Towards a violence-free 2023 General Election: A survey of public adherence to social and conventional media sensitisations agenda

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Abstract
Considering the incongruent relationship between the volume of political messages against election violence and the alarming growing cases of election violence reported in the media at every past election in Nigeria, this study embarked on examining the gap. The proliferation of various mass media outlets and stations including social and online media, which is expected to enhance political sensitisation and literacy yields inconsequential expectation. It is on this bases that this study sampled the opinions of the media recipients, using survey design to establish the influence of the media messages/campaigns against election violence on their patterns of participation in the 2023 general election. Abuja was considered the representation of Nigeria and as such a sample of 400 was considered, using Taro Yamane sample size formula. The sample size was evenly distributed among the four local government areas selected and copies of the questionnaire were administered on them. Discussion of findings were related to media agenda-setting and framing theoretical influences. The findings confirmed the assumptions that the exposure and consumption of the media messages/campaigns against election violence during 2023 general election are in significant proportions. However, the inconsequential influence rate of the media messages was not found significantly attributable to the potency of the message as the respondents disclaimed, but perhaps to other intervening variables, which fall out of the focus of this study. It is thereby recommended that the intervening variables be studied in further researches so that the degree of influence of the media campaigns against election violence on the electorates could be empirically justified.

Keywords: Election violence, framing, media agenda, political literacy, sensitisation campaign

Background to the Study

Over the years, it has been empirically documented that politics has been one of the agents of polarisation in Nigeria (Shenga & Pereira, 2019). The understudy of the dichotomies along ethnic, region and religious inclinations has depicted an inflamed rather than leveraged socio-political intolerance and rivalries. It is on this premise that issues of marginalisation, restructuring, power zoning, Muslim-Muslim ticket, Islamisation, and other political agitation concepts unceremoniously become sponsored media agenda, foisted on unwary Nigerians to fuel political violence.

It has also been theoretically deducted and historically observed in Nigeria and many neighbouring African countries how political violence has truncated many political transition processes and resulted to civil wars, civil unrest, military intervention, and or internal crises (Hussein & Sambo, 2020). Politically uninformed or ill-informed Nigerians are most often the vulnerable instruments that are used to precipitate and fuel political violence. The struggle to win electoral posts either as individuals or parties is becoming more tensed and highly competitive among politicians, who do not value democratic processes towards political transitions. The

competitiveness is towards meeting their political aspirations that are most often characterised by power ego, individualistic interest, oppression of the weak, perpetual financial colonisation of the common man so that they can always be susceptible to political violence, and foul play in favour of the financiers. These in many cases are displayed in form of ballot snatching, vote buying, political thuggery, disruption of the voting exercise, stealing voting materials, disruption of political campaigns and manifestos, breach of public peace, and political killings and maiming among others. Since those who are engaged to perpetrate these evils are the unwary minds among members of the public, the need for the media to disabuse their minds of the unceremonious acts fames the media essence (Adelakun, 2018a).

The mass media, which are originally conceived as the fourth estate of the realm due to their watch-dog roles on the politicians and political office holders are becoming political agents in structure, political allies in formation, and political mouth-piece in roles. The mass media are becoming more responsible to the political gladiators, who have extensively taken up the ownership structure of the media industry. Rather than being socially responsible to the truth, objectivity, dignity of the profession, and sanctity of the media voice, most journalists are answerable to the political philosophy of the media proprietors. The hard-earned credibility of the mass media, which compels and commands public trust, respect, and adherence to media warnings and public announcements from the media which is a significant instrument that the mass media use to advise, mobilise, and sensitise members of the public on issues of public interest and trust is slipping away.

The mass media as the trustees of public trust had much influence on the political transitions until after the 1993 general election and the post-annulment agitations. Empirical evidences abound on how political sensitisation messages from the media influenced the public disposition to politics, and the dispassionate attitude of the youth to political violence (Saleh, Yahaya & Mukhtar, 2023). In 1992, towards the preparation for the June 12, 1993 general election, the agenda of the mainstream media was to sensitise the members of the public towards a violent-free election. Sensitisation campaigns were all over the media in different local languages and dialects to ensure that the messages penetrated and reached the target media audiences. The sensitisation campaigns were also made interesting in forms of short dramas, public announcement warnings, short narrations, poems, documentaries and other artistic manners of media presentations to entice the audience interest and accrue importance to the messages. This was evidenced by the events that surrounded the pre and post 1993 general election as the election was adjudged the most peaceful and freest ever in the political history of Nigeria.

The broadcast media were noted for frequent public messages sensitising not only members of the public on the danger of engaging in electoral violence but also the politicians of the gains in allowing a free and fair election and the benefit of peaceful transition to democracy from the military shackle. Nigerian government considered the public sensitisation towards ensuring violent-free election a way of nurturing democracy and thereby partnered with the media and sponsored such sensitisation campaigns through some of its agencies such as National Orientation Agency (NOA), Mass Mobilisation for Self- Reliance, Zero Justice, and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), and others. The momentum of the social responsibility role of the media was kept until the proliferation of the mainstream media opened door for pure capitalism after which the public interests and national goods were fading on the priority of the media's social responsibility lists.

Election violence is highly detrimental to peaceful government transition and democratic process. Since it has been empirically established that the politically uninformed and the misinformed electorates as well the politicians across levels and parties are the principal actors in the election violence, the need for sensitisation and reorientation of the fallible, therefore, becomes inevitable. Previous electoral processes in Nigeria, including that of 2019, witnessed a lot of electoral violence

despite a plethora of media messages and campaign against such. Hence, the need to reassess the potency of the media messages/campaigns against election violence becomes imperative in readiness for 2023 general election.

Statement of the Problem

The historical trajectory of political violence (Chalfont, Soustelle, Podhoretz, Lowenthal, Will, & Elkins, 1980) has made a significant unfavourable influence on the promotion and sustenance of democratic processes in Africa. The trend has also questioned the social responsibilities and democratic roles of the media towards public sensitisation, peace promotion, and mobilisation towards political participation (Jinmi-Ahisu, 2021). Despite the proliferation of various mass media outlets and stations including social and online media, the expectation on the level of political sensitisation and literacy is not commensurable. Studies (Olowojolu, 2016; Opeibi, 2007; Tobechukwu, 2007; Okoro & Santas, 2017) have documented that media involvement in Nigerian politics, which is expected to be non-partisanship and apolitical has been suffering from media buying, threat, ownership hegemony, and media conglomerate syndrome. Could these be the reasons why media sensitisations of the public against violence-infested politics and politics of calumny are yielding inconsequential results? It is on this premise that this study engages in a longitudinal survey of the public adherence to media sensitisation messages/campaigns against election violence during 2023 general election. The correlation between the media sensitisation of the public against election violence and the level of adherence to this in 2023 general election is without mediating and moderating variables which influence the essence of the media sensitisations effort. Among such variables which form the central objectives of this study are to: (1) assess the level of public exposure to and awareness of media sensitisation campaigns against political violence; (2) dissect the media channel(s) that mostly engaged in sensitisation campaigns against political violence, (3) ascertain the efficiency in the frequency of the media exposure; (4) assess the public rating of the media sensitisation campaigns; and (5) examine the influence of the campaigns on public behaviours during and after 2023 election.

Literature Review

Mass Media as the gladiator of political awareness

Mass media play a pivotal role in shaping political awareness and influencing public opinion. Each of the various platforms of mass communication acts as a powerful intermediary between the government, political actors, and the general public. The media inform the citizens about local, foreign and global news affairs thus people tend to rely on the media as their major source of news, particularly news items within and outside their immediate environment. Based on information got from their local media, the masses create images, acquire knowledge, and form opinions about people, nations and their institutions. Therefore, the slants, language, manner and method in which the media significantly report events, issues, stories and politics in the world and especially in Nigeria have become a major topic for discussion among several researchers. Ibagere (2020), noted that the mass media have an important role to play in getting the people to be well acquainted with the political system. This emphasised the place of the mass media as an important component of modern society with the capacity to act as a gladiator of political awareness, either by improving public understanding of political issues or being controlled to serve specific objectives Thompson, Ebner, & Giddings (2017) also agreed that media messages play a crucial role in shaping public attitudes towards political leaders, parties, and policies that influence political behaviours and decision-making. The work found that the media's emphasis on certain issues significantly influence what the public perceives as important in the political space. This boils down to the saying that the language used in communication determines how it is portrayed.

Furthermore, the findings support the idea that the language used in communication has a significant impact on how information is presented and received. When the media emphasises specific subjects or themes, it naturally directs the public's attention to these focus points, influencing their perception of political issues. The selectiveness of media coverage not only impacts what people believe to be significant and important, but it also shapes their ideas, attitudes, and behaviours towards these topics. This situation highlights the media's important function as a gatekeeper in the sphere of political awareness as well as public orientation towards violence-free politics.

Mass media at the centre of political violence

Several studies (Hilary & Dumebi, 2021; Ibagere, 2020; Olowojolu, 2016) in Nigeria have underlined the influence of the media in escalating political violence. Sensational reporting, biased coverage, and the spread of hate speech have all been demonstrated to contribute to societal division and exacerbate disputes between various groups. In Iruonagbe, Imhonopi and Frederick, (2013), a conceptual review of the relationship between the mass media and political violence in Nigeria between 1999 and 2013 was examined. They discovered that certain media outlets, motivated by vested interests, prefer to present events in a way that fans the flames of violence during political crises. Hilary, & Dumebi, (2021) on the other hand agreed that the growth of unregulated social media platforms has accelerated the dissemination of disinformation, further fuelling tension and instability in the country. It can also be recalled that the emergence of social media platforms has had a significant influence on Nigeria's political environment. While these platforms have aided peaceful protests and citizen mobilisation, they have also been linked to the quick spread of hate speeches and incitement to violence. According to Soola (2011), the echo chambers formed by algorithmic suggestions on social media contribute to the establishment of divided and politicised online groups, resulting in a rise in politically motivated violence. More reasons why the mainstream media have a huge role to play in reducing political violence, however, ethical journalism, objective reporting, should be encouraged as they have the potential to overcome gaps and develop mutual understanding.

In addition to the aforementioned considerations, the mainstream media have a significant influence in moulding public opinion and political dialogue. Media outlets can serve as a bridge between disparate perspectives by adhering to the ideals of ethical journalism and objective reporting, encouraging an environment of informed conversation rather than divisive conflict. This position is becoming increasingly important in an era of quick media message dissemination, where sensationalism and bias can heighten political tensions. The media can help reduce political violence not only directly but also indirectly by encouraging a culture of critical thinking, empathy, and constructive civic engagement through factual, well-researched, and balanced reporting. By highlighting points of agreement and exposing the sources of disagreement, ethical journalism can be a powerful force for change (Adelakun, 2018b).

During elections, media campaigns are being used to distribute information, promote awareness, and encourage good social change. These campaigns especially in Nigeria aimed to address concerns such as election violence, hate speech, and provocation, among others. A study, (Madueke, Ogbonnaya, & Anumadu, 2017) have emphasised the relevance of media campaigns in encouraging peaceful political discourse and minimising the occurrence of violence during elections. Studies, (Cárdaba, Briñol, Brändle, & Ruiz-SanRomán, 2016; Meadow, 2009; Onabajo, 2020) have also documented that individuals who are constantly exposed to anti-violence media messages are more likely to adopt non-violent attitudes and behaviours; this shows that media efforts are important in influencing political culture and persuading individuals to engage in peaceful political involvement. As further discussed by Ashindorbe (2018), media messages advocating against political violence, can urge voters to participate in the election process and exercise their right to vote.

These efforts may motivate individuals to become active participants in civil society groups, thereby increasing democratic participation. Nonetheless, careful attention to the problems and constraints is required to ensure the long-term influence of these initiatives and to maintain a non-violent culture in politics.

Media effect theory and political violence control

The media's influence on political violence may be either expected or accidental. Recent studies exploring the application of media effect theories to the key variable of political violence has provided insight into the subtle ways in which media might exacerbate or ameliorate such conflicts. These studies have delved into the complexities of Agenda-Setting theory and Framing theory, offering insights on how media contents are framed to coagulate agenda on issues related to political violence, which invariably influence people's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours related towards violence-free elections. Since the effect of the media messages on the media audience is not pre-empt until such is manifested depending on factors such as the degree of need to be gratified with the media messages, and the rate of selective exposure from the audience's end, there are always moderating and mediating variables intervening in the degree of media influence on the audience in the analysis of every media effect theory (Jimin-Ahisu, 2001).

Agenda-Setting Theory: According to this theory, McCombs and Shaw (1972) hold that the media's selection of themes and focus on them influence the public's perception of the important concerns. Agbaje (2017) highlights how the media's choice of topics to spotlight can have a big impact on public opinion towards political violence. When the media prioritises reporting on violent episodes, it draws attention to the severity of the problem, potentially generating public outrage and demanding action from authorities. This, however, may unintentionally add to a climate of fear and uncertainty. Using this idea, researchers discovered that media outlets in Nigeria had the ability to alter public discourse on political violence. Ugwuanyi, Olijo and Verlumun (2019) proposed a strategic agenda-setting that favours peace-centric conversations. Media outlets can actively affect the public's perspective of the problem by dedicating media coverage to peace-building efforts, policy ideas targeted at conflict resolution, and stories of reconciliation. Furthermore, recent research (Nsude, Remilekun, & Etumnu, 2023) has emphasised how the broader societal context interacts with media agenda-setting. For instance, persistent socioeconomic gaps and political polarisation in Nigeria may enhance the influence of the media on public perception. The study added that media outlets frequently target particular political or ethnic audiences and reinforce pre-existing biases and polarise opinions on political violence. This shows that current societal dynamics are tightly entwined with the media's choice of stories to cover rather than being isolated.

Framing Theory: According to Koro (2018), the media may impact audience views by framing news in certain ways. For example, in Nigeria the framing of political violence by the media may either fuel political conflicts or facilitate reconciliation. The media may also motivate community action toward political violence management by presenting news events in a way that stresses the human cost of violence and the necessity of peace. Entman's (1993) research also serves as the foundation for framing theory, which emphasises how the media's presentation of news and election campaign messages can alter viewers' perception by framing events in particular ways. Recent studies (Adelakun, Aliede, Ambassador-Brikins, Enwerem. & Abutu, 2021; Ali & Hassan, 2022) have also shown how media framing postulations and larger societal issues are related. For instance, social media now play a bigger part in spreading information and influencing public opinions. Through algorithm-driven information delivery, social media platforms may unintentionally boost the polarised or sensationalised narratives, thereby potentially escalating confrontations. Thus, academics are expanding the use of framing theory in the digital sphere and researching how both conventional and social media play a role in influencing how the

general public views political violence and its potential solutions. The relevance of framing theory to this study could be more noticed in the level at which media outlets in Nigeria positively contribute to conflict resolution efforts by understanding the possible repercussions of media messages and the influence of the presentation approaches on the media consumers, whose media literacy insight is relatively low.

The Method

Survey design was adopted to sample the opinions of various audiences of media messages/campaigns against election violence in the 2023 general election. The survey was conducted between May and July, 2023 on the interval of three months to establish the changes in the public adherence to the media messages/campaigns against political violence The method was necessitated by the need to examine the influence of messages on public reactions as the election drew nearer. Studies (Rice, Winter, Doherty, & Milner, 2017; Shough & Yates, 2002) confirm the relevance of survey approach to opinion studies while substantiating why certain decisions were arrived at on issues that concern public reaction and what prompted such decisions. Another significant essence of survey design revolves round its empiricism, emanating from large data, which help in summarising major findings. When studying issues that concern large proportions of the population as in this study, survey method simplifies the access and assessment of the various perspectives of the information (Syed Alwi *et al*., 2021).

The population proportion of the audience of media messages/campaigns against political violence considered in this study cuts across the four local government areas (LGAs) in Abuja. Since all ethnic, regional, and religious characteristics are represented in the population of the residents of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria, the essence of drawing the population of this study from the FCT is justified and representative of the population of the country. Since there are variations in the media choice, political affiliation, tribe/ethnic group, and level of political awareness, the population of the study was all inclusive of all Nigerians of voting age within the sample local government areas of Abuja. The population of the registered voters in the sampled local governments in FCT according to the details released by INEC (2023) is 1,201,573. This population of the registered voters was considered as the population of the study since it both satisfies the conditions of the eligibility and characteristics of the media audience, and the likelihood of the minimum age of people that are likely to be enlisted in electoral violence. Using inclusion/exclusion strategy and approximation approach, the population of the study is delineated to all categories of media audiences.

The sample was drawn from the estimated population of the study as earlier discussed. Using Taro Yamane formula ($n = N/1+N\ (e)^2$), the sample proportion of the audience of the media messages/campaigns against political violence was calculated and approximated to 400 based on the study population. The audience of the media messages/campaigns against political violence under consideration cut across conventional and social media of information through which the campaigns were disseminated. A multi-layered sampling technique was adopted to ensure that an even proportion of respondents (100) was purposively drawn from the four randomly sampled LGAs.

Combination of open and close-ended questionnaire items were used to generate data from the sampled respondents. Data generated were analysed through Statistic Package for Social Sciences. Mean statistics were generated for the Likert scale analyses to establish the degree of acceptability or otherwise of the variables that address the research questions of the study.

The scope of this study is limited to Nigerians, who are of voting age within the randomly selected LGAs of Abuja. The opinions of the respondents sought were also limited to media messages/campaigns on electoral violence. The opinions of the respondents were not sought on any other form of media messages that are not related to or in connection with political violence. Since every ethnic, region, and geopolitical zone of Nigeria is

assumed represented in the research sample, the findings of the study are generalisable to any part of the country.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

The two sets of data generated were used to respond to the research questions earlier raised. The opinion sample poll was subjected to quantitative analysis to establish how the media audience perceive the media sensitisation messages/campaigns against election violence and of what influence such is in their involvement in the 2023 general election.

Demographic Distribution of the Respondents

Table 1: Demographic distributions of the respondents in relation to media preference

Variables	Most Preferred Media			
Local Government Area	Print Media	Broadcast Media	New Media	Total
Abuja Municipal L.G.A. (AMAC)	12	21	67	100
Gwagwalada L.G.A.	16	18	66	100
Bwari L.G.A.	5	34	61	100
Kuje L.G.A.	11	37	52	100
Total	**44**	**110**	**246**	**400**
Educational Attainment				
Informal education	0	23	1	24
Elementary School	0	45	8	53
Secondary School	6	36	48	90
Post-secondary Education	38	6	189	233
Total	**44**	**110**	**246**	**400**
Age Distributions				
18 – 38 Years	4	68	177	252
39 – 59 Years	21	44	55	136
60 Years & above	19	2	1	22
Total	**44**	**110**	**246**	**400**
Gender Distributions				
Male	32 (13.9%)	41	158	231
Female	12 (7.1%)	69	88	169
Total	**44**	**110**	**246**	**400**

- The percentages are across the total preference proportion within each construct of the demographic variables

The relationships of many of the demographic variables with media preference among members of the public in Nigeria as presented in the Table 1 justify the moderating influences of the demographic variables which studies have already documented (Adams, 2020; Adelakun & Oyebode, 2021; Adelakun, 2018b). The urbanisation factor, which most often is a determining factor of educational characteristic and literacy inference, is much reflected in the distributions of the respondents' media preferences across the sampled local government areas. Print media are slightly more preferred in local government areas that are considered highly urbanised such as Gwagwalada and AMAC than the others. The same highly urbanised local government areas are also leading in public preference for the new media. This although might have been influenced by the age distributions as a mediating variable, which is crowded with the youth age bracket, the specific degree of influence was not measured by this study.

The distributions of media preference across different age categories do not deviate from the norms. Respondents with informal education or those with low literacy rate are not usually the fans of print media. Reading and comprehension skills, which are required to internalised the messages of the print media are the key factors that determine the media preference format in this direction. The same variable cursed low interest in the new media by the educationally deficient media audience. Certain level of digital compliance is required in addition to reading and comprehension skills to get the best from the new media, hence the low preference rate for the media among the illiterates. Education has enhanced the interest of the digital immigrants in manipulating new media tools just like the digital natives and such is reflected in the high preference for the new media by the respondents with post-secondary education attainment.

The youth age range in the distributions is not only the dominant in the sample respondents but also demonstrates the digital native characteristics of the age group with over 70 percent of the youths preferring new media to any of the traditional media. Reading and comprehension skills might not be the paramount influencing factors on the youths' low preference for print media because most youths significantly consume the online versions of the print and broadcast media. The youth category has been empirically confirmed as the most active online (Adelakun & Oyebode, 2021). Invariably, most people within this category can manipulate new digital media compliance tools to explore the contents of the online media versions of the conventional media.

Gender as an influencing variable in the preference for different categories of mass media most often reflects the uses and gratification proposition. The female gender, especially women or housewives most often prefer broadcast media perhaps because of the programmes that gratify their needs. This study neither establishes nor links reading and comprehension skills as influencers of the less preference for print media by women than men. The proportion of the preference for print media is very wide between male and female when the percentage to the ratio of male to female sampled respondents is taken into consideration.

Q1: **What is the degree of public awareness of the media campaigns against election violence in the 2023 general election?**

Table 2: Degree of public awareness and usage of the media campaigns against election violence in the 2023 general election

Public exposure/awareness of the media campaigns	Sample Size	Construct Structure	Max	Min	Mean	Decision rule
High degree of awareness of media campaigns against election violence	400	Positive	5	1	4.97	Favourable
High level of reinforcement of the campaigns/ messages against election violence in the mass media enhances awareness	400	Positive	5	1	4.32	Favourable
High frequency of exposure to media campaigns against election violence aided the awareness	400	Positive	5	1	4.58	Favourable
High level of consumption of the media campaigns against election violence	400	Positive	5	1	4.63	Favourable

* A positively structured construct with above 2.5 mean value or a negatively structured construct with less than 2.5 mean value = Favourable

* A positively structured construct with less than 2.5 mean value or a negatively structured construct with above 2.5 mean value = Unfavourable

The proportion of awareness of media campaigns against election violence among the respondents depict the high degree of dependency on media. The postulation of the media dependency emphasises how much media audiences desire information or media messages to satisfy their needs. This explains why such audiences are attached to the media to meet their information demand. Almost all the respondents in this study were aware of the media campaigns against election violence. This is either because of their high level of dependence on media and as such they were exposed to such media campaigns per chance or they were much more interested in politics and as a result they looked up to the media for political information. It also explains why it is almost impossible for anyone to be independent of the media.

Respondents' high frequency of exposure to the media campaigns against election violence was instrumental to their level of awareness of the media campaigns. It suggests that the media audience were aware of the media campaigns against election violence as a result of their frequent exposure to such messages. The proportion of the respondents' awareness was also met with high level of reinforcement of the campaign messages against election violence on the mass media. The reinforcement was attained perhaps either as a result of their exposure to different messages on the same issue and in the same media or they were exposed to the same message on different media or both. This perhaps either precipitated the media agenda on the campaign messages or benefited from the media agenda that was already formed on the election violence as earlier discussed. The degree of consumption of the media campaigns against election violence also corroborates the proportion of exposure and awareness of the media campaigns. The argument according to Onabajo (2020) that "exposure to media messages does not translate to the consumption of such media messages" has been defeated with about 97% of those exposed to the messages eventually consuming them. The proportion of consumption also depicts the interest rate in such campaign messages by the members of the public. It explains the logic of how exposure leads to awareness, awareness metamorphoses to interest and the interest leads to consumption, while the latter eventually leads to actions or effects.

Q2: **What is the proportion of media channels' engagement in sensitisation campaigns against political violence?**

Table 3: Perceived proportion of media channel(s) engagement in sensitisation campaigns against political violence

Proportion of media engagement in the sensitisation campaigns	Sample Size	Construct Structure	Max	Min	Mean	Decision rule
High level of broadcast media engagement in media campaigns of violence-free election	400	Positive	5	1	2.27	Unfavourable
High level of Print media engagement in media campaigns of violence-free election	400	Positive	5	1	2.82	Unfavourable
High level of new media engagement in media campaigns of violence-free election	400	Positive	5	1	4.63	Favourable

* A positively structured construct with above 2.5 mean value or a negatively structured construct with less than 2.5 mean value = Favourable

* A positively structured construct with less than 2.5 mean value or a negatively structured construct with above 2.5 mean value = Unfavourable

The frequency of the campaigns against election violence was according to the data presented in Table 3 most often occurred on new media. This variable is much moderated by the directions of media preference earlier discussed. Respondents' perceptions of the media involvement in the media campaigns against election violence largely depend on not only their preferred media of information but also the programme choice and the most consumed contents. This factor is favourable to the new media as such were considered as the media type that mostly propagate the media campaign against election violence. But it should be noted that the perceptions of respondents as regards the media vehicle that mostly involved in the spread of the media campaigns against election violence is therefore not sufficient basis to place such judgement. Further studies can employ content analysis approach to establish the frequency of occurrence of the media messages/campaigns on the subject matter and the framing patterns of such messages that elicited responses from the target audiences.

Q3: **How do members of the public perceive the media sensitisation campaigns against political violence?**

Table 4: Perceived interest of the members of the public in the media sensitisation campaigns against political violence?

Public interest in the media sensitisation campaigns against election violence	Sample Size	Construct Structure	Max	Min	Mean	Decision rule
The media sensitisation campaigns were educative	400	Positive	5	1	4.87	Favourable
The media sensitisation campaigns were peace-oriented	400	Positive	5	1	4.82	Favourable
The media sensitisation campaigns appealed to self-dignity	400	Positive	5	1	4.34	Favourable
The media sensitisation campaigns were simple to understand	400	Positive	5	1	4.43	Favourable
The media sensitisation campaigns were political	400	Negative	5	1	1.01	Favourable
The media sensitisation campaigns promoted ethnic rivalries	400	Negative	5	1	0.89	Favourable
The media sensitisation campaigns promoted civil disobedient	400	Negative	5	1	0.43	Favourable

* A positively structured construct with above 2.5 mean value or a negatively structured construct with less than 2.5 mean value = Favourable
* A positively structured construct with less than 2.5 mean value or a negatively structured construct with above 2.5 mean value = Unfavourable

The perceptions of the media messages/campaigns against election violence were highly positive as the education function of the campaign was considered paramount. Reorientation of the people concerning an issue requires that they should first be educated about the issue. A better understanding of the issue makes people realise the benefits or dangers in such issue and such invariably leads to an informed decision. Political literacy that enhances active participation in politics as well as free and fair election can only be realised through such media messages that educate the electorates. The media sensitisation messages/campaigns against election violence were also perceived as peace-oriented. One of the most emphasised aspects of the campaigns that attracted the interest of the respondents is the area that captured peaceful coexistence. One of the respondents could recall and cited the phrase, "*Ma je ki Oloselu tabi egbe oselu kankan lo e lati da omi alaafia ilu re ru*" in a Yoruba broadcast media campaign against election violence, which could be translated as, "Don't allow any politician or political party use you to disrupt the peaceful co-existence in your land".

The simplicity of the media sensitisation campaigns against election violence was also accorded high value. Asides that the messages were passed in various local languages to ensure a better understanding by recipients so as to navigate the desired influence in the audience, the respondents considered the messages worded in simple and unambiguous expressions.

The media sensitisation campaign against election violence was also adjudged to appeal to self-dignity. One of the respondents recounted a short drama on Facebook where a politician shared money with other politicians for election campaign but gave cutlasses and other weapons to the miscreants (known as area boys) and commanded them to disrupt elections in the opposition strongholds or constituencies and even ensure the elections were not held at all in such polling units.

And the "area boys" demanded that the first son of the politician joined them in the operation, "After all, our parents also value our lives just as you value the life of your son", they revolted. The ability of the respondents to recall this key aspect of the campaign in the open-ended option of the questionnaire signifies the emphasis the messages laid on the dignity of self and the value for lives.

Despite that the overwhelming majority of the respondents considered the media sensitisation campaigns against election violence free of political influence, one out every five of the respondents perceived some of the messages as reeking political one-sidedness. This submission was considered insignificant on two grounds; one, the respondents who owned this opinion are inconsequential in proportion, and two, the respondents did not substantiate their claim with samples of such campaign messages. Similarly, the media sensitisation campaigns against election violence did not promote ethnic rivalries as perceived by almost 80 percent of the respondents. The respondents again confirmed that the campaigns sensitised against civil disobedience.

Q3: **What influence do the media sensitisation campaigns against political violence have on the public's political decisions?**

Table 5: Five-Point Likert Scale distributions of the perceived influence of the media sensitisation campaigns against political violence on public behaviours during and after 2023 election?

Media sensitisation campaigns influence on public behaviours during and after 2023 election	**Sample Size**	**Construct Structure**	**Max**	**Min**	**Mean 1st survey**	**Mean 2nd survey**	**Decision rule**
Change public orientation concerning election violence	400	Positive	5	1	4.34	4.87	Favourable
Help members of the public in self-realisation	400	Positive	5	1	4.22	4.82	Favourable
Disabused the mind of the public against political thuggery	400	Positive	5	1	4.01	4.28	Favourable
Enhanced peaceful voting	400	Positive	5	1	3.54	3.55	Favourable
Encouraged legal resolutions of electoral injustices	400	Positive	5	1	3.78	3.76	Favourable
Imbibed in members of the public the value of lives	400	Positive	5	1	3.89	4.08	Favourable

* A positively structured construct with above 2.5 mean value or a negatively structured construct with less than 2.5 mean value = Favourable
* A positively structured construct with less than 2.5 mean value or a negatively structured construct with above 2.5 mean value = Unfavourable

The perceived influences of the media sensitisation campaign against election violence slightly vary at various stages of the campaigns. Despite that the political cloud was becoming tensed and the likelihood of election violence was becoming apparent as the election drew nearer, the media campaigns to suppress such was also enhanced in frequency and content, thereby resulting to a significantly favourable change in the public orientation concerning election violence as shown in Table 5. A more significant change was also noticed in how the latter campaigns helped members of the public in self-realisation and dignity of self than the earlier media campaigns against election violence. This invariably inculcated in members of the public, the value of lives and the need to keep safe of the dangers that

election violence might expose them to. Similarly, the later media campaigns significantly disabused the minds of the youth against political thuggery than the earlier. There is minimal significant change in the influence of the media campaigns towards encouraging legal resolutions of electoral injustices rather than engaging in violence to counter violence during election as the campaigns changed in frequency and structure. The media campaign was perceived as having significant influence on public reorientation concerning election violence.

The study being a longitudinal one should have data for the two time frames the studies were conducted for comparison and in-depth insights. This is lacking.

Conclusion

The study of the potency of the media campaigns against election violence and its influence on the 2023 election in Nigeria has given a clue on areas of concern. The fact remains that the political cloud in Nigeria has drastically changed from what it was in the third and fourth republics and that the media industry has also transformed in structure, content and ownership. The inconsequential influence of the media campaigns against election violence on the reality obtainable during 2023 election as against the political transitions prior the fourth republic could be linked to the change in the political cloud and media structure.

The gap between the perceived submissions of the respondents and the reality of the degree of violence reported in the media during 2023 election can be attributed to other intervening factors that struggled it out with the media sensitisation campaigns against election violence. Factors such as building political empires that subjugate public interest and voice, creating abject poverty among the electorates, engendered level of illiteracy, and creating ethnic, region, and religious dichotomies to shattered public interest and voice could be further studied as intervening on the influence of the media campaigns on election violence. A similar study can also be replicated in any state or geopolitical zone within Nigeria to confirm the representativeness of the sample of this study. Such can also be replicated in other African countries that experience electoral violence, most especially where media efforts towards violent-free elections are similar either in nature, influence, or measure.

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