected to perform in the society: (1) service to the political system through the provision of information, discussion and debate on public affairs; (2) enlightenment of the public to equip them for self-government; (3) protecting individual rights by acting as watchdogs against the government; (4) providing service to the economic system by bringing buyers and sellers together through the agency of advertising; (5) provision of entertainment; and (6) maintenance of financial autonomy in order to be free from the pressures of special interest (Siebert et al 1956:74). Underpinning these functions are the basic principles of the theory which include the following: (a) the media have obligations to society and media ownership is a public trust; (b) the news media should be free yet self-regulating; (c) the media should adhere to established code of ethics and professional conduct; and (d) in certain circumstances, government intervention could be required to protect public interest (McQuail 2005).

Essentially, the import of the report resides in its recognition of media's responsibility as a social concept rather than a personal one. For Merrill, prior to Hutchins Commission, media responsibility had been thought to be "somehow automatically-built into a libertarian press" (1989:68). Unlike the laissez-faire posture of a libertarian press, Lambeth (1986) posits that a socially responsible press is defined as possessing a positive obligation to exercise freedom of expression. Unlike the libertarian theory, which primarily focuses on negative freedom in which any interference or restrictions by the government is opposed, the positive freedom in the social responsibility theory highlights the overriding goal of the press as enhancing participation of the public by listening to, and conveying a wide variety of voices (Siebert et al 1956). This conception confers social responsibility its "active connotation that changes the right of free expression from a natural right as in libertarian theory to a moral right, with the attendant quality of duty or obligation" (Thurston 1979:21). Social responsibility, as Altschull (1994) observes, is strongly rooted in utilitarianism in which moral accountability is a prized virtue. Given that utilitarianism seeks to implement moral justice in real life by striving for the greatest good for the greatest number, it is accepted that the press, in the utilitarian perspective, is implored to carry out more active, progressive and participant performance for social and political justice (Shim 2002).

Consequently, journalists should play an active role in the political process as opposed to mere reportage of events. As custodians of the public welfare, they are expected to facilitate political action when necessary (Shim 2002). Under social responsibility perspective, the journalist is not debarred from actively participating or intervening in social and political process to achieve socially-valued outcomes for the greater good of all. To this end, social responsibility-driven journalistic roles can be seen as “interventionist”. Interventionist journalisms are also referred to as “attached” because they have a strong attachment to a social or political cause and they tend to oppose, challenge or devalue objectivity and neutrality in journalism. In this approach, interpretive is preferred to descriptive reportage (Shim 2002). It is in this context that social responsibility theory comes in to offer a normative alternative that transcends the libertarian focus on events and news. It is a model that can quickly deliver, by insisting instead on feature, editorials and human-interest stories that investigate public problems (Nerone et al 1995). On the whole, social responsibility theory offers the philosophical basis for journalism and media reformers by discussing the need for extending the journalist’s function to the area of social and political change. The model is premised on the notion that the media have a moral duty to society to provide adequate information for citizens to make informed decisions. The main way social responsibility theory differs from libertarian theory is that the former presupposes that someone (the media, government, the public) must ensure that the media perform responsibly if they do not do so voluntarily (Nerone et al 1995). Siebert et al (1956: 74) captured this idea in the following words:

To the extent that the press recognises its responsibility and makes them the basis of operational policies, the libertarian system will satisfy the needs of society. To the extent that the press does not assume its responsibilities, some other agency must see that the essential functions of mass communications are carried out.

As noted in section 2.1, the ideal prescriptions enshrined in a normative model may not be in full conformity with the actual situation (Hanitzsch forthcoming). This is why Hanitzsch introduced the idea of appropriation. By this he means a mechanism by which the journalist, on the realisation that his cognitive role does not match the situation on ground, adjusts his cognitive role, largely shaped by the normative ideals, to be in agreement with the actual work environment. Such discrepancies have been a major criticism of social responsibility with reference to its viability, applicability and feasibility among media scholars (Merrill 1974). For Altschull, the whole concept lacks practical guidelines as the term social responsibility is bereft of meaning and its content is so vaguely fashioned that any meaning can be imputed on

it (1994). Similarly, Lambeth (1986) argues that the theory does not provide sufficient description of how the press and journalists are to express its social task. According to Lambeth, the theory “contains little that would assist individual journalists in daily ethical judgment they have to make. There is no general framework that can be applied to specific decisions” (1986: 7). In spite of these criticisms, social responsibility theory is gaining traction especially in this democratic dispensation as Tiri’s (2013) study in Nigeria has suggested. Similarly, a number of Nigerian scholars deploy this theory in studying journalistic practice in Nigeria (see Nwabueze 2010; Akinfeleye 2003).

Within the social responsibility model, Kanyegirire (2006) identifies three journalistic roles: participant-interpretive, advocacy and public-civic roles of journalism. Johnstone et al (1976) explain participant-interpretive role as involving active and creative performance by journalists in developing newsworthy information. As Weaver and Wilhoit (1996:137) observe, this role entails “a blending of three important roles: investigating government claims, analysing and interpreting complex problem and discussing public policies in a timely way”. Journalists practising participant-interpretive journalism are expected to play a socially-oriented interventionist and proactive role (Altschull 1994). Investigative, analytic and interpretative reportage demands journalistic activities whereby the form and nature of the news are structured more by the efforts of the journalist than the news sources (Johnstone et al 1979). To this end, the journalist must provide the background and interpretation needed to give event meaning.

In regard to advocacy, Janowitz (1975) argues that the journalist must actively take part in the advocacy process and try to solve societal problems through effective representation of alternative definition of reality. The advocate journalist, Janowitz (1975) notes, should act as a participant in social and political processes. Shim (2002) observes that advocacy journalism is an offshoot of the 1960s and 1970s social movements in the West and in the post-colony for a renewed focus on problems of civil liberties, political and economic freedom and development as part of efforts at preventing their future recurrence. According to this role, journalists emphasize the hindrances to socio-political change in modern society and the impediments some segments of society encounter in realising their legitimate self-interests. By so doing, the journalist becomes an advocate for the marginalised/voiceless. The journalist, within the advocacy perspective, must serve his readers by bringing silent voices to the forefront of the public image while highlighting the effects of modern power imbalance (Janowitz 1975).

The third journalistic role within the social responsibility theory is public journalism. Also known as civic journalism or community journalism, public journalism emerged in the US in the 1980s in response to the dwindling press readership and the persistent attacks on the libertarian posture in journalism practice (Lambeth 1986). While advocates of this role of journalism contend that journalism has failed in its self-avowed goal of serving the interest of the public, they recommend the practice of public journalism by means of which they call for greater active involvement of journalists in the community for the purpose of facilitating dialogue and civic consciousness (Lambeth 1986). Thus, it is believed that journalism can go on to mirror and express the cultural diversity and basic needs of a given society/community (Rosen 1999). Public journalism can be traceable to relatively recent work of the critical theorist Jurgen Habermas (1989) on the death of the public sphere (See section 2.5 for more discussion on public sphere). Habermas (1989) posits that the media should be assessed based on their ability to facilitate democratic participation through such a public sphere. By the exercise of public journalism, the media can produce an informed and participating citizenry (McChesney 1999).

In view of the three journalistic roles discussed above, editorial writers appear to embody most, if not all, of these roles. But participant-interpretive and advocacy roles of journalism are usually deployed by editorial writers in the exercise of their duties. Editorial writers, by the nature of their job, participate actively in the goings-on of the society they operate in by bringing meaning to a situation through interpretation and analysis of the event or issue. In doing this, they often advocate a point of view and facilitate dialogue and civic consciousness. More of this is explored in section 2.6. This study will therefore draw on the basic tenets of social responsibility theory to make sense of interview data from editorial writers appraising the normative ideals they drew on in writing these editorials and what they hoped to achieve by them. The next section discusses the place of deliberation in democratic setting using the notion of public sphere.

2.5 The Public Sphere

As outlined in the previous section, one of the major functions of the press is to serve the political system by providing information, discussion and debates on public issues. This function becomes even more crucial in democratic society where deliberation forwards the democratic practice. In his conceptualisation of public sphere, Habermas (1974) sees it as a domain of social life in which some approximation of public opinion can be formed. In

Habermas's original study of 18th century Europe, access was apparently guaranteed to all citizens wherein they "behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like the members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy" (Habermas 1974: 350). Citizens came to conduct themselves as a 'public body' when they discuss important civic issues in an unfettered manner, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the liberty to express and make public their views on issues of general interest (Habermas 1974). Habermas (1974) explains that though the state authority is the executor of political public sphere, it is not a part of it. Instead it derives the task of caring for the citizens mainly from this aspect of the public sphere. Habermas (1974) observes that then, and now, the public sphere is a sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organises itself as the bearer of public opinion in line with the principle of public information.

The type of public sphere Habermas talks about is an idealised bourgeois public sphere which he argues once existed in the past. As Papacharissi (2002) rightly noted, a number of critics idealise the public sphere and think back on it as something that existed long ago which became eroded with the coming of modern, industrial society. Fraser (1992) observes that Habermas conception of public sphere operated simply as a realm for privileged men to practise their skill of governance as it excluded women and non-propertied men. In contrast to a single public sphere, Fraser (1992) recalls that there exists in modern day American society, a multiplicity of counter-publics which emerged due to their exclusion from the dominant sphere of debate, insisting that there has never existed a single public realm which responds to all these diverse voices. Corroborating this view, Schudson (1997) avers that there is little evidence to suggest that a true ideal public sphere ever existed and that public discourse is not the soul of democracy because it is rarely egalitarian, somewhat too large and amorphous, hardly civil and proffers no dreamlike solution to problems of democracy. In defence of Habermas, Garnham (1992) acknowledges that the vision of the public sphere sketched a tragic and stoic pursuit of an almost unattainable rationality, recognising the impossibility of an ideal public sphere and limits of human civilisation, but still striving towards it.

The idea of public sphere still holds relevance in contemporary democratic society like Nigeria, given the obvious impracticability of any large scale society congregating in one place. Habermas (1974) highlights the role of the media in forming a vital constituent and catalyst for the existence of the public sphere. It is through the agency of the media that the people participate freely, on a level playing field, in discussions relevant to the public good

(Curran 2000). Hartley (1992) and others have made a convincing case that the media are the key domain for the public sphere in modern society. They help create the spaces where they can raise issue, and mediate debates. Deane (2005) observes the increasing visibility of the media as facilitator of public sphere, is predicated on the liberalisation of media in the wake of the third wave of democratisation across the globe, as well as the impact of information communication technologies (ICTs).

The liberalisation of the broadcast industry especially in developing countries offered the citizenry rare opportunity of making their voices heard through the agency of radio talk shows on matters of public concern (Deane 2005). This is particularly so as these radio stations whose financial survival depended on advertising revenue sought topics that attracted large audiences. As Deane (2005) rightly observes, it was about that time, the early 2000s, that the global system for mobile telecommunication became accessible to significant proportion of the population. The talk shows, Deane (2005) explains, became spaces for discussion and debate. This finds expression in Habermas' conception of modern day public sphere "as a network of communicating information and points of view" which is "reproduced through communicative action" (Arendt et al 2010:185).

Similarly, the impact of ICTs, the internet in particular, brought to bear on the communicative media, especially newspapers broadened the public sphere (Deane 2005). Newspapers, traditionally one-to-many medium of information offering limited interaction with their readers through phone calls, signed letters to the editor or emails, have been gifted with vast potential for reader participation through the use of online reader comments (Nielsen 2014). Henrich and Holmes (2013) explain that online newspaper readers interact with each other or express their agreement or disagreement with a news story through their comments. Chung (2008) observes that the reader comment forum has been more adopted and popular among all the human interactive features which enable dialogic communication on mainstream news sites. Reflecting on the phenomenal growth of reader comments in less than a decade, Levinson (2009:22) describes it as the "most frequent forum of sustained written discourse" in new media. The media are not only involved in the provision of space for public sphere to take place, it also takes part in it. As Lee and Lin (2006) state, editorials epitomise the news organisation's active participation in public debate. The following section discusses how journalism roles are facilitated through editorials.

2.6 Editorials: An Overview

McNair (2000) suggests that the histories of journalism and democracy are closely related. He observes that the development of journalism as we know today coincided with the emergence of the first democratic society almost four hundred years ago (McNair 2000). Journalism practice has made tremendous progress in its development. By the 1640s journalism has formalised a distinction between news and comment, or fact and opinion (Raymond 1996). By the 17th century, McNair (2000) recalls that the normative expectations of political journalism in a democracy had been defined. These normative roles include journalism as source of information in deliberative democracy, watchdog/fourth estate, mediator/representative and participant/advocate. If we are to draw from Hanitzsch's argument, it could be argued that the above roles are competing discourses of journalism. According to him, "the positioning of journalism vis-à-vis larger society – have no 'true' essence; *they are structures of meaning that are discursively created, perpetuated, and contested.*" (forthcoming: 8). Journalism being conceived as discursively constituted means that what journalism is and should be is not a given but a result of the interaction between social institutions and journalists. It comes as no surprise that Hanitzsch argues that the study of journalistic roles is critical to understanding journalism's identity and place in society (forthcoming). These roles are shaped by the environment in which the journalist operates. For instance, journalism as source of information in a deliberative democracy values the informational role of the journalist more than any other role because information is vital to deliberative democracy (McNair 2000). Chambers and Costain (2001) highlighted the importance of information to democracy when they remarked that democracy contributes to good governance to the degree that it is reliable and accurately informed, and that the choices made by citizens in elections are reasoned and rational. Hence, what journalism is and should be is not only context-specific, but time-specific.

Looking more closely at the four normative roles of journalism as outlined by McNair, participant/advocate role appears the most relevant to this study. This relates to the three journalistic roles Kanyegirire (2006) identified in social responsibility-oriented journalism (see section 2.4). According to this role, the editorial writer is not bound by values of maintaining neutrality consistent with news writing. Instead the writer is empowered by the conventions of editorial writing to take a stand on issues affecting his society with the objective of ensuring that the best interest of the society is served (McNair 2000). The news

media, particularly newspapers, express normative ideals of serving the public and working in the public interest most eloquently through the agency of their institutional voice or editorials.

There is an appreciable body of literature on the role and function of newspaper editorials (Stonecipher 1979; Krieghbaum 1956; Waldrop 1967; Flint 1926; MacDougall 1973; Spencer 1924). These scholars have offered various definitions of editorials. Editorial, according to Krieghbaum (1956), is the serious analysis of important, often current, issues so that the paper's "ideal reader" will, either, be informed, influenced or entertained. Spencer defines editorial as:

a presentation of fact and opinion in concise, logical, pleasing order for the sake of entertaining, of influencing opinion, or of interpreting significant news in such a way that its importance to the average reader will be clear (1924: 16)

Stonecipher (1979: 40) sees editorial as a "journalistic essay which either attempts (1) to inform and explain, (2) to persuade or convince, or (3) to stimulate insight in an entertaining or humorous manner." Editorials are seen as newspaper's institutional voice and for this reason; it is almost universally left unsigned and are not usually given a by-line.

From these definitions and arguments, there is a case to be made that editorials serve three main purposes: informing, entertaining or influencing the reader. Krieghbaum (1956) observes a lack of consensus among scholars on the classification of editorials as it has variously been classified by purpose, form of composition, appeal, content, geography of subject matter and sources. Krieghbaum (1956) and Stonecipher (1956) share similar grouping of editorials along informative, persuasive and entertaining lines. Stonecipher (1979) and Krieghbaum (1956) explain that informative editorials are written for the goal of illuminating the reader on issue of general interest but would not advance a position.

Persuasive editorials are aimed at influencing or converting the point of view of the reader to that championed by the paper. More recently, van Dijk (1992) argues that newspaper editors specifically intend to influence the social cognition of their readers through editorials. By social cognition, van Dijk (1992) refers to how people process information particularly its packaging, storage, retrieval and use in social contexts. Editorial writers do this by reproducing their own (group) attitudes and ideologies among the general populace (van Dijk 1992). Just like the name suggests, an entertaining editorial is written in a way that entertains the reader but could advance a position or interpret an issue (Stonecipher 1979; Krieghbaum 1956).

Regarding Nigeria in particular, Ekeanyanwu and Olaitan (2009) developed a typology of editorials based on their content. The authors identify six basic types of editorials that are common among Nigerian newspapers to include news, social, policy, special, tribute and speculative editorials. News editorials, the authors explain, deliberate on matters highlighted in the news of the day. They are noted for their news peg or lead. Social editorials relate to current and contentious socio-cultural issues of public importance (Ekeanyanwu & Olaitan 2009). Policy editorials focus on government policy discussed with the intent of making its import understandable to the general public **or to critique it** (Ekeanyanwu & Olaitan 2009). In terms of special editorials, Ekeanyanwu and Olaitan (2009) note they centre on subjects of special concern that emerge in the society, which may not be treated in the types of editorials earlier mentioned. Tribute editorials are written to celebrate the life of a prominent figure by emphasizing how his or her death will be a huge loss to the reader (Ekeanyanwu & Olaitan 2009). Finally, speculative editorials are based on unverified reports about an issue or an event. Ekeanyanwu and Olaitan (2009) point out that one can only tell whether an editorial is speculative if the conclusion says so. As rightly noted by Ekeanyanwu and Olaitan (2009) any of these editorials could be critical, condemnatory, expository or persuasive.

But most of these older typologies are descriptive rather than explanatory. Only in the 1960s and later did scholars start developing a discourse infused approach. As a precursor to that, a vital component of a newspaper, editorial performs a number of functions to the community in which it serves. In keeping with the views expressed by Emery (1962), the duties of any newspaper to its community are to ensure an honest and comprehensive reportage of events. Moreover, it owes to its community a fearless expression of editorial opinion in favour of the fundamental principles of human liberty and social progress. In this sense, editorials have become a platform of robust engagement between the paper and its community. Editorials are the mechanism through which the news media take active participation in public debates by supporting and arguing for what it believes to be in the interest of the society. In addition, editorials perform education functions. Editorials provide a veritable platform for explaining complex subjects by capturing various sides of an argument, its merits and demerits as well as the implication of different perspectives so that an average reader will be educated on the issues discussed (Sandman et al 1976). This is particularly true for new government policies as editorials are written on them to explain to the people what the policy means to him/her and the society. Drawing from Hanitzsch's (forthcoming) notion of discursive constitution of journalism, editorial writers, like other journalists, through socialisation become members of

the discursive community and are discursively exposed to the intellectual scripts and meaning systems that enable them to perform their roles. Exposing editorial writers to such intellectual scripts and meaning systems, George Gallup (1956-57), cited in Waldrop (1967: 5) writing in the *Masthead*, contends that:

the enormous task of informing the public must fall in no small part to the editorial writers of the nation. Their responsibility is *adult education* in the highest and fullest sense of the term.

It is hoped that through these informative editorials, a newspaper can assist in facilitating the education of the citizenry of the society in which the paper serves. In addition to education, Stonecipher (1979) suggests that the role of editorial is sometimes seen as a means of prophesying. Using a biblical analogy, Stonecipher (1979) posits that the prophet's duties are not only to interpret the world but also to warn the people when they sin. In his concluding remarks at the National Conference of Editorial Writers in 1971, Louis M. Lyons, former curator of the Nieman Foundation (a foundation for journalism at Harvard) cited in Stonecipher (1979: 31) left editorialists with this charge:

Finally, if one needed an excuse for an editorial page, or to try to define the primary role of the page, I think it would be to express the tone of the paper. This is even more than the policy of the paper. It's a chance to represent the institution itself, as a civilised and civilising force, as a concerned and considerate citizen, as a moderate and moderating influence, as a thoughtful person, a good neighbour, one who cares. The tone reflects the character of the paper. Whatever else, whatever encroachments, this does remain your charge.

Beyond the above cited roles editorials, election period, usually characterised by inundation of political messages, presents a special opportunity in which editorials can rise above competing voices to provide direction for the populace. Reflecting on the crucial role editorial writers could play at such times, Hulteng (1973: 11) writes:

By helping to explain the significance of the glut of events, by sorting out issues at stake, the practitioners of the editorial function can help the readers or viewer to avoid being drowned in the mass society. By calling attention to the ways in which central values of our system are being endangered, they can counter the appeal of the glib demagogue with the 'simple' answers.

To perform this function, Hulteng (1973) counsels that editorial writer should lift himself "above partisan involvements to take a long view of the events that crowd in heated confusion." The preparation of editorial writer is as important as the role he plays in the society. This explains why Hulteng (1973) insists he must be a combination of philosopher,

historian, advocate, and educator. Of particular importance to Hulteng among these attributes is educator and on this he contends “He must be an educated person, in the most catholic sense of that term” (1973: 17). The extent to which editorial writer performs his role credibly is a consequence of how much he has imbibed the intellectual scripts and meaning systems. Kanyegirire (2007) explains this using Althusser’s (1971) concept of interpellation. According to Althusser, interpellation relates to process by which identities or subject positions are created and how individuals are hailed into them. It is a mechanism which one organises oneself with regard to the subject position offered by a discourse. And in this study, the discourse of editorial writing, what is ‘expected’ of an individual hailed into or assumed a subject position of editorial writer, is often judged by what the editorials should do.

In view of these kind of ‘expected’ normative role editorials play in the society, it has been a subject of intense criticism both within the media industry and outside. Such criticisms have stemmed from perceived failures of these editorials and indeed editorial writers, to perform anticipated functions. Curtis MacDougall, a scholar who looked closely at editorials, in his assessment “found editorial too conservative, too chauvinistic and super-patriotic, too slow to support the underdog or to endorse an unpopular issue or candidate” (Stonecipher 1979: 26). Other scholars (Sandman et al 1976; Krieghbaum 1956) have voiced similar concern about editorials.

Over the years, editorials have remained a regular feature of newspapers. Further, editorials continued capacity to attract scholarly attention over the years is a testament to its relevance to modern society. Editorials have been broadly studied in three areas: content, rhetorical structure and influence. Le (2009) observes a preponderance of studies on editorial content to uncover their ideological position on a given topic. van Dijk (1992) while analysing two editorials from the British tabloid press’ textual strategies, found that urban disturbances involving young black people were represented as riots and framed in terms of black crime and violence. He argued that this was achieved by the deployment of argumentative and rhetorical strategies. Bolivar (1994) demonstrated how British editorials are made up of three basic components namely the lead relating to the subject, the follow reacting to the lead and value dealing with assessment of the topic. Hackett and Zhao (1994) investigated America’s master narrative of war as portrayed in the editorial discourse during the Gulf War. Le (2009) studied how the general structure of the editorials in *Le Monde* serves its goals. The study posits that *Le Monde* as a medium does not only provide a platform for public sphere exchanges, but actively participates in various public spheres with its own values and

opinions through her editorials. Nyaungwa (2014) examined how two Zimbabwean dailies (pro and anti-government) “spoke truth to power” during the 2013 elections. It found that the pro-government paper, immediately after elections, shifted focus from supporting the ZANU-PF-led government to demand for the fulfilment of electoral promises.

Some editorial studies have focused on their rhetorical structure. For instance, Caffarel-Cayron and Rechniewski (2014) explored the generic structure of French editorials from two newspapers (*Liberation* and *Le Figaro*) from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Al-Sharoufi (2011) studied the discursive strategies employed by some Arabic newspapers to serve the Islamist fundamentalists’ ideas and establish their hegemonic ideology in the Middle East. In her study of how *Le Monde* builds active participation within its editorials argumentation to establish its authority, Le (2004) contends that *Le Monde*’s editorialists portray themselves as representatives of public opinion, independent and devoted intellectuals to French tradition. Hawes (2010) examined the development of thematic progression in *The Sun* and *The Times* from 1991 to 2008. The study arrived at a tentative conclusion as to the rhetorical strategies underlying the changing progression choices, suggesting a shift from grand scale, academic-sounding text to a more emphatic style of rhetoric.

On the aspect of the influence of editorials and what influences it, Rugar (2007) showed how discursive characteristics of one journalistic practice (reportage of facts in the news) impact on the expression editorial opinion. Billeaudeau et al. (2003) examined the interplay among President, key members of the administration and military and the news media between the period of September 11 and October 7, 2002, when the U. S military campaign began in Afghanistan. The authors argue that the administration’s messages impacted on the editorials in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Kahn and Keeney (2002) showed how newspaper editorial endorsements affect the reportage of senatorial campaigns in the U. S. Azeez (n.d) who assessed the influence of newspaper editorials on the policies of the Lagos State government found that the editorials had significant impact on these policies.

From the literature reviewed, it is clear that there has not been a great deal of research on understanding the normative ideals newspaper editorials writers draw on in the coverage of elections. This study, therefore, makes modest attempt at contributing literature in this area. The next section discusses argumentation

2.7 Rhetorical Analysis

As established in the previous section, editorials sometimes take on an argumentative posture with the sole aim of persuading the reader to accept its own position. Prinsloo (2009) notes that media text draws intertextually on other texts in order to convey its message. For this reason, Prinsloo (2009) advises that a media text needs to be studied in terms of the way it is crafted. According to her, “it needs to be analysed as a social act that mediates the substance of the text and is therefore also a rhetorical act” (Prinsloo 2009: 211). Rhetoric, basically relates to an effort at persuasion carried out by the writer or speaker via the choices made in the production of the text (Prinsloo 2009). Aristotle in Richardson (2007: 156) defines rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion”. Seen as a political tool, rhetoric’s goal is not only to achieve persuasion but to find the persuasive facts in each piece and present them convincingly so to engender action. The rhetorer or arguer takes into account existing social patterns of the period and place in the construction of the text.

Richardson (2007) explains the identification of rhetorical discourse used, is a vital first stage when approaching rhetorical analysis. In rhetorical practice, there are three kinds of argument: forensic, epideictic and deliberative argument (Richardson 2007). As Richardson (2007) observes, every kind of persuasive discourse has exact rhetorical objectives it wants to achieve and, as a result would adopt special topics in realising the stated objectives. Forensic rhetoric relates to the type of argumentative discourse where the arguer either denounces or defends someone’s past deeds. Focused on the past, forensic rhetoric has as its modes of operation accusation and defence bordering on issues of justice and injustice committed by the defendant (Richardson 2007). In epideictic rhetoric, the rhetorer is preoccupied with demonstrating that someone or something is worthy of admiration or condemnation. Concerned with the present, epideictic rhetoric either praises or censures while addressing issues such as honour and dishonour. Intricately tied to the character of those referred to, the arguer tries to make the audience esteem those referred to on account of their goodness or hate them due to their badness (Richardson 2007). A positive rhetoric, Richardson (2007) explains can be categorised as a eulogy while a negative rhetoric is termed an invective. A deliberative rhetoric is employed when a rhetorer is discussing the desirability or otherwise of a decision, especially political decision (Richardson 2007). With its means as inducement and dissuasion, deliberative rhetoric which deals with the future, has as its special topic the advantageous and disadvantageous nature of issue at hand (Richardson 2007).

Central to rhetoric, Richardson (2007) notes, is the mode or strategy the arguer adopts in persuading the audience. Every argument presupposes the presence of what Prinsloo (2009: 244) referred to as “rhetorical triangle”. This consists of the argument (logos), the audience (pathos) and the arguer (ethos). The strategy for persuasion an arguer employs can be identified by the emphasis placed on any points of the triangle (Richardson 2007). An ethotic argument is one which depends on the establishment of the credibility of the author or speaker (Leach 2000). Here, it is believed that the audience will likely be convinced based on the character or ethos of the arguer. For instance, the audience is likely to be persuaded by the views of a medical doctor than a legal practitioner on any health matter. Through a pathotic argument, the arguer appeals to the emotions of the audience (Leach 2000). Prinsloo (2009) explains that the arguer employs pathos in an argument in order to move the audience to pity, fear, remorse or rage where the audience will be open to his argument. A logetic argument, Prinsloo (2009) points out, is contingent upon the logic or evidence offered. Richardson (2007) notes that through the logic and structure of the argument an audience can be persuaded. A logetic argument can be made deductively and inductively (Prinsloo 2009). According to her, “In a deductive argument an assertion is made by making a series of statements” (Prinsloo 2009: 247). Conversely, an inductive argument uses a particular case to support a general conclusion (Richardson 2007). There are three ways an inductive argument can be made: symptomatic, analogy or comparison and causal relationship argument (Richardson 2007; Prinsloo 2009). A symptomatic argument is one in which a particular instance is used to exemplify a bigger state of affairs. Prinsloo (2007: 247) observes that words like “characteristic”, “typical”, demonstrate this form of inductive argument. When argument by analogy or comparison is made, the arguer compares a specific case to something which the audience is conversant with or supports or opposes strongly (Richardson 2007). Terms like “equally”, “similarly”, “so too”, “any more than”, “accordingly” are a common feature (Richardson 2007; Prinsloo 2009). Causal relationship arguments are marked by words that are suggestive of consequences like “creates”, “makes”, “gives rise to” feature prominently (Richardson 2007: 164). Prinsloo (2009) observes that in argument by causal relationship, “chronology is confused with cause and effect and other factors are consequently ignored”.

There is a consensus among rhetoricians that any proposition can be expressed in diverse ways and in any context in which one of these ways will be most effective in convincing an audience (McQuarrie & Mick 1996; Richardson 2007; Leach 2000). For this reason,

McQuarrie and Mick (1996) posit that the rhetorical perspective indicates that the way a proposition is made could be more important than its propositional content. This accounts for the attention rhetoricians pay to rhetorical trope, an artful deviation (McQuarrie & Mick 1996). Corbett (1990: 426 in Richardson 2007: 65) describes a trope as “a deviation from the ordinary and principal signification of a word”. Similarly, McQuarrie and Mick offer a comprehensive explanation of rhetorical trope thus:

... rhetorical figure occurs when an expression deviates from expectation, the expression is not rejected as nonsensical or faulty, the deviation occurs at the level of form rather than content, and the deviation conforms to a template that is invariant across a variety of content and contexts (1990: 425).

The above definition, McQuarrie and Mick (1996) note, provides the yardstick on which the deviation is to be judged, setting boundaries to the number and kind of deviation while locating the deviation at the form aspect of a text. The views of many scholars (Richardson 2007; Kieran 1998; Prinsloo 2009), that journalism could be approached as an argumentative discourse genre cannot be truer than in editorials. As pointed out earlier, editorialists almost always advocate a position through argumentation. Richardson (2007) argues that the success of such argumentation depends on how the rhetorical tropes are used. Even though there are several tropes recognised in rhetorical theory, Richardson (2007) identifies five tropes that are helpful for analysis of newspaper discourse: hyperbole, metaphor, metonym, neologism and puns. These are explored more in chapter 4. This study hopes to demonstrate how editorialists used a number of specific rhetorical tropes to advance their line of argument.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter laid out the theoretical foundation on which this study is founded. It began with a discussion of discursive constitution of journalism in which Hanitzsch offered analytical lenses (the process model) through which a given journalism role emerges, destabilises and is re-created. Following this, the study reviewed the normative role of journalism as espoused by Christian et al (2009) in which they presented a new and illuminating way that extends normative theories of the press beyond western conceptualisation of journalism. A discussion of social responsibility theory provided a theoretical basis for thinking about editorials as constitutive of a socially responsible role the press should play in the society. This chapter also examined the concept of the public sphere as well as an overview of editorials. Finally, the chapter concludes by outlining key concepts of argumentation. Chapter three outlines the methods for data gathering and analysis.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the theoretical framework that informed the study. This chapter presents the research methodology used to conduct the study. This chapter is broadly bifurcated into four sections with some sections having sub-sections. The first section discusses briefly the aims and objectives of the study. The second section presents the research design which includes discussion on philosophical foundations underpinning qualitative (interpretivism) study though with an element of quantification. Section three outlines the data gathering and analysis techniques employed which include thematic content analysis and in-depth individual interviews and conclusion.

3.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study

As outlined in chapter one, and further explored in chapter two, the main aim of the study is to examine the possible contributions of newspaper editorials to the relatively peaceful and credible 2015 general elections in Nigeria. This study, which follows a qualitative approach, is particularly interested in establishing the content of these editorials and themes which emerged from the editorials in the lead-up to 2015 elections. The objectives of this research include the following:

1. To ascertain, through in-depth individual interviews, what normative ideals editorial writers drew on in crafting these editorials,
2. To examine the rhetorical strategies editorial writers employed to make their arguments persuasive,
3. To understand what editorial writers hoped to achieve through their editorials
4. To ascertain whether it is possible to draw any conclusions about the contributions the editorials made in the 2015 general election.

In order to study this issue, there is a need to employ scientific method of inquiry which is systematic, rigorous and methodological (Babbie & Mouton 2001). The goal of this exercise is to produce scientific knowledge that Babbie and Mouton refer to as “knowledge gained through scientific research and investigation” (2001:4). Whereas everyday life seeks to solve

personal problems, scientists strive towards generating valid descriptions of the world through the use of systematic, reliable and valid procedures (Babbie & Mouton 2001).

Within scientific inquiry, there are two main research approaches to understanding how knowledge is produced. The first is a quantitative approach closely rooted in positivist tradition while the second is qualitative approach located within the interpretivist tradition (Deacon et al. 1999). Creswell counsels that qualitative and quantitative approaches should not be seen as a “rigid, distinct categories, polar opposites, or dichotomies” (2014:3). Rather, they should be viewed as different ends on a continuum (Newman & Benz 1998).

The divide between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies stems from the principles that undergird each discipline (Lazar 2004). It was Thomas Kuhn who called both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research a “paradigm” (1977:294). According to Kuhn (1977: 175) paradigms “are the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by members of a given [scientific] community”. Within a specific paradigm, practitioners are united by shared elements in their training and are seen by others as people responsible for the search of a common objective. As a result, qualitative and quantitative approaches are based on certain epistemological positions, in which practitioners of each paradigm share. This research is qualitative in nature located within interpretivist tradition.

3.3 Research Design and Procedure

3.3.1 Qualitative Research Approach (Interpretivism)

Within the interpretive tradition, the researcher does not occupy oneself with establishing a cause-effect relationship characteristic of positivism, “but with exploring the ways that people make sense of their social world and how they express these understandings through language, sound, imagery, personal style and social rituals” (Deacon et al 2007:5). Qualitative research, Bryman (2012) observes, is a research approach that prefers words to quantification in the gathering and analysis of data. As opposed to the distance between the researcher and his subject of inquiry in quantitative research, qualitative research design is largely focused on how people make sense of their social life and the manner they convey these understandings (Deacon et al 1999). This paradigm is characterised by its commitment to viewing events, actions, norms and values “from the perspective of the people who are being studied” (Bryman 1988: 61). This approach to research is known as the “emic perspective” and is aptly suited for the study of those attitudes and behaviours best understood within their natural

settings (Babbie & Mouton 2001:270). When the goal of the study is to understand the insider's perspective, Priest (1996) states that such a study demands a holistic and inductive approach which offers opportunity to develop a descriptive, rich understanding and insight into the individual's beliefs, concerns, motivations, aspirations etc. (Priest 1996). The approach is adjudged appropriate for this research. For, as noted, this study seeks to find out the normative ideals editorial writers drew on in crafting their editorials and what they hoped to achieve by them.

Unlike the positivists who embark on a study to test pre-determined concepts and theories, the "qualitative researcher begins with an immersion in the natural setting, describing events as accurately as possible, as they occur or have occurred and slowly but steadily building second order constructs" (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 273). In contrast to producing a law-like finding in quantitative research, Sin (2010) contends that qualitative research pursues a multiplicity of meanings of complex phenomena within a given context. In this case, generalisability can only be considered in terms of transferability, which is to what extent findings can be applied in other contexts. The qualitative researcher acknowledges the value-laden nature of the study, his or her own values and biases and the information gathered from the field. With a rejection of the argument made by positivists that social reality is "out there", qualitative researchers insist that there are multiple realities and "these realities are socio-psychological constructions forming an interconnected whole" (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:13).

The philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research have necessitated some uncompromising positivists to raise the questions of validity (Bryman 1984). Strelitz (2005) argues that the applicability of the notion of validity is not dependent on the existence of some absolute truth or reality on which an account is comparable to. Rather, 'validity' relies on the fact that there exist methods of assessing accounts that are not wholly reliant on features of the account itself. To Mabweazara (2006), qualitative research that draws on the basic principles of social sciences is not unscientific merely because it is aligned more with interpretive than positivistic methods in its approach. The qualitative researcher embarks on a research out of personal and intellectual enthrallment by a phenomenon and continues to respect its integrity as he carries out field activities (Lindlof 1995). Qualitative methods are most suited for studies that seek to uncover, understand and gain new insight into little known phenomenon (Straus & Corbin 1990). This philosophical background is used to guide the presentation and analysis of data (see chapters four and five).

3.3.2 Sampling Techniques

There are two main types of sampling: random, which is also known as probability or scientific sampling and non-random sampling (Hansen et al 1998). Poindexter and McCombs (2000) observe that a random sample uses statistical assumptions to select elements from a given population and the results from the sample are generalizable to the entire population. The statistical assumption in a simple random sample is that every element of the population has equal chance of being selected for the survey (Poindexter & McCombs 2000). Conversely, Poindexter and McCombs (2000: 81) argue that a non-random sample, known as non-probability or non-scientific sample, “cannot produce a valid impression of the population.” They reason that since the process of selection did not take into account statistical assumption, the resulting sample is always biased, producing a skewed reality of population of interest. This study is constitutive of two samples: one, participants in in-depth individual interviews (editorial writers) and two, the newspaper editorials.

Qualitative studies usually employ non-probability sampling techniques. These are techniques whose intent is not to constitute statistically representative samples but to use the characteristics of the population as a benchmark for selection (Ritchie 2003; Silverman 2010). Purposive sampling is goal-oriented and the goal may range according to the need to ensure that samples relevant to the study are selected for study (Ritchie et al 2003). In the case of this study, the purpose was to ensure that editorial writers are selected and editorials chosen related to 2015 elections in Nigeria. Judgments as to the yardsticks used in purposive sampling are made early in the research and are usually informed by the main goal of the research, existing theories about the field as well as the hypotheses the study hopes to test (Ritchie et al 2003). The decision for the choice of purposive sampling technique in this study is informed by the goal of the research which is to investigate the possible contributions of editorials to the relatively peaceful and credible 2015 general elections as well as to ascertain the normative ideals editorial writers drew on, and what they hoped to achieve through their editorials. Hence the research participants in the study were purposively selected using a snowball sampling technique. Bryman (2012) explains that snowball sampling is most suitable when trying to sample hard-to-reach populations. As editorials are not produced with any by-line, it could have been difficult to identify those who write them without the help of someone within the media organisation. The researcher was assisted by a journalist in the *Guardian* who introduced him to some members of the editorial board who in turn, ‘linked’ him to others within the media organisation and outside. On the whole, eight editorial writers

were interviewed across the four newspapers sampled for the study. A research such as this focuses more on “comparatively small samples which are generated more informally and organically than those most typically used in quantitative research” (Deacon et al 1999: 43).

The second sample for this study was drawn from four Nigerian newspapers namely *Vanguard*, *Leadership*, *Independent* and *Guardian* over a four-month period beginning from 1 December 2014 to 27 March 2015. Though section 101 of the 2006 the Electoral Act stipulates a three-month campaign period, the campaign period was extended to four months following a six-week shift of the date of election from 14 February 2015 to 28 March 2015 by INEC is (Orji 2015). The choice of these papers (*Vanguard*, *Leadership*, *Independent* and *Guardian*) is due to their good online repository. The sample population consisted of all editorials in the four newspapers during this period. The researcher purposively chose editorials that related to the 2015 general elections for analysis. They were sourced both from online databases and physically from the Enugu State library in Nigeria. The titles of editorials found at Enugu State library were used in getting their online version. Overall, the textual corpus for this study amounted to 101 editorials (29 editorials from *Vanguard*, 20 editorials from the *Guardian*, 25 editorials from *Independent* and 27 editorials from the *Leadership*).

While preparing for thematic content analysis, I had to scale the editorials down to the ones that were emblematic of the themes developed. Twenty-five editorials were chosen for thematic content analysis covering three broad theme categories that emerged from my immersion (reading and re-reading) in the texts. Given that the research is qualitative, the focus is on ‘intensive insight’ instead of ‘extensive perspectives’ (Deacon et al 1999: 42-43), which calls for deeper engagement with the text (Silverman 2005). The researcher chose this number because it will help provide ample evidence of the possible contributions of newspaper editorials to peaceful and credible polls. Represented in table 1 below are theme categories and themes for thematic content analysis.

Table 1

Theme Categories	Headlines.	Newspapers
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1. Violence-free polls	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stop the pre-election violence. 2. The spate electoral violence. 3. Thugs-well, alive. 4. No to pre-election violence. 5. E. K. Clark's outburst. 6. Let's stop the hate speech. 7. On threats of war. 8. Enough of the bile and vile. 	<i>Leadership</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>Vanguard</i> <i>Guardian</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>Leadership</i> <i>Guardian</i> <i>Guardian</i>
2. Rational voting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Nigerians, their future. 10. For votes to count. 11. Beyond Buhari, Jonathan. 12. Now that candidates have emerged 13. Candidates must speak on the economy 14. Wanted: Issue-Oriented Campaigns please! 	<i>Vanguard</i> <i>Vanguard</i> <i>Vanguard</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>Leadership</i> <i>Leadership</i>
3. Credible electoral Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Don't mess with February 14 date. 16. On the permanent voter cards. 17. Minimah's minimal assurance on security for elections 18. INEC's extension of deadline for PVCs collection 19. Disqualify under-aged candidates before polls. 20. The looming police strike. 21. Enfranchising IDPs in North East. 22. Qualification for elective offices in Nigeria. 23. Why elections must hold. 24. Keeping the military out of politics 25. Go Get your PVC 	<i>Leadership</i> <i>Guardian</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>Leadership</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>Leadership</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>Guardian</i> <i>Leadership</i>

For rhetorical analysis, twelve editorials were sampled from the 25 editorials used for thematic content analysis. Table 2 provides a list of the editorials chosen for rhetorical analysis. The twelve editorials were chosen because they are emblematic of the use of rhetorical strategies in driving a message home.

Table 2

	Newspaper	Titles
1	<i>The Guardian</i>	Keeping the Military Out of Politics.
2	<i>The Guardian</i>	Enough of the Vile and Bile.
3	<i>The Guardian</i>	No to Pre-election Violence.
4	<i>Vanguard</i>	Nigerians, Their Future.
5	<i>Vanguard</i>	For Votes to Count.
6	<i>Vanguard</i>	Thugs – Well, Alive.
7	<i>Leadership</i>	Don't Mess With February 14 Date.

8	<i>Leadership</i>	Now That Candidates Have Emerged.
9	<i>Leadership</i>	Disqualify Under-age Candidates Before Polls.
10	<i>Independent</i>	E. K. Clark's outburst.
11	<i>Independent</i>	The looming Police strike.
12	<i>Independent</i>	Why elections must hold.

3.4 Detailed Discussion on methods adopted

3.4.1 Thematic Content Analysis

Given that one of the goals of this study is to establish key themes of the editorials leading up to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, thematic content analysis becomes pertinent in **this** study. Thematic content analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being relevant to the description of the phenomenon (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006). Though thematic content analysis is one of the most commonly used approaches to qualitative data analysis, Bryman (2012:578) notes that thematic content analysis is an approach to analysis that has no “identifiable heritage or that has been outlined in terms of a distinctive cluster of techniques”. The process may entail the recognition of themes through what Rice and Ezzy (1999: 258) describe as “careful reading and re-reading of the data.” Thematic content analysis is a type of pattern identification within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006). Introduced as a qualitative descriptive method, Vaismoradi et al (2013) posit that thematic analysis equips researchers with core skills for carrying out different forms of qualitative analysis. Though it provides systematic elements typical of quantitative content analysis, thematic content analysis allows for the combination of analysis of the frequency of categories with analysis of their meaning in context thereby harnessing the gains of the subtlety and complexity of a truly qualitative analysis. In line with Boyatzis' (1998) conceptualisation of thematic analysis, the term ‘code’ and ‘theme’ are used interchangeably. A theme relates to a particular pattern found in the data. In thematic analysis, a theme of a coding category can refer to the manifest content of the text, something directly discernible, like the mention of the term ‘violence’ in a series of transcripts. Conversely, a coding category may point to a more latent level, such as talk in which ‘violence’ implicitly referred to. As Joffe and Yardley (2004) submit, thematic analysis usually draws on both types of themes. In cases where the manifest theme is the focus, the goal is to appreciate the underlying meaning of the manifest themes noticeable within the data, which requires

interpretation. Thematic analysis of this nature is dependent on the coder to observe certain themes and assign these as categories (Elo & Kyngas 2007). Wilbraham (1995) posits that the advantage of thematic analysis, is its elasticity as it involves relatively flexible units of analysis based on judgement about themes of meaning. Applying inductive approach, themes were generated from my immersion in the editorial. Three main themes emerged: calls for violence-free polls, rational voting and credible electoral process. These are explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.4.2 In-depth Interviews

In-depth individual interviews, also known as unstructured interviews, are one of the leading methods of collecting data used in qualitative research (Bryne 2004; Legard et al 2003). The growing use of in-depth individual interviews in social research to understand people's viewpoint underscores the power of language to illuminate meaning. Writing on the vital characteristics of language, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 126) observe "its capacity to present descriptions, explanations, and evaluations of almost infinite variety about aspect of the world, including itself." Described as "conversation with a purpose" (Webb & Webb 1932: 130), in-depth individual interviews provide a mechanism through which knowledge of the social world is created through human interaction. Seidman (2006) posits that the objective of in-depth individual interviewing is neither to secure answers to questions nor to test hypotheses, but rather to understand lived experiences of others and the meaning they make of those experiences. Nigel (2004) explains that the purpose of any qualitative research interview is to understand the research topic from the perspective of the interviewees and to appreciate how and why they arrive at that standpoint. In all, eight (two for each medium) editorial writers or members of editorial board were interviewed for this study. The interview sessions which ranged from 35 minutes to an hour were largely directed by the interview guide with the researcher asking follow up questions when the need arose. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Before the interviewees took part in the interview, they were clearly intimated on the purpose of the study as the researcher went with an official letter from the supervisor detailing the purpose of the interview and assurance of anonymity. Consequently, the respondents willingly offered to be part of the study. As will be seen in chapter five, the responses have been anonymised in keeping with the pact between the researcher and the respondents.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the basic tenets of qualitative research methodology as an appropriate research approach for this study. The study identified thematic content analysis and in-depth individual interview as the two key methods for this study.

Chapter Four

Data Presentation and Analysis (I)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is particularly focused on ascertaining content dimensions of the editorials (such as the frequency distribution of the editorials, statistical distribution of editorial types and those they are aimed at etc.) as well as the key themes that emerged in the run-up to the 2015 elections in Nigeria. This chapter centres on the presentation of data from thematic content and rhetorical analyses.

4.2 Statistical overview of editorials

As stated in the previous chapter, this research is interested in statistical dimension of these editorials. This is because it aids in providing insight into what the editorial writers were engaged in the most, and gives us a sense of the possible areas these editorials focused on in the period under review. To this end, this study adopts the six basic types of editorials (news, social, speculative, special, tribute and policy) that are common among Nigerian newspapers (Ekeanyanwu & Olaitan 2009) in coding the editorial for this study. The goal of this subsection is to present an overview of statistical representation of the editorials according to the following classification:

- (a) The frequency distribution of election-related editorials in four newspapers in the period under review.
- (b) The monthly distribution (frequency) of election-related editorials across the four newspapers in the said period.
- (c) The distribution of editorials according to six basic types of editorial common in Nigeria as enunciated by Ekeanyanwu and Olaitan (2009).
- (d) The distribution of the audiences to whom the editorials are targeted.

The objective of establishing the various dimensions of the editorials (especially the frequency of occurrence and the month they appeared the most) is to determine the level of importance these editorials attached to the election. In addition, to see if the target audience of the editorials differed from the general notion that editorials are usually targeted at the elites.

Table 3. The frequency distribution of editorials in four newspapers.

	Frequency	Percentage
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<i>The Guardian</i>	20	19.8
<i>Independent</i>	25	24.8
<i>Leadership</i>	27	26.7
<i>Vanguard</i>	29	28.7
total	101	100

Table 3 indicates that the total number of election-related editorials that emerged from the period under study is 101. It also reveals *Vanguard* yielded the highest number of (29) editorials representing 28.7% followed by *Leadership* with 27 editorials (26.7%). *Independent* produced 25 editorials (24.8%) while *The Guardian* yielded 20 editorials (19.8%) during the period.

Table 4. The monthly distribution of editorials in four newspapers

	December	January	February	March
<i>The Guardian</i>	2	6	6	6
<i>Independent</i>	3	9	7	6
<i>Leadership</i>	5	8	11	3
<i>Vanguard</i>	5	7	8	9
Total	15	30	32	24
Grand total	101			

From table 4, the month of February generated the highest number of editorials (32) representing 31.7%, followed by January with 30 (29.7%). March had 24 editorials representing 23.8% while December had the least number of editorials with 15 (14.0%). The rationale explaining February coming up with the highest number of election-related editorials could be due to it being the month the election was initially scheduled to take place before it was shifted by six weeks. Again, the controversy surrounding the postponement of election generated ample editorial attention which could have accounted for more editorials in February. The month of December's comparatively low number of editorials could be attributed to the fact that electioneering campaigns were yet to gather momentum and very little was going on to warrant significant level of editorial coverage.

Table 5. The types of editorial

	News	Social	Policy	Speculative	Special	Tribute
<i>The Guardian</i>	14	4			2	
<i>Independent</i>	15	8	1	1		
<i>Leadership</i>	15	9	1	2		
<i>Vanguard</i>	10	18	1			
Total	54	39	3	3	2	

Table 5 shows that news category accounted for the highest (54) editorial type featured during the review period with 53.5%, social 38.6%, policy and speculative editorial type had 3% respectively, while “special editorials” accounted 2% of the total editorials. It is interesting that there was no tribute editorial maybe because no high profile politician lost his life during the period. The result above shows that the editorials kept close tabs on political developments in the country in the run-up to the 2015 elections as most of the editorials related to news and social categories. It also points to the fact that the editorials were actively involved in the discussions around elections, often drawing their topics from issues that appeared in the news.

Table 6. Categories of audiences to whom the editorials are aimed at.

Editorial Addressees	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Total	Percentage
Politicians	7	7	4	5	23	22.8
Political Parties	2	2	1	2	7	6.9
INEC	5	5	6	4	20	19.8
Nigerians	2	1	3	15	21	20.8
The military	1	1			2	2.0
DSS	1				1	1.0
The President	1	1	2		4	4.0
Police force		1	1		2	2.0
Government		3	1	1	5	5.0
Law enforcement officers			2		2	2.0
APC			1		1	1.0
Religious leaders		1	1		2	2.0
United States			1		1	1.0
The media			2		2	2.0
Ex-militants			1		1	1.0
Service chiefs			1		1	1.0
INEC and Military		1			1	1.0
CJN	1				1	1.0
Peace committee				1	1	1.0
Buhari				1	1	1.0
E. K. Clark		1			1	1.0
Jega		1			1	1.0

The audience of editorial message in this study is defined as individuals, groups or organisations whose actions, policies, programmes etc. the editorial is commenting on. On the other hand, it can be defined as individuals, groups, organisations etc. an editorial is urging to act in particular kinds of way. It should, however, be noted that though the editorial addresses these groups, it does not preclude other readers from consuming the message, though as observers. This, it is hoped, will help point to the segment of the society that attracted the most editorial attention. Table 6 shows that the highest group category the editorials addressed is politicians with 23 editorials representing 22.8% followed by Nigerians receiving 21 editorials (20.8%). About 20 editorials (19.8%) were addressed to INEC even as 7 editorials (6.9%) targeted political parties. Cumulatively, the percentage of editorials that addressed the elite is more than 70% which reinforces van Dijk's verdict that editorials are usually targeted at elites while the common man is a spectator to such discourse (1992).

4.3 Thematic Content Analysis

This section is concerned with the analysis of the themes that emerged from my immersion (reading and re-reading) of sampled editorials. From the examination of these editorials, three broad themes emerged. They include violence-free polls, credible electoral process and rational voting. Within each of these themes, could be found sub-themes. For instance, rational voting theme has political campaign sub-theme, violence theme has inciting statement sub-theme. In reference to credible electoral process theme there could be a number of sub-themes such as security at the polls, INEC and PVC matters, election postponement etc. This is because more than half of the entire editorials sampled for this study related to the credible electoral theme, though addressing different aspects of election.

Below are how the three themes have been defined and delineated:

- Violence-free polls theme emerged from editorials that condemned violent activities or threats of violence as well as those that called for the punishment of perpetrators of violence or censured people or political parties making inflammatory statements.
- Rational voting theme involves editorials that urged people to vote based on a rational decision that places the interest of Nigeria above ethnic and primordial considerations as well as editorials that either called for issue-based campaigns or decried lack of it.
- Credible electoral process theme relates to editorials that offered comments, opinions suggestions and encouraged the participation of all eligible voters in the election. The issues covered in this theme are the distribution of PVC, security at the polls, election

postponement and any other matters that could either undermine or enhance the credibility of the process.

These themes should be seen through the prism of what Hulteng sees as the crucial role editorial writers could play at such times such as election:

By helping to explain the significance of the glut of events, by sorting out issues at stake, the practitioners of the editorial function can help the readers or viewer to avoid being drowned in the mass society. By calling attention to the ways in which central values of our system are being endangered, they can counter the appeal of the glib demagogue with the 'simple' answers (1973: 11).

4.3.1 Theme Category One: Violence-free polls

As expected, the four newspapers sampled for this study wrote extensively on the need for violence-free polls. Given the tense electioneering period preceding the elections, the newspapers considered it appropriate to appeal to political actors to stem the spate of violence in the polity. One major incident these papers made reference to was the explosion that rocked APC's campaign rally in Rivers State in which six persons lost their lives.

In a March 24 2015 *Leadership* newspaper editorial headlined, "Stop the Pre-Election Violence", the paper decried the death of 58 persons to election-related violence as put forward by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in 22 states between December 2014 and March 2015. Hence the paper noted that "Given this scenario, there is the possibility of election and post-election violence and this must be arrested even before it happens." As a way of forestalling impending danger, the editorial advised that:

the security agencies, including the military and the police, the intelligence community and other related agencies must be on high alert. There is the need for extreme vigilance throughout the period, not only by the security apparatus, but also by the entire populace. All emergency services and health care delivery personnel and facilities must also be well prepared.

Additionally, in recognition of the important role of traditional institutions in the society, the paper noted that traditional rulers should be involved in the peace efforts.

To this end, it averred that:

There is the need for them to tell their followers that whatever the outcome of the elections, any perceived malpractice cannot be resolved by violence, but through peaceful means. Therefore, we expect them to plead for calm, no matter which way the pendulum swings.

By this, the editorial is reiterating the fact of political contest in which there is always a winner and loser. Thus proactively preparing electorate's mind on the reality of dealing with possibility of their candidate losing the election. The overall goal is to instil democratic virtue of respecting the wishes of the majority and so, forestalling post-election violence. Similarly, an *Independent* editorial on February 20 2015 titled, "The spate of electoral violence" noted that politicians and their supporters had yet to learn from history that the win-at-all-cost syndrome of Nigerian politicians truncated the First and Second Republics. The paper urged "the political class to make the 2015 elections violence free." The editorial further argued that it was "necessary for all the dramatis personae in this year's election to act within accepted norms".

As if not sure the appeal would be heeded by politicians; the paper went further to charge security agencies to be non-partisan as they carry out their duties. Here is an extract of that charge:

the security agencies – particularly, the Police and the Department of State Security (DSS) – must be apolitical in the discharge of their job, and ensure that any politician who foments trouble is brought to face the long arm of the law irrespective of the party he or she belongs or how highly placed in society he or she may be.

In the 16 March 2015 editorial (Thugs - Well, Alive), *Vanguard* newspaper located the violence that has characterised the electioneering period in the activities of thugs. The paper argued that thuggery had become a lucrative business that was no longer restricted to Election Day but had assumed a central role in political campaigns. While condemning the failure in punishing those who perpetrated the 2011 post-election violence the paper contended that:

We must avoid being so consumed about winning elections that we set the country on fire. Those who aspire to lead Nigerians should not use violence to achieve their ambitions. They should tell Nigerians how their leadership would improve Nigeria, instead of promoting violence.

The paper concluded by insisting that "immunity for thugs and their sponsors approves unprecedented violence. Thugs are overdue for punishment."

The *Guardian* editorial of March 13 2015 headlined, "No to pre-election violence", toed the same line of argument as the previous editorial maintaining that the inability of authorities in punishing violence perpetrators was an incentive for more violence. To arrest the situation, therefore, the paper posited that "addressing the problem of violence demands more than just advisory submissions to the deaf; it demands courageous deployment of the cudgel of the

law.” While citing relevant provisions of the law that addressed electoral violence, the editorial observed that there was absence of political will to punish electoral offenders. The solution the paper advanced is aptly captured in the extract below:

If the police and other security agencies are desirous of curbing electoral violence, they must begin by taking pro-active measures to reduce the amassment of small and light weapons. Moreover, community chieftains and religious leaders should counsel their people not to avail themselves as willing tools to be used wantonly by ignoble politicians and mischief makers.

Apart from the suggestions made, the editorial maintained that bringing those who engaged in electoral violence to book was a sure way of disincentivising violent behaviour during elections.

Within the broad theme of violence-free polls, in a bid to curb inciting statements among political actors, a number of newspapers observed with great concern that the campaigns were not issue-based but centred on personal attacks on candidates. As a result, several papers, through their editorials, drew the attention of the politicians to the possible danger of heating up the polity through unguarded statements. Cognisant of the sensitive nature of ethnic sentiments in the country, these papers were quick to condemn, in its entirety, any actor that espoused such sentiments.

In an *Independent* editorial, “E.K. Clark’s Outburst”, of December 12 2014, the paper noted that the statement made by Edwin Clark, a chieftain of the PDP from South-South region, in which he alleged that APC, in their desperation to clinch the presidential election, could poison the president “was unfortunate as it was capable of heating up the polity.” Similarly, the editorial seized the opportunity to denounce a statement credited to ex-militant, Asari Dokunbo in which he vowed that either Jonathan wins 2015 presidential election or there will be no Nigeria. The editorial submitted that:

All of these are, regrettably, statements that heat up the polity at a time Nigeria is saddled with her worst kind of insecurity as never seen before. The thinking among a school of thought is that such misconstrued statements of the immediate past may be responsible for some of the country’s present predicament. It is therefore expedient to sound a note of warning to all those making unguided statements to watch their utterances and put the national interest over and above their personal and parochial interests.

In the same vein, a *Leadership* editorial of March 15 2015 with the title, “Let’s Stop the Hate Speech” lauded Sultan of Sokoto, Sa’aad Abubakar’s condemnation of campaign of calumny pervading the political space. The editorial, by chronicling nations that have

suffered ethnic conflicts in Africa and Europe, as well as Nigeria's past history, emphasized the dangers of playing ethnic politics. The paper therefore noted that:

Nigeria and Nigerians cannot and must not be driven into the dark alleys of conflicts that are simply avoidable... We call on Nigerians to shun those strewing hate speeches and take their destinies in their own hands by deploying the power vested in them by the ballot box.

By reminding the electorate of the power of the ballot box, the editorial refocused their attention on the power of the vote.

The editorial, "Enough of the Vile and Bile" published in the *Guardian* on January 31 2015 berated uncouth political adverts. This was targeted at some candidates noting that it portended grave danger to the country. As a result, the paper averred thus:

It is important to remind Nigerian politicians who hardly draw lessons from history, that the kind of utterances being mouthed now were the sort that led to the Nigerian civil war. The electioneering campaigns must now be issues-based to enable Nigerians make informed choices of those to run this affairs. Enough of the vile stench and bile in politics.

In all these editorials, the papers were unequivocal in condemning and highlighting the potential violence that inflammatory statements may incite. Additionally, they characterised those who perpetrate such type of politicking as those who do not mean well for the country and are bereft of ideas on how to move it forward.

4.3.2 Theme Category Two: Rational Voting

Vanguard newspaper devoted a number of editorials emphasising the need for rational voting. The editorials sought to redirect the attention of the electorate to key issues affecting the nation, so to guide their electoral decision. A February 16 2015 editorial in *Vanguard* titled, "Nigerians, Their Future" opened with these thought-provoking lines:

The scandalous performance of governments, with very rare exceptions, should be one of the issues to be judged as Nigerians vote for their future, a future that exceptional incompetence has suspended in the past 16 years.

The editorial maintained this tone throughout the editorial by highlighting how some politicians have expropriated the nation's commonwealth for their personal use at the detriment of the rest of the citizenry. To forestall a recurrence, the paper noted that, "the obscene opulence of the campaigns, funded mostly from public funds, is another reminder to

voters to be careful in choosing who manages the country from May 29. Throughout the editorial, the paper reminded the electorate that:

All those who have abused their offices, neglected the people, created communal conflicts to feather their interests, must be denied the chance to continue the waste of our people and their opportunities. The choices made would either help us or hurt us for the next four years, and more.

The paper concluded with a charge to the electorate to vote for new leaders who “should be able to put Nigeria firmly on the path of irreversible prosperity, security, law and order, even with the economic challenges” adding that “such men and women abound – voters should find them, elect them.”

The *Vanguard* dedicated the last two days before the elections to highlighting the importance of rational voting. In a country with long history of voting based on primordial considerations, the paper, in a March 26 2015 editorial with the title, “For Votes to Count” called for a paradigm shift. “Nigerians should ensure their votes count on issues that are central to our survival as peoples, and a nation” the paper advised. It warned that if Nigerians did not approach the elections with this type of wakefulness, the 2015 elections “would produce the same unsatisfying outcomes we have had since 1999.” Part of the wakefulness the paper advocated involved voting “for candidates with character and credentials, those who have been willing to permit scrutiny of themselves.” The paper reiterated its position that the nation would suffer the same fate it has endured since 1999 unless the nation’s past, present and future were taken into account by the electorate while casting their votes. Here is part of the editorial:

Votes that count should produce strong voices, to represent the voiceless. We need candidates, who, when elected, would work for the common good. They are in the pack, we have to find them.

It further argued that Nigeria would only get out of this developmental doldrums by voting out of a conviction, insisting that votes should not be cast out of fear or intimidation but be made freely. While suing for a holistic appraisal of candidates’ past, present and future, the editorial contended that “voters’ choices that are based on capacities of candidates to work for the common good should supersede the primordial considerations that keep slipping into the campaigns.”

A *Vanguard* editorial, “Beyond Buhari, Jonathan” was written just a day before the presidential election (March 27, 2015) in an effort to bring reason in the midst of cacophony

of empty political rhetoric. The paper posed these rhetorical questions, “Where does the everlasting name-calling and blame sharing place Nigerians? How do troubles politicians cause benefit Nigerians?” Instead of falling prey to the machinations of the political class, the paper pointed out to the voters that the elections were not only a contest about who becomes the president, but also involved opportunity to elect members of the National Assembly. The excerpt below evidences it:

Nigerians should take the inclinations of the contenders serious as they make their choices, not only for the President, but for all the legislative seats at stake. Sentiments would be unhelpful.

On the whole, the editorial reiterated that “it is time Nigerians re-directed attention to basic issues affecting us. They should vote for those issues”.

It could be argued that if the electorate would make rational political decision, then the campaigns should be issue-based. As a result, a number of newspapers worked assiduously in ensuring that the campaigns were issue-based. In fact, shortly after the emergence of the major contenders for the presidential election, *Leadership* newspaper editorial of December 13 2014 titled “Now that Candidates Have emerged”, set an agenda on what should form the core of electioneering campaigns. The paper appealed to the aspirants to play by the rules and make their campaigns issue-based. The editorial maintained that, “those issues, it is pertinent for us to stress, must be relevant to the lives of the people.” The editorial was unequivocal in its insistence that the campaigns must address practical issues confronting the nation. According to the paper, “Nigerians must not accept any attempt at grandstanding. They must be told of practically viable plans to restore their humanity, bastardised by official inaction.” Below are extracts of what the editorial pointed out key areas politicians should speak on:

Unemployment that politicians talk about glibly must be made the centre of national political discourse and measures designed to bring the scourge within acceptable limits through programmes that are statistically measurable clearly defined.

The politicians must of necessity revisit the nation’s education sector and repackage it in line with what obtains elsewhere in the world, now that ideas have become a dominant factor in national development.

Having established issues on which the electorate can judge the candidates on, the paper advised voters to “de-emphasise the politics of next of kin or of bread and butter, where votes are bought and sold for as cheap as a cup of rice or loaf of bread.”

In the same vein, in a December 22 2014 *Leadership* editorial, “Candidate Must Speak on the economy” specifically highlighted the economy as a major issue that should be addressed in the political campaigns. The editorial gave an overview of economic challenges that the candidates should offer their opinions on. The paper wrote:

the issue of fuel subsidy, the devaluation of the national currency, the fall in the price of crude oil at the international market and inevitable fall in revenue, the state of insecurity comprising the insurgency in the north east and incessant cases of kidnapping in the south.

It reasoned that since whoever wins the presidential elections will grapple with the above mentioned problems, “these issues must take the front burner of any political discourse and they must be the underlining factors determining whatever promises, or goals set by the contenders.” It was the opinion of the paper that the electorate should judge the candidates based on their plans concerning the economy as they directly impact on the people.

The Guardian also added her voice to the call for issue-based campaigns. In an editorial, “Wanted: Issue-oriented campaigns please!” published in January 13 2015, the paper highlighted that the campaigns of the two main contenders in the upcoming election lacked clear-cut ideas and long term vision to forward Nigeria. The editorial captured it thus:

...it is a tragedy that the campaigns by the two dominant political parties are so glaringly bereft of concrete ideas and any long range vision, let alone any strategy of achieving greatness for the nation.

As a way of directing the contestants to what their goal should be, the paper cited a section of the nation’s constitution which encapsulates the main purpose of government to the people.

The editorial rendered it this way:

Section 14 (2) (b) the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria says with no equivocation that ‘the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government...’

Instead of fashioning out ways of achieving these goals, the paper averred that:

While the campaigns contents generally lack depth of thinking and breadth of fact as well as figure, and originality of answers to urgent national questions, they are rife with accusations, mudslinging and personal attacks.

The editorial concluded by reiterating its stance that:

The time has come to inject some seriousness into the running of the affairs of this country. Candidates must make promises that are specific and set targets that are measurable, attainable and time-bound. Both Dr. Jonathan and Gen. Buhari can still lead

other public office seekers by example and focus on issue-oriented campaigns and articulate their vision of a great Nigeria.

4.3.3 Theme Category Three: Credible electoral Process

As mentioned earlier, the credible electoral process theme involves disparate issues that all point towards achieving a credible election. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) introduced the Permanent Voters Card (PVC) as a way of improving the credibility of the electoral process in Nigeria. The distribution of PVC which was meant to curb electoral fraud with its built-in security features, authenticated by card reader, became particularly problematic. The difficulty potential voters encountered in collecting the PVCs became a national controversy with House of Representatives calling for the use of Temporary Voters Card (TVC) if INEC could not distribute PVC to voters.

It was in the heat of this controversy that Nigerian newspapers, through their editorials, provided suggestions to, and views on, the problem. A *Guardian* editorial of January 15 2015 headlined, “On the Permanent Voter Cards”, joined in the call by political elite in the country on INEC to make PVCs available to all eligible voters. The paper described PVC as “a vital part of any democratic process, a powerful tool with which the citizens elect those who should lead them.” In condemning the shoddy manner in which PVC distribution was being handled, the paper noted that INEC “had four years to envisage hitches and map out strategies to check such.” The editorial cited a number of countries as good examples of registration and voter card distribution which INEC could model their system after. Excerpt below reflects such allusions:

in Canada and Norway, citizens do not face the problems of collecting their voter cards as they easily get them in the mail box before each election. In Canada, citizens only need to contact their local elections office if there are problems on the cards. In Mexico, the voting card serves as a national identity document, while Denmark uses its computerised national civil registry to produce a computerised voter list.

Since the electoral umpire did not have sufficient time to adapt to the models above, the paper suggested the use of the Australian model. The paper wrote:

In Australia, if a voter’s name does not appear on the official ‘certified’ list, he/she can still cast a ballot in the form of a ‘declaration’ vote, and its eligibility is determined later, once relevant checks have been carried out.

Alternatively, the editorial argued that TVC could be allowed insofar as the holder is certified as duly registered adding that “It must be acknowledged that difficulties involved in collecting the PVCs are already draining voters of enthusiasm in the electoral process.”

Due to the challenges of the distribution of PVC, INEC, in deference to nationwide appeals, had to extend the deadline for the collection of PVC. Consequently, February 8 2015 editorial in the *Independent* captioned “INEC’s Extension of Deadline for PVCs Collection” described INEC’s decision to extend the deadline for the collection of PVC as “a welcome development that would enhance the credibility of the election”. The paper maintained that “for INEC to deliver a free and fair election ... the electoral umpire must ensure that all registered voters are issued with their PVCs.” However, it was also noted that despite the extension of the deadline for the collection of PVC, millions of voters may not yet be able to collect their PVCs. Hence the paper submitted:

We therefore urge INEC for the sake of ensuring the credibility of the election and deepening of democracy to accept the resolution of the House of Representatives on January 13, 2015 that, ‘the Commission should include in its election guidelines for the 2015 general elections a provision allowing registered voters with the Temporary Voters Card (TVC) whose names are on record to vote during the 2015 general elections’.

The paper explained that failure to use TVC in the event of every voter not being able to collect PVC would amount to:

disenfranchisement and denial of their constitutional right to vote in addition to jeopardizing the fortunes of their political parties and the prospect of a free and fair election.

By this, the editorial reinforced the basic tenet of democratic ideals which is inclusiveness. Related to the above, an editorial, “Go Get your PVC” published in *Leadership* newspaper on February 4 2015, was written in response to a report on the incidence of uncollected voter cards. The paper expressed concern that despite extension of the deadline for the collection of PVC, many PVCs were still uncollected. To address the problem, the editorial urged the federal government to declare a two-day public holiday to enable civil servants get their PVCs. The suggestion of the paper is reflected in the extract below:

However, to further ease the collection process and ensure that no potential voter misses this opportunity, the federal government should consider requests being made for a two-day public holiday to allow, especially, public servants time to perform this civic duty.

The paper appealed to the electorate not to be discouraged despite the cumbersome manner of PVC distribution, insisting that “every voter has an obligation to collect his or her PVC and vote in the election.” In regard to those who have changed their location since the last election in 2011, the editorial tasked INEC to “devise a creative means of ensuring that these people not only get their cards, but also participate in the election.” On a concluding note, the paper reiterated its stance with these words:

the electorate can still make the coming elections credible by fully participating in the process. It would be unfortunate if, with the kind of crowds at campaign rallies, voter apathy as a result of logistic problems leads to low turnout. It may call the credibility of the polls to question. This is why all registered voters should collect their PVCs before February 8.

The extract above, exemplifies efforts newspaper editorials made in mobilising active participation in the electoral process. To highlight the importance of participation, the editorial noted that low turnout would affect the credibility of the elections.

Another issue that dominated political discourse in the lead-up to 2015 general election was the issue of election postponement that resulted in feisty debate among political parties. The then opposition party, APC was vehemently opposed to the idea as they saw it as an orchestrated plan to scuttle the transition programme. As a result of the enormous controversy this engendered, Nigerian newspapers deemed it expedient to add their voice to the debate. In an *Independent* editorial of January 30 2015 with the title, “Why Elections Must Hold,” the paper argued stoutly that the electoral time-table should proceed as scheduled. The paper believed that the grounds on which the elections was being shifted – incomplete distribution of PVC – was not tenable, arguing that “the commission has in fact said it will continue to distribute the PVCs until the eve of the February 14 presidential and National Assembly elections.” Citing the 2011 general elections statistics, the paper observed that only 28.66% of voters actually cast their votes. The paper contended that:

Any attempt to postpone the election will not only aggravate the allegations that there are plots to scuttle a regime change but also impinge on the integrity of President Jonathan who had assured the U.S.A. on the ability of the country to conduct elections.

The editorial concluded by reminding the electoral body that the fate of the entire nation was dependent on it.

Similarly, *Leadership* newspaper editorial, “Don’t Mess With February 14 Date” also argued against the postponement of elections. While acknowledging the legitimate concerns (non-distribution of substantial number of the PVC, insecurity in the north-east and the tension-soaked atmosphere) of the proponents of election postponement, the paper insisted that “The nation faces a far greater danger in postponing the polls than in trying to right all wrongs before calling for polls”. The paper questioned the possibility of resolving the before the elections. The editorial put it this way:

If the polls were to be postponed by two months because of Boko Haram in the north-east, for instance, what is the assurance that the insurgent group will be routed before

May? Why can't all parties work with INEC to use the PVCs along with the Temporary Voter's Card, if it is necessary to do so?

The paper likened the call for election postponement to the midnight court judgment secured by Association for Better Nigeria (ABN) not to hold the 1993 elections. The editorial maintained that the nation had not recovered from ensuing crisis following the annulment of June 12 1993 election. Accordingly, the paper noted that:

Anyone who values peace should now give INEC all the support it needs to conduct these elections in February. Statesmen are urged to speak up now and not wait until the political train is derailed.

The editorial insisted that the elections should be held on February 14 and “there is no going back on the INEC timetable.”

Due to the manner in which the 2015 general electoral battle was fought, everything was drawn into the political battlefield, candidate's qualifications inclusive. Consequently, newspapers editorials were actively engaged in the debates on these issues. A *Leadership* newspaper editorial headlined, “Disqualify Under-Aged Candidates Before Polls” published on January 23 2015 was in response to a report by INEC that discovered 22 persons cleared to contest national assembly seats were below the stipulated age limit. Though INEC believes that the law did not empower them to disqualify candidates submitted by political parties, the paper argued that “it is unacceptable for the commission to handle the list of would-be lawmakers with such unnecessary legalese.”

The editorial further contended that if INEC maintained their position, it would create “room for politicians to latch on to technicalities to wrest from people a mandate that was freely given by the electorate.” In her submission, the paper contended that “due process and compliance cannot be breached where it saves us from needless litigations that would have been averted if these candidates were not cleared *ab initio*.”

For its part, *Independent*, writing in a January 2015 editorial, “Qualification for Elective Offices in Nigeria”, on the controversy surrounding the qualification of APC's presidential candidate, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, observed that the matter has been pursued “more in ignorance of the constitutional provisions for the qualification for elective offices than a knowledge-based discourse.” In a bid to dispel the misconceptions surrounding the issue, the paper made reference to the provisions of the law on the educational requirement for the position of the president. The paper noted that the law was vague on what constitute school

certificate and so, “cannot be tenable in law or constitutional debates.” Below is an extract from the editorial:

Though the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) explicitly makes mandatory for a person vying for the Office of President to possess a minimum of qualification of the West African School Certificate (WASC), however given the foregoing provisions of the 1999 constitution, it would be out of place for any one to dismiss Buhari as being not eminently qualified for the election.

The paper therefore chided the political class for operating in accordance with the 1999 constitution for 16 years – with numerous ambiguities – with little effort at far-reaching constitutional amendment. On this, the editorial concluded thus:

Underscoring the fact that the provisions of Section 318 of the constitution are confoundingly ambiguous and smacks of a no-qualification-required, is to say the least. That section should be amended with clear-cut provisions.

As expected, security at the polls elicited comments from several newspapers. Given the centrality of security to the credibility of polls, these newspapers offered opinions aimed at ensuring maintenance of adequate security during the elections. An editorial, “The Looming Police Strike” published in the *Independent* on March 9 2015 expressed alarm at the potential implications the planned strike by the Nigerian police would have on the 2015 general elections. The paper wondered why the proposed industrial action was to commence on March 28 2015, the very day the presidential election was to be held. The editorial berated police authorities for delaying payments of the promotion benefits of the concerned officers a year after their promotion.

The paper urged the police officers to reconsider their position in the interest of the nation. Here is part of the extract of the plea:

We however appeal to the officers in national interest to refrain from embarking on strike and toe the path of discipline and patriotism which is the hallmark of their calling and pursue their demands through official channels. They should accept the assurance given by the Inspector-General of Police, IGP, Suleiman Abah that their arrears will be paid soon.

While emphasizing the role of the police to the success of the election, the paper reaffirmed its confidence in the ability of the police to provide security during the elections. Part of the editorial reads:

the nation therefore counts on the police to provide the security so vital for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) staff, the electorate, election monitors, the media and other stakeholders to have the enabling atmosphere to play their role creditably and safely.

Still, another contentious issue that confronted the political class was the role of the military leading up to and during the 2015 general elections. As to be expected, various newspapers took divergent positions on the issue. For instance, a *Guardian* editorial of February 24 2015 headlined, “Keeping the Military Out of Politics” made a case for non-involvement of the military in the conduct of the election. The paper welcomed the pronouncement of the Court of Appeal that the military should not be used to monitor the elections. In her submission on the matter, the paper noted that:

The role of the military is clearly defined in Section 217 (2) (a-d) of the Constitution and, except for such dealers in negativism as do anticipate the worst scenario, there is no reason to begin to think that law and order will be sufficiently threatened during the elections to require that military personnel be pressed into service

The paper argued that the military was being dragged into terrains that were clearly political. Included in what the paper deemed as dragging the military into politics was highlighted thus:

the allegation (strongly refuted by the military) that soldiers were deployed to monitor the Lagos and Abuja residences of some leaders of the opposition party. There is also the case of as yet unverifiable but nonetheless disturbing video circulating on the Internet that alleges a plot by some politicians in collusion with some military personnel to rig the last governorship election in Ekiti State.

On the whole, the editorial called on political elite to not do anything that would necessitate military involvement in keeping the peace “as this will be tantamount to undermining the impartiality, the integrity, and the respectability of the military institution as a protector of our Constitution.”

In view of the centrality of security to the success of 2015 general elections, the newspapers were vocal in offering educated opinions on matters of insecurity, especially in the north-east region. The editorial, “Minimah’s Minimal Assurance on Security for Elections” published in the *Independent* on March 23 2015 expressed worry over the tentative assurance given by the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt-Gen. Kenneth Minimah, on the conduct of elections in the north-east region. In order to ensure that elections were conducted in the north-east, the paper had to explicate its effect on the credibility of the entire electoral process. The editorial captured its import thus:

The implications of not conducting elections in the liberated areas of the North East are also grave because Nigeria cannot validly elect a president in an election where a section of the country is excluded.

In addition, the editorial held that:

those liberated areas that are now at risk of not performing their civic duty could be the area of strength of a particular candidate and such candidate will be put in a disadvantage position if elections are not held there.

By highlighting the import of not holding elections in the north-east, the paper made the possibility of carrying out such decisions more unlikely. By extension they foreclosed unnecessary litigation that would have trailed the elections, as some candidates would have challenged the result in court, arguing that elections were not conducted in the entire nation as stipulated by law.

The editorial, “Enfranchising IDPs in North East” published by *Leadership* newspaper on December 20 2015 was written in support of senate’s resolution directing INEC to establish polling units in IDP camps in the north-east. The paper observed that those IDPs constituted a sizeable percentage of eligible voters and so, “should be a priority for the electoral body.” According to the paper, “INEC must accept that being displaced from their homes is bad enough. Disenfranchising them would be stretching misfortune too far.” The insistence of the paper on INEC conducting elections in IDP camps was unwavering and as such it argued:

The IDPs, though out of their home environment, must not be denied the opportunity to exercise their constitutional right. Every eligible and registered Nigerian voter, and this includes IDPs, must be given a chance to participate in the electoral exercise that will produce the country’s leaders. We insist that the vote of every Nigerian is his or her power and it will be a disservice to deny anyone the right to exercise that power, internally displaced or not.

The import of ensuring that all segments, including IDPs, of the society take part in the political process is to accord the electorate the right to exercise their franchise. The editorial, by this action, is upholding the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which confers this right to Nigerians irrespective of where they may be in the country.

The foregoing has sketched the various ways the editorials have through their interpretation, arguments, opinions and suggestions worked towards achieving rational voting, violence-free polls and credible electoral process in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The next section examines the rhetorical strategies editorial writers mobilised to make their editorials persuasive.

4.4 Rhetorical Analysis

As discussed in chapter two (see 2.7), rhetoric is “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle 1355b in Richardson 2007). Editorials, known as part of the opinion journalism, are largely persuasive in nature (MacDougall 1973). To this

end, its argument can be forensic, epideictic or deliberative. There are three modes of persuasion deployed in an argument to achieve its goal. They include ethos, where the arguer establishes his personal character as a base to advance his argument; pathos in which the arguer appeals to the emotions of the audience either to move them to pity, fear, rage or remorse so as to get them into a frame of mind that will be amenable to his line of argument; logos, here the rhetorer builds his argument on the strength of logic or evidence adduced (Prinsloo 2009; Richardson 2007). An audience, Richardson (2007) notes, can be persuaded through the logic and structure of the argument. A logetic argument can be deployed deductively or inductively (Prinsloo 2009). Prinsloo opines that “In a deductive argument, an assertion is made by making series of statements” (Prinsloo 2009: 247). On the other hand, an inductive argument uses particular cases to support a general conclusion (Richardson 2007). There are three ways an inductive argument can be made: symptomatic, analogy or comparison and causal relationship argument (Richardson 2007; Prinsloo 2009). A symptomatic argument is one in which a particular instance is used to exemplify a bigger state of affairs. When argument by analogy or comparison is made, the arguer compares a specific case to something which the audience is conversant with (Richardson 2007). Terms like “equally”, “similarly”, “so too”, “any more than”, “accordingly” are a common feature (Richardson 2007; Prinsloo 2009). Causal relationship arguments are marked by words that are suggestive of consequences. Words such as “creates”, “makes”, “gives rise to” feature prominently (Richardson 2007: 164). Prinsloo (2009:248) observes that in argument by causal relationship “chronology is confused with cause and effect and other factors are consequently ignored”.

In examining the rhetorical strategies editorial writers deployed to make their argument persuasive, the kinds of argument and modes of argumentation, as well as the use of rhetorical tropes in these editorials will form the focus of this inquiry. This is premised on Richardson’s assertion that the success of the argumentation rests on the application of rhetorical tropes. Consequently, analysis in this study will be restricted to the aforementioned rhetorical tropes. Prinsloo (2009) says an understanding of these divisions helps the textual analyst to recognise how the argument is working and so, take into account the form(s) of persuasion being mobilised.

4.4. 1 Discussion

In this section, the researcher seeks to analyse the rhetorical strategies employed in the editorial coverage of 2015 elections in Nigeria. As Prinsloo points out, the “particular choices made to construct a text draw on the various social patterns or social orders of their time and place” (2009:211). For this reason, she explains that when texts are analysed as a rhetorical act, the analyst is seeking to establish how the worlds of experience are fashioned for texts to effectively engage and interpret the worlds which they refer to (Prinsloo 2009). In engaging the issues that were firmly entrenched in the rhetorical arguments used in the editorials, I will first interrogate the use of the word “we”. I will then show how argumentation was mobilised in the sampled editorials to appeal to three key issues: calls for violence-free polls, credible electoral process and rational voting. Finally, I shall present an analysis of the use of rhetorical tropes in the editorials. In modes of argumentation, “we” relates to ethotic mode of argumentation in which the character of the arguer enhances or diminishes the acceptability of its argument.

4.4.2 The Editorial “we”

The editorial is seen as an institutional opinion of a newspaper on any issue (MacDougall 1973). This is why it is unaccompanied by any by-line. As Hulteng (1973) explains, editorials are usually written with the word “we” which could represent the editorial board or the policy makers of the publication. This indicates that the editorial is not presented as the opinion of a particular person. The word “we” was severally used in some of the editorials chosen for this rhetorical analysis. In relation to the modes of argumentation, “we” relates to ethos which is personal character of the arguer. The credibility of a newspaper, to an extent, determines the level of impact its editorial makes in a given society. Below are some of the examples of the use of the word “we” in the editorials:

We however appeal to the officers in national interest to refrain from embarking on strike and toe the path of discipline and patriotism which is the hallmark of their calling and pursue their demands through official channels (*Independent*, March 9, 2015)

This list, **we** must say, is by no means exhaustive, but should serve as a take-off point, if the political class is serious. (*Leadership*, Dec. 13, 2014)

Hulteng (1973) however points out that the use of the word “we” can bring about confusion to the editorial style. The use of the word, “we”, Hulteng (1973), posits can be used in an editorial to refer to the citizens of a country while it can also be used in the same piece to mean the paper. The extract below exemplifies this point:

We believe that INEC has a moral right as a regulatory commission to screen, sanitise, monitor and sanction the amorphous bodies that call themselves political parties... We will only be dignifying frivolous people by allowing under-aged voters and candidates to become a cog in the wheel of our democratic progress (*Leadership*, Jan.23, 2015).

Here, the first “we” refers to the paper the second was actually made in reference to Nigerians. To avoid the confusion cited above, *Independent* newspaper uses the word “Newspaper” alongside the word “we” to refer to the newspaper. An example of this is shown below:

This Newspaper has severally called on the political class to stop heating up the polity in the face of the on-going political engineering ahead of the 2015 general elections. In line with that position, we find the statements credited to the Octogenarian (Clark) as unfortunate as it is quite provocative and capable of heating up the polity (*Independent*, Dec. 12, 2014).

While some publications have stuck to using “we” to refer to the paper with its attendant confusion, others have adopted the use of the word, “Newspaper” to achieve greater clarity in their editorials. Interestingly, *The Guardian*, in particular, does not use any words to refer to itself. This is in keeping with its writing style. On this, *The Guardian* style guide counsels, “Keep yourself in the background. Readers are not interested in your personal history. Over-personalised or autobiographical journalism has no place in The Guardian” (Style: A Guide for Journalists 1983:11). Having discussed how editorial “we” was mobilised by editorial writers to further their argument, the next section discusses how the three kinds of argumentation (forensic, epideictic and deliberative arguments) and three modes of argumentation (pathotic, ethotic and logetic arguments) were deployed by editorial writers to persuade the audience.

4.4.3 Call for violence-free polls

The 2015 electioneering period was marked by violence which necessitated calls for violence-free elections. In one of its editorials “No to Pre-election violence” published on March 13 2015, *The Guardian* made an epideictic argument in which it flays politicians over the worrying spate of violence in the lead-up to the election. In so doing, it used an inductive symptomatic argument to state that the death of six persons at a political rally in Rivers State is reflective of what took place in other parts of the country.

The eruption of violence, with its trail of explosions, gunshots and intimidation that marred the All Progressives Congress (APC) gubernatorial campaign in Okrika, Rivers State, the other day, is a bitter reminder that elections are still a ‘do or die’ affair in many parts of the country...This is very regrettable given the assurance of a violence-free

election promised by politicians during publicised peace pacts amongst parties (*The Guardian*, March 13, 2015)

Using logetic argument, the editorial wondered “what kind of elections and leaders are these warring politicians engendering?” It maintains that the problem could be solved if the law is allowed to take its course on those who foment trouble during election.

Addressing the problem of violence demands more than just advisory submissions to the deaf; it demands courageous deployment of the cudgel of the law. Both Section 227 of the Constitution and Section 81 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) which prescribes punishments for contravention of Section 227 of the Constitution, are legal provisions addressing electoral violence (*The Guardian*, March 13, 2015).

In a similar editorial published in the *Vanguard* on March 16 2015, headlined, “Thugs – Well, Alive”, the paper makes an epideictic argument by criticizing the dishonourable role thugs play in increasing violence in the political arena. The editorial uses logetic mode of argumentation in arguing that, “Thugs are in the business because violence is profitable”. While employing an inductive argument by causal relationship, the paper averred that:

Thugs are growing in numbers and in the intensity of their actions. They adorn an air of invincibility because society permits them, dreads them, and sometimes adores them (*Vanguard*, March 16, 2015).

Still on its use of logetic strategy of argumentation, the paper, applying an inductive argument by causal relationship, further contends that thugs have grown from the marginal role they played during elections to a more central one because they have never been punished for their evil deeds.

From humble beginnings that saw thugs on the fringes of elections, they have assumed commanding positions in our politics. The growth and importance of thugs are sustained by willingness of most candidates to use them, protect them, and reward them.

The editorials not only addressed issues of violence but also condemned anything that could cause violence during the electioneering period. An example, titled “E. K. Clark’s Outburst” was published in *Independent* on December 12 2014. It is equally an epideictic discourse as well as an invective rhetoric in that it censures Chief Edwin Clark for alleging that APC could poison President Jonathan in their quest to take over the reins of government. Employing ethotic mode of argumentation that evidences consistent stance against inflammatory statement, the paper submitted that:

This Newspaper has severally called on the political class to stop heating up the polity in the face of the on-going political engineering ahead of the 2015 general elections. In line with that position, we find the statements credited to the Octogenarian (Clark) as

unfortunate as it is quite provocative and capable of heating up the polity (*Independent*, December 12, 2014).

Invocation of its stance against provocative utterances places the paper above charges of being partisan or selective in its actions. The editorial equally used logetic mode of argumentation to show the inappropriateness of Chief Clark's assertion.

Clark needs to be reminded that Jonathan is not an Ijaw president, but that of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. We share the sentiment that Jonathan is his political godson and that should be the off-limit, as such unguarded utterances will do the nation no good...

All of these are, regrettably, statements that heat up the polity at a time Nigeria is saddled with her worst kind of insecurity as never seen before (*Independent*, December 12, 2014).

The admonition by this editorial to Chief Clark to be "a father of the nation" is a pathetic mode of argumentation designed to evoke the feeling of fatherhood which signifies restraint, tolerance and acceptance in Chief Clark.

4.4.4 Call for Credible Electoral Process

A major theme that emerged from this study, is that the newspapers whose editorials were selected for this study, were unequivocal in their insistence on credible electoral process. Expectedly, they added their voices to a number of contentious issues that dominated the electioneering period, all aimed at engendering credible electoral process. One of them was the postponement of election. The editorial, "Don't Mess With February 14 Date" published in the *Leadership* newspaper on January 26 2015, advances a deliberative argument by emphasizing the undesirability of election postponement. The editorial likened such a call to "Coteries of voices ...converging, once more, on a road to damnation". The paper while using logetic mode of argumentation contended that:

INEC has had four years to prepare for this year's polls. A storm foretold cannot take the cripple by surprise. The National Assembly has had four years to put in place enabling legislations that could have removed all hurdles to free, fair, transparent and credible elections. The executive and judiciary arms have had four years to do what is right.

The nation faces a far greater danger in postponing the polls than in trying to right all wrongs before calling for polls. Shifting of the polls is bound to put the democratic structure in serious threat (*Leadership*, January 26, 2015).

Hence the call for election postponement was misplaced. In an inductive argument by analogy, the editorial reminded "Nigerians that the current hysteria is a throwback to 1993" in which similar calls for polls shift were made that year. The comparison of the call for election postponement to the annulment of June 12, 1993 elections was designed to evoke all the negativities that are the legacy of that mishandled poll. It thus argued:

Now, they have come again – those who thrive only in crisis but would not hesitate to migrate to safer climes after waging war on their nation. After nearly 23 years, they are pushing the country, once again, to the precipice. Unnecessarily. Wickedly (*Leadership*, January 26, 2015).

Any Nigerian or someone conversant with Nigerian politics knows that the June 12 1993 crisis was one of Nigeria's darkest moments in her political history which no-one wants a repeat.

Also, *Independent* published an editorial on January 30, 2015 with the headline, "Why elections must hold" in which it highlighted the undesirability of election postponement. Advancing its position through deliberative rhetoric, the editorial used a logetic mode of argumentation to counter the claim by the National Security Adviser to the President, Col. Sambo Dasuki, that 30 million Nigerians were yet to collect their PVCs.

The figure is however questionable as groups like the Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP), a coalition of opposition parties have faulted the claim, arguing that over 60% PVCs have been collected nationwide by anxious Nigerians. Figures from the electoral commission indicate that 42.7 million PVCs have been distributed (*Independent*, January 30, 2015).

Drawing from inductive argument by comparison, the editorial noted, "Available records had showed that out of the 73,528, 040 registered Nigerian voters in 2011, only 21, 074, 621 representing just about 28.66% actually cast their votes." Hence the claim that the election should be shifted on account of incomplete distribution of PVC does not hold, as it has been evidenced by history that not all who collect their PVC will eventually vote. The paper also employed pathetic mode of argumentation when it averred that, "INEC must know that the fate of 170 million Nigerians is in its hands. Prof. Attahiru Jega must be on top of his game by discharging the responsibilities reposed on him creditably." The use of pathetic mode of argumentation, it could be argued, was designed to appeal to the emotions of INEC chair and entire staff. To articulate the perspective that the future of Nigeria depended on the conduct of the election.

An *Independent* editorial, "The looming Police strike" published on March 9 2015 used a deliberative argument to argue against the proposed strike. Employing logetic mode of argumentation, the paper built its argument on two premises: one, that the date for the strike was ill-timed, "it is ominous why the Police officers chose that date which is potentially ruinous to the deferred election"; two, that the law does not permit police officers to go on strike, "Obviously, the Police Act forbids officers and men of the Nigerian Police Force from

unionizing and going on strike considering the essential nature of their job.” A pathetic mode of argumentation was also used to appeal to the officers.

We however appeal to the officers in national interest to refrain from embarking on strike and toe the path of discipline and patriotism which is the hallmark of their calling and pursue their demands through official channels (*Independent*, March 9, 2015)

The editorial, “Disqualify Under-Aged Candidates Before Polls” which appeared in *Leadership* newspaper on January 23 2015 is a deliberative argument. The paper contends that allowing under-aged candidates to stand for election could “leave room for politicians to latch on to technicalities to wrest from people a mandate that was freely given by the electorate.” Applying deductive argument, the editorial cited legal provisions which spelled out age requirements of candidates, as well as the possible circumstances (typographical errors) that could have led to the emergence of those under-aged candidates. The editorial insisted that:

INEC’s role in this democracy is not that of a rubber stamp agency for frivolous politicians and parties. It should weed out unserious candidates and parties. We believe that INEC has the moral right as a regulatory commission to screen, sanitise, monitor and sanction the amorphous bodies that call themselves political parties (*Leadership*, January 23, 2015).

The editorial made use of pathetic mode of argumentation by asserting that “INEC has a moral right as a regulatory commission to screen, sanitise, monitor and sanction the amorphous bodies...” This is an appeal to INEC’s sense of judgment geared towards getting INEC to act morally on the under-aged candidates, even when they have no legal powers to do so.

4.4.5 Call for Rational Voting

Newspapers editorials chosen for this study made a strong case for rational voting. It firmly believes that the electorate can only make significant impact in an electoral process if they vote with appreciable degree of understanding of the implications of their decisions. This is particularly true for a young democracy like Nigeria where people’s voting decisions are usually not based on the overall good of the country but on ethnic, parochial and selfish gains. Thus, the editorials made concerted efforts at encouraging the electorate to vote based on full information about the candidates and their views on issues affecting Nigeria. The editorials also reminded the people that current difficulties Nigerians are experiencing are a consequence of voting for unprepared leaders. This editorial, “Now that Candidates have Emerged” published in *Leadership* newspaper on December 13 2014 was written to make a

case for rational voting. It is the opinion of the editorial that the electorate cannot vote wisely without the knowledge of where the candidates stand on key issues confronting the nation. For this reason, the paper highlights some issues candidates must address. Making a logetic argument, the paper posited that the need for the electorate to vote rationally was due to the sorry state of the economy.

To say that the nation's economy is indescribably directionless would be being charitable, because, in our opinion, not much is going on to give the people hope of a better tomorrow. With inflation on the gallop, existence for many Nigerians has become drudgery. Unemployment that politicians talk about glibly must be made the centre of national political discourse and measures designed to bring the scourge within acceptable limits through programmes that are statistically measurable clearly defined (*Leadership*, December 13, 2014).

It also employed forensic rhetoric to explain why the private sector has not been able to generate jobs as expected.

Ordinarily, one would have expected the private sector to be the engine room of efforts to generate jobs, but the nation's experience in the last four years is such that with all the incentives put in place not much has been achieved, simply because the private operators see such policies as avenues to recoup investments in the political arena (*Leadership*, December 13, 2014).

For this reason, the editorial insisted that "Henceforth, Nigerians must say no to such fraudulent disposition."

A *Vanguard* editorial on March 26 2015 titled, "For Votes to Count", using a deliberative rhetoric, argued in favour of Nigerians voting with high degree of thoughtfulness. While making a forensic argument, it warned that "if Nigerians do not approach the elections with circumspection, 2015 would produce the same unsatisfying outcome we have had since 1999." Applying a logetic mode of argumentation, the editorial counselled that:

It is important too that those who we are electing would lead Nigeria out of economic gloom. Candidates we are electing should have clear milestones for assessing how they would redirect Nigeria from further drifting (*Vanguard*, March 26, 2015).

While making an inductive argument by causal relationship, the paper submitted that:

Nigerians' dissatisfaction with our current political system stems from two points, the near total neglect of the welfare of the people and the aversion of public office holders to accountability (*Vanguard*, March 26, 2015).

A similar editorial, "Nigerians, Their Future" was also published in the *Vanguard* on February 16 2015. In the editorial, the paper argued for the election of leaders who will retrieve the nation from its current sorry state. The paper made an inductive argument by causal

relationship when it claimed that incompetent leadership has resulted in the scandalous performance of government.

The scandalous performance of governments, with very rare exceptions, should be one of the issues to be judged as Nigerians vote for their future that exceptional incompetence has suspended in the past 16 years.

Nigerians have endured unnecessary hardship since 1999 because state governments with the connivance of the powers in Abuja elected backwardness, and at best a blurred future, for the country. Ravaging poverty has reduced the people to helplessness never seen in the past (*Vanguard*, February 16, 2015).

The editorial equally employed forensic argument in denouncing past performance of politicians in governance.

Either through surrogates, who are promising a freshness alien to them, or directly by themselves, they want to consign the future of Nigerians to the inattentive treatment it receive since 1999.

All those who have abused their offices, neglected the people, created communal conflicts to feather their interests, must be denied the chance to continue the waste of our people and their opportunities.

The search is on for leaders who will retrieve Nigeria from the precipice many of those in power condemned it to since 1999 (*Vanguard*, February 16, 2015).

Using a logetic mode of argumentation, the editorial cited how some candidates emerged as party flag-bearers as a foretaste of what some politicians have in stock for the populace.

The overbearing conduct of our leaders saw many of them breaching laws to have their ways in appointing their successor, and foisting on us future parliamentarians who belong to the same retrogressive past (*Vanguard*, February 16, 2015).

In this section, the study examined the kinds of argument and modes of argumentation used by editorial writers to make these editorials persuasive. I now turn to rhetorical tropes to demonstrate how they were mobilised to help the newspaper editorials speak on various issues of the time in a more persuasive manner.

4.5 Results of Rhetorical Tropes Analysis

The results of an analysis of twelve editorials drawn from the four newspapers (*The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *Independent* and *Leadership*) indicate a scant use of the tropes. Table 7 presents a distribution of rhetorical tropes identified in the sampled editorials. Additionally, table 8 shows the frequency of tropes used across four newspapers.

Table 7. Distribution of Rhetorical Tropes in *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *Independent* and *Leadership* newspapers

Rhetorical tropes	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Leadership</i>
Metaphor	<p>the deaf (March 13, 2015)</p> <p>cudgel of the law (March 13, 2015)</p> <p>spin doctors (March 13, 2015)</p> <p>these climes (March 13, 2015)</p> <p>foot-soldiers (February 24, 2015)</p> <p>Enough of state burials (January 31, 2015)</p> <p>dregs of the society (January 31, 2015)</p> <p>political climate (January 31, 2015)</p> <p>this tragedy (January 31, 2015)</p> <p>political climate (January 31, 2015)</p> <p>red lines (January 31, 2015)</p>	<p>powers in Abuja (February 16, 2015)</p> <p>backwardness (February 16, 2015)</p> <p>the business of violence (March 16, 2015)</p> <p>Thugs are in business (March 16, 2015)</p> <p>profits from this enterprise (March 16, 2015)</p> <p>extending their business (March 16, 2015)</p> <p>the law watches askance (March 16, 2015)</p> <p>produce strong voices (March 26, 2015)</p> <p>represent the voiceless (March 26, 2015)</p> <p>promises are sometimes veneers (March 26, 2015)</p>	<p>Nigeria's cup (March 9, 2015)</p> <p>saner climes (December 12, 2014)</p>	<p>Coteries of voices (January 26, 2015)</p> <p>umpire (January 26, 2015)</p> <p>midnight judgment (January 26, 2015)</p> <p>The forces of darkness train (January 26, 2015)</p> <p>cog in the wheel (January 23, 2015)</p> <p>epic battle (December 13, 2014)</p> <p>ultimate arbiters (December 13, 2014)</p> <p>in the last four years (December 13, 2014)</p>
Hyperbole		<p>The scandalous performance of governments, with rare exceptions never seen in these parts (February 16, 2015)</p> <p>Thugs have</p>	<p>full of workers' (March 9, 2015)</p>	<p>indescribably directionless</p>

Pun		seized authority (March 16, 2015) the law watches, they are becoming the law (March 16, 2015) they are assured the law would not inconvenience them. (March 16, 2015) The law should not excuse murderers belittles the law (March 16, 2015)		(December 13, 2014) damnation (January 26, 2015)
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Table 8. Frequency of Rhetorical Tropes in *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *Independent* and *Leadership* newspaper

Rhetorical Tropes	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Leadership</i>
Metaphor	11	11	2	9
Metonym	0	0	0	0
Neologism	0	0	0	0
Pun	0	4	0	0
Hyperbole	0	3	1	2

The results of the data above evidence that the tropes were sparingly used. This is at variance with Nyaungwa's (2014) study which shows a generous use of rhetorical tropes in Zimbabwean editorials. Out of twelve editorials sampled for this analysis, only 43 rhetorical tropes were identified. Metaphor appears to be the most commonly used trope accounting for more than 75% of the total tropes. Hyperbole was scantily used in these editorials but never used in *The Guardian* newspaper. Metonym and neologism were not deployed by any of the papers. While it is difficult to explain why these editorials deployed few rhetorical tropes in the delivery of their messages, it could be due to the style of writing of editorial writers. For

instance, *The Guardian*'s non-use of any hyperbole could be attributed to the need to ensure that the editorials reflect reality, especially in view of tension-charged political climate in which the elections were held. Exaggeration could have undermined the very objectives of bringing calmness it set out to achieve. These rhetorical tropes, it is to be noted, are used to make arguments both persuasive and forceful. The research briefly discusses the use of metaphor, hyperbole and pun in the editorials.

4.5.1 Metaphor:

Metaphor is a comparison between two things (Fulwiler 2002). Ohaja (2004: 35) explains that metaphor is a “statement of comparison like the simile but omitting ‘like’ or ‘as’.” A metaphor entails perceiving one thing in terms of another (Richardson 2009: 65). Editorial writers used metaphors to communicate their messages to the target audience. Here are a few instances of metaphor usage in the sampled editorials.

With the long awaited emergence of the presidential candidates, especially from the two major political parties, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC), the stage is set for an **epic battle** that will, obviously, define the future of democracy in the country. (*Leadership*, December 13, 2014).

The electorate, the ultimate **arbiters**, will expect the parties and their candidates to play by the rules and make their campaigns issues-based. And those issues, it is pertinent for us to stress, must be relevant to the lives of the people. (*Leadership*, December 13, 2014).

Nigeria's cup full of workers' strikes looks set to spill out with yet another looming strike that the nation can ill afford. (*Independent*, March 9, 2015)

Addressing the problem of violence demands more than just advisory submissions to **the deaf**; it demands courageous deployment of the cudgel of the law (*The Guardian*, March 13, 2015)

THUGS understand the **business** of violence (*Vanguard* March 16, 2015)

From example 1 above, the editorial writer used the phrase, “epic battle” to describe the forthcoming election. Not only does it highlight what was at stake, but it also points to the manner in which the elections are likely to be contested. Again, the word, “arbiters” is deployed by the editorial writer in reference to the electorate. “Arbiters” as a metaphor helps the editorial writer make a case for issue-based campaigns. If voters are to really function as arbiters, they need political parties to furnish them with manifestoes, on which voters can base

their judgment on when making their political decision. In the third example, the editorial writer makes a forceful case for a more stringent action to be taken against perpetrators of electoral violence. In doing this, the editorial writer uses the phrase “the deaf” to highlight the uselessness of decrying electoral violence without taking appropriate action against perpetrators. From the last example, the editorial writer uses business as a metaphor to show how entrenched violence has become in our electoral system. It also points to the fact that it is lucrative to the practitioners who, in this case, are the thugs as it affords them the opportunity of doing their masters’ bidding with enormous financial rewards. It further shows that thugs understand that their actions will not be challenged by anybody thereby emboldening them to act with impunity.

4.5.2 Hyperbole:

Hyperbole represents an instance of excessive exaggeration made for rhetorical effect (Richardson 2007: 65). Ohaja (2004) explains that hyperbole is a figure of speech which exaggerates an idea to emphasize a point. Hyperbolic statements are rare in the sampled editorials probably because they (editorials) are not sensational in nature. However, it is needed in some circumstances if the true meaning of a message is to be conveyed in the clearest possible terms. The following are the instances in which hyperboles were used to communicate the intentions of the editorial writers.

THE scandalous performance of governments, with very rare exceptions, should be one of the issues to be judged as Nigerians vote for their future, a future that exceptional incompetence has suspended in the past 16 years. (*Vanguard*, February 16, 2015).

To say that the nation’s economy is **indescribably directionless** would be being charitable, because, in our opinion, not much is going on to give the people hope of a better tomorrow. (*Leadership*, December 13, 2014)

Nigeria’s cup **full of workers’** strikes looks set to spill out with yet another looming strike that the nation can ill afford. (*Independent*, March 9, 2015).

Example one above highlights the height of poor performance and its preponderance across the country. The intent is to draw the attention of the electorate to the fact that such performance is a consequence of the present poor economic condition of the nation, and that poor performers are found at every level of government. Therefore, there is the need for the voters to think deeply about all the elective positions as they have serious consequences for the country as a whole. The second example suggests that the nation’s economy is

indescribably directionless. Such hyperbolic phrase was mobilised to emphasize that the economy does not inspire hope for the future. Though the economy is not properly managed, it does not mean it is bad as it is being portrayed. The third example relates to series of industrial action in the lead up to the 2015 general elections. Using the metaphoric phrase “Nigeria’s cup”, the editorial writer adds the hyperbolic phrase, “full of workers’ strike” to highlight the preponderance of industrial actions. The rate of industrial action was exaggerated to suggest that almost all agencies of government had planned to down tools during the elections when in reality, not up to five agencies had planned to go on strike.

4.5.3 Pun

Puns are commonly known as wordplay or play on words. Puns are a form of figurative speech, a trope in which the message possesses two different meanings (Van Mulken et al 2005). There are few examples of puns used in the sampled editorials for rhetorical analysis. Below are some of the examples of puns in the editorials.

They are appropriating space, **the law watches, they are becoming the law.** (*Vanguard*, March 16, 2015)

They are drunk on their principals’ violent utterances, and most importantly, they are assured the **law** would not inconvenience them. (*Vanguard*, March 16, 2015).

The **law** should not excuse murderers and arsonists because they act for politicians. (*Vanguard*, March 16, 2015).

Duplicity in punishing electoral offenders belittles the **law**. (*Vanguard*, March 16, 2015).

The use of the word ‘law’ in this discourse is heavily laden with ambiguity. It is not clear whether the author refers to the security agencies or the constitution (the laws of the land). Perhaps with the exception of the last one (which appears clearer to mean the law of the land), each use of the word ‘law’ in this discourse could be interpreted either way. If it is seen as meaning the institutions saddled with the responsibility of keeping watch over the law and enforcing it, then it is metaphor; but the fact that one could also read some to mean the laws of the land, and others to mean the institutions, all of them share a relationship of pun. Simply put, together they constitute a play on the word ‘law’. The editorial writer deployed pun to show how weak the law appears in the face of violence perpetration in order to make a strong case for stringent application of the law in punishing fomenters of electoral violence.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined thematic content and rhetorical analyses of newspaper editorials in the coverage of 2015 elections in Nigeria. It first sketched a statistical overview of the entire editorials (101). From the statistical overview, news and social editorial types were found to be the most commonly used editorials accounting for more than 80% of the entire editorials. This indicates that the four newspapers gave ample coverage to election-related issues by drawing extensively from developments in the news and social circles. It also showed that the editorials were directed at the elites who are largely key players during polls. Three main themes – violence-free polls, rational voting and credible electoral process – emerged from thematic content analysis geared towards achieving peaceful and credible polls. The editorials spoke on virtually all aspects of the election, offering advice, opinions, suggestions etc. all aimed at achieving successful polls. The sampled editorials established that there was scant deployment of rhetorical tropes in conveying editorial messages. The study showed that the editorials sampled for rhetorical analysis made three kinds of argumentation, namely forensic, epideictic and deliberative arguments to advance their positions. The editorials also used three modes of argumentation – logo, pathos and ethos – to appeal to their audience.

The next chapter appraises what editorial writers hoped to achieve through their editorial and the normative ideals they drew on in the discharge of their duties.

Chapter Five

Data Presentation and Analysis (II)

5.1 Introduction

Chapter four presented thematic content and rhetorical analyses of editorials of four national newspapers chosen for this study. Using in-depth individual interviews, this chapter investigates what editorial writers believed their editorials set out to do and achieve, and explores the normative ideals they drew on in the discharge of their duties.

5.2 In-depth Interviews: The Normative Ideals Behind Editorial Writings

This section is primarily concerned with understanding what editorials hoped to achieve through their editorials and the normative ideals that guide their action. To realise this goal, in-depth individual interview is proposed for this study. It is a useful research method for gaining insight into a person's thought or behaviour (Boyce & Neale 2006; Bryne 2004). The researcher did not directly ask editorial writers the normative ideals they drew on in the discharge of their duties. This is to avoid the responses of the editorial writers being influenced by the question. As Josephi (2005) notes, normative expectations of the western model used to frame questions influence the responses thereby resulting in seemingly universal notion of journalism even in non-western world. Rather, the researcher was concerned with identifying/discerning normative ideals from their responses to the actions they took in the lead-up to 2015 general elections.

5.2.1 Profiles of Editorial Writers

As noted in 3.4.2, the researcher conducted eight interviews with editorial writers or members of the editorial board in four newspaper organisations chosen for this study. In keeping with the principles of anonymity and confidentiality agreed with the respondents, no interviewees' identities will be disclosed: they will be identified as interviewee I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII and VIII. The editorial writers were asked about their histories with the paper and careers in general to discern the ways in which their socialisation has shaped their journalistic practice. The study indicates that the process of entry into the community of editorial writers is a long one, since members of this community are in the top echelon of the newspaper. Membership of editorial board is drawn from those who have spent several years in the industry. Rendered below are excerpts from some of their responses to this question:

Well, career-wise it's been a really interesting time because I have been here for more than two decades now. In fact this is my 28th year; I came in October, 1988 (Interviewee V).

I started here way back in 1991 as a reporter of *Sunday Vanguard* and rose from there to senior staff writer, deputy features editor. Of course I was in the *Sunday Vanguard* for many years, at a point, I was deputy editor of *Sunday Vanguard* (Interviewee VI).

They are usually experts in certain areas such as law, the economy, business, politics, international politics, foreign relations etc. This point was highlighted by Hulteng (1973) in which he made a case for the editorial writer to be well-informed in order to function effectively. According to him, the editorial writer must be “thoroughly grounded in one field ... or several and be conversant with a good many more” (Hulteng 1973: 18). Talking about editorial writers, Hulteng submits that:

He must be an educated person, in the most catholic sense of that term. He need not be a da Vinci, a Renaissance man, but he must – he *must* – have a solid fund of knowledge on which to base his analyses, predictions, and advocacies (1973: 17).

Though many of journalists joined their current newspaper a few years ago, some of them have worked in several organisations before joining the latest place of employment as the excerpts below show.

The editorial board is not a place for everybody, besides being a long-term journalist, you must have specialised in certain areas such as business and economy, you talk about politics, international relations, human interest. So there must be specialists in these areas, the editorial board is not a place where you just have anybody; you must be an expert to comment comfortably on certain issues.

Sincerely speaking I came to this paper in 2013 as member of editorial board. In December 2013, there was a change (reorganisation) and I was made editorial page editor and was equally asked to act as editorial board chairman. The post I held until 2015 when I was confirmed as the editorial board chairman. But I must tell you that prior to that I have been in journalism since 1991. I have worked in the *Punch*, *Concord* Newspapers and *Nigerian Economist*. I have worked in reputable organisations (Interviewee I).

On the whole, the interviewees have had many years of experience. Thus they are versed in various aspects of their society which enables them comment comfortably on those areas. It is believed that long careers in the industry results in journalists gaining experience and specialisation which is necessary for editorial writers to operate in his office effectively. This is arguably what Hanitzsch (forthcoming) meant when he noted that journalists are socialised into a journalism community through exposure to intellectual scripts and meaning systems. Not only does it emphasise the importance of having adequate knowledge about the area the editorial writer is commenting on, it also places a premium on the role editorials should play in the society. Beyond interpreting events or social problems, the editorial writer is expected

to have an understanding of the role his interpretation and advocacy should play in the society it serves.

5.2.2 Editorial Writers as Concerned Citizens

In keeping with the basic tenets of social responsibility theory, this study sought to understand the motivations of editorial writers in their writing leading up to 2015 general elections in Nigeria. A question on how they felt about the tense political environment prior to the election in the country was posed to the respondents. All but one admitted they were worried about the prevailing political climate. Most of the respondents expressed their worries in varying degrees. For instance, interview I expressed his concern this way:

Every true Nigerian ought to be worried because when you look at campaign of blackmail, character assassination and the tension in the polity, one could easily conclude that something untoward was going to happen. So I was worried because the process of election did not give feeling of comfort... I was worried as a newspaper editor and we tried as much as possible to express our worries.

Similar sentiment was shared by interview IV in which he averred that:

We had a lot of things to worry about – where politicians open their mouth and make threatening statements, when politicians say that they are going to make the country ungovernable if a particular government comes in... So, we were worried and then we expressed our concern through our editorials and warned the authorities and put them on notice in order to arrest some of these developments before they become too much to handle.

The fear about the election was further accentuated by United States' prediction that Nigeria could fracture by the year 2015. In his submission, interviewee V noted that:

We were worried also for the course of events especially when the election was being postponed... You know some people were more or less trying to advocate for an interim government or something. There was no need for that and our editorials had to address it. If you can recollect, 2015 was a year that everybody had the fear that the Americans were already saying that the country may disintegrate in that particular year.

Many of the respondents agreed that their concern related to the future of Nigeria. They believe that any crisis in Nigeria's political system was capable of adversely affecting her future. This view was most eloquently echoed in interviewee I's perspective:

I was very worried. Look at it this way: if Nigeria broke up that time, will I still be called a Nigerian? So, my identity was going to be taken away from me. It's like my life was going to be snuffed out of me.

From the foregoing, the admission by editorial writers that they were worried about the tone of the campaigns, and consequently moved to write editorials concerning those fears, is an

indication that they are committed to doing their part in order to ensure a peaceful election. This finds expression in social responsibility theory perspective, which highlights active participation or intervention in the social and political process to achieve socially-valued outcomes for the greater good of all (Shim 2002). For Shim (2002), social responsibility-driven journalistic roles can be construed as interventionist. It is for this reason that editorial writers had to voice their concerns, which addressed issues they perceive to be ruinous to the electoral process. The excerpts below represent some of the concerns expressed in editorials by editorial writers leading up to the 2015 elections in Nigeria:

Given the desperate campaign tactics of the two leading political parties (and it is confounding how an honest desire to serve the people of Nigeria would drive these less-than-noble measures), there are good reasons to be concerned about the conduct of the election process as well as the response to the outcome. But let it be said directly and unequivocally that no person's or group's interest is, nor can be bigger than Nigeria (*The Guardian*, March 26, 2015)

We are worried that because some of the perpetrators of these heinous crimes are associates and followers of influential politicians and people in government, they flaunt their criminalities openly and law enforcement officers seem helpless to restrain them or bring them to justice (*Leadership*, February 28, 2015)

This Newspaper is worried that religion is now an instrument to canvass for votes in the nation's political-mix. We acknowledge that religion has become the opium of the masses in the light of excruciating poverty created by bad leadership and the lack of basic infrastructure (*Independent*, January 9, 2015).

There are enough worries about Nigeria's future. Violence can only exacerbate them (*Vanguard*, February 3, 2015).

This sense of responsibility or obligation of intervening in the electoral process is at variance with the practice in which Sandman et al (1976: 266) chided editorial writers for using editorial pages "to praise the weather, pontificate on the latest news from Afghanistan" while important issues that affected the populace were denied editorial attention. In the case of Nigerian editorial writers, their fears, worries and concerns motivated them to direct the attention of political actors to issues that threatened credible electoral process. Thus, they are fulfilling the charge left by Louis M. Lyons, in which he described the editorial as "... a chance to represent the institution itself, as a concerned and considerate citizen... a good neighbour, one who cares" (Stonecipher 1971: 31). In fulfilling this goal, editorial writers are motivated, as Hulteng (1973: 38) puts it, "by an honest concern that the public interest be served" which is to have incident-free elections.

5.2.3 Understanding the Role of Editorials in the Society

In order to gain insight into how editorial writers perceive the role of editorials and journalism in the society, it was important to ask them what editorials do in general. All the respondents confronted with this question admitted that editorial played a vital role in the society.

Responses from interviewees I and III on the subject were quite interesting:

They are many. One, you have to realise that editorial is enlightening, it's informative, it's educative. If you look at it from that perspective, you will understand that editorial is like a torch bearer, it is the key that opens the door, it gives you key of liberty. If you are looking for a solution to something, go through the editorials of the papers, you will find the solution and that is why you find policy makers, politicians, even research institutions key into editorials.

Editorials are opinions that are usually expressed by the newspaper, not individuals. That is why we call it the leader for direction, for advice, for public enlightenment so that people generally could be well-informed before they themselves will take their own decision. These are the things that we see the elite, the middle class, people in the academia rely on that kind of editorial even for their own comment. It is usually directional signpost to help policy makers, the leadership of the country, public officers, business class and all others to be well-informed as citizens.

The idea of editorials being enlightening, informative and educative resonates strongly with participant-interpretive role of journalism, characteristic of social responsibility theory (Kanyegirire 2007). Here interpretation is preferred to description, as the journalist uses the agency of editorials to be a voice for direction, solution and guidance. Through interpretation, the editorial writer brings enlightenment to her readers by highlighting the import of an action or the consequence of a policy so that the reader will be properly directed. Education function of editorial, is very much in keeping with what George Gallup wrote in *Masthead* (1956-57) cited in Waldrop (1967: 5): "the enormous task of informing the public must fall in no small part to the editorial writers of the nation. Their responsibility is *adult education* in the highest and fullest sense of the term." This finds expression in one of the normative functions of the press according to the tenets of social responsibility theory. This holds that the press should enlighten the public to equip them for self-government.

Besides educational value of editorials, others believe that editorials are meant to reform the society. In his own view, interviewee V argues that "the importance of editorial is to reform the society, make some corrections, give advice where it is necessary." Similarly, interviewee IV described a more practical scenario in which editorials can be used to reform the society.

Sometimes when government formulates a policy which we consider to be injurious to democracy or human rights or even to the economy, particularly, of the masses, we point them out. In many cases, government has responded by rescinding their decisions and modifying them in ways that will accord with our positions which will now protect the interest of Nigerians generally.

The above finds expression in Emery's (1962) verdict that the duties of any newspaper to its community are a fearless expression of editorial opinion in favour of the fundamental principles of human liberty and social progress.

The following extracts from the editorials validate the educational and reformatory roles editorials play in the society:

But as a Newspaper, we note that the debate has been carried out more in ignorance of the constitutional provisions of the qualification for elective officers than a knowledge-based discourse... Section 131 of the 1999 constitution states that: "*A person shall be qualify for election to the office of President if (a) he is a citizen of Nigeria by birth (b) he has attained the age of forty years (c) he is a member of a political party and is sponsored by that party, and (d) he has been educated up to at least School Certificate level or its equivalent.*" [Italicised in the original text] (*Independent*, January 23, 2015).

The above editorial was written in response to the controversy surrounding General Buhari's qualification. The subsequent paragraphs were used by the editorial writer to elucidate what constituted school certificate. The intent, it could be argued, was to dispel any misinformation so that Nigerians could have an enlightened discussion on the issue. Here is another extract that exemplifies the educational role of editorials:

Politicians see power, it uses, for themselves, and frighteningly, the challenges of being outside the spheres of power... Most of the promises they are making, in their desperation to serve us, are rehashes of some fabulous ones that have been made since 1999; others are copied from faded copies of 1979 manifestoes and regurgitated to digital relevance for a people, who can really say they have seen it all (*Vanguard*, March 26, 2015).

The editorial was designed to educate Nigerians on the trickery of politicians who use flowery language to sway voters to their side with no intention to deliver on their campaign promises. Such editorials were meant to help voters to look beyond those enticing words to assessing candidates, with high degree of wakefulness, on their sincerity of purpose and ability to deliver on such promises.

One of the areas editorial writers made a case for reform is the campaign funding of political parties. In doing this, they drew on advocacy journalism role in social responsibility theory, which argues that the journalist must actively try to solve societal problems through effective representation of alternative definition of reality. Worth particular mention is the N21 billion raised by President Goodluck Jonathan's organisation in one night. The editorial writers argued that monetisation of the electoral process was injurious to the health of the polity as it lays a foundation for corruption.

The independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should work hard at tightening the regulations of election expenses or work for strengthening of those institutions or organs to monitor individuals, groups and political parties. Henceforth, political parties should be compelled to publish the source of their campaigns funds and purposes for which they would be deployed (*The Guardian*, January 19, 2015).

Editorials such as this are aimed at suggesting ways the electoral management body can effectively solve the problem of monetisation of their electoral. This is in consonance with advocacy role consistent with social responsibility-driven journalism. Here, the alternative definition of reality advanced is that money politics can be curbed if the electoral management body carry out their constitutional role of implementing close supervision of political parties.

5.2.4 Reflecting the Pulse of the Society

Newspapers do not exist in a vacuum. The relevance of a newspaper is, to a large extent, measured by how effective it is in reflecting the goings-on in the society where it is located. To this end, editorials as an important constituent of newspapers are expected to reflect the mood in the society, especially during tense periods, such as an election. Following the question about those who actually read editorials, there was a consensus among editorial writers who were interviewed that the readership of editorials are policy makers, the academia, government officials, politicians, research institutions, the business class and even the presidency. If indeed the intent of an editorial is to uphold the fundamental principles of human liberty and social progress (Emery 1962), then editorials must capture and convey the atmosphere of the society to people who are in a position to institute change. Again, if editorials can function as a moderating influence as Lyons (1971) suggested, then its contents should reflect what happens in the society it serves. Failure to do this will result in Sandman et al's (1976) condemnation of editorial writers for commenting on distant events while avoiding local controversies for fear of risking the anger of its readers. As a result, editorial writers demonstrated good understanding of this need and closely monitored events leading up to 2015 general election. The thematic content analysis in chapter four shows the range of issues the editorials offered opinions on. Interviewee IV, while explaining why editorials should carry out this function noted that the government is usually oblivious of what happens in the society due to the manner governance is conducted in the country. Therefore, there was the need to comment on these issues. In keeping with the social responsibility theory, one of the roles of the journalist is to advocate for the marginalised or the voiceless. The extract below captures this view thus:

Editorial is the opinion of the newspaper but if a newspaper is respected by the people and by the government, they would read the editorial and they would also like to dissect the thinking of the newspaper. Because the newspaper is in a position to know a lot of things that are happening within the society which the government, the authorities themselves may not know by virtue of the way they operate. Editorials have been of great value. Even the examples I just cited about government taking some actions as a result of what they believe is the position of our editorial is some examples of the value of editorial. I would say that editorials have been of great value because they reflect the thinking and what is actually happening in the society which government may not be able to know. Because most of our editorials are directed at government, public policies, public interests and all that, the editorials tell government a lot of things that they don't know and we believe that it enables them to refine their actions.

Interviewee V gave a practical way they reflected key issues through their editorial writings:

We had to write on violence and on some people spending so much money on campaigns, monies that you cannot easily attribute to them. We had to address such issues and maybe suggest also what INEC can do on how campaigns can be funded so that people will not be stealing from government purses to fund campaigns. Of course you know impunity was perpetrated in that period, we had to point them out and make suggestions here and there on how it can be done better in future.

The tone of the respondent above is an indication of an acceptance of an obligation consistent with social responsibility theory. Thurston (1979:21) explains that the conception of social responsibility confers its "active connotation that changes the right of free expression from a natural right as in libertarian theory to a moral right, with the attendant quality of duty or obligation". The use of the phrase "had to" is an acknowledgment of this obligation by the respondent. In his own submission, Interviewee II conveys his slightly different perspective:

The newspaper exists not in a vacuum; the newspaper is representing the populace. The newspaper helps the people to echo their opinion and push it, most times, to government for attention.

This is in line with concept of advocacy journalism. The journalist, within the advocacy perspective, must serve his readership by bringing silent voices to the forefront of the public discourse (Janowitz 1975). A similar view, as above, was shared in the response by Interviewee I.

I think... editorials help raise the level of discussion at elections. They bring to the front burner those issues which are germane to the process. If you look at our editorials you will discover that they reflected major issues that were fundamental to the election. From campaign funding to security at the polls even to issues of violence, those were issues that had direct impact on the outcome of the elections. If the newspaper had failed to talk about those issues at such a critical moment in our national life, that paper had failed to live up to its responsibility because newspapers should be the conscience of the society.

The excerpt above cannot be better understood than in the words of Louis M. Lyons (1979: 31), in which he argued that the primary role of an editorial page is to represent the institution

(newspaper) “as a civilised and civilising force, as a concerned and considerate citizen, as a moderate and moderating influence, as a thoughtful person, a good neighbour, one who cares”. By raising the level of discussion to what the campaigns should be about (issue-based) as opposed to provoking ethnic sentiments, the editorial writer, is equipping the citizenry for self-government so that they can make informed decisions at the polls.

Interviewee II aptly captures it thus: “So, if you close your ears in an election year, during elections, what else will you be reporting? That means you have excluded yourself, you have de-marketed yourself”. This is in tandem with the normative function of social responsibility theory of serving the political system by providing information, discussion and debate on public affairs such as election. It is the view of editorial writers that they have an obligation to comment on election-related subjects and failure to do so, amounts to falling short of their responsibility.

The following are some extracts of editorials in which the mood of the society was mirrored:

Recurring developments in the country, especially during electioneering periods not just always stroke tension across the country, they also result in non-indigenes living in fear. As the February election approaches, the tension has again heightened as supporters of the two presidential frontrunners, ... struggle to come out victorious. Each has threatened showdown if they are not satisfied with the conduct and/or outcome of the polls. Southerners residing in the northern parts of the country have reportedly started an exodus back home as northerners in the south are said to be equally heading back to the north in fear of post election violence (*Independent*, February 10, 2015).

Blames, name-calling, and sheer abuses have become the new order of campaigns. Everything is wrong with the other person. Every action is subjected to scrutiny that gives the impression that we are searching for saints as President (*Vanguard*, December 17, 2014).

In some States, there were as many primaries as there were aspirants. Each aspirant had delegates, organised primaries, where the organiser emerged winner. There are cases where four aspirants have declared themselves winners of the same ticket (*Vanguard*, December 12, 2014).

Between then and now, the security situation has degenerated to a level where the average Nigerian is morbidly afraid to even step out of his house each day. When men are not killed in the churches and mosques, their wives are cut down or worse in the markets and their children are either killed in school or abducted (*Leadership*, December 13, 2015).

5.2.5 Speaking Truth to Power

Editorials are usually not aimed at the common reader. Instead, they tend to address influential political actors by examining their actions or advancing alternative course of action (van Dijk 1992). It was for this reason that van Dijk observes that “the readers are rather observers than addressees of this type of discourse of one of the power elites, viz, the press,

directed at other power elites, typically the politicians” (1992: 244). In line with this thinking, editorial writers interviewed for this study reveal how they spoke truth to power during the elections. The first step to speaking the truth to power is by coming up with a stronger argument through extensive research. In the four dailies studied, it is an established norm to discuss the editorial topics in editorial board meetings before they are written by a member of the editorial board. As interviewee I put it:

Editorial is not written by one person. We have a group, who will discuss themes, then as a writer you collate the views of the editorial board members and based on your knowledge of those themes, you put them together.

The response of interviewee V reflected a much-related view as the one expressed above:

Honestly, it’s a lot of work packaging all those editorials which you are seeing especially for some of the serious newspapers like our own here and some other ones out there because editorials are not just what somebody sits down in a corner to write individually. No, it’s an aggregate of opinion of some people who should know in the society really.

Getting aggregate of opinion also involves inviting experts beyond the editorial board to help enlighten the board on certain matters of the state, as interviewee V noted:

In fact, during national conference period, because we needed a wider opinion, we had to go beyond even the board here; we had to invite people from outside who we know will really give us good advice. We ran a series of editorials addressing various issues on that conference. We invited so many people- Professor Itse Sagay, Olisa Agbakoba and many others we had to invite them to come around and tell us about how they feel about the whole thing. From that one we knew we were in a good position to say something authoritatively on those issues.

Such was the extent of building a strong argument. Thus, interview III asserted that:

No institution, no agency jokes with the *Guardian* editorial because our editorials are usually not editorials that are ordinary, they are well-thought-out, well written, well edited and we have never been frivolous.

This extensive research tradition is premised on the notion that editorials, which usually take on argumentative posture, can only achieve its goal of influencing people’s views on a subject, if the basis of the argument is founded on a firm foundation. This is particularly necessary for editorials directed at the elite. Such editorials need not only demonstrate the use of language, but application of reason to change the thinking of the elite. For their editorials to function as torch bearers or directional signposts, as editorial writers claim, such editorials must bring fresh perspectives to an issue, and offer strong arguments so as to inspire a change of point of view of the elite. The prevailing practice of having editorial boards among Nigerian dailies to discuss editorial topics as a group as opposed to as individuals, is to guard

against the danger of building an argument from one point of view, often plagued with many false premises. Writing on the possible danger of crafting an editorial by an individual without his argument being subjected to the scrutiny of another person(s), Hulteng opined that:

An editorial writer sitting alone in his office, building an editorial theme from start to final draft, can easily become bemused by his own brilliant eloquence and overpowering logic that he fails to notice that one corner of his dream castle is resting on sand or that he forgot to put in any stairway. Any piece of writing can benefit from searching scrutiny of others, and this is particularly true of opinion writing (1973: 27).

It appears Nigerian editorial writers may have taken counsel from the above and as a consequence of its extensive preparation, interview III believes their editorial “comes magisterially.”

We speak truth to power and because we are an independent newspaper, when we speak, the nation listens... People always react to our editorials because you know editorials are not usually objective things but when we speak truth to power, most of the times, the power people react.

I think we did others condemning violence in the country especially in Rivers state at that time. We describe that kind of editorial in our editorial board meeting as being magisterial. You know when you write something and it's like delivering judgment that this one is not good enough, that this one is good enough. Honestly, I am very proud of this paper for having written editorials of note in the past. (Interviewee V)

When asked to cite examples of how powerful people reacted to editorials, interviewee IV responded:

Very lately, because I can't remember many things that had happened in the past, very recently, the federal government dissolved the governing boards of some universities and we wrote an editorial to say that it was not proper because such things are not done. There are laws guiding the establishment and dissolution of governing boards of universities, that the federal government did not follow those procedures. Shortly after that, the federal government apologised and I believe they reversed the decision that they took. Another example is when the Nigerian budget presented by the executive to the National Assembly when it was discovered that a lot of things were added which were not included by the presidency, we wrote editorials condemning whoever was responsible for that and asking government to take appropriate action against those people. Shortly after that, a number of people were relieved of their duties. So we believe it was in response to our editorials. Those are the two examples I can immediately recollect.

The extract above exemplifies an instance where editorial writers carried out one of the functions the press is expected to perform in the society, within social responsibility model, which is protecting individual rights by acting as watchdogs against the government (Siebert et al 1956).

The editorials sampled for this study are replete with instances of where the editorials spoke truth to power.

Thus the police, INEC and government must find ways to put an end to to this. If the police and other security agencies are desirous of curbing electoral violence, they must begin by taking pro-active measures to reduce the amassment of small and light weapons (*The Guardian*, March 13, 2015).

Specifically, we admonish Clark to be a father of the nation, irrespective of his political loyalty or ethnic nationality. At over 85 years of age, we expect no less from him, as the younger generation of Nigerians look unto him and other elder statesmen for their wealth of experience and wisdom (*Independent*, December 12, 2014).

INEC must know that it holds the fate of 170 million Nigerians in its hands. Prof. Attahiru Jega must be on top of his game by discharging the responsibilities reposed on him creditably. He must be careful to avoid bringing disrepute to his name (*Independent*, January 30, 2015).

In our opinion, the security agencies, including the military and the police, the intelligence community and other related agencies must be on high alert. There is the need for extreme vigilance throughout the period, not only by the security apparatus, but also by the entire populace (*Leadership*, March 24, 2015).

In order to adequately account for what editorial writers hoped to achieve and the normative ideals that informed their actions, it is important to briefly examine the contexts under which editorial writers carry out their work. Janks (2005) observes that the situational and intertextual contexts are critical to the process of interpretation of text. The situational context, Janks (2005) explains, is useful for providing answers to the place and time of text production. The Nigerian newspaper industry is a vibrant one (Babalola 2002) and it is adjudged the freest on the African continent (Bourgault 1995). This freedom is much more entrenched since the return of democracy in 1999. Apart from political independence, the Nigerian newspaper industry enjoys economic freedom as they are privately-owned business enterprises. Given that editorial is a space for newspaper to speak as an institution on matters of public importance, they have a degree of independence from pressures of the political and economic realm. In fact, some members of the editorial board are drawn from outside the media industry and so, may not be exposed to the influence of any special interest. As was stated in the policy thrust of *Leadership* newspaper, the press in Nigeria is poised to defend Nigeria and her people. This is why journalists in Nigeria perceive their role as located within the social responsibility theory framework as Tiri's (2013) study suggests.

The period leading to the elections was marked by heightened tension. This was the first time the then incumbent party, PDP, had been faced with any opposition party who threatened the political position of the PDP (Uzodi & Orji 2015). Owing to the close contest of the polls,

every aspect of it was hotly disputed often leading to controversies driven by distortion of truth to favour one's own goal. In the midst of the cacophony of voices, newspaper editorials present an auspicious platform to champion the cause of a peaceful and credible electoral process. This is because editorial as a journalistic genre is permitted by convention to hold and make public its views on any issue. Unlike the news stories constrained by news values of objectivity and neutrality, editorial remains the only way a newspaper can offer its own opinion on public issues.

Informed by the social responsibility media theory which, among other things, presupposes free and financially independent press, the editorial writers seem to have felt obligated to provide discussion and debate to ensure that the best interest of the society was served. The preparation of these editorials, according to the responses from the editorial writers, evidences an acknowledgement of a moral duty to the society in which a newspaper serves to provide honest and thoughtful opinion. This is why they engaged in extensive research drawing on different perspectives to offer balanced and enlightening opinion. Through their editorials, editorial writers hoped to arrest the degenerating state of electioneering campaigns by pointing out the anomalies in the process and suggesting ways to curb them. For instance, when a *Vanguard* editorial discussed the increasing visibility of thugs in the election, it concluded that thugs were overdue for punishment. The editorial writers also wanted to raise the level of discussion by pointing to issues that are central to the Nigerian state. The editorial writers are moving campaign discourse from a pedestrian to an issue-based level by insisting that candidates must speak on the economy. They also wanted to ensure that the electorate vote with a measure of wakefulness and thoughtfulness. In doing this, the editorial writers drew the attention of the electorate to the fact that the parlous state of Nigeria is a consequence of voting, based on primordial, ethnic or selfish reasons. Furthermore, they warned that the country could witness the same result if there was no change of attitude. The editorial writers intended to inculcate in the politicians the values of patriotism, civility and the spirit of sportsmanship that respect the will of the people. They intended to produce informed and participating citizenry (McChesney 1999). On the whole, editorials writers hoped that through their editorials the elections would be peaceful and credible, and the winner would be a true reflection of the wishes of the electorates.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter, through in-depth individual interviews, assessed what editorial writers hoped to achieve through their editorials and the normative ideals that informed their actions. The study found that the social responsibility theory was the normative ideal that informed their actions. Editorial writers, in their bid to service the political system through provision of information, discussion and debate, hoped to facilitate the electoral process by calling the attention of authorities, politicians and election management body, INEC to issues that could undermine the credibility of the process. They equally appealed to the electorate to vote with a sense of patriotism that shuns ethnic and parochial sentiments. In keeping with interventionist stance typical of social responsibility-driven journalism, editorial writers also provided technical advice to INEC on how to distribute PVCs in the hope of enhancing the credibility of the polls. Beyond drawing their normative ideals from social responsibility media theory, the editorial writers were also motivated to act by the dangerous direction the country was headed. This is particularly significant in that it portrayed editorial writers as ordinary citizens similarly affected by what happens in the society they operate. Unlike previous criticisms of editorials writers acting in ways that show them distant from the society they serve, this study demonstrates that they are disturbed, like other Nigerians, by the prospect of the country disintegrating. They were thus motivated to warn political actors about the consequences of their actions. **The next chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of this study.**

Chapter Six

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to summarise the study while drawing conclusion and making recommendations in relation to the findings presented in the previous chapters. The data presented was collected from four selected Nigerian newspapers namely: *The Guardian, Independent, Leadership* and *Vanguard* as well as in-depth individual interviews with editorials writers of the aforementioned newspapers. Conclusions provide an overview of the result of the study, citing what was identified in the study in the light of the objectives of the study. The chapter makes recommendations for further study drawing from the conclusions and the analysis of the data.

6.2 Summary

This study sought to investigate the possible contribution of editorials to peaceful and credible 2015 elections in Nigeria. It also examined what editorial writers hoped to achieve and normative ideals they drew on in the discharge of their duty. In exploring these issues, the research primarily drew on qualitative research methodology with thematic content analysis and in-depth individual interview as the main research methods. However, the editorials were quantified in order to establish the frequency and other dimensions of election-related editorials. The main findings of the statistical overview of the editorials indicate that news category accounted for the highest editorial types with 54 of the 101 editorials. The month of February recorded the highest number of election-related editorials in the period under review with 32 editorials. As the month in which the elections were initially scheduled to place coupled with the controversies its postponement generated, it was easy to justify the figure. With respect to whom the editorials addressed, a cumulative statistical overview of editorials showed that 70% of them addressed elites. This is indeed consistent with van Dijk's verdict that editorials are usually directed at elite while the common man is usually a spectator to such conversation (1992).

6.2.1 Thematic content analysis

From the thematic content analysis of these editorials, three broad themes emerged, namely violence-free polls, credible electoral process and rational voting. These themes broadly captured the major issues that were germane to the conduct of the 2015 election in Nigeria. Using these Themes the editorials essentially made two broad contributions to the electoral process. First, it made moral and ethical appeals by urging supra national and patriotic attitudes that transcended ethnic and primordial lines. Following from the rational voting and violence-free polls themes, the editorials were deployed to ensure smooth conduct of the elections in keeping with the facilitative role of journalism as discussed in chapter two. Social responsibility theory, as discussed in chapter two, encourages journalists to proactively intervene in a process in the interest of greatest good of the greatest number of people and so, these editorials were vocal in their advocacy for nationalist and patriotic attitudes towards to

the election. This was particularly pertinent given that as was mentioned in chapter one, ethnicity and win-at-all-cost mentality of politicians truncated the First and Second Republics in the country. Events in the lead-up to the 2015 election in Nigeria were emblematic of a repeat of 1964 and 1983 political crisis. Hence the need to urge Nigerians, particularly the political class, to think of the country's good first as opposed to their personal gains. The electorates were equally tasked to exhibit a sense of nationalism and patriotism while casting their votes. By reminding Nigerians that the election is a fight for the soul of Nigeria, it puts the consequences of the outcome of the polls in perspective. This emphasis is for the electorate to patriotically focus on larger entity called Nigeria opposed to thinking the polls is all about two individuals. This strategy was deployed to unite a nation polarised by politics and enlighten a people blinded by ethnic and primordial sentiments.

The second contribution that the editorials made is process interventions. Emphasized most in credible electoral theme, process intervention is very much in line with the interventionist posture typical of social responsibility theory. They did this by providing technical advice to enhance the process of election. They offered practical solutions to various challenges militating against smooth conduct of the election. Of particular reference was the problem with the distribution of PVC, the editorials suggested various ways of solving the problem. They also drew the attention of INEC to issues like fielding of under-aged candidates for elective position and the need to hold elections in the north-east of Nigeria which could bring the credibility of the process into question. These editorials were committed not only to the conduct of the election but also ensuring that its credibility meets international best practices. Instead of staying aloof "detached" characteristic of Libertarian model in the name of neutrality, these editorials made spirited efforts at facilitating credible election by advising, suggesting and appealing to INEC and other relevant agencies to perform optimally to guarantee a successful process. On the whole, the editorials kept close watch on the political developments in the country offering informed commentaries aimed at achieving successful electoral process. The strategies for realising this goal included constructive criticisms, outright condemnation for actions warranting such, suggestions on ways the process could be improved by citing how the process works in advanced democracies and commending those whose actions deserved commendation.

6.2.2 Rhetorical Analysis

This study probed the rhetorical strategies editorial writers mobilised to advance their arguments. The study revealed that editorial writers employed pathetic, logetic and ethotic modes of argumentation. At one point, editorial writers appealed to the emotions of the audience in order to accept their line of argument like they appealed to the police to shelve their planned strike in the "national interest", at other times, argument were built on the strength of the logic of argument sometimes citing the some provisions of the constitution of the country to argue a position. Yet, there were occasions when previous stance of the paper was invoked as a basis to justify the current position held as in an ethotic argument to demonstrate their consistency in judgment. As shown in chapter four, the editorials used forensic, epideictic and deliberative kinds of argumentation in arguing diverse positions. For instance, editorials advocating for rational voting made use of deliberative kind of

argumentation as it warned that the nation would still face the problem poor governance if the electorate voted without a measure of wakefulness or thoughtfulness. From the results of rhetorical tropes, there was a scant use of rhetorical tropes in the editorials sampled for this study. Metaphor appears to be the most commonly used trope accounting for more than 70% of the entire tropes. Neologism and metonym were not identified in any of the editorial. While the reason for the scant use of rhetorical tropes cannot be established, it could be attributed to the writing style of editorial writers.

6.2.3 In-depth Individual Interviews

Given the volume of election-related editorials, it is obvious that editorial writers were concerned about the smooth conduct of the polls. It was, however, important to ascertain the normative ideals that informed their work. To do this required finding out what they thought editorials do. The responses of editorial writers were indicative of a good appreciation of the role of editorials in society as they noted it is informative, educative, enlightening, reformative and above all, solution-offering. In chapter two, journalist's role enactment, as Hanitzsch explained, relates to the process by which cognitive roles of journalists and by extension, normative role translate into action. The response above, it is argued, shapes what these editorial writers think they do which in combination with the normative ideals translated into what the editorials actually did in the lead-up to the 2015 elections.

A number of these editorials were largely educative often making reference to constitutional provisions while advancing a position in a bid to educate the reader on the position of the law concerning certain issues. It was also in the tradition of these editorials to enlighten the people by stating the implications of certain actions of the political class. It is equally on record that they provided solutions to difficult situation such as the distribution of PVC by calling for the decentralisation of PVC distribution to ward levels. Again, the editorial writers revealed that their role was to reflect the pulse of the society. There is an understanding among them that those in places of authority may not know what ordinary citizens feel about a policy, hence the need to capture those feelings and channel it to the ruling elite. They believe that by virtue of their work, they have more information on the goings-on in the society which puts them in good stead to convey same to the governing authorities. Furthermore, the editorial writers revealed that they spoke truth to power.

There was a unanimous admission by respondents that the main recipients of editorial messages are the elite. This response is further corroborated by the result of the statistical overview that showed that over 70% of the editorials actually appeared to be addressed the elite. In order to speak truth to power elite with the aim of influencing their actions, such arguments must be founded on some notion or approximation of truth arrived at through extensive research tradition common in editorial boards in Nigeria. There was a consensus among editorial writers on the need to discuss editorial topics at length before the editorials were written so as to make their argument as strong as they could be. All in all, editorial writers saw their position as the voice of the voiceless, i.e. some kind of 'conscience of the nation'. Overall, they demonstrated a commitment to the sustenance of democratic ethos.

From the interviews it became clear that the editorial writers hoped to arrest the spate of violence in the polity, raise the level of discussion and re-direct the attention of politicians to core issues bothering ordinary Nigerians through their editorials, put national consciousness and patriotism at the heart of political discourse, produce informed and participating citizenry (McChesney 1999) and ultimately achieve peaceful and credible polls. In view of the evidence and analysis in chapters four and five, I argue, therefore, that editorial writers drew on social responsibility theory in carrying out these activities. Their actions find expression in the functions the press is expected to play in the society in social responsibility model. They were inspired by the need to service the political system through the provision of information, discussion and debate on public affairs to produce these editorials that spoke on various issues germane to the conduct of the election. They were, as many of them mentioned in the interviews, motivated by the need for the enlightenment of the public for self-government to create editorials that explained the consequences of voting based on ethnic and primordial sentiments and a reminder that the election was about the soul of national and not about Buhari or Jonathan. Being ‘attached’ to the cause of facilitating credible polls, the editorial writers had to make ‘interventions’, through suggestions, when necessary to achieve a peaceful and credible 2015 general elections in Nigeria.

6.3 Conclusion

Overall, this research examined the contributions of editorials to the credible and peaceful 2015 general elections in Nigeria. This study investigated what editorial writers hoped to achieve through their editorials and the normative ideals that informed such actions. Again, the study examined the rhetorical strategies editorial writers employed to advance their points of argument. Judging by the data and analysis presented in chapters four and five, is it possible to draw any conclusions about the contributions the editorials made in the 2015 general elections?

There is a strong case to be made that editorials contributed to the success of the elections but what may be difficult to establish is the impact of the contribution given that this study is not a reception or survey research that could gauge the impact or how the audience received the editorials. Based on the range of issues the editorials commented on as shown through thematic content analysis, it indicates that the editorials covered every aspect of the election. From the primaries to elect party flagbearers to what should happen on Election Day, the editorials consistently offered reasoned opinions to make the process better. Not only do they condemn actions that could derail the process, the editorials equally proffered solutions to problems facing the election. For emphasis, the editorials repeated some of the issues they spoke about. For instance, the issues of violence and distribution of PVC were repeatedly addressed.

Again, the editorials were couched in ways that persuade the readers to accept their point of view. By appealing to the emotions of the target audience, the editorials strove to put them in a frame of mind to accept their argument. Sometimes, the editorials used events that happened in the past like the annulment of June 12, 1993 election to dissuade political actors from

taking a particular course of action. These allusions are things that Nigerians can relate to and relevant to them. At other times, it advances its argument based on the logic of argument.

Judging by the sheer volume of election-related editorials, it is difficult to argue that they made no contributions to the success of 2015 election. More so, it is argued that by stressing a particular theme over a period of time, these editorials influenced the social cognition of the Nigerians (van Dijk 1992) which, however tenuously, this study suggests ultimately resulted in the successful conduct of the 2015 election. For instance, in the three weeks of February (1-20), all the sampled editorials wrote on the state violence in the campaigns. In fact, *The Guardian and Independent* newspapers produced two editorials each within the said period. Such sustained focus on a given issue in a short period of time not only made their message accessible to the audience but also seems to have inspired a change of heart. Among the selected newspapers, *Vanguard* was particularly committed to advocating for rational voting while the *Guardian*, *Leadership* and *Independent* emphasized the three themes, though in varying degrees.

It should be noted, however, this study does not claim that editorials are the only variable that contributed to the relatively peaceful and credible 2015 election in Nigeria. It argues that, in view of the evidence adduced in this study, editorials played a part in the positive outcome of the election. This research has demonstrated how the media can assist in ensuring credible electoral process. As opposed to the destabilising effect of the media in 2007 Kenyan election (Ismail & Deane 2008) as well as Nyamnjoh's (2005:56) observation that "research on media and elections suggests that the media have not performed this role properly", the Nigerian media, and press in particular, through its editorials have provided a model of how the press can be an instrument of peace building in a tense electoral contest in facilitating peaceful and credible elections through reasoned editorials.

6.4 Recommendation for further study

It is axiomatic to note that a study such as this cannot be all-encompassing as a result of constraints of time and resources and that in the process of research, a variety of gaps and areas that need to be explored in future research present themselves. These include:

- (1) Audience receptions studies could be fruitfully conducted to ascertain how newspaper editorials influence the readers. Since the current study did not set out to assess the impact of editorials on the readers, such studies could provide empirical data on the subject.
- (2) Survey-based data could establish the demographics of newspaper editorial readership in Nigeria and also directly assess what memories readers have of the impact of the editorials (and newspaper coverage more generally) on their voting and attitude to the election. It also examine if voters accessed the editorials directly or were exposed to

key ideas via third parties. This could help assess of the viability and applicability of two-step flow theory in the spread of meanings derived from editorial content.

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APPENDIX

Interview Transcripts

Interview With Interviewee I *Independent*

Could you tell me a little about your history with this paper, and your career?

D: Sincerely speaking I came to this paper in 2013 as member of editorial board. In December 2013, there was a change (reorganisation) and I was made editorial page editor and was equally asked to act as editorial board chairman. The post I held until 2015 when I was confirmed as the editorial board chairman. But I must tell you that prior to that I have been in journalism since 1991. I have worked in the Punch, Concord Newspapers and Nigerian Economist. I have worked in reputable organisations. Today, journalism has taken me to work as the editorial board chairman, the opinion of the paper which is very germane. The editorial board is not a place for everybody, besides being a long-term journalist, you must have specialised in certain areas such as business and economy, you talk about politics, international relations, human interest. So there must be specialists in these areas, the editorial board is not a place where you just have anybody; you must be an expert to comment comfortably on certain issues.

So, how does the editorial emerge? Is it a sort of combined effort or are you the only one that writes the editorial?

D: I work in what you may call quality control unit, editorial is not written by one person. We have a group, who will discuss themes, then as a writer you collate the views of the editorial board members and based on your knowledge of those themes, you put them together. From there another person will look at it. There is a process: the process starts by getting the right topic, calling members of the editorial board to discuss those topics and one individual among the members putting those things down as agreed. When the person has put it down, the chairman of the editorial board or a senior editor will further ensure that they are written in terms of the position of the editorial board which is also the position of the paper. Basically, editorial is not a one man job. It is a collective effort and because it is the position of the paper you can't say an individual has written one.

How long have you been writing editorials?

D: Very long time because of my background. I have been a political reporter, Labour reporter, so I have brought in all strength into my job. I'm a specialist in certain areas, in politics, international relations. We have people who have economics background, with their knowledge they can come in and shape our views on national economy so at the end of the day we all agree on a position. But for me as a person, I have been writing editorial for over twenty years.

Some people think the media had had a positive impact on the outcome of the 2015 election in Nigeria. Do you agree?

D: That question is neither here nor there because you say positive impact, are you talking about the pressure to ensure that the election is conducted in free and fair atmosphere? Or that there were certain media that encouraged the position of certain political party thereby confusing or misdirecting the people? Because part of what happened in last year's election for the fact that some particular group of print and electronic media actually supported a particular party and its candidate and so, there was so much propaganda. You also had the neutralist, like ours, who raised certain issues which were germane to the conduct of the elections and we did that because we wanted a credible elections. We wanted an election that will be accepted by not only Nigerians but the international community. So, we drum off the fears. I am happy that you saw some our editorials; they were all geared towards ensuring we had a peaceful election. So that's why I said it's neither here nor there but I must say that 80% of the media actually played a positive role in the conduct of the election because of the position they took. We wanted a credible election; we wanted a free and fair election. We wanted the right candidate to emerge and we also enlightened Nigerians on what it takes to choose the right candidate. So to that extent, there was a positive impact. But you cannot rule out that there were still some that were partisan. But for the maturity of the 80% of the media, I think there would have been serious crisis because some were even raising issues that were not supposed to be brought to the front burner. Some were saying things that I used to call it imaginary things, raise a lot of tempo in the society. There was a time towards the time of the election people were scared as a result of the kind of stories that were coming out of the newspapers. People were scared will this election actually hold; won't there be crises here and there? But let me tell you one thing: the maturity of the outgoing president saved everything. If he had not come out to accept defeat, there would have been serious crisis in the country because whether you like it or not the newspaper actually raised the tempo, created so much tension because of their support for a particular candidate. Look at the kind of blackmail that went on would you say that was positive? It now boils down to those who participated in the election. What their mindset was. Thank God we had a president then whose mindset was not to destroy Nigeria because there was pressure on him not to concede. But he came out to say 'no I have accepted defeat, I congratulate the winner' So when you are talking about the role of the media, you can't just look at it from a straight-jacket perspective. You must appreciate the fact that the media was divided.

Do you think your newspapers and in particular, your editorials played any role?

D: Obviously, the editorials played a role, very fundamental role because what you have to appreciate is that in Nigeria here the elite they pay a lot of attention to editorials because that shapes the opinion of the people. So they know they listen. It's like information for them. So they are able to know the tide. When the newspaper is shouting don't do this, don't do that they know that it is going to be problem. So basically editorials, at that time by neutralists, actually played a crucial role because some of us came out to tell them that the way they were campaigning was not the right way. People were saying things about one another that were not right, those were not what the people wanted; the people wanted their manifestoes, what programmes did they have for the people? People were boasting of the people they had who could stop any election in Nigeria. They became laws unto themselves so a greater portion of

the media came out to say 'no' that was not the way it should be. I can only tell you that the editorials of the neutralists played a very strong role. If you could remember, before Jonathan conceded defeat there were series of editorials from us, insisting that there should be peace, the ambition of politicians should not affect the lives of Nigerians. I think our editorials actually played a very strong role.

Do you think your editorials are popular feature of your newspaper?

Editorial is the heart of the newspaper. Every policymaker, every research institution, every elite needs to know the mindset of the paper. You don't get the mindset of the paper through news reporting, you get the mindset of the paper through editorials. Editorial is so fundamental to every newspaper. In fact, you have editorial board on its own. Editorial board is not under the editor, it is a division of its own with intellectuals to discuss national issues in such a way that it provides solution or a guide to those issues. So editorial is very important especially in my newspaper. As a matter of fact, this newspaper has won two awards on editorials in the past.

Do you get responses on editorials?

Of course I do. We get both positive and negative responses. Many of these responses are negative. We receive responses when the views expressed by the paper are not palatable to the authorities concerned. There was a popular parastatal that sent a note to our editor then in response to an editorial on the parastatal arguing that we did not acknowledge their own position but in actual sense we did acknowledge it. It was a balanced editorial, how could they say we did not acknowledge their position? We have also a situation where the government from Aso Rock praised us for what did.

What editorial from the election period are you most proud of?

I still remember it. It is 'Minimah Minimal Assurance on Security for elections'.

Is there any editorial when you think about it now, you would like to delete or feel should not have gone out?

Yes, there was one. The thing almost cost me my job. It happened that there was an editorial that was not favourable to a particular candidate. I was so worried when I was called by the authorities to complain that the editorial was not good. I had to apologise.

What do you think is the value of editorials in general?

D: They are many. One, you have to realise that editorial is enlightening, it's informative, it's educative. If you look at it from that perspective, you will understand that editorial is like a torch bearer, it is the key that opens the door, it gives you the key of liberty. If you are looking for a solution to something, go through the editorials of the papers, you will find the solution and that is why you find policy makers, politicians, even research institutions key into editorials. In fact, the editorials are what give direction in a society where you need to

ventilate all kind of issues. I must tell you that the values of editorials are immeasurable. Don't forget a lot of people also go through the editorial for improvement on their language.

What do they do?

Let me just take one out many examples. If government is looking for an idea on agriculture policy, the editorial provides a base for the government to think on that policy. It gives the government a critique of that policy; it opens your mindset on the way forward. So that's why I said an editorial is a torch bearer, an enlightener, it enlightens one on how to go about an issue and that is why it is so vital among the elites. It stands a defender of truth. Where does it defend that truth, the position of the paper and where does it come from, from the editorial. So if you are talking about defending democracy, you are talking about protecting the interest of the people. Journalism is not complete without editorial because it is the tool that fights corruption and injustice.

Do they do a different 'job' to news stories?

D: Yes, because news comes from what happens but we do analysis of that. In doing analysis, you further open up issues. You take editorials from a sober perspective, you are now adding flesh and relevance to that story. Normally in news story, you report what transpired but the editorial goes beyond that it brings out issues which normal reporting cannot do and gives you a way forward. So, you add value to that news.

Do you think editorials have a special value or more value at elections?

D: I think so because editorials help raise the level of discussion at elections. They bring to the front burner those issues which are germane to the process. If you look at our editorials will discover that they reflected major issues that were fundamental to the election. From campaign funding to security at the polls even to issues of violence, those were issues that had direct impact on the outcome of the elections. If the newspaper had failed to talk about those issues at such a critical moment in our national life, that paper had failed to live up to its responsibility because newspapers should be conscience of the society. So I would say editorials have more value at elections especially one such as 2015 general elections.

Were you worried, at any time about the elections?

D: Of course. Every true Nigerian ought to be worried because when you look at campaign of blackmail, character assassination and the tension in the polity, one could easily conclude that something untoward was going to happen. So I was worried because the process of election did not give feeling of comfort. People never knew what the card reader was and they were just talking about using that card reader to manipulate elections. Some people were even saying that the essence of the card reader was to make a particular candidate to win the election. There was no confidence in those constituted to conduct the election. The whole country was divided. It threw up ethnicity, regional politics and parochialism. So, all these things were going to affect the elections and obviously, the project known as Nigeria. So basically for a true Nigerian, a patriot, why won't you be worried? I was worried as a newspaper editor and we tried as much as possible to express our worries.

Did your worry also have anything to do with Nigeria's future?

D: Obviously, because it was like the country was going to break up. Would you have loved that?

What was your biggest worry?

D: My biggest worry was the breakup of the country as result of tone of politicking. The north was not ready to compromise; south-south was saying that if Jonathan loses the elections there will be trouble in the land. The north too was saying that it was time to lead Nigeria. So, there were forces that actually were impacting negatively on the corporate existence of country. Personally I was worried that this country would breakup. That election could fulfil US prediction.

How worried were you?

D: I was very worried. Look at it this: if Nigeria broke up that time will I still be called a Nigerian? So my identity was going to be taken away from me. It's like my life was going to snuffed out of me. Such was the worry because I have no other country. So, basically I was worried to the point that it was a choice of either you live or die. So you could imagine the extent of the worry.

Was there ever a time when you wrote an editorial with a specific goal in mind?

D: Obviously every editorial is written with a specific goal in mind. Every editorial has an objective. If it doesn't have an objective, then it is not an editorial. So, you want to talk about elections without knowing what you want to talk about and why you want to talk about it. If I want to answer that question, I would say every editorial has an objective. If you want to talk about "Minimah's Minimal Assurance of Security for Election", we were arguing that they (the government) should try and put in place mechanism that will ensure free and fair elections. We were not assured by your assurance so there is need to put in place those things that will make sure that people have confidence in the conduct of the election. So, it has a mission, it has an objective. Editorial that does not have an objective is not an editorial. It is like asking a writer what motivates you to write.

Looking back now, do you think the editorials made any difference in the outcome of the elections?

A: Obviously the editorials made a lot of difference. At a time when people were taking sides, editorials came out to say "this is the direction". If we don't go through this direction there will be problem and most people saw it and agreed with it. If Jonathan had not felt the pulse of the people through the editorial, would he have come out to say 'I concede defeat?'

Who gets to write editorials?

A: Senior editors those who have gone through various beats and they are exposed to the field. They are very knowledgeable. Editorial is not written by someone new to the industry.

Who decides who writes what do people have areas of specialisation?

A: The editorial board chairman decides or assembles the topics, gives the direction. At the meeting every member is allocated based on areas of specialty.

Who do you think are the readers of your editorials?

Policymakers, people who are concerned about how the paper feels about a particular issue, politicians, government officials, research institutions. Basically, people who are involved in policy making and implementation because they use the editorial to get feedback on how policy affects the common man.

Do you ever imagine a particular person while writing these editorials?

A: You don't imagine a particular person except that person has done something that requires national attention. Take the case of the president, his policies can be analysed, not him. You don't look at the person, you look at what he or she has done so that others can learn. So, you don't think about an individual, you think about the outcome of that individual's action. It is the action of the individual you look at.

Looking forward, do you think editorials will be changing, or their role will change over the next few years, or even 5 or 10 years?

Both will change because society is dynamic and everything has to be done in accordance with the issues at the moment even in style of writing. For instance, in those days you could write a full page of editorial but now we are making it short because most people are busy, they just want short things, straight to the point. So it will change based on the dynamics of the time we are in. It can't be rigid. Your style will change; your choice of topic will change as the society changes. If you look at the history of editorials in Nigeria, you will see changes because it is based on the movement at that time. Before independence, it was nationalism, so discussions were based on nationalism. After independence, it was developmental editorials. We are moving into what we call specialisation like the economy, health etc. So, the editorial will always move to reflect the mood and situation at that time. Style will change.

INTERVIEW WITH Interviewee II *Independent Newspaper*

Could you tell me a little about your history with this paper and your career?

A: My entry into journalism was over 25 years ago but real practice was over 15 years ago. I started as a business, economy and finance journalist but as I rose through the ranks I began to broaden my base in all aspects of journalism including entertainment and politics. Now, politics because at a time, I had to supervise the entire newspaper structure. So that means that my overview across the system not just business and economy and with that comes enormous exposure. Before then, I had even covered elections. I remember I covered 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections.

How long have you been in this newspaper?

This is my eleventh year.

How long have you been writing editorials?

I do not write editorials per se but because of my level, sometimes I had to see them and make my own input. I had to also attend meetings of the editorial board and then oversee the output before it goes into the paper because I sign the paper at that time. I had to see what was going into the paper. I am the face of the newspaper. So, anything that appeared on the newspaper I should be able to say “I know about it and I saw it and I will take responsibility” and I will not say it was not me or ask the next person. I will take responsibility without referring to the next person.

Some people think the media had had a positive impact on the outcome of the 2015 elections. Do you agree?

Yes, very very well. The media has had an impact pre and post-election especially in this age of new media, social media for the good and bad reasons. Good, because before election a lot of sensitisation especially this last one with the card reader. The media was always coming out to say this is how many people who have been accredited to vote in this state. The media also was used to check rigging in that if we all agree that one million people were registered in this state for example, they were also reporting online in the social media and in the print of this one million, only six hundred collected their voter cards so you will know that only six hundred thousand are qualified to vote in that election. So, it will be stupid of anybody to come tomorrow and say 750, 000 people voted when it was only six hundred people that collected voters cards. That only has nullified that election. The media was used to check rigging and to sensitise people and to put people in the know about what is going on about that election. The media was a very active voice in conscientising the people as to their rights. The 2015 election was one in which we saw a drop in the number of people that voted in the 2011 election which showed that there was padding (inflation of figures) before which did not happen in 2015 elections. It is of the ingenuity of the electoral umpire this time around and the backing (support) of the media was following up with everything. It was a step in the right direction. The media was posting results from polling units. I have a place where I stored all the results that INEC released on their twitter handle and saved it somewhere so that we can actually follow up.

Do you think your newspaper and in particular, your editorials played any role?

A: Yes, reasonably. This newspaper played an active role because the newspaper ordinarily should be the voice, the mirror of what goes on in the society. So, if you close your ears in an election year, during elections, what else will you be reporting? That means you have excluded yourself, you have de-marketed yourself. We are all political animals. In this newspaper, I might have sympathy for PDP, the chairman of editorial board might have sympathy for APC but when it comes to the slant of the paper, it is what the Nigerian people are saying. That becomes the binding force. The paper, in its editorial presentation, was at the forefront of ensuring that the will of the Nigerian people triumphed at the end of the day.

Do you think editorials are a popular feature of your newspaper?

Yes. It is an everyday thing in this newspaper to produce editorials opinion that is the voice of the paper. You pick a topic and whatever is written is the opinion of the newspaper not the opinion of one person. There are several issues that will require a voice everyday.

So what are the criteria that inform the choice of particular editorial?

A: Issues that have been reported in the news not just our newspaper it can be in other newspaper, issues that are germane and considered of public interest and issues that you want to draw the attention of the government or people involved or concerned that they should address this issue for the sake or good of the society. The newspaper exists not in a vacuum, the newspaper is representing the populace. The newspaper helps the people to echo their opinion and push it, most times, to government for attention.

Have you got some feedback from editorials written?

Yes. There are feedbacks from editorials. Feedback can come from your readers giving you thumb up and some saying “Is that the only issue that you saw to attack, why are you antagonising us?” It can come from reply they can write you letter to defend their own position and you owe it to them to publish what they have put out because they also have the right of reply which you must oblige them.

Can you give me an example of some feedback you got?

A: I may not be able to cite some examples; the chairman of the editorial receives these letters and treats them. So he will be in a better position to do that.

What editorial from the election period are you most proud of?

A: The chairman of the editorial board is in a better position to answer that because the election is over a year now and so many things have happened.

What do you think is the value of editorial in general?

A: The value of editorial generally, like I said before, editorials are the voice of the newspaper. So it carries weight in that it is the newspaper speaking, not one person. Editorials are taken very seriously and they carry a lot of weight. So, editorials are important because it helps to send the institutional message, not a personal message. It carries weight and it is taken seriously and that informs the way people receive it and react to that when they are on the wrong side of that particular piece. So, editorials are very important and they are taken seriously by any company or organisation that is affected.

Do they do a different ‘job’ to news stories?

A: The newspapers are history written in a hurry. The difference between the news story and editorial is that the news stories are reported as they unfold but the editorials, it has happened and you are now giving it a thought and now following from this, X,Y, Z, this newspaper

thinks the government should rather be focusing on these areas. The editorials, often times, are reacting to stories that have broken in the past so as to send a message to those concerned.

So, the editorials actually shape some things that have been in the news giving it a different perspective?

A: Yes. All of you may be looking at it like this in the news but editorials will bring out all the facets to an issue. The editorial, because they are thought-through, helps to shape government policy on particular areas.

Were you worried, at any time, about the 2015 election?

A: Yes I should be worried. Quite honestly, on a number of times, I was worried. Worried, for example, when the election was initially postponed. I was worried that there was a lot of cloud concerning the election. I was worried whether the elections should be allowed to follow through to the end. I was worried whether the card readers will be allowed. I was worried whether some hawks within the government will not hijack the process. I was worried about the safety of important people in the process. I was worried about even the election results will be released. So, a lot of questions that needed answers.

Were you also worried about Nigeria's future?

A: Of course. All of these added together is about Nigeria's future. If any of the worries crystallised, it's about whether there will be civil uprising, whether there will be a military coup. So many 'ifs' were involved. So, everything was about Nigeria. Don't forget, a lot of investors packed their monies in cash so that if there was anything they would board the next flight and they are out. So there were a lot of worries. Don't forget that the US predicted in 2015 Nigeria was going to split and so, it was like 'is it the breaking point?'

Do you think editorials have a special value or more value at elections?

A: No it's not just at elections. Anytime, editorials have special value. Now we are talking about the budget of 2016 having hiccups. Editorials have been written to take a stand, to call those involved to put the Nigerian people first in all of their calculations. So, at elections, yes, editorials are there. It is not only elections that brings the people together to talk in a voice. Government policies can also affect people positively or negatively which will warrant editorial being written to call the attention of government to certain salient areas that need their attention.

What was your biggest worry in that election?

A: The biggest of them was whether the process would be allowed to go through from the beginning to the end. What if somebody snaps the process in the middle especially the presidential election? Will Jonathan accept defeat? That became the biggest worry at a point and you know if he didn't accept defeat, there was a problem already. God being on our side, he conceded defeat and the rest is history.

Was there ever a time when you wrote an editorial with a specific goal in mind?

A: Of course. Every editorial is targeted at an endpoint. Editorials can be written to help shape government policy; to give government a second opinion about where they are treading, about an issue. Government may be thinking about it this way and the paper thinks it is going to be better this way for X,Y, Z reasons. Sometimes, the government may think twice and tinker with its own thought process to accommodate what you have put in. So, editorials are supposed to help government provide good governance because government policies affect the people, we need to voice our own opinion to help them have a second thought.

Looking back, do you think editorials made any difference in the outcome of 2015 elections?

A: Yes. Because you continue to shout, because you continue to make the noise, even if they were going to do it like this before, they could begin to say ‘ah if we go that way, the consequences may be there’ and so, back off. So, to that extent, it is possible that the editorial would have cautioned some people. So, the editorials which backed up some of these reportage helped to make sure that some people were whipped into line.

Who gets to write editorials? Is it only the editors or others?

A: It might not even be the editor. Editorials are matured writing and so, they are written by those who have strong bias for such. Editorial is not the job of one person; it is brought before the editorial board; it is discussed by a wide spectrum of people – editorial board chairman, editorial page editor, and senior editors of the paper. You have specialists, experts in law, economy, commerce and so on, you have people who have hands on experience in the workings of these various sectors sitting down and discussing that issue with each one bringing his own perspectives into the discussion. The person who is to write the editorial takes note and puts all these points together in the editorial and that is how the editorial comes about. The editorial board chairman vets it, passes it and then before it gets to the page, the editor looks at it and okays it.

So we can say it is a product of many heads?

It is a product of experts both within and outside the newspaper.

Who decides who writes what and do people have areas of specialisation?

A: Yes. On the editorial board, you have people from different walks of life. So, there are people who have flair for the art – gender issues, health, economy, law. It is a college of expertise and experts, they have their various aspects of the business they major in. some people don’t write, they only come together and talk and there are people who are assigned to write, they put the views of all these people together.

Who do you think are the readers of your editorial?

A: The readers of editorial are policymakers, business and company executives, government people and senior people especially those the topic of that particular editorial affects in order

to know the thinking of this newspaper or that newspaper on the issue. It is for everybody but not everybody goes there. It is for serious-minded people and serious issue.

Do you ever imagine a particular person while writing an editorial?

It depends on what you are writing about. If one person is being addressed by the editorial, then you have to imagine the person in writing the editorial. So, you can imagine one person, you can imagine an institution. Let's say you want to write about politics or elections, you have people in mind – the president, the vice president, the senate president, his deputy, the umpire, the governors. All these people you imagine them depending on what role they are playing or had played or they intend to play and you begin to forecast what is likely to happen and then, as you predict, you advise. You may want to go this way but if you do, this is likely to be the outcome.

INTERVIEW WITH Interviewee III *The Guardian*

Could you tell me a little about your history with this paper, and your career?

A: Definitely you know I started writing for the Guardian from inception around 1983. I was invited to join the Guardian effectively in 1999 when democracy was coming back to Nigeria then at a management level as Abuja bureau chief who also had concurrent accreditation to cover the whole north as bureau chief. Because as bureau chief I was the deputy controller and deputy editor when I was in Abuja. As Abuja bureau chief, I was in-charge of Abuja and the entire 19 northern states. So, I was in-charge as the deputy editor until 2012 when I was appointed editor of the newspaper itself and also have to serve on the editorial board, also as an editorial writer. We just had editorial board meeting now and we normally have people from outside who come to discuss the editorials. The chairman of the editorial board is Professor Wale Omolebu who was one time vice chancellor University of Ife and there are some other university dons that come here from University of Lagos, Lagos state university and some other universities, other experts, some retired diplomats, former managing director of Daily Times are members of the editorial board.

When did you start in Journalism?

A: I started journalism effectively even from campus in 1984, 1985 and up to 1986 and then I joined the Pioneer newspaper in Abuja in 1988 as Lagos bureau chief and by 1990 I was the editor of the paper, Abuja Newsday, the first newspaper in the Federal capital territory. It was closed down by the military government in 1993 on the basis of June 12 crisis.

How long have you been writing editorials?

A: You know I started writing editorials even in Abuja Newsday in those days in 1990 as editor. We didn't have formal editorial board; the publisher and I were co-ordinating everything because it was a weekly newspaper in the beginning, I was one of the sole editorial writers. So, I started writing editorials effectively in 1990.

Some people think the media had had a positive impact on the outcome of the elections. Do you agree?

A: Well definitely you know election as a process is, most of the time, a media event and you know that editorials are very strong opinions of the newspaper. You know it is called the leader. Editorials are issues that political leaders and business men cannot ignore. Guardian as a newspaper has been very influential especially in the area of editorial writing from foundation (Inception) to the extent that the publisher stated one of the policy objectives that people who should serve as chairman of the editorial board should have a doctorate degree and that is exactly what we have here. He is a professor of note who was vice chancellor after Dr. Reuben Abati joined the government in 2011.

Do you think your newspaper and in particular, your newspaper played any role?

A: Definitely you know that there were a number of things that we suggested even about the election processes, about candidature, about party programmes, about political recruitment and some other directional signposts that we wrote about which even the election management body, ruling party and opposition party then had to take seriously. No institution, no agency jokes with the Guardian editorial because our editorials are usually not editorials that are ordinary. They are well-thought-out, well written, well edited and we have never been frivolous. In the area of editorial writing, we are second to none.

Do you think editorials are a popular feature of your newspaper?

A: Very very popular. It is one of our strong points. People always say ‘Have you read the Guardian editorial?’. People always wait for our editorials that may not come immediately but when it comes, it comes magisterially. We speak truth to power and because we are an independent newspaper, when we speak, the nation listens.

Have you got some feedback from the editorials you have written over the years?

A: Definitely we have won the Nigeria media merit award with our editorial. We always get reaction all the time. Some of them we normally publish. People always react to our editorials because you know editorials are not usually objective things but when you speak truth to power, most of the times, the power people react. We always get instant reaction. We always get positive reaction from civil society organisation applauding us for being very authoritative. We do our research and editorial writers and co-ordinators are usually very senior people. For instance in the Guardian, we have the privilege of housing four to five former editors as members of the editorial board. Some of them are above 70 now, we can't be frivolous. That is why our discussions are usually very robust and exhaustive. You cannot find frivolities where you have professors, good researchers and university dons, retired army generals.

Can you give me a specific example of the feedback you've received over the years?

A: You know when we wrote an editorial in 2013 on the release of Hamza Mustapha, for instance, it was an instant accolade. When we also wrote editorial on the coming of APC at

that time challenging PDP, it elicited a lot of reactions. Under General Babangida administration, the Guardian wrote an editorial to save Nigeria, it was learnt that it triggered Armed Forces Ruling Council meeting because of what the editorial suggested. Definitely we receive reaction every day from people. Sometimes, the reactions we receive from the government are usually not pleasant. You know they closed down this newspaper on the basis of editorial material in 1994.

What editorial, from the election period are you most proud of?

A: We are very very proud of most of our editorials especially the one we wrote on the direction for government. But specifically, we wrote a series about five of them on constitutional conference of 2014 shortly before the election which also received positive reaction. It even received great reviews in the media and we are very proud of that.

Is there any editorial when you think about it now, you would like to delete or feel should not have gone out?

A: No. You know I told you the profile of members of the editorial board. We have never regretted our editorials. We always updated our editorials on the basis of new information. We look at issues and we follow them up. We never regretted anything except on factual errors that are committed all over the world and immediately we discover that this fact was inaccurate, we correct it. But most of the time because of the number of editors that look at the script we are usually impeccable, unimpeachable.

What do you think is the value of editorials in general?

A: Editorials are opinions that are usually expressed by the newspaper, not individuals. That is why we call it the leader for direction, for advice, for public enlightenment so that people generally could be well-informed before they themselves will take their own decision. These are the things that we see the elite, the middle class, people in the academia will rely on that kind of editorial even for their own comment. It is usually a directional signpost to help policy makers, the leadership of the country, public officers, business class and all others to be well-informed as citizens.

Do they do a different ‘job’ to news stories?

A: Definitely you know editorials are taken from news stories and current affairs and issues that are trending. They are lifted from issues that have been reported or some matters arising that have been reported by other newspapers, not necessarily from our newspaper. It could come from the press, some from the television.

What job does an editorial do in a society?

A: Editorial is like a pathfinder, it shows policy makers, businessmen, leaders the way. It corrects, it informs and it sets agenda. It has an agenda setting role, it enlightens and points to the way.

Do you think editorials have a special value or more value at election?

A: Definitely. It has more value because elections normally are political issues and when political issues come, controversies and confusion occurs and in the midst of that confusion, you elevate peoples thought through editorials. During that period, the election management can make mistakes or be complacent, they can deviate from the rule, it is the responsibility of the 'leaders' that is the editorials to point to the way. But you know that editorials are usually issues that address public interest. If editorials don't attend public interest, it means they are not editorials.

Looking back at the 2015 general elections, were you worried, at any time, about the election?

A: Yes. We were worried that the election was not going to be free and fair, it could be violent and it could be inconclusive and it produce an unexpected result. But at the end of the day, we looked at those issues that were threatening peace and security and we addressed them and most of the time, we were respected and we are still respected. Our opinions count because they are usually very serious issues.

Were you also worried about Nigeria's future?

A: At that time yes we were worried about Nigeria's future and we wrote a few editorials on that. If you research our editorials, we raised our worries about the Nigeria's future and we addressed issues that could douse tension at that time. We suggested a number of issues that could help keep the peace.

Can you tell me, what was your biggest worry?

A: The biggest worry was that the election was going to lead to violence if the result was not acceptable to some sections of the country.

Was there a time when you wrote an editorial with a specific goal in mind?

A: Definitely. We wrote editorials with the objective of ensuring peace among the various ethnic groups and politicians and the opposition party. that the opposition party should not go certain way and that the way they should conduct their opposition business should not be divide, should not be to witch-hunt It should be to address public issues of public interests and not to personalise, for instance, campaigns that were toxic that should not be acceptable, they should address issues rather than personalities.

Looking back now, do you think the editorials made any difference in the outcome of the election?

A: Definitely. The editorials made a difference because some of those issues that were raised were also addressed by the people concerned- government agencies, election management agencies and some others. We are pleased that some of our editorials were quoted by some of the election management agents and agency managers.

Who gets to write to editorials? Is it only the editor or others?

A: Editors usually are not the editorial writers. Editorial board members were called lead writers. Editorial board members are assigned various topics to write. Most of the time, the sitting editor, may be until he steps down from that chair, will not write. The editor can only edit what has been written by designated editorial writers. Editorial writers are there as editorial board members.

What are the criteria on which the assignment is given?

A: You look at somebody's background, you look at the topic and you see that this person will be able to handle this topic. The chairman of the editorial board assigns topics based on the person's background. Your background will dictate what will be given to you.

Who do you think are the readers of your editorials?

A: Readers of our editorials are policymakers, government people, the president, the president's men, the governor, the governor's men, especially the people in the academia and even diplomats. They look at the editorials to feel the pulse of the nation in collecting diplomatic intelligence.

Do you ever imagine a particular person while writing these editorials?

A: No, we don't imagine except that we want to address a particular person who has done something. Maybe the governor has said something provocative and something interesting, we want to address that particular issue within national or public interest.

Looking forward, do you think editorials will be changing or their role change over the next few years?

A: Editorials should not be changing. You know editorials are not on their own, editorials are within the context of certain dynamics in society. But what editorial managers worry about now is the frequency and urgency with which to address such issues because of the advent of the social media platforms. If you open social media somebody has written a lengthy article on an issue, so, you want to ensure that your own editorial doesn't come too late after all things have trended in the social media. What is being addressed now is the hypersensitive highways that we have. Things are very speedy; things are specific and of course, everything is now done at the speed of thought, not even light anymore. So, this is the worry of newspaper editor- how will this editorial come out as fast as possible so that it doesn't come out stale.

INTERVIEW WITH Interviewee IV *The Guardian*

Could you tell me your history with this paper and your career?

A: Well, I have been working with this newspaper since 1985. I actually started as a judicial reporter and rose to become judicial editor. Later on, I was news editor of the paper; I was assistant editor and had a brief spell as editor of the Guardian on Sunday. Then I came to the editorial board, I have been on the editorial board since 2003. That's quite a long time now.

Right now, I am the editorial page editor but because I am a lawyer, I am also the legal adviser of the newspaper. That's briefly my career.

So when did you start in journalism?

A: 1985. I actually started in this paper and have been in this paper since then. I had a stint with the paper as an intern about two years before 1985. The paper was very new at that time and that encouraged me to join the paper when I was ready for a full time job in 1985.

How long have you been writing editorials?

A: Since 2003. That's about thirteen years ago.

Some people think the media had had a positive impact on the outcome of 2015 elections. Do you agree?

A: Sure, because the media kept the authorities on their toes. During the preparation for the elections, the media were reporting what's on ground and what's not on ground. They were writing news, features stories about the activities of INEC, that's the body to conduct the elections, they were writing news, feature stories about the activities of political parties, particularly highlighting those were capable of undermining the elections in one way or the other. So, all these ones kept the authorities and stakeholders on their toes and I think that at the end of the day, the election was better for it.

Do you think your newspaper and in particular, your editorials played any role?

A: It played a very major because all these activities I just spoke about, I'm talking about them principally from the standpoint of my newspaper. I'm involved in the newspapering and in the writing of the editorials. Every issue that we considered to be significant for the conduct of the election, we talked about them in our news reports and in our editorials. We pointed out the dangers, the flaws, the actions that tend to incapacitate or tend to disrupt the elections in one way or the other; we pointed them out in our editorials. So the paper has played a very very major role.

Do you think editorials are popular feature of your newspaper?

A: It's not just a popular feature; it is to the best of my knowledge, one of the strongest points of the newspaper. The Guardian has always been noted, as far back as since its inception thirty something years ago, for the pungency of its editorials, the topicality and the robustness of the argument and then the conclusion. The authorities, we have reasons to know, have always taken our editorials seriously and that many people also read the editorials because of its pungency.

Have you got some feedback from your editorials?

A: A lot of feedback, a lot of feedback commending us for what we have done. Indirectly, we also get feedback when some of things we propose in the editorials are implemented by a government agency, the federal government or the presidency or a governor. Occasionally, of

course, we get some feedback from people who don't agree with our editorials or who feel that we have committed some major errors or who even feel that we are misinformed and they point them out and as a newspaper we accommodate all these. We know that we are not infallible, we could make mistakes and we try to correct our mistakes wherever they are apparent. Where it is apparent that the people who are condemning us are doing so with the intention of their own selfish interest, we just overlook them. We get a lot of feedback basically.

Can you give us specific example?

A: It is very difficult to remember. Very lately, because I can't remember many things that had happened in the past, very recently, the federal government dissolved the governing boards of some universities and we wrote an editorial to say that it was not proper because such things are not done. There are laws guiding the establishment and dissolution of governing boards of universities, that the federal government did not follow those procedures. Shortly after that, the federal government apologised and I believe they reversed the decision that they took. Another example is when the Nigerian budget presented by the executive to the National Assembly when it was discovered that a lot of thing were added which were not included by the presidency, we wrote editorials condemning whoever was responsible for that and asking government to take appropriate action against those people. Shortly after that, a number people were relieved of their duties. So we believe it was in response to our editorials. Those are the two examples I can immediately recollect.

What editorial, from election period, are you most proud of?

A: Because we wrote so many editorials then, I want to say that I am proud of all of them because we wrote editorials when the elections were pending, when they were about to come because we now look at the scenario - what has been happening and we tried to let the authorities know this is what has been happening, to guide the stakeholders in the conduct of the elections. We tell the authorities what is wrong, what is right. I can't talk about any particular one right now. There were so many good editorials but we have good reasons to write each of them and nobody has been able to fault us on our argument and positions on those editorials.

What do you think is the value of editorials in general?

A: Editorial is the opinion of the newspaper but if a newspaper respected by people and by government, they would read the editorial and they would also like to dissect the thinking of the newspaper. Because the newspaper is in a position to know a lot of things that are happening within the society which government, the authorities themselves may not know by virtue of the way they operate. Editorials have been of great value. Even the examples I just cited about government taking some actions as a result of what they believe is the position of our editorials is some examples of the value of editorial. I would say that editorials have been of great value because they reflect the thinking and what is actually happening in the society which government may not be able to know. Because most of our editorials are directed at

government, public policies, public interests and all that, the editorials tell government a lot of things that they don't know and we believe that it enables them to refine their actions.

What do they do?

A: They influence opinions of people, they influence opinions of governments and therefore, they indirectly affect certain things that the government does. Sometimes when government formulates a policy which we consider to be injurious to democracy or to human rights or even to the economy, particularly, of the masses, we point them out. In many cases, government has responded by rescinding their decisions and modifying them in ways that will accord with our positions that will now protect the interest of the Nigerians generally. That's what editorials do by informing the government; by pointing out the errors of their actions, editorials shape the activities and functions of the society.

Now at election, does editorial do a different 'job'?

A: At every time election or no election, editorials are meant to look at what is happening in the society and to reflect on them and to condemn some of them that are condemnable and to commend those that are commendable and to point out to the appropriate authority how to improve on the situation. That's what editorials do. Elections or no elections. It is just because when you are talking about elections, you are talking about change of government, you are talking about the expectations of the people. The focus is on those elections because it is when the policy is right that all other things become right too.

Were you worried at any time about the elections?

A: Of course. We had a lot of things to worry about – where politicians open their mouth and make threatening statements, when politicians say that they are going to make the country ungovernable if a particular government comes in, when we have information that some politicians are recruiting thugs; when we have information that some politicians are amassing weapons and all that. They were alarming. So, we were worried and then we expressed our concern through our editorials and warned the authorities and put them on notice in order to arrest some of these development before they become too much to handle.

Were you also worried about Nigeria's future?

A: Definitely. When all these things that I have enumerated, when government itself was embarking on actions and policies that were patently not in the interest of the people, when people were not accounting for huge public fund that were meant for the development of the society, we were worried that this would affect the country, her development and future. Again, we expressed our concern through our editorials and to some extent; we have succeeded in making government to react positively to some of these issues.

What was your biggest worry?

A: I would say that the biggest worry was that we feared that there may be a kind of violent uprising if Jonathan lost (the election). That was my biggest worry because the people that

were supporting the then president from what they were saying they were so determined that they were not going to lose. Many people like Asari Dokubo, Chief Edwin Clark were making statements to the effect that this country would collapse if Jonathan was not allowed to get a second term and yet we also knew that the government of Jonathan its performance in past six years has been very poor. So many things happened in the issue of security, in the issue of corruption and all that. So, many of us knew that Nigerians wanted some change and that it was possible that they will bring in another government. We were worried that there could be violence but we thank God that violence did not happen even though Jonathan lost. I would say that that was one of my biggest worries.

Was there ever a time when wrote an editorial with a specific goal in mind?

A: Every editorial is written with a specific goal in mind. If government has taken an action and if that action is not good and we want to write editorials to tell government to reverse that action - that's the goal. If the action is good, we write editorial to commend the government and to suggest ways that it can improve on that action. That is goal of that editorial. Every editorial has specific goals. No editorial is written for the sake of it, we have things in mind and we try to express them as clearly as possible in these editorials.

Looking back now, do you think editorials made any difference in the outcome of the election?

A: Yes. As I said before we put the authorities on their toes: some of the things they were planning, we wrote editorials on them because we saw that those things are not good and they stopped, they modified them. We raised the consciousness of the people through our editorial warning them that these things are happening they have to come out and make their vote count. To a large extent, we were able to reduce the possible risk of manipulation of elections and the results.

Who gets to write editorials? Is it editor or others?

Members of the editorial board consisting of many members up to 25, sometimes less.

Who decides who writes what or do people have areas of specialisation?

A: It is made by consensus. Sometimes, there are some areas that require some expertise. If you are talking about finance, if you are talking about monetary policies, fiscal policies, if you are talking about the economy, there are people who are specialists in these areas. Then when we are talking about rule of law, what the tribunals are saying, what the courts are saying, as much as possible, we also assign those topics to lawyers who are versatile in the area and can interpret the law. Apart from that, it is by consensus because we have general writers who can write many things. If a topic is suggested to them and they don't have objection, they accept it. If they have objection, they assign it to somebody else because we want somebody that could give the best expression to all the editorials that we write.

Who do you think are the readers of your editorials?

A: I would say the intellectuals – policy formulators, those in the universities, students and of course, people in business and the people in government. By the time you put all these people together you have large number of people but I'm aware there are those who read sports only, metro section, some people read other things. But those are the ones I think read editorials more.

Do you ever imagine a particular person in mind while writing these editorials?

A: Yes. Sometimes you can have the president in mind if you feel that the issue you are talking about is such that requires direct intervention of the president or of the governor or of particular minister. So, we do have people in mind. In fact, every editorial is written to identify a particular person that will now take the action we are advocating in the editorial because if you just talk government generally you are not talking to anybody. As much as possible, we try to identify a person who has the authority or the competence to take the action we advocate.

Looking forward, do you think editorials will be changing or their role change in the next few years?

Well editorials will change in the sense that society itself is not static so the editorials must respond to changes in the society. But I think that ultimately the role of the editorial will be to make the society better which is the role now. We are seeking to improve the workings of government, to improve the well-being of the populace, citizens. So whatever happens, those should continue to be the role in the public interest, because anything outside that, to me, diminishes the essence of editorial. The editorial is supposed to seek an improvement in the society.

INTERVIEW WITH Interviewee V *The Guardian*

Could you tell me a brief history with this paper and career?

A: Well, career-wise it's been a really interesting time because I have been here for more than two decades now. In fact this is my 28th year; I came in October, 1988. But it is not when you come in that you get to a particular level. I have moved round and round. Initially I was in the newsroom; I started off as a sub-editor and later moved to the Sunday desk as news editor. Back to the sub-desk as the chief sub-editor, then later around 1999 or so, I started editing the Saturday paper. But specifically about the editorial board here, this should be my eighth year or so, because I came here (editorial board) in January, 2008. I started writing editorials in 2008.

When did you start in journalism?

A: I have been here all along. I have not changed media house. It's more or less a matter of unbroken chain except for one or two years when the Abacha administration shut down this place. That was around 1994 and 1996. That's the only time you can say you are not effectively doing the job but at least we were still coming around in the office trying to see what we can do but definitely not working in any other place other than this place.

Some people think the media had had a positive impact on the outcome of 2015 elections. Do you agree?

A: Yes to a great extent. It had a positive impact. Let's give it to the media in the country. You know whenever there is any big event or development in the country, in spite of some difficulty here and there, it's only people who are really on ground who know that so much effort is put up to make this country stand. Honestly, media professionals have done enough to keep this country together. If you recall many other events that have happened in the past as far back as June 12, 1993 election crisis period, in fact that was one of the most trying periods in this country. Apart from the military interruptions here and there which the media have given a very good account of themselves, particularly about this 2015 election, the media really tried. You know it's not just an industry where anybody now comes in and write something in the name of writing. No. You can see some intellectual touch in many of the editorials which you have come across. Honestly, it's a lot of work, packaging all those editorials you are seeing especially for some of the serious newspaper like our own here and some other ones out there because the editorials are not just what somebody sits down in a corner to write individually. No. It's an aggregate of opinion of some people who should know in the society really. We met here yesterday; we meet once in a week. In the board there you have professors, doctorate degree holders, army generals; in fact, former army chief of staff is there. Oh yes, it's a very serious business. We have some lecturers, former ambassadors, professor Dele Cole is there Ahmadu Amzat is there. Incidentally, the board is being headed by Professor Wale Omoleye, former VC of Obafemi Awolowo University and it's a serious business where everybody is given the opportunity to dissect a particular topic, give your own opinion, then we look at it again. In fact, in some cases we find out that there may be some topics introduced but at the end of the day even after spending close to an hour, you find out that some people may even come up with the opinion that, no, this is not worth writing maybe for some reasons that we don't have enough information about such a thing or that it will not be in the interest of the country to be writing that thing at that particular time so that we don't give yourself out to some people outside the country. Honestly, it's a serious business here about four, five hours every Wednesday thinking about the problem of this country. The same thing happened; to come back to the election of 2015 you talked about, whenever election topics are being discussed, the way people attack it, it's as if you are in a seminar or a workshop. Let me recall the time the national conference was going on, sometimes we spend about two hours discussing a particular topic because we really need to get opinions from every member who is interested in saying something before you now aggregate it and somebody will sit down later to write the thing. And even after writing, some other people along the line will still have to look at the copies to see whether it reflected what was discussed at the meeting or not. During election, so many topics were touched may be about the parties, you know some of these our parties sometimes they misbehave, maybe about the campaigns, maybe about the money they are spending on campaigns and so on. Even the disposition of some of the politicians; are they doing the right thing? Are they saying the right thing especially when it comes to the matter of violence? We wrote so many editorials condemning violence in the country. So, I will say that, because I also monitored

other papers, the media, press did the very best they could during that period on the election issue.

Do you think your newspaper and in particular, your editorial played any role?

A: Oh it did. In fact, we ourselves know that when it comes to the matters of editorials in particular, because whenever we set about discussing or writing the editorial, we always have it at the background or in mind that we are writing for people who in a position to do something, to change the course of events in this country particularly the government. So in most cases, we always target the government in most of the editorials we write that at least if they read and we know they are reading because later on, you find out that from the decisions being taken in government you will know that in one way or the other, they are reacting to your editorial or trying at least to pick one or two little things which are useful in what you have advised them to do and from their decisions you know that you are the one who suggested those. So, it's more or less a feedback channel when you see government taking a particular decision along the line of what you have asked them to do. In fact, we can't even count the number of editorials on the missing Chibok girls. We have written a lot on what the government did or what they did not do right at that particular time, even on the way the soldiers are conducting their operations because as I said we always tap from the knowledge of the general we have here who normally enlightens us about security implications of what they are doing or are not doing. We see that from some these things we say, by the time the government takes its decision, you will easily notice that the government is reading what we are saying.

Do you think editorials are popular feature of your newspaper?

A: Oh yes. In fact, we don't joke with the editorial pages here under any circumstance. In fact, that's why the management went as far as recruiting these diverse intellectuals in the society to sit down and discuss these issues. If we are to be modest, it is this paper really that started that culture, way back in 1983 when it started, of having a collection of people whose job it is just to sit down and talk about editorials and you can see that a lot has been done. In fact, there was a time we made a compilation of some of the past editorials we wrote. I think the title of that book is 'The Whole Truth', just random sampling of some of the editorials of note which we wrote in the past was compiled into a book some years ago. I think we have a copy in the library, I don't have a copy here. That's shows the seriousness we attach to the editorials because we know that we are addressing the government, in some cases the captains of industries in some cases, maybe officials in the ministries or even the schools and whatever and even topics that affect the ordinary man on the street because the paper itself is more or less considered as the voice of the people. Because the ordinary man out there may not be in a position to talk to the government but we can do it on their behalf- that people out there are suffering. Government should do this and this. For example again, look at the current situation on the fuel crisis in the nation, in fact since it started I can recall that we must have written about four or five editorials in the last three months because as long as that problem persists, we just have to keep addressing it, keeping the government on its toes to do something. That

is more or less speaking on behalf of that man on the street who doesn't have that opportunity to do it.

What editorials from the election period are you most proud of?

A: I think we did one about the situation of the country immediately that election was conducted. You know when the former president conceded victory to the other candidate. I think we wrote a very strong editorial commending his action. I think we did others condemning violence in the country especially in Rivers state at that time. We describe that kind of editorial in our editorial board meeting as being magisterial. You know when you write something and it's like delivering judgment that this one is not good enough, that this one is good enough. Honestly, I am very proud of this paper for having written editorials of note in the past. I can recall also the one we did maybe about two years ago when Major Hamza Mustapha was eventually released after spending so many years in detention, that was one editorial that we received so many commendations from people because it really dealt with the issue. That the prosecuting counsel did not really handle the case well and that the fact that man spent so many years in jail and you just release him. Although he has the right to be released if the judge feels the prosecutors don't have any case against him. But we tried to establish that that case was not well-handled on both sides. We are proud of ourselves that we did so much about what is expected of a newspaper at a crisis period or even when there is no crisis when you have to speak up about a particular topic.

Is there any editorial when you look at it now you will like to delete it or feel should not have gone out?

A: No. No because of what I said earlier on about quality control. Because we don't publish anything, it's not just one person sitting down and writing something. So much has been discussed and it's an aggregate of opinions. Even after writing, as I said, there is somebody whose job it is to knock it together again, see which one correlates with what has been discussed, which one is not in line with that and even at that, by the time it gets to being published, the MD in his office, will also have a last look at the thing to see if it is in order. So the editorial goes through so many channels. Editorial is not something like the news story because news is something you are writing in a hurry, you are packaging in a hurry and so, mistakes can be made. But this one is what you have taken your time to think about to write, to package, to do everything, so when it goes out, you know you are putting out what has been well-thought out. If you are apologising or recalling a particular editorial, it's a sign of unseriousness on the part of the paper. Honestly, it is.

What do you think is the value of editorials in general?

A: If I may just summarise what I have been saying, it's just a matter of giving a paper's opinion that is why they call it the leader, the technical term. It is the voice of that paper; it is the newspaper saying this thing not an individual. So, the importance of editorial is to reform the society, make some corrections, give advice where it is necessary, where people have done what not ought to be done, you try and say 'you have not done this one right'. More or less as I have said it's like giving a direction, editorial is like looking at the society, trying to

direct the way it should go. It's like trying to give a direction on which way to go for a country, for a group of people or even for individuals.

Do they do a different 'job' to news stories?

A: Oh yes. They do because editorials, by their nature, are majorly on what has been reported in the news stories. When newspapers report stories, then you come around to say there should be an editorial on this news story. So, it's more or less like a follow up to news stories. Sometimes, it may not even be a reported something. It could be something observed by a member of the editorial board but once they know it is something that can be of benefit to the readers or the society. Though in most cases, they are based on news stories that have been published. The difference is that news stories are based what is reported everyday but editorials are based on those reports majorly.

Do you think editorials have a special value or more value at elections?

A: They do because there are some things that INEC did that were not right at that time. Where they don't do it right, we try to say no, where they do it right we commend them. In fact, that is the essence of editorials; commend where you should commend some actions taken and again, knock some people if some actions that were taken are not right. For example, after last 2015 election, I can recall that there was a particular topic we wrote on INEC chairman, just the man alone because of what people felt the man did. Yes he is a human being there may be some errors here and there but overall, when you look at it, he did something for this country that nobody can easily forget. We had to write an editorial to commend him. We had to write on violence and on some people spending so much money on campaigns, monies that you cannot easily attribute to them. We had to address such issues and may be suggest also what the INEC can also do on how campaigns can be funded so that people will not be stealing from government purses to fund campaigns. Of course you know so much impunity was perpetrated in that period, we had to point them out and make suggestions here and there on how it can be done better in future. It is not as if there is perfection in everything but at least when you suggest a few things maybe somebody out there could be listening and address those suggestions.

Were you worried at any time about the elections and about Nigeria's future?

A: Well, just like any other citizen or group of people, we were worried also for the course of events especially when the election was being postponed by some weeks for what could have called for the postponement because we felt that there was no need for six weeks postponement at that time. Come to think of it, at the time the elections were eventually held were Boko Haram people still not operating? They were still in town but the elections were conducted even in those problematic states. So, there was apprehension really in the country at the time, will the election hold? Will it not hold? But we had to insist that the election must be conducted under whatever circumstances. You know some people were more or less trying to advocate for an interim government or something. There was no need for that and our editorials had to address it. If you can recollect, 2015 was a year that everybody had the fear that the Americans were already saying that the country may disintegrate in that particular

year. Could it have been the election that will cause it or something? Everything had to be done to really support the government of the day to do everything within its powers to make sure that nothing went wrong. Divine intervention, that's my own personal opinion, helped to bring the situation under control. Everything moved on and we have a new government who are also battling with their own problem now which we are also addressing because the problem will always be there for them (government) to solve.

What was your biggest worry in the 2015 elections?

A: The violence, the election violence. In fact, pre-election violence and even during the election. It was something that ought not to be. That was my biggest worry because it could really set the country on a course we did not plan for. Because if one part of the country is burning, there is no way the other part of the country will be at peace. Violence was the one I rate the biggest worry for the country that time because it can truncate everything that was being done even at the last minute.

Was there ever a time you wrote an editorial with specific goal in mind?

A: Of course, that's the basis of an editorial when you set about writing an editorial: one, you try to give the two sides to an issue, then, make a background of that particular event. But the most important thing as you said now having a goal you have a goal in mind that this is what should be and not the other one. So, it's always a case of saying 'this is our position, this is what we believe to be the right thing to do' whether for the government or governors or administrators even in local governments or even for religious leaders. We have had one or two editorials knocking them too because they have given room to so many things that you can't even believe some of these people you call religious leaders do. Because they can't really draw a line between their own calling and politics, many of them find themselves straying into political terrain and we had to call them to order. So, you always have a goal in mind.

Looking back now, do you think the editorials made any difference in the outcome of the 2015 elections?

A: Oh they did. They did. I said it also from the feedback we get on those editorials, you know that it is more or less a fair outcome of what I have told you because even before or after the election, the INEC chairman was here too with his people and we told him our mind that day. He was given honest opinion of the paper and he even made references to some of the editorials we have written, thanking us for, at least, telling them on what they have done wrong or maybe commending them on what they have done right. That's the way it is so we have seen some impact of the editorials. It is just that unless you sit down and make a content analysis of some of post-editorial decisions of government and some other things that happened that were done to correct what we are trying to point out, its only then you could say this is the level of impact it made. But definitely we know that it made some impact on most of the editorials we have written.

Who gets to write editorials? Is it only the editor or others?

A: No, editor doesn't even write editorials because he has his own job to package the paper in the newsroom. That's why we have the editorial board and at the beginning of this discussion, I mentioned the people we have. You see we have some visiting members and some of them consultants like the (army) general and all those ones that I said come around. Many of them come, at least, we tap from their knowledge. They are just consultants and many of us are more or less the writers. It's not as if we cannot make contributions, we do. They bring their own experience and we make our own contributions, then the writers, about nine or ten of them, write it. So, the editor may not even write because he doesn't have the time really to be writing editorials. Some of us are here on full-time basis mainly to write editorials, though we do some other assignments that may be given. So there are writers, there are visiting members who are also writers and of course, we have some consultants too.

Who decides who writes what and do people have areas of specialisation?

A: The editorial board chairman is there as I said, Professor Omoleye, he doesn't write, but apart from that we have a staff member, a very senior one who co-ordinates the editorial topics we write. So, he will be the one assigning the topics to the persons he feels will be able to handle it well. Yes maybe on specialty, when it comes to writing editorials on the economy, it is not something you just give to anybody, we have some economists on the board too who, at least from their own background, they will be able to handle it much better than somebody who is not versed in business and economy. But generally, the writers can be given anything to write, maybe on sports, religious matters; you write on health, you write on politics. In fact, during national conference period, because we needed a wider opinion, we had to go beyond even the board here; we had to invite people from outside who we know will really give us good advice. We ran a series of editorials addressing various issues on that conference. We invited so many people- Professor Itse Sagay, Olisa Agbakoba and many others we had to invite them to come around and tell us about how they feel about the whole thing. From that one we knew we were in a good position to say something authoritatively on those issues.

Who do you think are the readers of your editorials?

A: It's varied. But as I said we target the officials in government up to the president himself if he has time to read the editorials. If he doesn't, you know there are people around him whose job is to look at those things and do a summary for him. We target the governors especially if we want to address issues of a particular state. We target public servants too, leaders in the ministries, departments and agencies, captains of industries, the bank chief executives, even students in schools if they are serious enough to read editorials. Then arms of government – you can write on judiciary, you can write on the legislature. We can target key sectors of the economy because in one way or the other there is no way somebody, somewhere will not read it and call the attention of other who may not have read it to read it. That's the essence of editorial writing- that somebody out there will read and call the attention of some other ones who will be in a position to take decision. The essence of editorial is that you keep talking about a thing until something is done in the interest of the people. That is the essence of writing editorials. If after saying this one now, we feel there is no change we come back again and start writing until there is a change.

Do you ever imagine a particular person while writing these editorials?

A: No not a particular person except that editorial is person-specific. That is the only time you can say you are writing for him to read. I just mentioned about the former INEC chairman, Professor Attahiru Jega, that's one person we've written about. so many times we have written about former president, Obasanjo, so many times we have written about Gen. Buhari as a person. Those ones are person-specific editorials. But in most cases, it is always a general issue that is being addressed.

Looking forward, do you think editorials will be changing or their roles change over the next few years?

A: No, I don't see any role changing. It has never changed; it has always been like that. In the history of journalism, editorials has always been like that – used to address problems of the society and suggesting solutions, way forward. There may be changes in some other aspects of the newspaper but definitely editorials will always address ills in the society.

INTERVIEW WITH Interviewee VI Vanguard Newspaper

Could you tell me a brief history with this paper and you career?

A: My name is Dayo Benson and at the moment I am the deputy chairman, editorial board. I started here way back in 1991 as a reporter of Sunday Vanguard and rose from there to senior staff writer, deputy features editor. Of course I was in the Sunday Vanguard for many years, at a point, I was deputy editor of Sunday Vanguard. Then at a point I was the politics editor. At the moment I am editor, law and Human Rights and deputy chairman editorial board. Apart from being a journalist, I'm also a lawyer.

When did you start in journalism?

A: 1991.

How long have you been writing editorials?

A: Incidentally, the first assignment I did when I came to Vanguard in 1991 even though I was not engaged as editorial writer was an editorial which was even published I did that out of my own personal interest. Getting really involved in editorial writing started about four, five years ago.

Some people think that the media had had a positive impact on the outcome of the 2015 election. Do you agree?

A: Yes, sure sure.

Do you think that your newspaper and particular, your editorials played any role?

A: Sure. Of course. In terms of coverage, comments and other focus on the election. In the build to the election, we highlighted what the political parties had to offer, their programmes,

the candidates. Yes it did play a role. Don't forget that newspaper is an agenda setting medium.

Do you think editorials are popular feature of your newspaper?

A: Sure it is. It has been a popular feature of this newspaper from inception to the best of knowledge.

Have you got some feedback from the editorials?

A: Well, not directly. Maybe they are directed to the chairman of the board. Maybe if people know you that you write editorial, once in a while, they compliment you on the editorial you did on a particular subject. There are occasional feedbacks.

What editorial from the election period are you most proud of?

A: Well, during the election period, I must say I was not fully involved in the editorial at that time. But I know that there are very serious editorials written by Vanguard that are worth-celebrating.

What do you think is the value of editorials in general?

A: The value of editorial is that it states the position of the paper and stand of the paper on any issue, polity which goes a long way to show this is where the paper stands on. It also establishes a point, makes suggestions, offer solutions and make recommendations. Editorial plays an important role in the newspaper.

Do they do a different 'job' to news story?

A: Of course. When news breaks, news is reported. News is what happened, how it happened, when it happened and who are the people involved. When news stories are reported, then editorial takes it up from there in terms of analysis. News is what happened, how it happened and who are the people involved, editorial now puts the issues in perspectives. We don't have to report it the way it is reported in the news story, identify the issue, state the perspectives, and then make recommendations. So, editorial is different from news.

Do you think editorials have a special value or more value at elections?

A: Sure. Of course. It does. It has because it goes a long way in such instant to state where it (newspaper) stands on election or endorse a particular candidate as done in advanced democracies.

Were you worried at any time about the election in Nigeria?

A: The build up to elections was somehow disturbing. The campaigns were threatening; the contestants were talking tough, the hate campaigns, the intrigues and some of the subterfuge that characterise the elections which is, maybe not too strange to this clime anyway. So, the fear then among the general populace was what was going to happen after the election. Thank

God, God took control and our politicians learnt to play by the rule. To God be the glory the outgoing president conceded victory to the current president.

Were you also worried about Nigeria's future?

A: Yes of course. Like I said, people were worried as to what was going to happen after the election. Some people had their families relocated overseas saying they are going to come back months after the elections. Some people thought the country was going to break up as speculated by the Americans and so many other things. But thank God all these things did not come to pass.

What was your biggest worry as regards the election?

A: My own biggest worry is not different from that of other people. My greatest concern was that people, political actors should play by the rule and that the election should be free and fair and that the umpire, INEC should be up and doing in its task.

Was there ever a time you wrote an editorial with a specific goal in mind?

A: As I told you I was not really fully involved in the writing of editorial, I was involved in other things even though I was a member of the editorial board. The chairman would have been in a better position to respond to these questions.

Looking back now, do you think the editorials made any difference in the outcome of the elections?

A: It made a difference to the extent that it stated the position of the paper, pointed out some issues, placed some issues in perspectives, tried to analyse situation and tried to point out the consequences of certain actions and tried to set agenda.

Who gets to write editorials? Is it the editor or others?

A: Others. The editor does not even write editorial. He is the editorial board chairman (pointing to the next office), I'm the deputy and we have editorial board made up by senior editors. Those are the ones that write editorials.

Who decides who writes what and do people have areas of specialisation?

A: At the editorial board meeting, issues are tabled, people bring in editorial ideas. If I bring an editorial idea on a particular area but it may not necessarily my area, maybe I'm not specialist in that area somebody with expertise in that area will take it. If it is on legal issue, it is usually directed to me because I'm a lawyer I have a broader perspectives on legal matters. Essentially, editorial ideas are tabled, we debate them, and we point out the perspectives. Ideas are discussed, thrashed out and we assign whoever is going to write it. When it is debated and suggestions are made, it enriches the final product of the editorial.

Who do you think are the readers of your editorials?

A: Well, the political class read editorials, business community also read it, professionals also read it, I think the academia too, they read it. The elite also read it. I know editorial is not meant for the ordinary people. They may not be interested in it.

Do you ever have a particular person in mind while writing these editorials?

A: Certainly not.

Looking forward, do you think editorials will be changing or their role change over next few years?

A: I don't see it changing. Editorial is editorial. Editorial will be responding to daily issues in the polity to the extent that it should get better. The issues editorials will be focusing will be richer and it will have more depth and perspectives will be wider.

I know that as a newspaper, there is a kind of an obligation to the society. When a newspaper takes a position, what informs the positions that you take?

A: The motto of Vanguard is 'Towards a Better Society'. That is it nothing more and the people. We place the people first.

INTERVIEW WITH Interviewee VII Vanguard Newspaper

Could you tell me your history with this paper and career?

A: I started as a freelancer in January 1992. I worked in the foreign affairs of the paper up till year 2000 when I became a full staff in 2001. So, I have been a full staff since 2001.

When did you start in journalism?

A: Well that was in 1988.

How long have you been writing editorials?

A: Since last year. Well once or twice I wrote before last year but I was integrated into the editorial board last year.

Some people think that the media had had a positive impact on the outcome of 2015 election. Do you agree?

A: Well to some extent.

Do you think your newspaper and in particular, your editorials played any role?

A: Yes of course. In the editorials, we tried to caution the playmakers, the stakeholders and we have to nudge them unto good manners.

Do you think editorials are a popular feature of your newspaper?

A: Well, it depends on how you gauge the popularity some read, some don't read. So, that's it. So it depends on the perception, I wouldn't know

Have you got some feedback from editorials and if any could you me specific example?

A: Well, I have got some feedback people complaining. I can't recollect particular examples now. But I do know that some people have called in to complain, some people have called in to solidarise or associate with the editorials written by Vanguard.

What editorials from the election period are you most proud of?

A: Well I wasn't a member of the editorial board at that time. We write everyday and I cannot tell the one I am most proud of. I can't remember the editorials of that time now.

What do you think is the value of editorials in general?

A: Editorials sound off the thinking of the newspaper, the editorial gives direction, they shape and place some patterns the newspaper feels about the happenings in the society.

Do they do a different 'job' to news stories?

A: Yes. The editorial is different; the editorial is the opinion of the newspaper. Editorials reflect the thinking of the newspaper. Editorial is opinionated.

Do you think editorials have special value or more value at election?

A: Of course they do. At every time editorials are important, they reflect the opinion of the newspaper concerning the circumstance of the period in the operational base of the newspaper.

Looking at the 2015 election, how important was editorial?

A: Well, I have said that before. They help to nudge playmakers in Nigeria towards good manners.

Were you worried at any time about the election and about Nigeria's future?

A: Of course. All Nigerians were worried, we were all worried.

What was your biggest worry?

A: My biggest worry was that the losers will not concede defeat and that violence could break out.

Was there ever a time when you wrote an editorial with a specific goal in mind especially during the election period?

A: I was not involved in the editorials then.

Looking back now, do you think the editorials made any difference in the outcome of the election?

A: I think so. Yes they did. They helped to nudge playmakers towards good manners.

Who gets to write editorials? Is it the editor or others?

A: We all write editorials. All members of the editorial board write editorials.

Who decides who writes what and do people have areas of specialisation?

A: Yes, based on your operational base, your operational duties in the newspaper.

Who do you think are the readers of your editorials?

A: Readers of the newspaper.

Do you ever imagine a particular person while writing these editorials?

A: Well, my focus is on the reading public. Those who are going to read the newspaper.

Looking forward, do you think editorials will be changing or their role change in the next few years?

A: I don't think they will.

Interview with Interviewee VIII *Leadership Newspaper***Could you tell me a little about your history with this paper, and your career?**

A: Well, I'm the immediate past chairman of *Leadership* newspaper and I was in that position for three and a half years. Before then I was a lecturer in the university.

When did you start in journalism?

A: I'm not really a core journalist; so I never really practised journalism per se. Like I said, from being a lecturer, I came in as chairman of editorial board.

How long have you been writing editorials?

A: For three years.

Some people think the media had had a positive impact on the outcome of the 2015 election. Do you agree?

A: To some extent, yes, because they kept the momentum even though there were a lot of negative and bad practices. But by and large, I think they did well especially the social media.

Do you think your newspaper and in particular your editorial played any role?

A: Yes it did because we were more objective than the others.

Do you think editorials are a popular feature of your newspaper?

Yes they are.

Have you got some feedback from the editorials?

A: yea we do because sometimes people call to say “oh, that was a well-written editorial” and sometimes when we do an editorial, the result usually positive most especially on policy issue. It results in policy change because we know policy makers are listening. So I think there is an impact.

Can you give me a specific example?

A: None that can easily come to mind but there have been quite a number.

What editorial from the election period are you most proud of?

A: There was one I wrote that says “It’s politics not war.”

Is there any editorial when you think about it now, you would like to delete or feel should not have gone out?

A: As the chairman editorial board, I assign editorials but the ones I write specifically myself, I never regret them. Or maybe there was one imposed during my time by the management but the one I write myself I never regret them.

What do you think is the value of editorials in general?

A: It’s not what I think, what I know is the value of editorial. The editorial is the intellectual hub of the paper and it gives the direction of the paper and deals on very serious issues. It is well-researched. It is what determines the level of intellectual being of that paper.

What do they do?

A: I said that the editorial is the intellectual hub of the paper and that means the editorial board brings together people from all walks of life to discuss issue, to discuss what is happening in the polity. Any paper that does not have an editorial is no paper. It is the stand of the paper, it is tripod on which you build the paper.

Do they do a different “job” to news stories?

A: Generally speaking it is report of the people’s pulse and editorial does not determine what story comes out but it has a lot of bearing on the story. It gives the direction of the story.

Do you think editorials have a special or more value at elections?

A: You can’t quantify the value of editorial because a lot of people at intellectual level, policy level, and editorial is what people read to tell them what the pulse is, what the people are thinking.

Why do you think editorials have more value during elections?

A: Because it is an editorial. I’m not saying just election, all the time an editorial is very important. Just like I said before any paper that does not have an editorial is not a paper. Every paper must have an editorial.

Were you worried at any time about the election?

A: Why should I be? I'm not a politician, I don't stand for election, mine is to make an objective analysis.

Were you bothered about the level of politicking at that time?

A: I wasn't because it was none of my business. Like I said mine is to be objective. I look around me and make my analysis.

Was there ever a time when you wrote an editorial with a specific goal in mind?

A: Obviously. Every editorial has a goal in mind, it has an objective. It is a message you are sending out. If you are going to write an editorial, it must have an objective.

Looking back now, do you think the editorials made any difference in the outcome of the elections?

A: Well, editorials are not campaign itself and the people that read editorial is just a small percentage compare to the rest of the people.

Who gets to write editorials? Only the editor, or others?

A: Editors do not necessarily write editorials. As a matter of fact, it is the members of the editorial board that write editorial.

Who decides who writes what and do people have areas of specialisation?

A: The chairman of editorial board.

Who do you think are the readers of your editorials?

A: I already told you, editorials are targeted at policy makers and the elites of the society.

Do you ever imagine a particular person while writing these editorials?

A: I don't. I was once an editorial board chair and that calls for objectivity.

Going back to 2015 elections, we know that there were a lot of controversies surrounding the card readers, the date for the election and so many other things, did you write any editorial in that respect?

A: No, we wrote an editorial calling for fair play, asking relevant bodies to do all they can to make the election successful and we gave our recommendation.

Looking forward, do you think editorials will be changing or their role change in the next few years?

A: it is not a question of whether I look forward, what I'm telling you is that editorials are definitions of what is happening, they are current issues. So, whatever is happening that is what will discuss whether it is negative or positive issues.