

Analysis of Newspaper Reportage on Fuel Subsidy Removal from June – July 2023 in the Guardian and the Punch Newspapers in Nigeria

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Abstract

Fuel subsidy refers to a government intervention strategy where a portion of the production or distribution cost of petroleum products is covered by the state to ensure affordability for consumers. In Nigeria, successive administrations have implemented fuel subsidies as a means of promoting economic stability and easing the financial burden on citizens. However, growing concerns over the fiscal sustainability of the policy, particularly its contribution to the national debt, have led to increased advocacy for its removal. In line with these concerns, the Federal Government of Nigeria, under the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, officially discontinued the subsidy regime in June 2023. This study investigates the newspaper coverage of the fuel subsidy removal between June and July 2023 in two prominent national dailies—The Guardian and The Punch. Utilizing content analysis methodology, the research examines the nature of the coverage in terms of frequency, prominence, tone (direction), type of report, and the size/length of the articles. Findings indicate that both newspapers dedicated substantial attention to the issue, with a notable prevalence of negative tones across their reports. The study concludes that the print media played an active role in shaping public discourse on the policy and recommends that newspapers adopt a more proactive editorial stance on matters of national importance. Rather than merely reflecting public sentiment, newspapers should contribute substantively to policy debates as critical stakeholders in national governance.

Keywords: *Newspaper reportage, Fuel subsidy, Federal government, The Guardian, The Punch.*

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1. Introduction

Fuel subsidy is a government policy whereby the state absorbs a portion of the cost of fuel production, particularly petroleum products to ensure affordability for the general population. Although Nigeria is Africa's leading crude oil producer, its economy continues to depend significantly on oil revenues for foreign exchange earnings and budgetary support (Ekeruche, 2020). The rationale behind fuel subsidy in Nigeria is largely rooted in social protection and economic stimulation, intended to cushion citizens from the volatility of global oil prices and mitigate inflationary pressures (Olomola, 2019). The policy traces its institutional origins to October 2000, when the federal government responded to the underperformance of the country's four refineries by establishing a special committee to address pricing and distribution inefficiencies in the downstream petroleum sector. This move culminated in the formation of the Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Committee (PPP CRC), which was later restructured into the Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA). Through the PPPRA, a price modulation mechanism was introduced to enable domestic fuel prices to reflect fluctuations in the international crude oil market, while still offering some degree of subsidy (Soremekun, 2023). This framework allowed for domestic price adjustments—upward when international prices rise to ensure supply stability, and downward during price falls to offer consumer relief. However, the financial burden of sustaining fuel subsidies has increasingly become unsustainable. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020), global energy subsidies reached \$178 billion in 2019, with petroleum products accounting for the majority (\$131 billion). When expanded to 77 countries using additional International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates, the total petroleum subsidies for 2019 reached \$270 billion. In the Nigerian context, the fiscal strain is particularly severe. From 2006 to 2019, Nigeria spent an average of ₦743.8 billion annually on subsidies, amounting to approximately ₦10.4 trillion over 14 years (Federal Ministry of Information, 2020). In 2022 alone, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) expended ₦4.39 trillion (approximately \$9.7 billion) on petrol subsidies, a situation that exacerbated fiscal deficits and public debt (REUTERS, 2023). This crisis has been compounded by the country's dependence on imported refined petroleum, owing to the long-standing dysfunction of its local refineries. Additionally, widespread oil theft and pipeline vandalism have reduced net crude oil production, further deepening the imbalance between import expenditure and crude oil earnings (Adeniran & Ogujiuba, 2021). In response to these economic inefficiencies, former Central Bank Governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi and former IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde have both advocated for the urgent termination of the fuel subsidy regime, citing its distortionary effects and fiscal unsustainability (Sanusi, 2020; Lagarde, 2019). Reflecting this growing consensus, the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari excluded fuel subsidy allocations from the second half of the 2023 national budget. Buhari justified the decision by stating that continued subsidy payments would compromise Nigeria's ability to adequately fund essential public sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2023). The policy direction was then later confirmed by the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's

administration, which announced the official termination of fuel subsidies in June 2023. Given the significance of this policy shift, it is imperative to examine how mass media, particularly newspapers, reported and framed the removal of fuel subsidy. Newspapers, as key agents of public discourse, disseminate information through various formats—news reports, editorials, features, commentaries, and advertorials serving both as mirrors of public opinion and as agenda-setters in the policy arena (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2020). In Nigeria, newspapers are generally classified by their periodicity, namely; daily, weekly, or bi-weekly with the majority operating on a daily or weekly publication cycle. This study, therefore, focuses on analyzing how two leading Nigerian dailies, The Guardian and The Punch, reported on the fuel subsidy removal between June and July 2023. Specifically, the study evaluates the frequency, nature, prominence, editorial direction, and size of reportage on this critical national issue.

1.1 Problem Statement

Newspapers, in line with other media of communication, have a primary responsibility of informing, educating, and entertaining. In addition, they interpret, concretize, and even mobilize the people to take meaningful actions (McQuail, 2010). Fuel (or petrol) is central to the economic pursuits of Nigerians, whose daily sustenance is tied to this by-product of Nigeria's rich crude oil deposits, its major foreign exchange earner (Ekeruche, 2020). The role newspapers played in the wake of the fuel subsidy removal by the Tinubu administration as agenda setters needs to be critically analysed to make for an effective appraisal of the new administration and its impact on the socioeconomic life of Nigerians (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2020). The pronouncement by President Bola Tinubu, at his inauguration on May 29, 2023, that "subsidy is gone" and its subsequent removal by the government has been a major source of discourse (Reuters, 2023). The media has extensively reported on the reasons for the removal, the effects it has had on the population and the economy, and potential strategies to mitigate the socioeconomic challenges it has triggered (Adebayo, 2023; Premium Times, 2023).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study include the following:

- i. To investigate the nature of reports on Newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers.
- ii. To examine the frequency of Newspaper reportage of fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers.
- iii. To establish the direction of the Newspapers in their different presentations on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers.
- iv. To determine the prominence given to fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers.
- v. To ascertain the nature of the Newspapers' editorial contents on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers.
- vi. To explore the size/length of Newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers.

1.3 Research Questions

- i.** What is the nature of reports on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers?
- ii.** What is the frequency of Newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers?
- iii.** What is the direction of Newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers?
- iv.** What is the level of prominence given to fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers?
- v.** What is the nature of the Newspapers' editorial contents on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers?
- vi.** What is the size/length of Newspaper reportage given to fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch Newspapers?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Subsidy

Fuel subsidy is a government policy in which the state covers a portion of the production costs of fuel, particularly petroleum products to keep prices lower and more affordable for consumers. The main justification for introducing fuel subsidies was to cushion Nigerians from the effects of rising global oil prices. According to Onyeiwu (2021), Nigeria experienced a subsidy-driven era from 1970 to 1979, during which a wide range of services and goods including healthcare, electricity, education, air travel, water supply, and even basic food items like milk, sugar, rice, wheat, and beverages were heavily subsidized. This extensive subsidy system was made possible by the oil boom of that decade, triggered by the global oil crisis resulting from the Arab-Israeli conflict, which significantly increased global oil prices. During this period of economic prosperity, public-sector salaries were substantially raised under the 1975 "Udoji awards." Meanwhile, government agencies such as the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) operated without collecting electricity bills, and Nigeria Airways offered flight tickets at prices well below market value. However, the sharp decline in oil prices in the 1980s meant the government could no longer sustain these subsidies. A shortage of foreign exchange further hindered the importation of essential goods, resulting in widespread scarcity. A 2023 report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) notes that fuel subsidies formally took root in the 1970s and were institutionalized in 1977 through the enactment of the Price Control Act, which prohibited the sale of specific products including petrol above set government prices. Although subsidies are based on a socially beneficial idea, their implementation in Nigeria has been marred by widespread corruption and inefficiency. Despite being Africa's largest oil producer, Nigeria still relies on imported refined fuel, highlighting deep structural issues within its energy sector.

2.2 Fuel Subsidy and Corruption in Nigeria

Transparency International defines corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” Corruption undermines public trust, weakens democratic institutions, slows economic growth, and worsens inequality, poverty, social unrest, and environmental problems. Tackling corruption requires a clear understanding of how it operates and the systems that allow it to thrive. In Nigeria, widespread corruption and the persistent failure of domestic refineries have left the country dependent on imported refined petroleum products, resulting in the annual payment of billions of dollars in fuel subsidies. In 2012, the government announced its intention to redirect funds from subsidies to critical infrastructure development and other national priorities. According to Jukwey (2012), a legislative investigation revealed a gap of over \$4 billion annually between subsidized fuel quantities and actual consumption—highlighting large-scale corruption in the subsidy system. The committee found that subsidies were being paid for 24 million liters of fuel per day that were never used by Nigerians, amounting to ₦669 billion (roughly \$4.14 billion) each year. In Transparency International’s 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Nigeria ranked 150 out of 180 countries, a slight improvement from its 154th position in 2021. During a speech at the United Nations General Assembly on September 19, 2023, President Bola Tinubu explained that the removal of the fuel subsidy was aimed at boosting investor confidence and promoting economic growth by eliminating a system plagued by waste and corruption. Subsidy payments have long suffered from a lack of transparency and accountability. A 2012 parliamentary probe reported by Al Jazeera uncovered a \$6 billion fraud involving officials at the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), leading to public outcry and calls for deeper investigations and reforms. Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, now Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and formerly Nigeria’s Minister of Finance, stated that the subsidy system mainly benefited a cartel of oil marketers who diverted the funds for their own gain. She questioned whether these cartels had become more powerful than the government itself. Odewale (2023) emphasizes that fuel subsidy in Nigeria has been marred by corruption, manipulation, and gross mismanagement. Between January 2020 and June 2022 alone, the government spent ₦3.92 trillion on petrol subsidies—more than the combined national budgets for health, education, and defense over the same period. From 2006 to 2018, about ₦10 trillion was spent on subsidies, with ₦5.82 trillion spent in 2021–2022 and ₦3.36 trillion proposed for the first half of 2023. These figures reveal the heavy financial burden subsidies place on government resources, limiting investment in key sectors that could improve citizens’ welfare and economic development. Numerous fuel subsidy fraud cases have been investigated, with several companies and individuals facing prosecution. In one such case reported by Sahara Reporters (2017), Justice Adebukola Banjoko of the Federal Capital Territory High Court sentenced oil marketer Jubril Rowaye to 104 years in prison on April 7, 2017, after he was found guilty of a ₦1.05 billion subsidy scam prosecuted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission.

2.3 Fuel Price Hikes in Nigeria

Ukonu (2006) notes that private media proprietors are highly active and prominent in Nigeria. Government-owned newspapers and magazines are now a rare sight, with most influential national newspapers being privately operated. This private ownership ideally grants them the freedom to publish without excessive governmental control. These national dailies are expected to act as intermediaries—conveying public opinion to the government and, in turn, disseminating government policies, programs, and decisions to the people.

Jimoh et al. (2013) trace the history of fuel price hikes in Nigeria back to the military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo, who in 1978 made the pump price increase from 8.4 kobo to 15.37 kobo and raised funds prior to the 1979 democratic transition as well as to address social welfare needs. His civilian successor, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, further upturned the price with 20 kobo in 1982. Allegations of incompetence and widespread corruption in Shagari's government resulted in its eventual overthrow.

The government of President Ibrahim Babangida continued this trend with multiple fuel price increases. On March 31, 1986, the price was raised to 39.50 kobo, and later to 42 kobo in April 1988. By January 1, 1989, the price rose to 60 kobo for private vehicles. These hikes coincided with the introduction of a domestic Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which triggered nationwide protests due to deteriorating economic conditions. Another increase followed on March 6, 1991, moving the price to 70 kobo per litre. In November 1993, it was further raised to ₦5.00, sparking more protests that forced a rollback to ₦2.50 by the end of the month.

General Sani Abacha's regime increased the pump price to ₦15.00 on October 2, 1994, but after just two days, lowered it to ₦11.00 in response to public outcry. Later, under General Abdulsalami Abubakar's transitional government, the price rose again to ₦25.00 on December 20, 1998, but was reduced to ₦20.00 by January 6, 1999, following nationwide protests led by labor unions and civil society organizations. Notably, only the military regimes of Buhari/Idiagbon and the civilian administration of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua did not raise fuel prices—likely due to the short tenure of the former and the health issues of the latter.

During President Olusegun Obasanjo's two-term civilian leadership, fuel prices were repeatedly increased. On June 1, 2000, the pump price jumped to ₦30, but public resistance forced a reduction to ₦25 and then ₦22 by June 13. The price climbed again to ₦26 in 2002 and reached ₦40 by June 2003. By June 2007, it rose to ₦70, but was later reduced to ₦65 by President Yar'Adua upon assuming office.

Under President Goodluck Jonathan, efforts were made to remove fuel subsidies entirely. Adams Oshiomhole, former Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) president

and Edo State governor, who had previously opposed subsidy removal, eventually supported it. However, before public consultations were completed, the Petroleum Product Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) announced the full removal of subsidies on January 1, 2012, pushing the pump price to a record ₦141 per litre. This move sparked widespread protests and nationwide strikes organized by the NLC, TUC, PENGASSAN, ASUU, and other civil society groups. The resulting pressure forced the government to partially reinstate the subsidy and reduce the price to ₦97.

One year into President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, in 2016, the pump price was raised from ₦87 to ₦145. Upon securing a second term, the price increased again to ₦161 per litre in 2020 and later to ₦170 by November that year. Before handing over power to President Bola Tinubu in May 2023, fuel sold for ₦210 per litre. At his inauguration on May 29, 2023, Tinubu declared an end to the fuel subsidy, a decision that shocked many Nigerians. Since then, the pump price has hovered around ₦600 per litre.

Table No 01: Data on petroleum prices/adjustments in Nigeria (1978-2023)

S/No	Date	Administration	Price(k)	Percent (%)
1	1978	Gen Olusegun Obasanjo (as military ruler)	15.3	
2	1982	Gen Shehu Shagari	20	
3	1990	Gen Ibrahim Babangida	60	300
4	1992	Gen Ibrahim Babangida	70	17
5	1992	Gen Ibrahim Babangida	3.25	364
6	1993	Gen Ibrahim Babangida	-	54
7	1994	Chief Ernest Shonekan	5	120
8	1994/98	Gen Sani Abacha	11	-
9	2000	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	20	82
10	2000	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	22	10
11	2001	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	26	18
12	2003	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	40	54
13	2004	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	45	13
14	2007	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	70	56
15	2007	Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua	65	0.07
16	2012	Dr Ebele Goodluck Jonathan	97	117
17*	2016	Gen. Muhammadu Buhari	145	-
18*	2020	Gen. Muhammadu Buhari	161	-
19*	2020	Gen. Muhammadu Buhari	170	-
20*	2022	Gen. Muhammadu Buhari	210	-
21*	2023	Bola Ahmed Tinubu	570	-

Source: Modified Communiqué by South-South Leaders 2012 (as cited in Jimoh, et al (2013)

*Modified

2.4 Global Fuel Prices

Table No 02: Fuel Prices in Selected Oil Producing Countries as at November 2023

S/No	Countries	Pump Price in US Dollar
1	Algeria	0.341
2	Bahrain	0.531
3	USA	0.941
4	Egypt	0.404
5	Iraq	0.573
6	Kuwait	0.341
7	Libya	0.031
8	Nigeria	0.764
9	Oman	0.621
10	Qatar	0.795
11	Saudi Arabia	0.621
12	UAE	0.795
13	Venezuela	0.035

Source: GlobalPetrolPrices.com

According to data from GlobalPetrolPrices.com, the global average fuel price is approximately \$1.33 per liter. However, fuel prices vary significantly across countries. Generally, wealthier nations tend to have higher fuel costs, while poorer countries and major oil-producing and exporting nations often enjoy much lower prices. An exception to this trend is the United States, which, despite being a highly developed country, maintains relatively low fuel prices. These price differences are largely due to each country's approach to fuel taxation and subsidies. Although all countries purchase petroleum at similar prices on the international market, they implement varying levels of taxes and subsidies, leading to differing fuel prices at the consumer level.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored on the Agenda-Setting Theory of Mass Communication. Originally introduced in 1972 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw from the University of North Carolina, the theory rests on two key assumptions: first, that the media shape reality by selecting which aspects to highlight and which to omit; and second, that the more frequently an issue is covered, the more important the public perceives it to be (Drew, 2023).

Emerging after the era of normative theories, Agenda-Setting Theory emphasizes that the media work in tandem with other societal factors to influence change, rather than possessing absolute power. As Folarin (2002) explains, agenda-setting refers to the media's ability to influence which issues are seen as significant at any point in time within a given society. Importantly, while the theory does not claim that media control what people think, it asserts that they influence what people think about.

Kunczick (1995), as cited in Folarin (2002), adds that proper analysis of agenda-setting requires comparing media content over time with the issues most discussed by the public. McQuail (2010) supports this, stating that to establish a causal link between media agendas and public discourse, rigorous content analysis must be applied using sound methodology. Despite its influence, the theory is critiqued for downplaying how audiences selectively consume media content. As McLuhan (quoted in Folarin, 2002) argues, the press can manipulate public perception by either amplifying or completely ignoring certain events. Given this, the media's role, especially in controversial matters like the removal of fuel subsidies, must be handled with balance and objectivity. According to Omoera (2010), while the press must inform, serve as a watchdog, monitor elections, and advocate for reforms, it should also act as an unbiased mediator. McQuail (2010) further explains that true objectivity in reporting involves neutrality, avoidance of bias, adherence to factual accuracy, and independence from hidden agendas. Reportage should be free of personal bias and must not distort the reality it seeks to present. Some scholars argue that achieving complete objectivity in the media is unrealistic. As noted by Dommick and Rothenbuhler (1984), "There always appears to be some 'niche' in which a particular medium has an advantage." Despite this limitation, the media's responsibility to ensure that political leaders are held accountable and that events are reported fairly remains critical to upholding its role as the "fourth estate of the realm."

Agenda-Setting Theory has faced criticism on several grounds. One major critique is that media audiences are not always attentive or rational; they may overlook important details. Additionally, the theory's influence diminishes when audiences have already formed strong opinions. Furthermore, critics argue that the media cannot manufacture problems—they can only influence the level of public awareness, the priority given to issues, and their perceived importance (Addo, 2010). Nonetheless, Agenda-Setting Theory remains highly relevant to this study because the media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of what matters most. People depend on the media to filter, highlight, and structure information. By selecting and emphasizing certain topics, the media helps individuals decide which issues to prioritize, thereby influencing both public conversations and policy-related decisions.

2.6 Empirical review

Since the fuel subsidy debate became a major issue in Nigerian politics, numerous research studies have explored its advantages and disadvantages. For instance, Odesanya and Abubakar (2013) examined the types of stories covered during the 2012 fuel subsidy removal crisis in Nigeria, encompassing straight news reports, editorials, opinion pieces, photographs, and letters to the editor. Their findings revealed that straight news was the most common format, with 2,022 items, while letters to the editor were the least frequent, totaling 651 items. They also analyzed the tone of the coverage in two newspapers and found that the reporting was overwhelmingly negative. Specifically, the Punch newspaper published 1,426

items with negative connotations across 31 editions, while Vanguard reported 1,276 similarly unfavorable pieces in their study titled “Press Reportage of 2012 Fuel Subsidy Removal Crisis in Nigeria.” Similarly, Ezeah (2016) assessed the extent of coverage given to the fuel subsidy removal by three national newspapers in a study called “Fuel Subsidy Removal Strike in Nigeria: A study of Selected National Newspaper Reports.” The results showed that Daily Sun accounted for 38.26% of the coverage, The Punch covered 29.61%, and Daily Trust contributed 32.13%. Odesanya and Abubakar (2013) also investigated the prominence given to the fuel subsidy removal issue during the crisis. Their research indicated a high level of prominence, evidenced by 705 and 683 editorial items on the front pages of Punch and Vanguard newspapers, in that order. Additionally, the inside pages featured 2,150 and 2,030 news items in the Punch and the Vanguard , respectively, underscoring the significant attention the press gave to the crisis. Ezeah (2016) further analyzed editorial direction on the fuel subsidy removal strike in the same newspapers, finding that Daily Sun covered 28.6% of the editorials, The Punch covered 50%, and Daily Trust covered 21.4%.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted quantitative research design while content analysis is the method used. The population of study were National Newspapers. However only The Guardian and The Punch Newspapers published from June to July, 2023 were content analysed. The Purposive sampling technique was used to select the two national newspapers, because of their national spread, availability, regularity including balanced coverage of events, promotion of the National interests, editorial independence, critical reporting, accessibility, circulation and popular readership. A total of 122 editions were analyzed—61 from each newspaper—covering a 61-day period from June 1 to July 31, 2023. The data collection tool was a coding sheet, which was designed to capture various study variables such as the frequency, nature, length, and prominence of fuel subsidy removal reports. Content was categorized and coded as follows: straight news 1, editorial 2, opinion/column 3, feature 4, cartoon 5 and advert 6. The coding instrument underwent face, criterion, and content validity testing. Reliability was established through composite intercoder reliability testing, using the Krippendorff's Alpha formula (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011), resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.89 (89%).

3.2 Data Collection

This research relied on secondary data sources. Editions of The Guardian and The Punch newspapers were retrieved from the National Library in Yaba, Lagos.

Data extraction focused on publication dates, story categories and placements, story types, and frequency of coverage. Information was gathered directly from the hard copies of the newspapers.

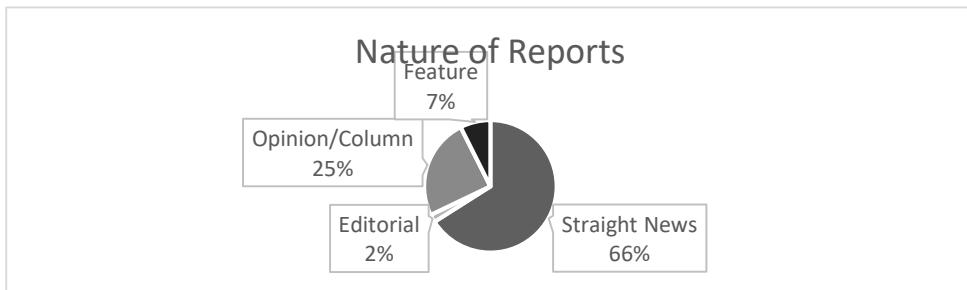
4. DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, with findings presented in frequency and percentage tables.

Research question 1: What is the nature of stories on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers?

Table No 03: Nature of Reports on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers. This is also represented in a pie chart below.

	The Guardian		The Punch		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Straight News	55	61.1	52	72.2	107	66
Editorial	2	2.2	1	1.4	3	1.9
Opinion/column	26	28.9	14	19.4	40	24.7
Feature	7	7.8	5	6.9	12	7.4
Cartoon	-	-	-	-	-	-
Advert	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	90	100	72	100	162	100

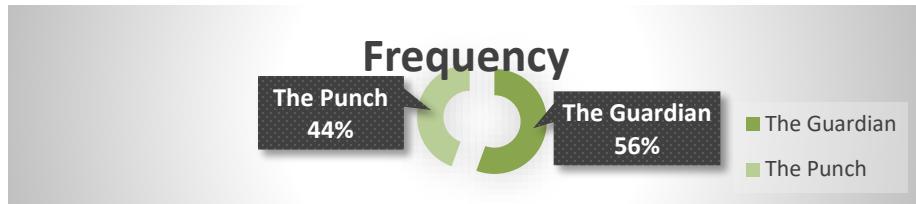


Research question 2: What is the frequency of Newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers?

Table No 04: Frequency of Newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch Newspapers. This is also represented in the pie chart below.

Newspaper	F	%
The Guardian	90	55.6
The Punch	72	44.4
Total	162	100

Table above shows the frequency of coverage on the fuel subsidy removal by The Guardian and The Punch newspapers is reflected in the number of times they addressed the topic. As illustrated in the table below, both newspapers reported extensively on the issue, publishing a total of 162 editorial items. The Guardian Newspaper reported the highest reports on fuel subsidy removal, a total 55.6 percent, while The Punch reported 44.4 percent.



Research question 3: What is the direction of the Newspaper reports on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers?

Table 5 shows that a larger percentage of the newspaper contents on fuel subsidy removal were negative which represent 47.5 percent of the total news items. 40.1 percent were positive while 12.4 percent were neutral in their reports.

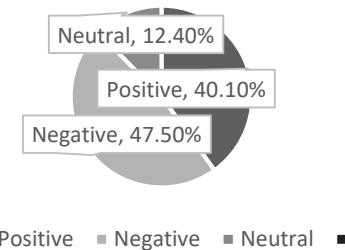
The tone of newspaper coverage on the fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch is illustrated below. This is also visually represented in the accompanying pie chart.

Table No 05: Direction of the Newspaper reports

	The Guardian		The Punch		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Positive	35	38.8	30	41.7	65	40.1
Negative	41	45.6	36	50	77	47.5
Neutral	14	15.6	6	8.3	20	12.4

Total	90	100	72	100	162	100
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Direction of Newspaper Reports



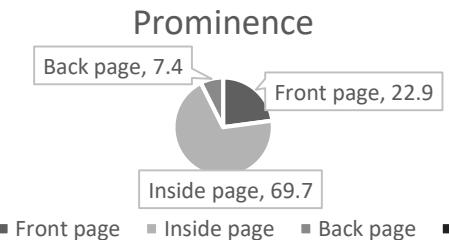
Research question 4: What is the level of prominence given to fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers?

Level of prominence given to fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers. This is also represented in the pie chart below:

Table No 06: Level of prominence

Size	The Guardian		The Punch		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Front page	11	12.2	26	36.1	37	22.9
Inside Page	73	81.1	40	55.6	111	69.7
Back page	6	6.7	6	8.3	12	7.4
Total	90	100	72	100	162	100

Table above reveals that fuel subsidy removal received high level of prominence. A total of 22.9 percent of news items made it to the front pages of The Guardian and The Punch Newspapers, 69.7 percent occupied the inside pages, while 7.4 percent made it to the back page.



Research question 5. What is the nature of the Newspapers' editorial contents on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers?

Nature of the Newspapers' editorial contents on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers.

Table No 07: Newspapers' editorial contents

Newspaper	F	%
The Guardian	2	66.7
The Punch	1	33.3
Total	3	100

This is represented in this pie chart.

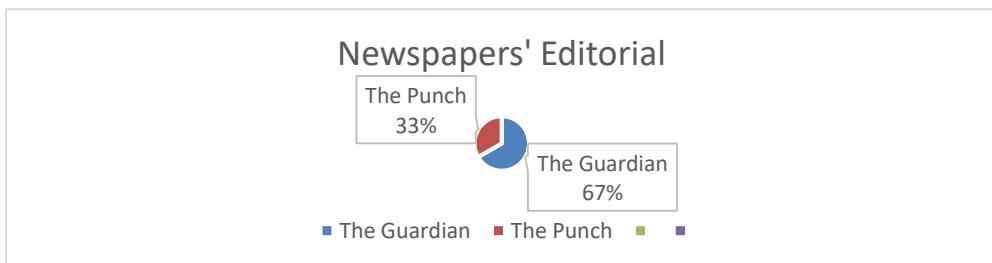


Table above reveals that editorials on Newspaper Reportage on fuel subsidy removal by The Guardian Newspaper is 66.7% while The Punch Newspaper recorded 33.3% of the total reportorial.

Research question 6. What is the size/length of Newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers?

Size/Length of Newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers. This is also represented in the pie chart below:

Table No 8: Size/Length of Newspaper reportage

Length	The Guardian		The Punch		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Full page	17	18.9	27	36.5	43	26.5
Half page	35	38.9	15	20.3	50	30.9
Quarter page	14	15.5	10	13.5	24	14.8

Other sizes	24	26.7	22	29.7	45	27.8
Total	90	100	74	100	162	100

Size/Length

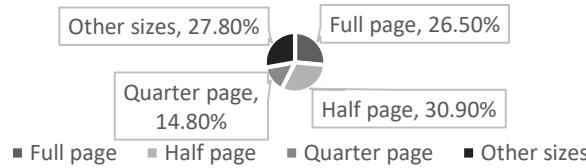


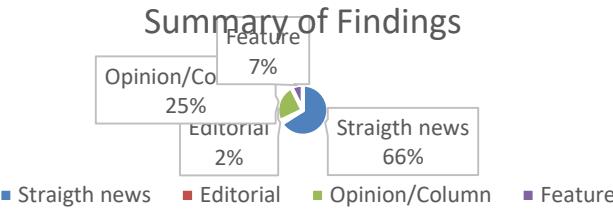
Table above shows that the newspapers placed the fuel subsidy removal reportage majorly on half pages as it represents 30.9 percent, followed by full pages which represents 26.5 percent, other sizes (sizes that are not full, half or quarter pages) is 27.8 percent. Full pages and quarter pages had 26.5 and 14.8 percent respectively 36.5 percent of news items on the full pages were effected by The Punch while The Guardian had more of its reports on half pages at 20.3 percent.

Summary of the Findings

The results revealed the following major findings:

Content categories	The Guardian				The Punch				Category Total	Percentage
	P	Ne	Nu	T	P	Ne	Nu	T		
Straight news	25	23	7	55	21	28	3	52	107	66
Editorial	1	1	-	2	-	1	-	1	3	1.9
Opinion/Column	6	13	7	26	8	6	1	14	40	24.7
Feature	1	4	2	7	3	1	1	5	12	7.4
Cartoon	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Advert	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	33	41	16	90	32	36	4	72	162	100

Legend: P – Positive N – Negative N – Neutral T – Total



The result shows that Straight News which is the first reportorial category on the table, contributed more than the other five categories combined, in reporting stories on fuel subsidy removal. Newspapers Reportage on Fuel subsidy removal had a total of 162 reports. The Guardian led with 90 mentions while The Punch had 72 mentions. There is no significant difference with regards to page placement of newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal by the two papers; The Guardian and The Punch placed majority of their reports in the inside pages. The newspapers' reports on fuel subsidy removal are negative which represent 47.5% of the total news mention. Fuel subsidy removal received negative editorials by The Guardian and The Punch Newspapers. There was no significant difference in the length of the reports allotted to fuel subsidy removal by the Newspapers.

5. DISCUSSION

This part of the study was done in order to relate the research objectives with the findings from the analysis.

Research objective 1: To investigate the nature of stories on Newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers. The findings reveal that Straight News which is the first reportorial category on table 7, contributed more than the other five categories combined, in reporting stories on fuel subsidy removal, while straight news reports led the rest with 106 reports out of 162, opinion/column took a distant second position with 42 reports. Feature and editorial had 10 and three respectively. Similarly, the result of the nature of stories on the Press Reportage of 2012 Fuel Subsidy Removal Crisis in Nigeria by Odesanya and Abubakar (2013) showed straight news recorded the highest contents of 2,022.

Research objective 2: To examine the frequency of Newspaper reportage of fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers. The frequency of Newspapers Reportage of fuel subsidy removal was high with 162 editorial items, compared to the report by Ezeah (2016), which recorded high frequency on the study: Fuel Subsidy Removal Strike in Nigeria: A study of Selected National Newspaper Reports.

Research objective 3: To establish the direction of the Newspapers in their different presentations on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers. The research revealed that The Guardian and The Punch Newspaper reports on fuel subsidy removal were negative. This result corroborates the result of Odesanya and Abubarkar (2013) on the direction of newspapers' contents on the Press Reportage of 2012 Fuel Subsidy Removal Crisis in Nigeria, which results were utterly unfavourable.

Research objective 4: To determine the prominence given to fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers. There is a significant difference with regards to page placement of newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal by the two papers. The Guardian reports was mostly placed in the inside pages with about 81.1%. Equally, The Punch also placed 55.6% of its reports in its inside pages. It is clearly indicated that The Guardian had only 12.2% of its reports placed on front pages, while The Punch had up to 36.1% on front pages, which signifies a lot in terms of print media placement allocation or prominence. Odesanya and Abubakar (2013), examined the degree of prominence given Press Reportage of 2012 Fuel subsidy removal crisis in Nigeria. The study revealed that, 2,030 and 2,150 news items made the inside pages of the Vanguard and The Punch newspapers which justifies the prominence accorded to the crisis by the press.

Research objective 5: To ascertain the nature of the Newspapers' editorial contents on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers. The research findings show that Editorials on Newspaper Reportage of Fuel subsidy removal The Guardian Newspaper is 66.6% while 33.3% for The Punch Newspaper. While the result of the research by Ezeah (2016), who also investigated the direction of Newspapers' editorial contents on Fuel Subsidy Removal Strike in Nigeria: A study of Selected National Newspaper Reports, 28.6% of the editorial was covered by Daily Sun, 50% was covered by The Punch while 21.4% was reported by Daily Trust.

Research objective 6: To explore the size/length of Newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal in The Guardian and The Punch newspapers. Analysis of the size/length of Newspaper reportage on fuel subsidy removal reveals that more news reports were published on half page, which represents 30.9% of the total newspaper reports. While most of the stories on fuel subsidy removal were published either on other sizes, full pages or quarter pages by The Newspapers. However, it is a clear indication that, there was no significant difference in the length of the reports allotted to the issue by the Newspapers.

6. CONCLUSION

After a thorough examination of the newspapers' reports on fuel subsidy removal, as analysed above, it is safe to conclude that there was high editorial focus on the issue by the two newspapers. The two newspapers also gave considerable prominence to the issue. This conclusion is derived from a significant number of stories that occupied the front and other important pages of the two newspapers. The direction of newspaper stories of the two newspapers was negative. The researchers noticed this through in-depth reading of the manifest contents of the two newspapers.

6.1 Recommendations

Newspapers should be more decisive in taking positions on all issues affecting the people. More than reporting public opinion, newspapers should contribute their opinion(s) as stakeholders in the affairs of the nation. There should be measures put in place by government to prioritize the interest of the citizenry. The social welfare measures options such as purchase of government owned buses to reduce the difficulties the citizens with transportation should be considered by government. Research is recommended to assist government in decision making to avoid treading on the wrong side of public opinion and general expectatio

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