

Public Perception of Broadcast Coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission in the Conduct of the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in Adamawa State

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Abstract

This study assesses public perception of broadcast media coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) during the 2023 gubernatorial election in Adamawa State, Nigeria. Employing a survey research design, data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to a sample size of 400 respondents, drawn from a population of 2,196,566. Perception theory served as the theoretical framework, offering insights into how the public interprets and evaluates media content. The findings reveal that 69% of respondents identified talk shows as the most prominent form of broadcast programming used in the coverage, followed by political music jingles. Additionally, the public perceived broadcast media to have employed mild and non-inciting frames and to have maintained objectivity in their reportage of INEC's conduct during the election. The study concludes that public perception of broadcast coverage was largely favorable, attributing this to the media's professional and impartial approach, which in turn fostered public trust. It recommends that broadcast media continue to employ balanced and non-provocative frames when reporting on electoral matters. Furthermore, the government is urged to implement policies that ensure media security,

particularly during the coverage of sensitive electoral processes, to sustain positive public engagement and trust.

Keywords: Broadcast Coverage; Election; Public Perception; INEC; Media Objectivity

INTRODUCTION

Election is the heartbeat of democratic setting and is the most ubiquitous of contemporary political activity used to bring about the emergence of new leaders in any typical democratic setting. According to Mossawir, (2017), election is seen as the process of choosing people for particular jobs by voting. This emphasizes direct participation of voters in election, each voter goes to the poll and records a vote in favour of one candidate or another, the candidate with the maximum number of votes is declared elected (Rose, 2017). This method is said to be the most popular and is used in all democratic countries.

However, election became imperative as a result of development of the idea of representative democracy due to the impossibility of direct representation in the modern society. In essence, elections play an important role in the life of a nation. It is one of the essential ways by which citizens choose their leaders and by so doing contribute meaningfully to the identification of the kind of development they would like to see (Albert, 2023). Thus, elections are significant because they confer legitimacy to leaders when elections are democratically conducted, but generate legitimacy crises when persons that are not the true choice of the people are foisted on them (Nwolise, 2022).

Elections are considered genuine and democratic if the voters are freely allowed to vote for their leaders in a safe and free environment devoid of violence, rancor, intimidation, manipulation or subversion of the process. (Sule, Azizuddin & Mat, 2018). The 2023 general election, the seventh in the series of National Elections conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) since Nigerian's return to electoral democracy in 1999, marked a watershed in the history of the conduct of elections in the country being an elections that was expected to be credible and transparent going by lots of promises made by INEC and the huge amount of money budgeted for the election. The public expects the electoral commission to improve on the eroded gains made in the past few years in Nigeria's path to achieving true democracy through credible controversy-

free elections. One of the major ways to win public trust in electoral processes is through transparent, balanced and effective media coverage of electoral activities

Media reportage on election in Nigeria in the recent democratic dispensations has been embroiled in many mishaps and anomalies ranging from lopsided coverage by the media in favour of stations/candidates they are affiliated with, open vilification of opponents on the media, stiff and unhealthy competition, and preferential treatment among others. This has consequently made the general public to perceive the media to be biased in political coverage and reporting of electoral activities.

A clear example was evidently seen during the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in Adamawa state when the gubernatorial candidate for the All Progressive Congress Sen. Aishatu Binani flouted the rules governing announcement of election and colluded with INEC officials and some media outfit to declare her winner of the election without following due process, although, her declaration was later nullified and the Resident Electoral Commissioner arrested for further investigation but the situation has raised tensions in the state as it was a front burner on national dailies as well as being a topic issue for most broadcast outfits in the country as many were already alluding the candidate as the first female governor in Nigeria. On the part of election observers, they were duly accredited and were also allowed to watch the distribution of election materials, conduct of the voting, sorting and counting of ballots and announcement of results. The rules guiding the election observation were highlighted by the Electoral body and that contributed to the success recorded in the 2023 governorship elections. Be that as it may, the conduct of the election and its concomitant outcome elicited outrage from the electorates thereby raising both questions and concerns on the perception of the audience towards the exercise as reported by the media particularly broadcast media which provided live coverage. It's against this background that the study evaluated public perception of Broadcast Coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission in the Conduct of the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in Adamawa State.

Statement of the Problem

The process of election conduct in Nigeria has never been easy in the political history of the country, as with most African democracies, Nigerian election is no different, mired with enduring challenges in a bid to conduct satisfactory elections as a result of so many elements, the security attached to the safety of election often times is usually

compromised and this is due to favoritism, fear and injustice (Raphael, 2009). The electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) seemed entrapped in a vicious circle of recurrent elections accusations in virtually every election in Nigeria. The Electoral body generally is saddled with the responsibilities of coordinating interaction of constitutional, legal, institutional rules and organizational practices that determine the basic rules for election procedures and electoral competitions (Musa, 2021).

Owing to the perceived biased in media reportage of electoral activities by the members of the public, electoral reports from most media stations are taken with a pinch of salt as most public stations are often perceived to be government oriented whereas private organisations are always seen to be affiliated to the proprietor's interest. Suffice to say that different nuances abound on the perception of the public on media coverage of electoral activities by the INEC in Nigeria. In addition to the aforementioned, not many empirical researches have been undertaken on the phenomenon of election fraud, irregularities, malpractices and the public perception in relation to INEC's reputation. Thus, the phenomenon of non-challant behaviours of some INEC officials has continued to reduce the public confidence of the electoral empire. Consequently, data on the subject is relatively scarce. So also, literature is building on audience perception towards media coverage of INEC in most particularly the northern part of Nigeria is also weak. Therefore, this study examined critically and analytically the Public Perception of Broadcast Coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission in the Conduct of the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in Adamawa State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the public perception of broadcast coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) performance and quality of elections conducted in the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election. However, the specific Objectives of this study are to:

1. determine the public perception on the various forms of broadcast messages used in coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election.
2. ascertain the perception of the public towards the frames used by broadcast media in the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election.

3. determine whether the public perceive public broadcast messages on INEC were reported professionally during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election.

Review of Concepts

Major concepts in the study have been reviewed to strengthen the contextual base of the study.

Public Perception

Public perception refers to the collective beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and feelings of the public, specifically registered voters in Adamawa State, regarding the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and its role in the 2023 Gubernatorial Election. This concept encompasses both cognitive and emotional responses to INEC's conduct of the election. The social phenomenon known as *public perception* can be seen as the difference between an absolute truth based on facts and a virtual truth shaped by popular opinion, media coverage and/or reputation. Celebrities, politicians and corporations all face the same scrutiny by the public they serve, and it can be very difficult to overcome a negative perception by the public. While individual companies may strive to do the right things for the right reasons, how the public views the industry as a whole can make those things much more challenging to put into motion. (Michael, 2023)

Public perception is not necessarily inaccurate or based on something other than the truth. The public at large can often receive enough factual information in order to form a general opinion about a public figure, celebrity or industry without relying on innuendo or unfounded rumors. There can be instances, however, when the perception of a situation is affected by other issues, such as cultural bias or prejudice. A defendant accused of a heinous criminal act may or may not be guilty of the actual crime, but perception of that type of crime can be difficult for a jury to ignore while deliberating (Samuel, 2022).

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

INEC is the electoral management body responsible for organising and overseeing elections in Nigeria. It plays a crucial role in the electoral process, including voter registration, candidate nomination, conducting elections, and announcing results. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the electoral body that is saddled with the responsibility of election conduct in Nigeria according to Nigerian 1999

Constitution and the Electoral Act 2010. It was established shortly before the final transition to civilian rule in 1998 to replace the previous electoral bodies that were scrapped by the military during their sojourn into power. The Nigerian Military on 5th August 1998 established the INEC under Decree No.17 (Suleet al.2017). The INEC is empowered by Section 225 Sub-Sections 1-6 and Section 226 Sub- Sections 1-3 of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution to monitor and supervise all electoral processes and activities in Nigeria. Besides, the Electoral Act 2010 provides in Section 88-92 that INEC has the powers to register political parties, deregister them, monitor their activities including financial such as sources of income, expenditure, maximum campaign spending limit, audit their financial books and sanction violators of regulations accordingly.

The INEC is headed by the chief executive who is the Chairman of the organisation, appointed by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as approved by the National Assembly. He is subordinated by twelve (12) National Commissioners with two (2) each drawn from the six geo-political zones of the Northeast, North-central, Northwest, Southeast, South-south and Southwest. The organisation is divided into seven Departments as follows: Personnel Department, Finance and Audit Department, Political Party Monitoring Department, Works and Housing Department, Information and Publicity Department, Legal Unit Department and Operations and Logistics Department. The body is supervised by the members of Governing Board appointed directly by the President (Sule et al., 2017).

Literature Review

Related literatures were reviewed to provide nuanced perspectives and insights on the topic under research

Public Perception on forms of Broadcast Messages used in Coverage of INEC's Conduct of 2023 General Election

The role of broadcast media in shaping public perception during electoral processes has been widely acknowledged in communication and political science literature. Broadcast messages, particularly those disseminated by state bodies like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), significantly influence public trust, behaviour, and understanding of election processes (Ojo, 2022). The 2023 Adamawa gubernatorial election provides a rich case for analyzing how broadcast messages were employed in shaping

perceptions of INEC's conduct. Public perception of electoral integrity is a critical determinant of the legitimacy of election results. Research has shown that media plays an essential role in influencing public trust in electoral institutions (Norris & Kern, 2019). In Nigeria, broadcast messages serve as the primary source of information for many voters, particularly in rural and underserved regions (Okoye, 2021). The information delivered through radio, television, and, increasingly, social media platforms can help mitigate or amplify perceptions of electoral fairness, transparency, and effectiveness (Nwabueze, 2023).

Studies indicate that during elections, the content and framing of broadcast messages can either foster confidence in the electoral process or reinforce skepticism and distrust. For example, when broadcast media highlight procedural transparency and institutional integrity, they can enhance trust in electoral bodies (Tella, 2022). Conversely, negative framing or the omission of key information can lead to perceptions of bias, manipulation, or incompetence (Ogunyemi, 2022). This dynamic was especially relevant in the 2023 Adamawa gubernatorial election, where broadcast media became a battleground for competing narratives.

Public Perception on the Frames used by Broadcast Media in the Coverage of INEC's Conduct of the 2023 General Elections

The role of media in elections is well-established as a critical factor in shaping public opinion, influencing voter behaviour, and constructing narratives around the legitimacy of electoral processes. In particular, the framing of election coverage by broadcast media plays a central role in shaping how the public perceives electoral institutions, such as Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Media frames, or the ways in which news stories are organized and presented, influence the salience of particular issues and can either bolster or erode public trust in electoral processes (Entman, 1993). This literature review explores the public's perception of the frames used by broadcast media in covering INEC's conduct of the 2023 general elections, with a focus on how these frames influenced attitudes toward electoral integrity, transparency, and fairness.

Media framing theory, initially popularized by Erving Goffman (1974) and later expanded by Robert Entman (1993), suggests that the media do not merely reflect reality but actively construct it through framing, emphasizing certain aspects of reality while

downplaying others. Framing in electoral coverage typically involves selecting certain words, themes, images, and angles that shape how the audience interprets the events in question (Iyengar, 1991). According to Pan and Kosicki (1993), the way issues are framed in the media can significantly affect public attitudes, political participation, and trust in institutions.

In the case of the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, broadcast media framing of INEC's conduct was crucial for shaping the public's perception of the Commission's performance and the legitimacy of the electoral process. The frames used in election coverage, whether focusing on procedural transparency, electoral irregularities, or political disputes, had significant implications for how citizens assessed the fairness of the election and the credibility of INEC (Oluwole & Adebayo, 2023). One dominant frame in the media coverage of INEC's conduct during the 2023 elections was the emphasis on transparency and procedural integrity. Many broadcasts, particularly from state-controlled media, highlighted the technological advancements employed by INEC, such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the IReV (Result Viewing Portal) as evidence of a commitment to transparency and reducing electoral fraud (Ojo, 2022). Positive frames focused on these innovations as a means of ensuring free and fair elections, reinforcing the public perception that INEC was actively working to enhance electoral credibility. For example, national TV stations, such as the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), frequently broadcasted updates on BVAS usage and the real-time uploading of results to the IReV portal. There also negative frames which amplified the differences and even war of words between political parties and candidates which subsequently divided the electorates across many factions.

Theoretical framework

Perception theory was found to dovetail with the focus of the study and was therefore used as the theoretical framework.

Perception Theory

The perception theory was propounded in 1964 by G.A Steiner and Berelson. They (Steiner and Berelson, 1964) defines perception as a "complex process by which people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world" perception can be influenced by an individual past experience, societal and

family values, either way, stimuli are sensed differently by people. Perception can be influenced in two different ways: structural and functional. Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008) structural influence refers to how sensory stimuli are perceived physically. As the name states, it is coordinated and usually structured. Functional influence is based on personal conviction (which is in most cases subjective), and in all cases deals with psychological factors that affect our perception. These two influences on perception (structural and functional) are related in the sense that the structural influence poses as a platform for functional influence.

There is tendency for individual to have a varying perception based on circumstances encountered, environment, sex, and lifestyle and so on. This tendency is termed *selective perception*. For this reason, messages are not interpreted in the same manner by individuals. This theory clearly demonstrates how the public get influence; hence, its suitability as a theoretical framework for this study is apt. In the context of the current study, members of the public have varying perception on the media coverage of INEC's conduct of 2023 General election in particularly Adamawa State where media announcement of gubernatorial election sparked tension and agitations.

METHODS

This study adopted quantitative method of research design. Survey research method was adopted for this study using a questionnaire to solicit responses from a cross-section of a group of people where data was retrieved; this design was appropriate because the focus of this study. This design therefore, helped the researcher to sample the public perception of broadcast coverage of the independent national electoral commission INEC in the conduct of the 2023 gubernatorial election in Adamawa State. The population of this study was the total number of registered voters in Adamawa State as at the time of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election. Adamawa State has the total of 2,196, 566 number of registered voters as at 2023 according to the Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC) therefore, the population of this study shall be 2, 196, 566 registered voters (INEC, 2023).

The sample of this research is calculated by using Taro Yamane (Yamane, 1967) formula with a 95% confidence level and 0.5 margin error to avoid sampling error. The calculation formula of Taro Yamane is presented as follows.

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

Where :

n= sample size required

N = number of people in the population

e = allowable error (%)

Substitute numbers in the formula:

$$n = \frac{2,196,566}{(1 + 2,196,566 (0.05)^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{2,196,566}{(1 + 2,196,566 (0.0025))}$$

$$n = \frac{2,196,566}{(1 + 1.25)}$$

$$n = \frac{2,196,566}{2.25}$$

$$\frac{2,196,566}{(1 + 2,196,566 (0.05)^2)}$$

$$n = 398.22$$

$$n = 400$$

The researcher administered 400 copies of the instrument to respondents, which only 398 copies were completed and returned useable.

RESULTS

Table 1: Showing Talk show as one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in covering the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, to a very high extent	70	17.6%
Yes, to a moderate extent	269	67.6%
Yes, to a low extent	59	14.8%
Total	398	100 %

Data on table 1 above shows Talk show as one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in covering the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of

the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election. The implication of the data is that Yes, to a moderate extent, talk show was one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in covering the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election as shown by 269 respondents representing (67.6%) of the entire respondents.

Table 2 Showing Political advertisement as one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in the coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, to a very high extent	97	24.3%
Yes, to a moderate extent	112	28.2%
Yes, to a low extent	189	47.5%
Total	398	100 %
Responses	Frequency	Percentage

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data on table 2 above shows Political advertisement as one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in the coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election. The implication of the data is that Yes, to a low extent, Political advertisement was one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in the coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election as shown by 189 respondents representing (47.5%) of the entire respondents.

Table 3 Showing Musical/jingle as one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, to a very high extent	102	25.7%
Yes, to a moderate extent	236	59.2%
Yes, to a low extent	60	15.1%
Total	398	100 %
Responses	Frequency	Percentage

Data on table 3 above shows Musical/jingle as one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in the coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission's

(INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election. The implication of the data is that Yes, to a moderate extent, Musical/jingle was one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in the coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election as shown by 236 respondents representing (59.2%) of the entire respondents

Table 4 Showing how Inciting frames were used by broadcast media for the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	37	9.2%
Agree	59	14.8%
Neutral	231	58.0%
Disagree	25	6.2%
Strongly Disagree	46	11.5%
Total	398	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data on table 4 above shows how Inciting frames were used by broadcast media for the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election. The implication of the data is that majority of respondents Neutral on Inciting frames were used by broadcast media for the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election as shown by 231 respondents representing (58.0%) of the entire respondents.

Table 5 Showing how Mild frames were used by broadcast media for the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	56	14.0%
Agree	299	75.1%
Neutral	20	5.0%
Disagree	12	3.1%
Strongly Disagree	11	2.8%
Total	398	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data on table 5 above shows how Mild frames were used by broadcast media for the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election. The implication of the data is that majority of respondents agreed that Mild frames were used by broadcast media for the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election as shown by 299 respondents representing (75.1%) of the entire respondents.

Table 6 Showing how the broadcast messages on INEC were given unbiased coverage during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	28	7.0%
Agree	295	74.1%
Strongly Disagree	14	3.5%
Disagree	18	4.5%
Neutral	43	10.9%
Total	398	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data on table 6 above shows how the broadcast messages on INEC were given unbiased coverage during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election. The implication of the data is that the majority of respondents agreed that the broadcast messages on INEC were given unbiased coverage during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election as shown by 295 respondents representing (74.1%) of the entire respondents.

Showing how the broadcast messages on INEC were given professional coverage during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	40	10.0%
Agree	256	64.3%
Strongly Disagree	48	12.0%
Disagree	32	8.1%
Neutral	22	5.5%
Total	398	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data on table 7 above shows how the broadcast messages on INEC were given professional coverage during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election. The implication

of the data is that the majority of respondents agreed that how the broadcast messages on INEC were given professional coverage during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election as shown by 256 respondents representing (64.3%) of the entire respondents.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study were analysed and discussed thematically in line with the research questions to satisfy the objectives of the study.

What is the public perception on the various forms of broadcast messages used in coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election?

This research question sought to identify the perception of the public on the various forms of broadcast messages used in coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election. Findings from the study revealed that talk show was one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in covering the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election as shown by 269 respondents representing (67.6%) of the entire respondents. In addition, to a low extent, Political advertisement was one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in the coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election as shown by 189 respondents representing (47.5%) of the entire respondents. Also, to a moderate extent, Musical/jingle was one of the forms of Broadcast messages used in the coverage of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial election as shown by 236 respondents representing (59.2%) of the entire respondents. An analysis of the perception of the public on the various forms of broadcast messages used in the coverage of the activities of INEC revealed that talk show was the leading form of broadcast programmes used in the coverage of the INEC's conduct of 2023 gubernatorial election in Adamawa state followed by political music jingles.

This is in tandem with the findings of Asemah et al.(2018) and Soala(2009) who both stated that news Programs and Talk Shows have been identified as critical formats in disseminating information about electoral processes and fostering public dialogue carried out by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In the same vein,

Prasad(2009) Kaul(2011) also added that programs that merge entertainment with education effectively raise awareness about electoral participation while addressing literacy and cultural barriers. Broadcast programs during Nigeria's general elections, including the 2023 election, were strategically tailored to educate, inform, and engage the public about the electoral process. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in collaboration with media houses, used diverse broadcast formats to enhance transparency, ensure public participation, and foster electoral integrity.

Similarly, Aina (2023) added that news programs were a primary medium for disseminating timely information about INEC's preparations, the voting process, and results collation. Major broadcast stations, such as Channels Television and NTA, provided hourly updates and featured comprehensive electoral news to keep the public informed. In addition to that, election debates were also aired on television and radio stations, providing platforms for candidates to present their manifestos while promoting informed decision-making among voters.

What is the perception of the public towards the frames used by broadcast media in the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election?

The research question here aimed at ascertaining the perception of the public towards the frames used by broadcast media in the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election. The study found out that majority of respondents affirmed Neutrality on Inciting frames being used by broadcast media for the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election as shown by 231 respondents representing (58.0%) of the entire respondents. Furthermore, majority of respondents agreed that Mild frames were used by broadcast media for the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election as shown by 299 respondents representing (75.1%) of the entire respondents. Also, majority of respondents agreed that Objective frames were used by broadcast media for the coverage of Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) conduct of the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election as shown by 279 respondents representing (70.1%) of the entire respondents. It is apposite to say that the public perceived broadcast media to have used mild frames void of inciting frames and

were also objective in their reportage of the conduct of 2023 gubernatorial election by the INEC in Adamawa state as evidenced from the findings of this study.

The findings of the current study contrast with the studies of Adebajo & Oladipo (2023) who stated that conflict frame was the dominant approach, particularly in analyzing the controversial supplementary election in Adamawa State. Media narratives frequently highlighted tensions between political parties, alleged irregularities, and challenges within INEC, emphasizing conflict over collaboration. This frame often aimed to attract public attention by sensationalizing disputes, which, while engaging, may have heightened perceptions of electoral instability. Broadcast media underscored the role of INEC in ensuring transparent and credible elections. Coverage frequently questioned the integrity of officials and the efficacy of processes, especially in response to allegations of malpractices. This frame resonated with public demands for accountability but also led to divided opinions on whether INEC fulfilled its mandate effectively.

Other studies on public responses revealed mixed reactions to the frames utilized by the media in reporting 2023 General Elections (Nwosu, 2023; Okoro & Onyekachi, 2023). For instance, the conflict frame was often perceived negatively, with some audiences arguing it amplified partisan divisions and undermined the legitimacy of the election process. Conversely, the accountability frame received more favourable feedback for aligning with public expectations for transparency and fairness. Positive framing of INEC's reforms and innovations, such as the deployment of the BVAS system, was linked to improved perceptions of the institution. However, negative coverage focusing on administrative lapses had the opposite effect, reinforcing skepticism among voters.

What is the perception of the public towards broadcast messages on INEC were reported professionally during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election?

This research question sought to determine whether the public perceived the broadcast messages on INEC were reported professionally during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election. Findings from the study revealed that majority of respondents agreed that the broadcast messages on INEC were given unbiased coverage during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election as shown by 295 respondents representing (74.1%) of the entire respondents. Additionally, majority of respondents agreed that how the broadcast messages on INEC were given professional coverage during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election as shown by 256 respondents representing (64.3%) of the entire

respondents. More so, majority of respondents disagreed that the broadcast messages on INEC were given adequate coverage during the 2023 Adamawa Governorship election as shown by 199 respondents representing (50.0%) of the entire respondents. This apparently shows that the public perceive the broadcast messages on INEC's conduct of 2023 gubernatorial election in Adamawa state to be primarily unbiased, professional and adequate in given time and coverage to all parties involved as seen in the findings of the study.

In line with the findings of the study, Adeyanju et al (2023) stated that public trust in broadcast reporting during the 2023 elections was influenced by perceived professionalism, with delays and inconsistent reporting cited as challenges. The interaction between broadcast media and social media narratives created contrasting perspectives, as traditional media emphasized credibility, while social media amplified criticism. Professionally crafted messages in broadcast media enhanced confidence in electoral processes, although rural audiences depended heavily on traditional channels most especially the radio to satisfy their informational needs. The 2023 elections marked significant progress in political inclusivity. For the first time, smaller parties gained representation in the National Assembly as projected by the mass media most particularly broadcast, thereby challenging the dominance of traditional political powers. This shift was perceived as a step toward a more representative democracy, despite lingering dissatisfaction among segments of the population.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the study concludes that public perception of broadcast media coverage of 2023 gubernatorial election by INEC in Adamawa state is favourable owing to their professional and objective coverage of the election. This has consequently made the members of the public to repose their trust on the broadcast media's coverage of the electoral umpire's activities. Although, some of the audience may not be happy with the outcome of the election, but the live and balanced coverage given to the election by broadcast media stations pacified the audience as they were able to see for themselves the culmination of activities that terminated at the announcement of the election results. The pictures and videos members of the public saw for themselves on most particularly television were instrumental in eliciting positive perception towards

broadcast media coverage of INEC's activities. This buttresses the saying that a picture is worth more than a thousand words. Having the leverage to see both visuals and hear real time sounds are key features that make broadcast media reporting unique and believable. This behooves that media reportage should be prioritized by the INEC in carrying out all their activities in order to earn the trust of the public.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were given;

1. Prime time should be given by the broadcast media to news on INEC's activities during election period to promote public perception on electoral activities and processes.
2. The broadcast media should maintain the use of mild and objectives frames in reporting electoral issues among other reports to avoid inciting the public.
3. There should be continuous training of professional journalists on election reporting.

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