

# Priming of the Restructuring Agenda in the Media: An Analytical Study of Select Nigerian Newspapers

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**Abstract:** *Earlier media studies have demonstrated that the way the media report salient issues engage the peoples thinking and change of attitude about the issue. Since 2014 confab, there have been serious requests from right, left and center calling for the execution of the outcome of the confab till the sudden reinvigoration of the Biafran agenda among the Igbos. Finding a way out, restructuring was suggested. Since this restructuring agenda, the media have been on course to set the enabling environment for the soft landing of all inclusive method that best suit the restructuring agenda in respect of their social responsibility function to the public. Against this background, this study is interested in evaluating how the media placed the restructuring issues in their day-to-day reports as a serious national matter. The study adopted the content analysis research method while the agenda-priming and social responsibility theories of the press were used as the theoretical framework to provide support to the study. The findings demonstrated that the media paid high premium attention to the restructuring of the country; but failed to establish the angle through which the restructuring could solve the problems of insecurity, desires for secession, poverty, unemployment and terrorism which necessitate the restructuring agenda. The researchers recommended that the media should do more by providing a direction for the restructuring agenda bearing in mind the level of deprivation that caused the problem in the country.*

**Keywords:** Restructuring, deprivation, confab, priming, newspapers

## 1. Introduction

Earlier media scholars have acknowledged media power of providing a template for public views on certain salient issues in the society in different forms. In all these different forms, the media power to impact on the opinion of the citizens on prevailing public issues were made paramount in the relationship between what the people see, read and hear and what they pay attention to in divergent groups. Among one of these means through which the media content can control or make marks on what the minds of the people strike is priming. Priming is therefore the act of making some contents appear as if they are being favoured in the media through the position they occupy in the media, the size of their headlines, the use of photographs and images in covering such issue, the frequency of reporting and the column(s) it usually occupy in the pages of newspapers by a particular event and the air space they occupy in terms of broadcast media. Reacting to the importance of length/size of media contents, Cissel, (2012) argues that there is significant relationship between length of the news articles and their perceived importance. She further stated that by analyzing articles' length, she was able to understand and draw conclusions about how important the media source felt the covered topic was or should be regarded by its reader. The reason is that the magnitude of a news article can be signified by the location of the story and its length.

Priming effect in the media draws on political science research conducted by Iyengar, Peters & Kinder (1982) which was premised on the believe that media provide a context for public discussion of an issue and set the stage for audience understanding of the issue under report (Smith, 2011). Drawing from the premise of the concept of priming above, it can be rightly argued that the amount of time and space the media devote to an issue make an audience receptive and alert to particular themes mostly rampant in the media. In this same way, audience perceptions of events are impacted by historical context with which they are

familiar with such event as a function of media experience (Arnold, 2009).

For instance, aggressive and repeated media reporting preceding an event may be very strong in the minds of the audience leading to grass-root awareness of the event among the people. Events such as insecurity situation in Nigeria, the height of deprivation against some regions, the increase in religious crisis and many other factors that suggest disintegration will get into the mind of the people when they are given aggressive media reporting because such media attention will make them almost impossible for audiences to ignore them in their day-to-day deliberations. This can only be achieved through frequent reporting (Priming) on the attributes and elements of the events, giving up-dates and on-the-event coverage to such issues in the media. Such aggressive reporting thus makes an audience of people at least temporarily interested in the event(s) covered even though prior to the reporting many (perhaps most) members of the audience were not security or religious fans but those who get caught up in the moment following the kind of media attention an event commands.

Arnold, (2010) argues that Priming effects of communication are importance for decision making. For example, as Nigerians talk of restructuring today, which aspect of the country's attitude or structure needed to be restructured- political restructuring, economic restructuring, administrative restructuring or religious restructuring? Which of the political candidates the people will vote for in the forthcoming 2019 general election in the country? The concept of priming is based on the assumption that people don't carefully weigh all possible aspects of a situation or problem when making decisions. Rather, they employ mental shortcuts when making up their minds to act in one direction over an issue of public concern. One of the heuristics they apply is to rely on information that is most accessible in their memory. The memory network stores ideas and concepts that the people have come across at some

point in time, for instance when reading the newspaper this morning. Every memory is stored as a node, and every node is related to another node by semantic paths (Arnold, 2010). Nodes that are strongly connected to each other form a mental schema, an interpretative framework or a belief system. When an external stimulus, for instance a news headline, activates a node in this network, the entire schema gets activated and will serve as shortcut for making a decision.

Media coverage of political issues has an impact on which concepts are activated for evaluation by selecting and emphasizing certain aspects – and ignoring others. This fact above explains the media power of telling the people what to think about (Asemah, 2011; Cissel, 2012) which draws the battle line between agenda setting scholars (Ukonu, 2009) and the proponents of agenda mirroring hypothesis (Nwodu, 2007). While the agenda mirroring hypothesis school of thought relies on the events unfolding in the society as the bases for media reporting, the agenda school of thought relied on the media practitioners interest in selecting what gets to the public from thousands of events that unfold in the society. The belief here is that media failure to report that there is an accident along Igbariam-Achalla road does not stop the accident from taken place where the agenda setting school of thought agrees that since the accident fails to meet media selection and publication, it cannot impact upon the people.

Moreover, some studies (Entman, 2006; Johnson, 2014; Altheide 2013) attribute the actual priming effect mainly to frequency in the belief that the more prominent an issue is in the media, the greater is its accessibility in a person's memory. This issue will then be more important for making a decision than other issues that might also be relevant. While citing Iyengar & Kinder (1987, p. 63) Scheufele and Tewksbury (2006) argue that Priming refers to “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations”. Priming occurs when news content suggests to news audiences that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments.

Driving home the study, Nigerians quest for restructuring and the direction of the restructuring agenda is a serious challenge to the executives following the fact that different regions, ethnic groups, interest groups and socio-cultural organizations have different views of restructuring with each group conversant with the area or sector that will favour them when restructured. In view of this challenge, the onus lies in the media to inject in the peoples' mind, the benchmark through which this restructuring can be achieved through priming the news to the audience for them to be able to make decision on which direction to shape the restructuring in order to solve the problems that necessitate it. Against this background, the study sets to examine the direction that media noticeably primed the restructuring agenda in the country.

## 2. Statement of Problem

Individual differences theory made it clear to all that two persons that ate a plate of rice when subjected to interview

on the taste of the rice will give different information about the food they ate. Media scholars and proponents of the individual difference theory have acknowledged that the reason for divergent reaction among different individuals is rooted or dependent on the individual's attitude, disposition and predetermined motive (Agbanu, 2014, Udoaku and Olise, 2009; Nwabuaeze, 2014) concerning the plate of food under investigation. Drawing from this, since Nigeria has different ethnic groups, political affiliations, socio-cultural interests and pronounced religious affiliations, there is bound to be differences in the views expressed in the media concerning restructuring agenda in Nigeria. With divergent views from these groups who nurse different grievances over one kind of deprivation or the other, the problem of identifying the most influential sector that this restructuring will target to suit the interest of the highest number of people becomes a problem. For instance, with the level of poor infrastructure, poor state of economy and accumulated feeling of being marginalized in south east, restructuring is balancing the power distribution and creation of one state in the region to equal other geographical zones in the country. On the other hand, restructuring to the Avengers in the middle belt may not be far from given them the benefits of owning the oil wells in their area. To Nigerian unemployed graduates, restructuring is the provision of well paid jobs that can exonerate them from the poor economic state that caused their poor standard of living and vice versa. At this point, media priming becomes important as that will help the people make meaning out of several options. As an agent of democratic sustenance, the media are expected to give direction through priming, the angle that the restructuring agenda can follow in order to accommodate and solve the greater number of the problems facing the country with which restructuring was called for. It is against this background that this study set to examine media priming of the restructuring agenda in the country.

## 3. Research Objectives

The following research objectives were set to be achieved by this study as a way of providing direction for the restructuring agenda.

- 1) To ascertain the frequency of coverage of the restructuring agenda in the select Nigerian newspapers.
- 2) To find out if the select Nigerian newspapers gave Prominence coverage to events and issues concerning the restructuring agenda in Nigeria.
- 3) To ascertain the media theme dominantly primed as the strongest challenge that makes restructuring agenda a must accomplished mission among the select Nigerian newspapers.
- 4) To ascertain the dominant source of media contents on the restructuring agenda among the select Nigerian newspapers

## 4. The Scope and Limitation of Study

The scope of this study spanned from September to December 2017 when the agitations for the session among the IPOB attracted the reaction of the Federal Government to mount operation Python Dance II in the south eastern Nigeria. It would be recalled that these months may not be perfectly adjudged to be a perfect representations of the

newspapers in the country. The study covered all editions of those select newspapers and their contents on restructuring agenda in Nigeria. The newspapers covered, to which this study is limited to, are *This-Day*, *Daily Trust*, *the Nation*, and *Vanguard* newspapers. Any other newspapers beyond these ones are not covered in the study. The limitation of this study therefore, is the fact that these selected newspapers are not representative enough to stand for all the existing newspapers in Nigeria. By this, the information or better still the manifest contents of these newspapers cannot be rightly adjudged sound enough to represent the Nigerian newspaper priming of the restructuring agenda in Nigeria. Moreover, it is expected that the library may not be organized enough to keep all the editions of these selected newspapers or the various pages of the newspapers in all the selected editions of the newspapers for this period of time under study. The interpretation therefore is that the manifest contents of the omitted pages and unavailable copies of the selected newspapers are not analyzed and this therefore, constitute the limitation of this study. This study is limited to the manifest contents of the selected newspapers found, examined and as well analyzed in line with the study objectives with a view to answering the research questions posed for the study. This study covers the publications of *This-Day*, *Daily Trust*, *the Nation*, and *Vanguard* Newspapers concerning the restructuring agenda in the country.

## 5. Significance of the study

The major issue in the country today is whether we actually need to restructure Nigeria. Then if we need to restructure Nigeria, what is the direction for restructuring? What is the sector to be restructured? From among various contending issues which one should be the priority for the restructuring agenda? In view of compelling evidence on the need to restructure the country and the perceived effect that such action can help in keeping the country together and still developed, this study shall help to ascertain if the Nigerian newspapers, as agent of democratic sustenance provided a clear direction for the restructuring of the country. The study will then be a platform for advising the newspapers on how to prime national issues for effective positive attitudinal change that will ensure futurity. The study shall highlight certain demands of democratic and social equality reporting with a view to discouraging different kinds of deprivation and subjugation in a developing country. This study will contribute to literature on the area of national development and the media. This study is therefore, a view towards the media idea of providing direction in a cross road for the entire country to locate its bearing in the desire for national unity and development in the face of multi-faceted crises. Given the controversial nature of this restructuring agenda, giving direction for its achievement is a move to national integration and the sustenance of the democratic principle in the country.

## 6. Theoretical Framework

### The priming theory of Mass Communication

In the words of Arnold, (2010) priming theory draws from the political science research of Iyengar, Peters & Kinder of 1982. It is one of the media effect theories of Mass

Communication that justifies the ability of the media to insight thoughts among the audience. The proponents of this media theory are of the opinion that the mass media provide a context for public discussion of an issue and by so doing set the stage for audience understanding of issues which in turn influences their beliefs and attitudes towards the event or issue primed. For McCombs (2004) media are capable of calling attention to issues that suit their sponsors' interests and thus influence the public recognition of newsworthiness overtime. Rogers and Dearing (1988) address both media effect and policy making in terms of agenda-setting. While media agenda is assumed to influence the public agenda, it is also said to indirectly influence policy making processes. By proposing that policy making processes are directly affected by public opinion, priming the public agenda is consequently considered as a crucial media effect.

Priming hypothesis is considered as an extension of agenda-setting whereby media content functions as a prior frame of reference according to which audience interpret subsequent news and evaluate governmental performance (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). According to Domke (2001, p. 755) "cognitive knowledge structures or schemata that are frequently or recently activated become more readily accessible for application to attitude objects". Therefore, the connection between agenda-setting and priming is based on the fact that both effects are produced by repetition and depend on memory-based models in analyzing audience perception of news. Priming is, therefore, seen as a "temporal extension" of agenda-setting (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p.57). In other words, while media salience of certain issues or certain aspects of issues influence public opinion (agenda-setting), priming gears the public's contextualization of new experience in terms of more accessible previous knowledge. By the same token, McCombs (2004) considers priming as a second-level agenda-setting process which is not a product of repetition. He argues that different narrative structures of a story are said to make certain aspect of it more salient in one version than in another, and can therefore alter the public opinion regarding that story. Relating this theory to the current study, the aspect of restructuring Nigeria that takes precedence in the media reports concerning the issue, is no doubt going to influence the public views on the matter.

### Social Responsibility Theory of Mass Communication

This paper is also premised on social responsibility theory of the press which places press on duty to ensure that the people are well informed (Nwabueze, 2012) on the issues and events in the society to enable them make an informed decision on salient national developmental issues. Social responsibility according Ekeli, (2008, p. 338) originated from the moral philosophy that is directed at protecting the small, poor, the helpless and the underprivileged against any form of unknown and impending danger. From the look of things, the quest for secession and unending sectarian attacks in the country points a clear finger on mismanagement of government institutions without recourse to the plight of the masses. Secession and insecurity are twin sisters of deprivation and marginalization which today pose the greatest threat to the economic and administrative development, political and cultural accommodation,

religious and ethnic tolerance and finally the unity of Nigerian state.

At the wake of all these unity threatening challenges, restructuring became and is viewed as having the magic wand to restore the country from disintegration. In this respect, the media are expected to provide the people with information on the direction and the aspect of the country to restructure in order to save the country from the impending danger of being disintegrated. Reporting the various restructuring angles paying attention to the advantages and otherwise of each position held by different interest group in the venture will help in providing the direction needed to achieve an all inclusive restructuring in the country. The media therefore should not shy away from exploring the best method for the restructuring agenda by issuing reports on other countries where such measure had impacted upon national unity. Through this way, different interest group that may have had different and parochial view of the restructuring agenda may be influenced to make decision. Relating this theory to this study, it is pertinent to note that the survival of this country from these unity threatening challenges that it found itself now depends on the ability of the media to play their role well. So it is the media that can serve as their teacher linking the respective views of all interest groups to advantage of embracing an all inclusive restructuring method that can best address the problem that called for the restructuring agenda among Nigerians. Against this backdrop, social responsibility theory was considered relevant to the study.

#### **Relative deprivation: A Cause for Restructuring**

Nigeria is made up of different people speaking different languages and exhibiting different culture and beliefs. As a heterogeneous society, understanding of one another is somehow lacking to the extent that some people feel that their tribes are not well taken care of. This concept was first developed by Walter Garrison Runciman in 1966 to explain attitudes of social inequality in twentieth-century England (Ezemenaka and Prouza, 2016). The basic idea of the concept is that people who are deprived of things of high importance or necessity in their society such as status, money, rights and justice among others - tend to join social movements with the hope or expectation that their grievances or dissatisfaction will be attended to. Thus, Runciman (1966) recognizes 'egoistic deprivation which refers to a single individual's feeling of comparative deprivation and fraternal or group deprivation... refers to the discontent arising from the status of the entire group as compared to a referent group. While citing Singer (1992), Flynn, (2009) noted that fraternal deprivation may strengthen a group's collective identify and draw their attention into taking group action. Flynn (2009) argued that relative deprivation theory is related to the larger body of interdisciplinary work known as social movement theory. Social movement theory, as described by Flynn, began in the late 19th century and includes the study of social mobilization, including its social, cultural, political manifestation and consequences.

This theory has been critiqued by scholars for failing to explain the reason that some people who feel marginalized do not take action by joining social movements. This theory

has been further contested by researchers of relative deprivation theory, who point out that the factors of the theory fail to indicate another unseen factor that moves individuals or groups of people towards social movement, which is 'the will or their will (Ezemenaka and Prouza, 2016). Kendall (2005) argues that the 'will' suggests that individuals are propelled into, or determine to join, a social movement whose activity they believe can address their discontent or marginality within society and work to resolve the prejudices they face. In other words, individuals engaged in social movement activities believe in the strength of their 'willpower' to help them achieve meaningful results. Unfortunately, any sort of denial or removal of this willpower prevents some individuals from joining the group action for the actualization of the desired group objective, despite facing the same problems, deprivation, marginalization injustice or issues as those who join social movement activities. This is exactly the case with IPOB, Avengers and somehow the Boko-Haram sect in Nigeria. In one way or the other, these groups have the feelings that they are deprived of certain rights which they are qualified to get as citizens of the country.

Internally, IPOB activities appeals to virtually all Igbo men in the country but it was only very few people can risk joining it because of the denial of the willpower by federal government. On the other hand, Gurr explains relative deprivation in relation to the psychological frustration-aggression theory which argues that the 'raison d'être' of human attitude to violence is the mechanism inherent in frustration-aggression. Though Gurr notes that frustration does not explicitly imply violence, when it is sufficient and prolonged it often leads to anger which degenerates into violence. The 'relative deprivation' hypothesis of Gurr portrays the discrepancy between what people think they deserve and what they can actually get. The author emphasize that the propensity for collective violence strongly differs with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among collective members. Making inferences from his ideas concerning relative deprivation theory, it becomes evident that the struggle for a separate Biafra is the expression of frustrations held in common by collective members of relative 'homogeneous' societies represented by IPOB. The frustrations and agitations conveyed by the members of Biafra are not always or inherently violent, as explained by Gurr, but can take on violent dimensions when prolonged. The primary grievance among those who struggle for Biafra varies. Some of these variations manifest in what the peoples of Biafra feel they deserve, such as good standard of living in society, or else what they hope to achieve if such demands are not met, such as separation from Nigeria in order to address these issues through a new government of their own - one which shows due concern for its people.

In all dimensions, if all the warring groups are well examined, their various grievances will end up in a feeling of being ignored, marginalized or disappointed as the case may be. Once frustration sets in, someone can act in a way most unexpected of him. The same thing applies to a group with common antecedent when they feel that they are being marginalized, frustration of group objectives can make them feel bad and decide to react. On this note, the country cannot

hardly be in peace with this height of marginalization and deprivation that majority of the citizens suffer in Nigeria. In view of this fact, restructuring agenda becomes necessary for the unity of the Nigerian state.

## 7. Method of study

This study adopted the quantitative and qualitative content analysis research method in addressing the research questions posed for the study. The quantitative research analysis helped the researchers to examine whether the restructuring agenda was given adequate and prominent coverage in the Nigerian media while the qualitative content analysis exposed the major source of media content and the dominant theme of the restructuring agenda primed in the media. The units of analysis were breaking into four units in line with the research objectives in terms of frequency, prominence, Dominant media theme and the major media sources of information used in the media for the coverage of the restructuring agenda in Nigerian media. The units of analysis were further split into contents categories-  
Frequency: The number of times the newspapers cover restructuring and events concerning it in the newspaper, prominence- the placement of the stories in the newspapers and the treatment of their headlines in the news. News headlines are considered to have controlled prominence when it is made bold with larger space bigger than other stories that contains in the same page. The researchers developed media themes from the slant of the news items observed.

Based on these items, the researchers classified the themes into- political restructuring theme, religious and cultural restructuring theme, economic restructuring theme and power balance restructuring theme. Contents that reflect political and electoral issues were seen as political while those that points on the marginalization and deprivation of the people from getting certain positions of authorities are considered as power balancing theme. The contents that reflect the need from the cultural or religious angle are categorized as cultural and religious theme while those that examine the economic imbalance as the cause of the problem that need to be addressed are seen as economic theme. The coding sheet however, was used as instrument to content analyze reports on events and issues concerning restructuring agenda in the media. The sampling period for this study covers all the editions of the select newspapers published within the months of September, October, November and December 2017. These months were also purposively selected given that this was the period the Operation python dance II that generated the basic hit in the call for restructuring was launched. This study employed the purposive sampling technique which allows the researchers to purposively select the sample of the study based on an expected quality, character or to select those which meet certain criteria in the phenomenon under study (Nwodu, 2017). The coding sheet however was used as instrument of data collection on the media priming of the restructuring agenda in the Nigerian media. The measuring instrument meets a correlation coefficient of 0.78 to be accepted as valid and reliable for the study.

## Instrument of Data Collection

Based on the nature of our research design, the most appropriate instrument for the collection of data is the coding system. Therefore, the manifest content of the selected newspapers were coded using coding sheet carefully constructed for this research. The use of coding system is justified by its ability to translate field data into an easily understandable value or symbols representing specific attributes or given variables and indication (Uwakwe, 2005).

## 8. Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 1:** Aggregate of the issues of the newspapers from September to December, 2017 on the restructuring agenda in Nigeria

Variables	This-day	Daily trust	Nation	Vanguard	Freq	Percent
September	29	23	19	18	89	27.3
October	17	26	22	28	93	28.5
November	23	18	14	16	71	21.7
December	20	15	19	19	73	22.3
Total	89	82	74	81	326	100

Source: Researchers' content analysis 2018

Table one above shows the newspapers coverage of the restructuring issue by the months selected for the study. Based on the table, it was observed that the newspapers did not predict the crisis that made restructuring agenda more popular. This manifested in the number of reports issued in September when the operation python dance II was launched. In the month of October, the report rises to decline in November showing that different people and different groups have resumed to react on the operation, hence recalled the media attention to restructuring agenda.

**Table 2:** Showing whether the newspapers gave adequate coverage to the restructuring agenda in Nigeria

Variables	This-day	Daily trust	Nation	Vanguard	Freq	Percent
Quarter-half page	26	19	26	21	92	28.2
One-two pages	54	58	45	56	213	65.3
Three-four pages	9	5	3	4	21	6.4
Total	89	82	74	81	326	100

Source: Researchers' content analysis, 2018

The implication of the data in the table above, is that the newspapers gave adequate coverage to the restructuring agenda given the number of pages covered in their reports. With majority of the stories published in one to two pages per newspaper is good enough to provide the detailed information that the can help the readers take an informed decision on the agenda under investigation. From the information in the table, the media played their social responsibility role to the people.

**Table 3:** prominence priming of the restructuring agenda in the media

Variables	This-day	Daily trust	Nation	Vanguard	Freq	Percent
Front page	21	15	10	24	70	21.4
Inside page	42	49	33	38	162	49.6
Back page	9	6	9	7	31	9.5
Center page	17	12	22	12	63	19.3
Total	89	82	74	81	326	100

Source: Researchers' content analysis, 2018

Given the fact the number of the stories inside the page is by 2 items lesser than those that are contained in the focal points of the newspapers, this table revealed that the media gave prominence coverage to the restructuring agenda in Nigeria. This will go a long way in instilling in the people the need for restructuring in this country.

**Table 4:** The dominant media theme used in the coverage of restructuring agenda

Variables	This-day	Daily trust	Nation	Vanguard	Freq	Percent
Political theme	21	17	18	23	79	24.2
Economic theme	14	21	16	18	69	21.1
Power imbalance	30	23	27	25	105	32.2
Reli/Cultural theme	24	21	13	15	73	22.3
Total	89	82	74	81	326	100

**Source:** Researchers' content analysis 2018

The information from the table above implies that the media gave all round and effective reporting on the issues of restructuring from all angles that encourages the feeling for being marginalized and deprived among Nigerians. Drawing from the data above, the media highlighted power imbalance as the key element that controls all other aspect of the factors that encourage the feelings of marginalization and deprivation which formed the bases for the request for restructuring.

**Table 5:** Dominant media source

Variables	This-day	Daily trust	Nation	Vanguard	Freq	Percent
Political party source	12	17	10	13	52	15.9
Ethnic source	34	36	28	38	136	41.7
Religious/cultural source	25	15	19	21	80	24.5
Government source	18	14	17	9	58	17.7
Total	89	82	74	81	326	100

**Source:** Researchers' content analysis 2018

The above data imply that there are four identifiable sources to the information on the restructuring agenda of the country and the most dignified among them is the ethnic source. From this table, it has been clear that the ethnic background of the people that make up the country is paramount to the problem challenging the country.

## 9. Discussion of Findings

On the first research question set to investigate whether the select newspapers gave adequate coverage to the restructuring agenda in Nigeria, empirical data contained in table 2, revealed that the newspapers gave adequate coverage to restructuring agenda. From the data in table 2, of all the 326 items found as published, only 92 items were contained in quarter and half pages while all others transcend from one full page to two and more. Based on this figure here, the newspapers were seen to have been able to provide detailed information on the restructuring agenda for the public to take an informed decision on the restructuring agenda. While constantly issuing reports on the restructuring agenda, the media draw the minds of Nigerians to the matter of discourse. This finding is in tandem with the views of the

proponents of priming theory of mass media which stated that Mass Media provide a context for public discussion of an issue and by so doing set the stage for audience understanding of issues which in turn influences their beliefs and attitudes towards the event or issue primed (McCombs (2004; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 57; Arnold, 2010). Based on the above proposition, the select newspapers have set the stage for the discussion of the restructuring agenda for the public through their priming of the issue.

Considering the second research question on the prominence given to the restructuring agenda, this study found that majority of the information on the restructuring agenda were published on the focal pages of the newspapers from where they can be seen for public attention. No wonder the restructuring agenda was popular among Nigerians. Significantly, this finding supports the views expressed by media effect school of thought that the media placement of events in the focal points of the newspapers command public attention to the issues communicated in the media (Nwabueze, 2011). This finding also corroborates earlier media effect position that the media lead the public in assigning relative importance to various public issues by positioning them in focal points for public to see the level of importance it commands in the media (Miller 2002). Moreover, this finding is an expression of the media ability to perform their social responsibility role which is to inform the people on the happening around them and the magnitude of the events that took place in the environment as agent of social and democratic engineering (Adeyanju, 2013; Nwabueze, 2014). Having been adjudged to have given prominence coverage to the restructuring agenda, the media have played their roles to the public.

Considering the third research question on the dominant media theme used in the coverage of the restructuring agenda, the researchers found that power imbalance media theme dominated the priming of the restructuring agenda. This finding justifies the true need for the restructuring agenda which basically hinges on the distribution of power in the country (Ogbeidi, 2012; Nkwede, 2014). The above theme dominated the priming of the agenda because different people are reacting to the issue of restructuring the country and their reactions are being reflected in the media. the reasons for these reactions is premised on the natural fact that the more aggrieved the people are, the more eager that are to react to issues that make them aggrieved, deprived, denied and marginalized. The above finding is a sharp contrast to Fog, (2013) who posits that the competitive news media select and frame stories in ways that hamper the ability of the democratic system to solve internal social problems as well as international conflicts in an optimal way. By revealing that the problem facing the country is power imbalance, the media have exposed a problem that hampers democracy instead. This finding agrees with the deprivation school of thought who argues that the feelings of denial and discontentment among the people are likely to propel them into joining group actions in order to draw the government attention to their problem (Flynn, 2009; Ezemenaka and Prouza, 2016). This finding also corroborates the views of El-Rufai (2012) who argues that the rate of discontentment in the country has created the

space for unfavorable reactions of the public against the machineries of the government

Looking at the dominant media source used in the priming of the restructuring agenda, empirical result revealed that ethnicity dominated the source of priming restructuring messages in the select newspapers. This finding supports the believe in Eghosa (2007) who argues that virtually every disintegration desire among the citizens in the country are ethnic motivated. In the views of this researcher, the most peace threatening factor in the country originates from ethnicity, tribe and ancestral differences. By the finding; priming ethnicity as the major source of information in the restructuring agenda had repositioned the minds of the people on the dangers of the supremacy of ethnic origin to the unity of the country. It is therefore the views of these researchers that should Nigerians learn to do away with ethnicity and religious supremacy, the much needed unity and equity that can bring development of all sector in the country will be secured. The media is a servant to the source.

## 10. Conclusion

From the findings, the paper concludes that the mass media have done their own beat in priming the restructuring agenda to the public through issuing adequate and prominence reports on the issues that concerns restructuring. Having provided detailed reports and analysis on the events surrounding the agenda, it left for the public to take an informed decision on the event based on the media contents provided. Of all these effort by the selected newspapers in the restructuring agenda, the media failed to expose the people through editorials the ways out of the crises. Actually, we have seen the that the main problem as highlighted in the media is the imbalance in power and the position of ethnicity in the country, what could be done to remedy all these problems have been provided by the media, the contents is still dominated by individual opinions and group identities.

## 11. Recommendations

Owing to the findings and conclusion above, the researchers recommended as follows

- 1) That though the media have done well in priming restructuring agenda in their focal points, they should not relent in pressing higher till the change of attitude needed for the unity, progress and development of this country is achieved.
- 2) That the government in power should do the needful to give this restructuring agenda all the necessary attention to be successful.
- 3) That the citizens and the individuals concerned in the system should take a rethink on their various support for ethnic and religious supremacy to accommodate national interest for there to be peace.
- 4) That since power imbalance have been seen as the main theme of media priming of the restructuring agenda, efforts should be put in place to ensure that the power structure in the country is balanced in a fair, just and acceptable manner for all to be included in the administrative system through provision of a way out.

This will reduce the rate of discontentment among the people.

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