

READERS' PERCEPTION OF NEWSPAPERS' COVERAGE OF THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF NIGERIA'S JUNE 12, 1993 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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Abstract

The echoes of the inconclusive June 12, 1993 presidential election reverberated across Nigeria in 2023 as the nation marked the thirtieth anniversary of the epochal poll. It was observed that despite several studies on media coverage of the various aspects of the historic election, researchers seemed to have paid little attention to readers' perception of newspapers' coverage of matters relating to the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election, most especially its thirtieth anniversary. This study, readers' perception of newspapers' coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 presidential election, was therefore undertaken to fill the gap. Perception theory was used as the framework of the study while survey was adopted for the collection, interpretation and analysis of the data quantitatively. Findings show that while most of the respondents were exposed to reading newspapers, their knowledge of June 12, 1993 presidential election and related matters was inadequate even when few of them considered the direction of newspapers' coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of the election as positive and that it encouraged them to be more patriotic in the nation's pursuance of national unity, democratic ideals and good governance. It recommended that newspapers should always ensure the inclusion of democracy entrenching issues, like the ideals of June 12, 1993 presidential election, in their political reportage in order to redefine Nigeria's political culture and philosophy as well as democratic ethos that will play down ethnic and religious considerations in Nigerians' choice of leadership and in who or where gets what from government at all levels.

Keywords: Readership, Newspapers, Democracy, Elections, June 12, 1993 presidential election.

Introduction

Monday, June 12, 2023 made it exactly thirty years that Nigerians cast their votes in the aborted third republic which could have produced the second democratically elected President in the nation's democratic history. The 1983 military coup led by the then Major-General Muhammadu Buhari that ousted Alhaji Usman Aliyu Shehu Shagari as the first

president and all other democratically elected individuals from power brought about more than a decade of military rule in the most populous black nation the world over. Series of fruitless attempts were made, most especially by the administration of the self-styled military president, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida popularly known as IBB. What looked like an endless search for democracy eventually culminated in the June 12, 1993 presidential election (Adedigba and Audu, 2022). The scholars went on to say that although the National Electoral Commission (NEC) had not yet completed the announcement of the election results officially, the results already collated across the country by the then National Electoral Commission, NEC, showed that Alhaji Bashir Othman Tofa of the National Republican Convention (NRC) had lost to Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the electoral contest. Although NEC had started announcing the results, it was forced to stop the announcement on June 16, 1993 as a result of a court injunction obtained by The Association for a Better Nigeria led by Chief Arthur Nzeribe. The stoppage was followed by outright annulment on June 23, 1993 due to what IBB called voting irregularities. The annulment according to Adedigba and Audu (2022) led to demonstrations and political turmoil, which resulted in IBB's resignation and the formation of a feeble stop-gap civilian administration, tagged Interim National Government, ING. Later that year, a bloodless coup saw General Sani Abacha taking over as the military's Head of State to continue the country's military rule. Since the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, it appears that different crises resulting from the election are the main issue preventing Nigeria's democracy from developing such that the type of democracy that prioritizes investing in people and resources for the purposes of political stability, economic viability, scientific advancement, improvements in technology and education, as well as life-improving social programmes may be unfamiliar to many Nigerians despite the return of the military to their barracks since May 29, 1999 (Adedigba&Audu, 2022).

Almost three decades after the June 12 1993 election, another presidential poll was held nationwide on February 25, 2023, few months to the thirtieth anniversary of the election that Adedigba&Audu (2022) say will be impossible to forget. Without a doubt, the series of events that followed the annulment were similar to those that sparked the crisis of the 1967 civil war (Egbo, 2022). On a positive side, the first democratically elected President in Nigeria's fourth republic, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo announced May 29 as Democracy Day and a public holiday in remembrance of the struggle to enthrone democratic rule in Nigeria. Former President, Muhammadu Buhari, moved a step further by modifying the national holiday marking Nigerian democratic existence from May 29 to June 12 every year to commemorate the election believed to be the freest and fairest in Nigeria's democratic annals (Adedigba&Audu, 2022). In addition, the Federal Government gave further recognition to the watershed election and the presumed winner by renaming the Abuja National Stadium as Moshood Abiola National Stadium, and awarding him the Grand Commander of the Order of the Republic (GCFR) (Presidential Broadcast, Radio Nigeria, June 12, 2019). GCFR is the highest honour in Nigeria bestowed mostly on the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Due to the press's numerous contributions, the world has become a global village. The media has been at the forefront of improving the understanding of messages across the various ethnic groups in both small and large societies (Shuaibu, 2020). Adedotun and Ajayi (2019)

noted that in today's world, the press is extremely important for informing the people and allowing them to express their ideas and opinions on the events taking place around them. In the words of Omobola (2019), the Newspapers also give people a suitable platform to express their opinions on public issues and connect with people outside their immediate surroundings and the rest of the globe. Newspapers' freedom is one of the biggest gains of democracy since it allows for free exchange of ideas that is essential to a nation's progress (Modoux. 2020). While serving as the watchdog against the misuse of authority and promotion of accountability, the media, particularly newspapers, are the bedrock of democracies across the world; Nigeria inclusive.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that democracy is a universal ideal, there are regional variations in how power is acquired and used as well as democratic institutional setups. In Nigeria where there was a long period of military rule before the conduct of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election and thereafter, most of what could have been democratic institutions were either outlawed or highly compromised through military decrees. Such institutions include the media where newspapers occupied a strategic place. The media, most especially newspapers, were imperiled through statutory and non-statutory regulatory means to the extent that the performances of their statutory functions became herculean tasks. The absence of accurate evaluation of press coverage of intrigues and events prior to the current democratic rule is one of the issues impeding Nigeria's development of a democratic culture. There have been lots of studies on different aspects of media coverage of the June 12, 1993 presidential election and its anniversary with most of them concentrating primarily on how much coverage the issues received in the media. However, the studies failed to address readers' perception of newspapers' coverage of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, most especially its thirtieth anniversary. This, therefore, is the center point of this study which examines readers' perception of newspapers' coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria using Osun State as a case study.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the level of exposure to newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding the 30th anniversary of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election among newspapers' readers in Osun State.
2. To ascertain the views of newspapers' readers in Osun State on the level and direction of newspapers' coverage of the 30th anniversary of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election.
3. To find out the influence of newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding the 30th anniversary of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election on the attitude of newspapers' readers in Osun State towards national unity.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of exposure to newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding the 30th anniversary of annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election among newspapers' readers in Osun State?

2. What is the view of newspapers' readers in Osun State on the level and direction of newspapers' coverage of the 30th anniversary of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election?
3. What is the influence of newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding 30th anniversary of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election on the attitude of newspapers' readers in Osun State towards national unity?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Concept of Readership

The concept of readership is central to the printed materials. Readership is an abstract concept which captures the act of reading. The concept, though difficult to define, is usually associated with newspapers, magazines and all kinds of periodicals. Thus, readership is the number or type of people who read a particular newspaper, magazine (Okocha & Nwachukwu, 2020). Bottle PR (2019), a UK based agency established in 2004, views readership as "a general term that refers to the number of people reading a particular publication, including both the individual who purchased the publication and others who have read it." Huntsville (2011) defines readership as "the number of adults (18+) in a specified geographic area who" must have scrutinized, perused or scanned through a publication. Obaid (2013) noted that to read is to get ideas from printed or written materials. Reading is a way of acquiring knowledge.

Oyeyemi (2005) observes that reading is a means of tapping knowledge from superior minds. Reading is a term used to refer to an interaction by which meaning encoded in visual stimuli by an author makes meaning in the mind of the reader. It involves the recognition of printed or written symbols which serve as stimuli for assigning meanings through the intellectual manipulation of concepts already possessed by the reader. The resulting meanings are thereafter organised into thinking process according to the purpose adopted by the reader, such an organisation leads to modified thought and/or behaviour, or else leads to a new behaviour which takes its place either in person or in social development.

From another perspective, reading is defined as the vocalization of words in a given passage and the process of giving meaning to materials. This definition refers to reading aloud, that beginners do quite often and which enables teachers to detect and to correct errors spontaneously. Johnson (1999) observed that there are two types of reading, namely, reading aloud and silent reading. In silent reading, the reader reads in the inside of him. In other words, he does not vocalize what he reads. Wide reading imposes reading silently and this is necessary for developing the reading habit, effective reading and for a profound understanding of literate and technical texts.

State of Newspapers' Readership in Nigeria

Reports indicate that globally the newspaper, as a concept, is passing through its hardest time ever, especially since the Internet came to provide online functionalities and possibilities far beyond what the newspaper could offer: instant and free news, interactive and multimedia features, and easy accessibility through very simple handheld technologies like mobile phones and personal computers (Ashong & Henry, 2017). Exposure to newspapers among

Nigerians, old and young is said to be low. This is more so among youths in the nation (Abdulraheem, Adisa&La'aro, 2012).

Cooper (2019) argues that newspapers' readership is in its worst state as readers are massively shifting to online sources. Ashog and Henry (2013) concur that the emerging realities in the media business, especially the newspaper, show that the paradigm is shifting. With the coming of the online newspapers, the print newspapers seem to be losing their hegemony as more readers appear to go online. In a Daily Trust report in 2021, Mallam KabiruYussuf, President of the Association of Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria, NPAN, while admitting the reduction in newspapers' readership discloses that the development has been having telling effects on the industry. This was corroborated by the Abuja branch of Newspapers Vendors Association in another Daily Trust report also in 2021. Apuke and Omar (2020) discover that there is low readership among mass communication students of Taraba State University, Jalingo, due to lack of purchasing power and the growing presence of news on the Internet among others reasons. They advocate that, in order to improve newspapers' readership among students, libraries should provide free and unhindered access to newspapers to all library users.

Overview of June 12, 1993 annulled Presidential Election and its 30th year anniversary

Monday, June 12, 2023 marked exactly thirty years the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential was conducted under very peaceful atmosphere all over Nigeria. Two political parties, decreed into existence by the Armed Forces Ruling Council under the headship of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC) were the two political parties that fielded candidates in the presidential poll. While SDP fielded Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola, also known as MKO Abiola, from the South-western state of Ogun, The NRC's candidate was Alhaji Bashir OthmanTofa from the North-western state of Kano (Adedigba&Audu, 2022). At the conclusion of the election, MKO Abiola was reported to have earned over eight million votes, winning in 19 states, while his rival, Othman Tofa, received over six million votes, winning in 11 states. Abiola was said to have won the election by garnering nearly 60% of the more than 14 million votes cast. The June 12, 1993 Presidential Election was non-violent and transparent in contrast to more recent elections that were characterized by widespread rigging, intimidation, outright violence, maiming and killing (Adedigba&Audu, 2022). Unfortunately, after the results showed Chief MKO Abiola of the SDP was coasting home into a landslide victory, the election was canceled by the military administration under General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida citing security threats and massive rigging that could not be justified till today, as reasons to call off the poll. Nigerians protested the invalidation of the vote and the unfair treatment meted out to the presumed election winner. General Babangida's administration succumbed to the pressure and was compelled to "step aside" in favour of an Interim National Government (ING) with Chief Ernest Shonekan, a native of Chief MKO Abiola's homeland in the present-day Ogun State, as the head (Ajayi &Ojo, 2014).

Ajayi and Ojo explain further that the ING was overthrown in a bloodless palace coup on November 17, 1993 by the then Secretary of Defense and Chief of Army Staff, General Sani Abacha, who assumed the roles of Head of State. Without success, MKO Abiola fought hard to regain his mandate with vociferous support from the mass of Nigerian people, political and

human rights activists, labour unions and prominent Nigerian political figures. At a stage MKO Abiola had to flee the countries. Some of his supporters were arrested and detained, killed by alleged state actors and while others were forced to go on exile for fear of their lives. MKO Abiola returned to the country and declared himself president at a gathering in Epetedo, Lagos. He was subsequently arrested and detained by the Abacha junta (Adedigba&Audu, 2022). General Abacha had passed away on June 8, 1993. Following Abacha's death, there were spirited efforts locally and international to address the June 12, 1993 crisis. That brought an American delegation, which included the then American Director of International Organizations and Peacekeeping- Susan Rice, to Nigeria. The team visited MKO Abiola in detention. He developed health complications in their presence and died almost immediately on July 7, 1993 (the day he was supposed to be released by General Abdulsalami Abubakar who took over as Head of State after Abacha's demise). With Chief Abiola's death, Nigeria's democracy shook under the weight of grief and sorrow.

Thirty years down the line, June 12, 1993 presidential election and events relating to it were gradually going out of political consciousness of Nigerians particularly among the Nigerian youth, most of whom were not born then and therefore unaware of the sacrifices made by the acclaimed symbol of the election, the struggles before, during and after its annulment, the fierce battles fought by pro-democracy activists who combated the military to a standstill for the establishment of Nigeria's democracy. To say the least, Abiola's name was slowly disappearing from political reckoning in Nigeria (Ajayi &Ojo, 2014). This is more so since neither June 12, 1993 presidential election nor Chief MKO Abiola was accorded any official or semi-official recognition by the successive governments from 1998 until President Muhammadu Buhari did so twenty-five years after, precisely on June 8, 2018, by changing May 29, the date being commemorated as democracy day from 1999 to June 12, conferring posthumously the highest national honour of The Grand Commander of the Federal Republic, on Chief Abiola, the assumed victor of the presidential poll, and naming the Abuja National Stadium after him (Ojoye, 2018 &Opejobi, 2022). The Nigerian Senate, the country's parliament, approved President Buhari's declaration by passing the Public Holiday Act Amendment Bill on May 16, 2019, designating June 12 as the new Democracy Day and a public holiday. For generations yet to be born, the designation of June 12 as Democracy Day has cemented its place in Nigerian political history and will serve as a permanent reminder of the country's battles to enshrine democracy (Ajayi &Ojo, 2014).

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu said in his statement on the 2023 edition of Democracy Day marking the 30th anniversary of the June 12, 1993 presidential election that the nullification of the election was the foundation of the unrelenting efforts which gave birth to democratic governance from 1999 till date (Daily Post, 2023). The President therefore asked Nigerians to recommit themselves to advancing democracy, saying that it had served as their "compass for the past 24 years" (Adedigba&Audu, 2022).

The Interplay between Newspaper, 1993 annulled Presidential Election and Sustenance of Democracy in Nigeria

Citizens can only understand government goals, actions and inactions regarding constitutional procedures and governance when they are sufficiently informed and educated. In actuality, newspapers and other media outlets serve as informational bridges

between the government and the governed (Ojo, 2015). In the same vein, newspapers establish the agenda for discussions of important national issues, compile public viewpoints on them, and inform the relevant authorities whether or not they are in favour of the issues in question. In a democratic and civilized society, newspapers serve three fundamental functions: they inform the public about issues associated with public policy and politics by presenting and debating alternatives; they serve as a watchdog by exposing corporate and political corruption as well as other forms of abuse of power or ineffective policies; and they assist in educating the public about their rights as citizens and how to exercise those rights. As a result, the newspaper contributes to the development and maintenance of democratic governance transparently, anticipatorily, and responsibly (Tell Magazine, 2004).

It has been 30 years since the late Chief (MKO) Abiola was adjudged to have won the presidential election held on June 12, 1993 which was invalidated by the IBB's administration. The invalidation of the election was seen by many people as a significant setback for establishing democratic governance in the nation. The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, who designated June 12 as Democracy Day and a national holiday took the step to right the wrong and assuage the feelings of Nigerians that the watershed election will continuously have its place in Nigeria's political book of remembrance. Following the 1983 coup, all the promises to restore democracy and give the will of the people the upper hand were unfulfilled for thirteen solid years of military rulership. It took the death of General Abacha which brought in General Abdulsalami Abubakar before the atmosphere of political pessimism, dissatisfaction and despair among the populace could give way for fresh hope of return to democratic governance.

In Nigeria, where the Fourth Republic is in place, the media is crucial to the democratic process. The press primarily serves as an informant by giving Nigerians real information that comes from both domestic and foreign sources. Consequently, a wire-service reporter stated that "the reporter is the ears and eyes of the public, and if he cannot express everything he perceives and discovers in popular terms then the entire reportorial procedure is lost" (Cohen, 2003). In order for citizens to establish their own opinions on matters of public concern and ensure that public policies, programmes and choices are based on popular demand, the media offers truthful information about democratic activities to them. The role of the media in informing the world is transcendently important. The importance according to a United States publication is underscored by the fact that every media outlet is a veritable encyclopedia of local history of the world and an expert on democracy and democratic practice (Rucker & Williams, 2015). The media in Nigeria has been promoting Nigeria's democratic practice. Indeed, the country has a thriving media that has served as the forerunner of democracy. A testament to newspapers' status as a bulwark of democracy is its participation in the enthronement and sustenance of democracy through their reportage focusing on advocacy for credible elections, good governance (where accountability, probity and transparency are the benchmarks), strong political parties and the inalienable rights of the citizenry to perform their civic obligation in adult suffrage.

Prospects of Nigerian Democracy

It is clear that Nigeria's democratic balance sheet is far from perfect, yet there is still some optimism. First of all, despite numerous instances of dreams being dashed, rights being denied, and trust being betrayed by successive Nigerian governments, the yearning for democracy among Nigerians has remained unquestionably strong. Regardless of their doubts and regrets about some aspects of democracy in the country, Nigerians have continually shown their preference for democracy by actively participating in the various electoral processes since the start of the current democratic dispensation. Furthermore, there is a widespread understanding in the nation today that using the voting booth is the sole acceptable and popular way to gain political power. The people believe that the chances for multi-party democracy's relative security and survival are better assured through the ballot box (Ojo, 2015).

Empirical Review

Okorie (2020) conducted a study titled 'Annulment of June 12 1993 presidential election and the indefinable questions for democracy in Nigeria'. The researcher looked at all the influencing factors, how they interacted, and how Abiola died as a consequence. The study also includes the posthumous award of the Grand Commander of the Federal Republic (GCFR) on him, the renaming of Abuja National Stadium as Moshood Abiola National Stadium, and the proclamation of June 12, 1993, as Democracy Day and a federal holiday. According to him, the activities of the federal government are irrelevant. This is true since the major issue of the annulment, which is the formal declaration (even if posthumously) of MKO Abiola as the winner of the election has not been done. Okorie suggested that in order to declare Chief Moshood Abiola the election's victor posthumously, the federal government should first drop the accusations brought against him, pardon him and then certify the election results. The study concluded that there are numerous challenges caused by annulment of the June 12 1993 presidential election and which have significant effects on the Nigerian democratic existence.

Abdullahi and Riyauddeen (2022) research tagged "The media and democratic practice in Nigeria: A discourse on the fourth republic" submits that advancing democracy is one of the media's most important and significant jobs. This is owing to the fact that democracy cannot flourish and prosper unless information management and distribution are democratized and liberated from excessive governmental control. Over the years, the Nigerian media has responded effectively to the political, economic, and social challenges that been evolving from time to time. In the democratic movement in Nigeria, journalists were frequently seen as adversaries of the state; as a result of which they are constantly intimidated, muzzled, and imprisoned.

Theoretical framework

This study is premised on perception theory. One of the pioneers of perception research is Helmholtz (1821–1894). He suggested that there must be intermediary mechanisms between senses and our conscious view of the outside world. An excellent instance of such a procedure is "inferential thinking," which enables us to draw conclusions without using our senses as a starting point. Thus, Helmholtz was an early proponent of constructivism who thought that experience and stimulation are separated by other events and that perception is more than

just the immediate registering of feelings. The psychological concept of perception theory has historically been used to describe people's propensity to select information that supports their pre-existing beliefs while rejecting information that is incongruent with those beliefs. In many books over the years, perception theory has also been referred to and characterized as "congeniality bias" or "confirmation bias." The phrase has historically been used to describe how people prefer to pick out particular pieces of information to incorporate into their mentality. These decisions are founded on their viewpoints, convictions, attitudes, and judgments. People have the capacity to cognitively analyze the data they are exposed to and pick out the positive evidence while disregarding the negative.

The premise of perception theory is that people would look for more information about a topic even after taking a position. The many aspects of the topic that are reinforced during the decision-making process will colour the stance that a person has selected. According to Stroud (2008), theoretically, selective exposure takes place when individuals allow their thoughts to influence the media they choose to consume. Perception theory has been demonstrated in a variety of scenarios, including instances of self-interest, circumstances whereby individuals exhibit prejudices against certain groups, viewpoints, and individual and group-related difficulties. Three things that might prevent selective exposure are perceived informational utility, perceived fairness norms, and informational curiosity. The theory is relevant to this study in the sense that it centered on readers' perception of newspapers' coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of June 1, 1993 annulled presidential election.

Research Method

Survey design was used in the study to collect quantitative data. Wimmer and Dominick (2000) noted that conducting surveys provides a number of clearly recognized benefits. Survey method can be used to look at issues in actual environments. It is affordable cost-wise given the volume of data that can be acquired. Finally, the survey method enables researchers to look at a wide range of factors, including biographical and behavioral data, attitudes, motives, goals, and so forth, and to use various statistics to interpret the data. The survey technique was used to generate quantitative data from respondents in the sampled local government areas of Osun State.

Population/Sample Size and Sampling Technique

According to Sadiku, Eze and Musa (2018), a research population is typically a sizable group of people or things that serve as the principal subject of a scientific inquiry. The population of this study are thus the residents of Ife Central, Ilesa East, Odo Otin, Osogbo, Ede South and Iwo local government areas of Osun State. The following table presents the population of the selected local governments according to City Population (2022):

Table 1: showing the population of the selected local governments

Local government	Population
Ife Central	217,100
Ilesa East	136,800
OdoOtin	171,500
Osogbo	201,900
Ede South	98,000
Iwo	148,400
Total	973,300

Source: City Population (2022)

Consequently, to determine the basic sample size for the study, TaroYamane (1973) formula for calculating sample size was adopted. Below is the calculation:

Where: N = sample size sought

e = level of confidence = 95%

N = population size = 936,900

By substituting in values, we have;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = Sample

N = Population size under study

I = Unit in value (always constant)

e = Estimated standard error margin of 0.05

$$\begin{aligned}
 n &= \frac{936,900}{1 + 936,900(0.05)^2} \\
 &= \frac{936,900}{1 + 936,900(0.0025)} \\
 &= \frac{936,900}{1 + 11089.5} \\
 &= \frac{936,900}{11090.5}
 \end{aligned}$$

n = 399.9 approximately 400. Therefore, four hundred (400) newspaper readers were selected in Osun State for the study.

The population was divided into clusters using the multi-stage sampling approach since it would be extremely impossible for the researchers to contact all the citizens of Osun State. With multi-stage sampling, the researcher must select his samples one at a time until he has the necessary sample (Asemah et al., 2012). The state already exists in a cluster known as senatorial districts namely; Osun East, Osun West and Osun Central. These senatorial districts were broken down into local government areas comprising 10 local governments from each of the senatorial district with an area office in Osun East. Using the simple random sampling technique, two local government areas were selected from each senatorial district. The selected local governments are shown in the table below:

Table 2: Distribution of selected local governments

Local government	Population	Percentage
Ife Central	217,100	22.2%
Ilesa East	136,800	14.0%
OdoOtin	171,500	17.6%
Osogbo	201,900	20.7%
Ede South	98,000	10.0%
Iwo	148,400	15.5%
Total	973,700	100%

Having divided the entire population (Osun State) into senatorial district and also local governments using stratified sampling technique, the researcher also employed purposive sampling approach in the second stage to select the six local governments with two coming from each of the senatorial districts.

Instrumentation/Validity/Reliability/Method of Data Analysis

Survey method was used to conduct and analyze data while the tool utilized to get information from the respondents was a questionnaire. A survey is a research tool that compiles data from a big sample (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). However, copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents directly by the researcher in a bid to ensure that they were properly filled and returned. To ascertain the validity of the instrument, expert validity was employed. Hence, the researcher employed the services of a communication expert to scrutinize the instrument to ensure that it is valid and credible for measurement. When repeated measurements of the same material yield identical findings, an instrument is considered dependable (Wimmer& Dominick, 2003). Test re-test technique was used in ascertaining the reliability of the instrument. All the data gathered for this study were analyzed with quantitative analysis method. Therefore, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for quantitative data presentation and analysis in a bid to make the data meaningful and understandable.

Data Presentation/Analysis

A total of four hundred (400) copies of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents while three hundred and eighty-four (384) copies of the questionnaire were successfully retrieved which resulted to ninety-six (96%) response rate.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Male	157	41%
Female	227	59%
Age		
Valid 18-30yrs	96	25%
31-40yrs	153	40%

41years and above	135	35%
Academic Qualification		
SSCE	127	33%
ND/NCE	201	52%
Bsc/HND	42	11%
MSC	14	4%
Ph.D	-	-
Occupation		
Civil Servant	79	21%
Self-employed	197	51%
Trader	66	17%
Teacher	43	11%
Student	-	-

Table 3 shows that 157 respondents (41%) were male while 227 respondents (59%) were female. Also, 96 respondents (25%) were from the ages of 18 to 30 years, 153 respondents (40%) were between 31 and 40 years while 135 respondents (35%) were between the ages of 46 years and above. As such, 127 respondents (33%) were SSCE holder, 201 respondents (52%) were ND/NCE, 42 respondents (11%) were Bsc/HND holder while 14 respondents (4%) were masters/ PhD holders. On the respondents' occupation, 79 respondents (21%) were civil servants, 197 respondents (51%) were self-employed, 66 respondents (17%) were traders while 43 respondents (11%) were teachers. These findings imply that most of the respondents were adults, educated and as well capable of providing response to the research questions as codified in the questionnaire.

Table 4: Level of exposure to newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding 30th anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election among newspaper readers in Osun State

Question	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
How often do read newspapers?	Frequently	161	41.9%
	Once in a while	147	38.2%
	Occasionally	59	15.3%
	Rarely	17	4.6%
What is your degree exposure to newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding 30 th anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election	High	49	12.7%
	Moderate	67	17.3%
	Low	205	53.3%
	I can't say	63	16.3%
How frequent do you get expose to newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding 30 th anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election	Daily	41	10.6%
	Weekly	37	9.6%
	Bi-Weekly	44	11.4%
	Monthly	114	29.6%
	Occasionally	148	38.8%

The table 4 above shows that more than average of the respondents (41.9%) frequently read newspapers. This is followed by those that read newspapers once in a while (38.2%). Also, 15.3% of the respondents said they read newspapers occasionally while 4.6% said they rarely read newspapers. The respondents were further asked to explain the degree of their exposure to newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election. On this, 12.7% of the respondents said they are highly exposed to newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 election. 17.3% of the respondents said they are moderately exposed, 53.3% said their exposure to the issue is low while 16.3% could not say anything. This means that most of the respondents were not adequately exposed to its coverage by newspapers. More so, 10.6% of the respondents said they were exposed to the issue on newspapers every day, 9.6% said on a weekly basis, 11.4% said bi-weekly, 29.6% said on a monthly basis while 38.8% said occasionally. This finding shows that information relating to the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election are not adequately covered by newspapers.

Table 4: Views of newspapers' readers in Osun State on the direction of newspaper coverage of 30th anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election.

Question	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Do you think newspapers gave adequate coverage to 30 th anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election?	Yes	197	51%
	No	128	33%
	I can't say	59	16%
How can you describe the direction of newspapers' coverage of 30 th anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election?	Positive	239	62%
	Negative	86	22%
	Neutral	45	12%
	I can't say	13	4%
Would you agree that the Nigerian newspapers focused on using the 30 th anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election for entrenchment of democracy?	Strongly agree	141	37%
	Agree	87	23%
	Strongly disagree	64	17%
	Disagree	84	17%
	Undecided	8	6%

From table 4, it can be deduced that more than half of the respondents (51%) opined that newspapers gave adequate coverage to thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election. When asked on the direction of newspapers' coverage of the June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election, majority of the respondents (62%) described the direction of newspapers' coverage of thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election as positive, 22% others said the direction is negative. In this study, those considered positive are the media reports that centered on the entrenchment of democracy in the nation owing to happenings in the June 12 annulled presidential election. Finally, less than average of the respondents (37%) strongly agreed that the Nigerian newspapers focused on using the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election for the entrenchment of democracy just as 23% others agreed that the Nigerian newspapers focused on using the

thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election for entrenchment of democracy. Meanwhile, 17% of the respondents disagreed with the assertion.

Table 5: Influence of newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election on the attitude of newspaper readers in Osun State towards national unity

Question	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Newspapers' coverage of 30 th anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election influenced my attitude towards national unity?	Strongly Agree	207	53.9%
	Agree	122	30.9%
	Strongly disagree	18	4.6%
	disagree	27	7%
	Disagree	10	3.6%
I agreed that newspapers' coverage of the 30 th anniversary of July 12, 1993 election influenced my participation in election?	Neutral		
	Strongly Agree	217	56.5%
	Agree	119	30.9%
	Strongly disagree	41	10.6%
	disagree	7	2%
I am of the opinion that newspapers' coverage of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election encourages my contribution towards national issues	Disagree	-	-
	Neutral		
	Yes	182	47.3%
	No	151	39.7%
Newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding 30 th anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election influence my patriotism towards national unity?	I can't say	51	13%
	To a large extent	187	48.6%
	To some extent	64	16.6%
	To no extent	84	21.8%
	I can't say	49	13%

Table 5 sought to provide answer to the third research question. It revealed that 53.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that newspapers' coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election influenced their attitude towards national unity, while 30.9% agreed. This is as 4.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that newspapers' coverage of thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election influenced their attitude towards national unity. 7% of the respondents disagreed to the assertion while 3.6% others were neutral. Also, most of the respondents (56.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that newspapers' coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 election influenced their participation in election, 30.9% agreed, 10.6% strongly disagreed while 2% others disagreed that newspapers' coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 election influenced their participation in election. To further ascertain the influence of newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election on the attitude of newspapers' readers in Osun State towards national unity, less than half of the

respondents (47.3%) were of the opinion that newspapers' coverage of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election encouraged their contribution towards national issues, 39.7% of the respondents said it did not encourage their contribution towards national issues while 13% of the respondents could not say. On the other hand, 48.6% of the respondents noted that newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election influence their patriotism towards national unity to a large extent, 16.6% of the respondents said to some extent, 21.8% said to no extent while 13% others could not say.

Discussion of findings

This study examined readers perception of newspapers' coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election in Nigeria. Three objectives and research questions were set for the study which led to the adoption of quantitative research approach and subsequent employment of survey research method. From the data gathered and analyzed, it was found that an average of the respondents (41.9%) frequently read newspapers, just as 38.2% of other respondents said they read newspapers once in a week. This finding implies that most of the respondents were exposed to reading newspapers. However, more than half of the respondents (53.3%) said their exposure to issues surrounding the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election is low while 16.3% could not say anything. This implies that the respondents were not adequately exposed to the issues surrounding the June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election. This could be as a result of seasonal attention that the newspapers often give to issues relating to the June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election. Determining the level of exposure to issues surrounding the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election, it was found that 29.6% of the respondents said they are exposed to issues relating to June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election on a monthly basis while some of the respondents (38.8%) said they access such information occasionally. This finding shows that the information relating to the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election are not adequately covered by the Nigerian newspapers. This is however in line with the submission of Abdullahi and Riyaddeen (2022) which noted that the Nigerian media has over the years been reacting optimally to the unfolding political, economic and social issues, but does this when elections are approaching or whenever they wanted to celebrate democracy day.

To ascertain the views of newspapers' readers in Osun State on the level and direction of newspapers coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election, it was discovered that more than half of the respondents (51%) opined that newspapers gave adequate coverage to the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election. This finding implies that some of the respondents thought that some newspapers especially in the Lagos- Ibadan axis of the Nigerian print media tried their best in covering the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election because it coincided with the 2023 presidential election circle that had another Yoruba politician and one of the apostle of June 12, 1992 election in person of Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu as a major presidential candidate and eventual winner of the 2023 presidential election whose swearing-in as the sixth democratically elected president took place on May 29, 2023; few days before June 12. Also, majority of the respondents (62%) were of the view that the direction of newspapers coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential

election is positive, even as 22% others said the direction is negative. In this study, those considered positive are the media reports that centered on the entrenchment of democracy in the nation owing to happenings in the June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election. This finding is in tandem with that of Okorie (2020) which revealed that **newspapers set agenda for the discussion of critical national issues, collate the views and opinions of the people on the issues and convey same to the authorities concerned for the betterment of the society. Meanwhile, the study negates that of Ojo (2015)** which noted that newspapers' reports on June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election are bias as it supports some sects in the authority. Finally, on the influence of newspapers' coverage of issues surrounding the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election on the attitude of newspapers' readers in Osun State towards national unity, it was discovered that 53.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that newspapers coverage of the thirtieth anniversary influenced their attitude towards national unity, while 30.9% agreed. This finding is in line with that of Ashindorbe and Danjibo (2019) which examined two decades of democracy in Nigeria. They contend that newspapers' readers were often influenced by what they are exposed to adding that it will be uncharitable to discount the incremental gains of newspapers and other media platforms. Since the return to civil rule, the country is far from attaining the status of a consolidated democracy. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents (56.5%) strongly agreed that newspapers' coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of July 12, 1993 election influenced their participation in elections even as 30.9% agreed. Also, 47.3% of the respondents opined that newspapers' coverage of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election encouraged their contributions towards national issues. These findings show that newspapers' coverage of issues relating to the thirtieth anniversary of the June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election played a significant role in the attitude of newspapers' readers in Osun State towards national unity.

Conclusion/Recommendations

This study has analyzed readers perception of newspapers' coverage of the thirtieth anniversary of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election. Gleaning on the findings of the study, it can be deduced that newspapers' reports on the issue posed significant effect on readers' attitude especially towards development and stability of the nation and her democracy. From the foregoing, it can be noted that newspapers' readers perceived media reports on the thirtieth anniversary of the June 12, 1993 election as one that is insufficient due to its rare inclusion and unavailability in the media contents except during the usual democracy day celebration or election period. This study thus unquestionably concurs with the idea that while media (newspaper, magazine, radio, television, and the new media) as an institution exerts a great deal of influence because of how crucially important their roles are to the functioning of modern societies, the influence that the media wield in any society is only tangentially associated with the political orientation of the holders of political power in the society who only use the media to leverage on their already existing powers. Although many academics have remarked that the Nigerian press historically had a strong political slant, it must be emphasized that the nation is not homogeneous. The political polarization of the media reflects the political and economic divisions that exist in the nation. In line with this finding, the following are recommended:

1. Media organizations especially newspaper outfits should ensure that they always include issues that are worthy of entrenching democracy in Nigeria, citing the June 12, 1993 election as example, in their publications. This would go a long way in sensitizing the media audience and as well influence them positively towards the democratic growth of the nation.
2. There is an urgent need for the redefinition of the country's political philosophies and values that will be suitable and be in consonance with the spirit of the June 12, 1993 presidential election and the peculiarity of the Nigerian political landscape which must be inculcated in the curricular of students at secondary and tertiary education levels.
3. Also, Government needs to re-align the divergent ethnic, religious and political interests into a common political values and culture that would be generally accepted by all Nigerians. For instance, the ethnic and religious issues that took the centre stage of campaigns in the 2023 presidential election were given no consideration in the June 12, 1993 election despite the fact that Chief MKO Abiola and his running mate, Ambassador Babagana Kingibe were muslims like Asiwaju Bola Tinubu and Kashim Shettima. On the ethnic or tribal level, Abiola is of the Yoruba ethnic group like Bola Tinubu while Kingibe belongs to the Kanuri ethnic group like Shettima. Democratic and political stakeholders should there be concerned on why what was politically and widely acceptable factors were bitterly criticized in the 2023 presidential poll. This is imperative not necessarily because of the 2023 presidential election that had come and gone but because of similar polls in the future. In essence, Nigerians must develop a code of conduct or governance for public office holders at all levels of government that will play down or wipe out ethnic and religious considerations in who or where gets what from governments. This should be grown to become democratic ethos and norms that will be in line with the accepted political cultures, philosophies and values in Nigeria.

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