



Gendered News Reportage?: A Study of *The Guardian* and *The Sun* Newspapers, Nigeria

Patrick E. Okon*, Esther Ajiboye, Thelma Ekanem, Oladokun Omojola

Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

***Corresponding Author:** Patrick E. Okon, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract: Gender is central to identity since humans are socially positioned as gendered subjects, and or choose to identify with certain genders. This positioning, then, is evident in discourse choices and patterns, as well as attitudes and orientations towards social phenomena. Premised on the gendered differentiation and framing theories, this study examines women reporters' construction of news stories in two broadsheet mainstream newspapers in Nigeria, *The Guardian* and *The Sun*. Data comprise sampled news stories published between 2015 and 2017. Through textual and thematic analysis, the study reveals that it is social issues and institutional ideology or practice norms that predominantly drive female news constructions and reportage. The study concludes that women's news reporting is, fundamentally, driven by a number of linguistic and structural values and that what counts most in female news reportage is fidelity to the professional code of practice. However, women tend to engage more in the coverage of some news beats that require less use of hard logical arguments. In view of these findings, a similar study might need to be undertaken in the future in relation to the male news reporters to provide framework for comparison.

Keywords: News, News Reportage, News Language, Gendered News, *The Guardian* Newspaper, *The Sun* Newspaper, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

News, in its diversified formats, is fundamentally a narrative about a current but unexpected event whose occurrence interests readers and draws debates and discussions on the event. News reporting is a type of journalism, typically written or broadcast, which involves a social process of narrative construction (information gathering, processing and reporting) guided by acceptable news language, news style and news distribution systems (Hasan, 2013). However, at the heart of the analytic discourse about news and news reporting is the understanding that news construction or news language "is a profoundly social activity" (Conboy, 2007: 2). As a public construct, news language configuration is done within an industrial community defined by its own specific news style and journalistic language. However, the value of news language is intrinsically tied with its power at representation, signification, and generation of impact at the point of reception (Conboy, 2007).

Studies (Chiluwa, 2012; Conboy, 2007) also reveal that it is the language of newspapers that have, historically, provided the template for the development of the language of news and how news media have adapted or altered this language to meet their specific needs and audience demands. The interpretative and critical analysis of the language of newspaper news is, therefore, a familiar domain in the study of the language of journalism, newspaper reports and discourse analysis. The aim has always been to understand and establish specific symbolic characteristics or methods underlying text production and consumption.

The relationship between the language of news and gender differentiation is also today becoming a centralized aspect of the discourse on the language of journalism (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008; Conboy, 2007). Problematizing gendered identity in terms of self-representations and gendered subject positioning of issues is today becoming everyday symbolic struggles in education and cultural studies (Lin, 2008). Such symbolic struggles is also serving as apparatuses for hegemonic production of identity categories and subjectivities in news, as well as for the deconstruction of solidarity and binarized differences as conditions for understanding social diversity and for constructing harmonious pluralism across countries (Lin, 2008).

While it is sometimes difficult to clearly disentangle women's news language and target audience from the male, the two (female and male) are clearly separate elements but interrelated in the

discourse about the structure of news reports and the language of journalism. As noted by Richardson (2007: 1), “specifically: the sourcing and construct of the news is intimately linked with the actions and opinions of (usually powerful) social groups; it is impossible to select and compose news without a conception of the target or intended audience”. In the same vein, one could add that it is impossible to select and compose news without a consideration of the gendered source or intended goal of the gendered source or the question of social inequality, power differences, and power domination. In other words, news making and news language are never completely devoid of overt or covert political positions. Such positions are often driven by context considerations, such as audience, production and distribution contexts, ideological context, news value, and existing platforms for social interactions (Okon, 2017).

In this respect, the scholarly value of this paper is anchored on two key assumptions: Firstly, human social identity, apart from being tied around the question of ethnicity and race, are gendered. Our definition as either male or female also affects how we frame narratives, respond to issues, or project ourselves. Secondly, female reporters working with mainstream newspapers do not construct news stories in exactly the same way that their male counterparts do; the way they construct, interpret, and represent news realities relates, in part, to the qualities of their gendered identity.

In response to these assumptions, this paper explores how female reporters at *The Guardian* and *The Sun* newspapers in Nigeria construct and represent news. In particular, we wish to understand the gendered elements that are factored into female news stories, the dominant unifying ideas of women’s news, the female news focus, and the dominant normative perspective – the subjective or the objective – in women’s news making. This analytical exploration is done through the textual analysis of published news reports written by women, using specific thematic categories.

The study covers a three-year period (2015 to 2017). The overall goal is to draw out inferences and compare the results with other studies. The study is significant because it could enable us understand the dominant values and approaches that drive and underlie female news making in Nigeria, as distinguishable from the male. Secondly, it could assist us in understanding how gendered subjectivity, one of the key drivers of human actions, affects news representations by newspaper reporters.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In this regard, the study has the following objectives:

- to understand how women reporters, at *The Guardian* and *The Sun* newspapers, construct news
- to streamline the qualities that underlie women’s news reports, as published in *The Guardian* and *The Sun* newspapers; and
- to explore the dominant perspectives in women’s news stories published in *The Guardian* and *The Sun* newspapers.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purpose of this paper, we wish to adopt ‘framing analysis’ as the driving conceptual framework. There is diversity of approaches to newspaper news analysis (Chiluwa, 2012; Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1988). Framing is a significant approach to discourse analysis.

Framing analysis is concerned with the way the world is seen through the lens of the news reporter (DeFleur, 2010). Framing analysis focuses on the kind of subjective frames (words, ideas, images, sound, emotions, etc.) reporters bring to bear on their news stories. In this regard, ‘frames’ are abstractions that work to organize message meanings or the values that news media place on the information they convey to the public, which influence how audiences perceive and respond to the news (DeFleur, 2010). Audience’s response to reporter’s depiction of the ‘real world’, of course, is dependent on the accuracy of how reality is represented. Often, it is a reporter’s subjective or objective interpretation of reality that guides audience’s response and social behaviour to what is represented (DeFleur, 2010).

Seen in this light, framing theory is closely tied with Agenda Setting theory; yet framing theory operates as a second level of Agenda Setting imperative. While Agenda Setting theory operates to

inform the audience of what to think about any issue of public importance as conveyed through news media, framing theory *tells the audience how to think about that issue* (emphasis is mine).

Goffman (1974), the first to apply this theory to the field of communication, makes a distinction between two frameworks by which people come to make sense of the reality of the world around them as conveyed through news media: the *natural* and the *social* frames. Natural frameworks present events as physical occurrences without attributing any to the causation of social forces; but social frameworks see events as socially driven occurrences, driven and manipulated by the whims and goals of other social players. Both play the role of helping audiences interpret news data and understand their experiences in a wider social context. The difference between the two, Goffman admits, is functional. Yet, social frameworks build on natural frameworks. For Goffman (1974), these frameworks and the values they create are significantly influential in the way audiences interpret and respond to communicated news messages.

In this regard, framing analysis is understood within the context of this paper as “a constructivist approach to examine news discourse with the primary focus on conceptualizing news texts into empirically operationalizable dimensions – themes, words, phrases, and contexts - so that evidence of the news media's framing of issues in news texts may be gathered” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 1).

As a procedural methodology, news discourse in relation to the two Nigerian newspapers under scrutiny is approached as a sociocognitive process with structural and contextual dimensions and as involving the interplay among three players: sources of news, journalists, and audience members with socially defined demography (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

However, the applicability of framing analysis to this study requires careful and critical examination of the contents of reported female news texts and their contextual meanings, using an appropriate analytic process that allows the breakdown of the discursive issue into smaller units necessary to understand and solve the gender and reportorial problems.

4. NEWSPAPER AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

News reporting is centrally concerned with the construction of social reality and the representation of dominant discourses in a society. This becomes even more imperative in the print industry where reporters have greater opportunity of preserving permanently records of social events and of becoming more objective and detached in the expression of ideas and views. The role of the media in the construction of reality and how people view the world around them has received critical and evaluative studies in media research over the years (Alkazemi, 2012; Adoni & Mane, 1984; Alexander, 1981). The construction of reality considers the processes by which social, political and ideological meanings are framed, processed and carried through the news media. Typically, researchers tend to focus on how media represents social reality; manages social change; and affects the well-being of audiences. The impacts of the ideological contents of the media that attempt to reflect back the dominant discourses circulating in the society or in the newsroom have particularly been examined (Richardson, 2007).

According to Rogers, Kenix and Thorson (2007; cited in Alkazemi, 2012), media texts can play a role in the creation and circulation of ideological meanings, through the subtlety of information presentation to audiences. The meanings portrayed, the authors argue, can find associations with gender, age, ethnicity and emotional stereotypes, reinforcing them either positively or negatively. Thus, theoretical media research has found support for the positive and negative effects of meanings on audiences, mediated through the media. Also, there is the understanding that no two papers can approach social realities exactly the same way, as circumstances, rather than statistics, often inform a number of press constructions of social narratives (Peelo et al., 2004).

Newspapers' framing of reality, just like in other media forms, have traditionally been constructed along three broad ideological traditions: conservatism, liberalism and democratic traditions. However, as noted by Gamson et al. (1992), it is difficult to find anyone paper that could claim to approach these ideals perfectly. However, the different ideological traditions do provide a many-voiced and open text that can and has often been read oppositionally by newspaper audiences as they attempt to understand and respond to social realities (Gamson et al., 1992).

Nigerian newspapers also have quite a few things that make them different from one another. Ideological likeness and unlikeness are factors that shape their representation of reality. Most

dominant ones support the ideology of free enterprise with occasional interference by the state to stabilize the socio-political economy. When this liberal posture takes on conservativeness, it tends to support the *status quo*, especially when the term is defined as a regime of the ruling elite who control the biggest share of the nation's socio-political and economic resources to the detriment of the subaltern segment.

It appears *The Guardian* passed the test as a liberal newspaper during the military regime of Mohammadu Buhari (1983-1985) and that of his successor, Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1992). During Buhari's time, reporters were jailed on the heel of a draconian Decree 4 of 1984 while a lot of harassment of reporters of *The Guardian* newspaper took place. The harassment came to a head during the regime of Sani Abacha (1993-1998) when Alex Ibru, the largest equity holder of the newspaper, escaped an assassination attempt. *The Guardian's* editorial content had supported liberal views which opposed the authoritarian system of the military dictators. *The Sun* newspaper does not have that history as it came into existence only two years after Nigeria reverted to democratic rule in 1999; but it still depicts liberality in its coverage in the form of sensationalism.

Beyond the liberal-conservative argument as a factor of reality representation are the ownership structure and editorial positions. The most visible newspapers have ownership dominated by the male folks. Editorial positions of most national newspapers in Nigeria are also dominated by men as typified by the cliché "Gentlemen of the Press." This is not just a fact but a historical one.

Ever since the missionary Henry Townsend produced the *IweIrohin*, media ownership has always been skewed against women and it wouldn't make any difference which category it is – private or public. Government-owned newspapers in Nigeria, in most cases, appoint men to represent them in the boards of directors. The ownership of *The Sun* and *The Guardian*, the two newspapers under scrutiny, has always been male-dominated. The case of *The Guardian* changed a bit in 2011 when Maiden Ibru resumed as the publisher of *The Guardian* after the death of her husband founder, Alex.

Also, the first list of 25 editorial positions occupied by Nigerian women provided by Sanusi and Adelabu (2015) over a period of 40 years shows only three women – Amman Ogan, Harriet Laurence and Maiden Ibru – appearing for *The Guardian* and none from *The Sun*. In their second list of four editorial positions, none appeared for either *The Guardian* or *The Sun*. However, in the non-editorial sector (graphics, press hall, photography, newsroom production, etc.) of the two newspapers, women are visible; though it appears *The Guardian* has a more preponderant scenario than *The Sun*. *The Sun* is not totally bereft of females as its online editor is a woman as of 2018. The advent of the Internet has also elicited the increased ownership of women for news sites and blogs and it appears the trend of increment will go on for a long time.

The ownership and editorial positions exist within the remit of socio-political and cultural environment which shape the way newspapers portray social realities. These owners and editors have their religious beliefs, political beliefs, social circles and the like. *The Guardian*, in its websites, claims it is not politically affiliated and reports fairly and objectively as a clear demonstration of its social responsibility credential in the build-up to a just society. The case of *The Sun* is different as its founder and majority shareholder, Uzoh Kalu, has been seen publicly supporting the current Buhari's civilian regime, a regime known for its hard lining.

These theoretical specificities are essentially important. They can help us understand the kind of socio-political factors that operate to shape the framing of public narratives by women and how the chosen orientation of each newspaper can affect readers' responses to social realities, based on the news stories presented before them.

5. REPORTING NEWS: THE GENDER FACTOR

Research reports show that in 2000, 189 member states of the United Nations made a declaration to improve the living condition of humanity throughout the world. Included in this package was the advancement of gender equality (Global Goals for Sustainable Development, 2015). However, Nigerian women have continued to experience marginalization in spite of the fact that an estimated 50% of Nigeria's population is made up of women (UN Women, 2014).

A portion of the United Nation's Report on African women in 1995 (cited in Oyewole & Olisa, 2017) discloses that the media play significant roles in heightening gender inequality through stereotypic reports, neglect and negative representation of women (cf. Usaini et al., 2017). Often, women in the

news are basically seen and not heard. Even when the news is about them, there has to be a male authority for the news story to be important (Anyanwu, 2001). The case is the same both in relation to national and international news. Oyinade et al., (2003) also admit that in news reportage, occasionally the faces of women are simply used to adorn the pages of newspapers without any written texts attached to explain the placements of the pictures.

Women's invisibility or underrepresentation in the media in Nigeria does not come as a surprise. Right from the inception, the media in Nigeria have functioned merely as the mouthpieces of their owners and editors who often are men. This seems to legitimize their focus on male subjects. Okunna (2005), for example, asserts that women are made invisible through the scanty or non-representation of their view points. Even when women do achieve visibility, the manner of their representation reflects the biases and assumptions of those who define the public and media agenda. And, given the make-up of the Nigerian society as a traditionally male dominated society, Anyanwu submits, "news making itself is gender-biased"(2001: 69). However, gender disparity and male dominance in news construction process is not peculiar to the Nigerian society alone. The disparity is global (Amobi, 2013; Okunna, 2005).

Amobi's (2013) report on a study conducted by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) in 2000 to determine the extent of women's participation in the media worldwide reveals startling figures for Nigeria: A staggering 95% of the journalists reporting the news in the country's radio, television and newspapers were male. Participation of women as news subjects remained at 17%. Women appeared as news subjects only in some major topic areas such as politics and government (7%), business and economy (3%) and as total news subjects (7%). While women were quoted in newspapers stories only 13% of the time, they appeared in photos 20% of the time (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2000: 78-88; cited in Amobi, 2013). Another study conducted by WACC in 2005 to determine if there was any increase in women's participation in the media between the years 2000 and 2005, Amobi (2013) admits, revealed no shift in perspectives. In fact, female participation in major topical areas in the news such as politics and government dropped to 16% from 17% in 2000.

Separate data sets provided by Enwefah (2016) and Djerf-Pierre (2007), however, show that 91% of news stories in Nigeria were produced by men and 86% of them also made the news. While women took-up the supportive roles in newsrooms, the men were supervisors and in charge of editorial and reportorial units. Beats such as politics, business, sports, amongst others, were highly gendered sexist domain. Their findings reveal that there was more concentration of women in soft, feature, and human interest news beats.

According to the Global Media Monitoring Project (2005; cited in Amobi, 2013), the picture was not so bleak in the broadcast media. Nigeria was in the lead with women radio and television presenters as well as reporters. However, it was discovered that women who reported on war and conflict ran a high risk of harassment and they rarely told their supervisors about their sad experiences for fear of being pulled off assignments. Also gendered double standards and a glass ceiling continued to stump the promotion of women to key governance positions in print and broadcast news organizations (Amobi, 2013).

Regardless of the low side of these specifics, it is clear that women still play recognizable roles in news reporting of all kinds. Though a lot have already been discovered about women's participation in news making, this paper is of the view that what characterise their news framing and representation of social realities is still worth examining further.

6. METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

The study of the newspapers was done in a quantitative way. A total of 4,446 news reports written by women in the course of three years (2,308 for *The Guardian* and 2,138 for *The Sun newspapers*) were analysed. The main thematic categories included *othering*; *unifying idea in news*; *news framing*; *news orientation*; *style of writing*; and *news language*. The split of the main thematic categories into smaller conceptual units in the coding frame was to allow for more precise measurements.

The samples of analysis were purposively selected. The newspapers studied were drawn from the archival store of the Covenant University, Ogun State, Nigeria. The choice of the two mainstream

newspapers was informed by their different ideological orientations (conservatism vs liberalism). Newspapers considered to be purely of the democratic perspective, such as the *Daily Trust*, were not included as part of the study; merely for the reason of a more effective management of the sample size. Only news contents produced by women reporters were sampled and analysed. Purely social and nominal parameters were used in deciding who constituted a woman.

The foci of analysis were both the *manifest* and *latent* contents of the news reports. While the former considered only *frequency* of occurrences of themes/issues, the latter assessed the *intensity* of variables in terms of their contextual background information (Mayring, 2000). The rules that guided *frequency* measurement were: 1=High; 2=Medium; 3=Low; N=Not Applicable. The rule that guided *latent* measurements was principally tied around the analysis of the contexts. However, in the analysis process, some editions of both *The Guardian* and *The Sun* were found to be missing from the archival store. Also, stories jointly written by male and female reporters were not considered for analysis. These specifics have, in varying ways, impacted on the final data outcome for this study.

7. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDING

Below are the statistical findings, presented in a tabular format. Under table 1.1 the findings were arranged in a four-monthly format; but in tables 1.2 and 1.3, the findings were first arranged in three rows under a bi-monthly arrangement (each row representing each year of study). These were later reduced to a single row still under a bi-monthly column structure for easy analysis, using the ‘dominant scoring measurement scheme’ as guide.

Table1.1. *Periods Covered and Numbers of Women’s News*

Reports Viewed

S/N	Month/Year	Number of Stories
1.	Jan. –April 2015	Sun- 348 Guardian - 472
	Jan – April 2016	Sun- 360 Guardian- 464
	Jan – April 2017	Sun- 354 Guardian- 464
2.	May-August 2015	Sun-101 Guardian- 252
	May-August 2016	Sun-229 Guardian-71
	May-August 2017	Sun-312 Guardian-184
3.	Sept-Dec 2015	Sun-97 Guarduan-125
	Sept-Dec 2016	Sun-215 Guardian-133
	Sept-Dec 2017	Sun-119 Guardian-143
Total	2015-2017 (Jan – Dec)	Sun – 2, 135 Guardian – 2,308

The analysis of data reveals that *The Guardian’s* women’s news stories published over three years period was higher than what *The Sun* newspaper published over the same period: 2,308 for *The Guardian*, as against 2,135 for *The Sun*. The highest number of female stories (360) was published by *The Sun* between January and April of 2016 and the lowest (97) between September and December of 2015. For *The Guardian*, the highest number of female news stories (472) was published between January and April of 2015; the lowest number (71) was published between May and August of 2016; followed very closely by 125 female news publications made between September and December, 2016. More stories were generally covered in the month of January as accompaniments to mark the Yuletide events. Also, the early quarter of 2015 witnessed the political elections in Nigeria, which event could also have accounted for the high level of female newspaper coverage around that period, both for *The Sun* and *The Guardian*.

Table1.2. Coding Scores: *The Guardian*

Categories	Sub-Categories	Jan – Feb	Mar-April	May-Jun	July-Aug	Sept- Oct	Nov – Dec
Othering in the news	• Male gendered story	3	3	1	3	3	3
	• Female gendered story	2	2	1	3	1	3
	• Purely social concern	1	1	3	1	1	1
Unifying idea of news story	• Politics	2	1	3	1	1	1
	• Economy	1	2	3	2	2	1
	• Social (entertainment + infrastructure)	2	2	3	3	3	3
	• Cultural (religion + cultural heritage)	3	3	1	3	3	3
	• Sport	3	3	2	3	3	3
	• Science/technology	3	3	1	2	3	3
	• Education	3	3	2	2	3	3
News framing	• Hard facts	1	1	3	1	1	1
	• Soft facts	1	2	3	2	2	3
	• Features	3	3	1	3	3	3
	• Morality	3	3	1	3	3	3
News orientation	• Subjective	3	3	3	3	3	1
	• Objective	1	1	2	1	1	1
	• Neutral	2	2	3	3	2	3
	• Sensational	3	3	2	3	3	3
	• Conservative	2	2	1	3	2	1
	• Liberal	2	3	1	3	3	3
	• Propaganda	3	3	1	3	3	3
Style of writing	• Narrative	1	1	3	1	1	1
	• Argumentation	3	2	1	3	3	2
	• Explanation	2	2	1	3	3	3
	• Description	2	1	2	3	3	3
	• Conversational	3	3	1	3	2	3
	• Informative	1	1	3	1	2	3
	• Expository	3	3	2	3	3	3
	• Supporting social campaign	3	3	3	3	3	3
Language	• Gendered	2	3	1	3	1	3
	• Reflective of age	3	3	1	3	3	3
	• Reflective of social position	3	2	2	3	3	3
	• Generically identifiable format	2	2	1	3	3	3
	• Stylistically identifiable format	2	2	1	3	1	3
	• Reproduces social reality	1	2	1	1	1	3
	• Purely abstract	3	2	2	3	3	1
	• Expressive of social need/want	2	2	1	3	3	3
	• Metaphorical	3	3	2	3	3	3
	• Mythical	3	3	3	3	3	3
	• Allegorical	3	3	3	3	3	3
	• Simile	3	3	3	3	3	2
	• Satirical	3	3	2	3	3	3

Scoring dimensions: 1=High; 2=Medium; 3=Low; N=Not Applicable

Table1.3. Coding Score: *The Sun*

Categories	Sub-Categories	Jan – Feb	Mar-April	May-Jun	July-Aug	Sept- Oct	Nov – Dec
Othering In the news	• Male gendered story	3	3	1	2	3	3
	• Female gendered story	2	2	1	3	1	3
	• Purely social concern	1	1	3	1	2	1
Unifying idea of news story	• Politics	2	1	3	1	2	1
	• Economy	1	3	3	2	2	2
	• Social (entertainment + infrastructure)	2	3	3	2	1	3
	• Cultural (religion + cultural heritage)	2	3	1	3	1	3
	• Sport						
	• Science/technology	3	3	1	2	2	3
	• Education	2	3	2	3	3	3
News framing	• Hard facts	2	1	3	1	1	1
	• Soft facts	1	2	2	3	2	2
	• Features	2	3	1	3	2	3
	• Morality	3	3	2	3	3	3
News orientation	• Subjective	3	3	2	2	3	2
	• Objective	1	1	2	1	2	2
	• Neutral	2	2	3	3	2	3
	• Sensational	2	2	1	3	2	3
	• Conservative	3	3	3	3	3	3
	• Liberal	2	2	1	3	1	1
	• Propaganda	3	3	1	3	2	3
Style of writing	• Narrative	1	1	2	1	2	1
	• Argumentation	2	3	1	3	3	2
	• Explanation	2	2	1	3	2	3
	• Description	2	1	2	3	1	3
	• Conversational	3	3	3	3	3	3
	• Informative	1	1	2	2	1	3
	• Expository	3	3	2	3	2	3
	• Supporting social campaign	2	3	2	2	2	3
Language	• Gendered	2	3	1	3	3	2
	• Reflective of age	3	3	1	3	3	3
	• Reflective of social position	3	2	2	3	3	3
	• Generically identifiable format	2	2	1	1	1	3
	• Stylistically identifiable format	2	2	1	1	2	3
	• Reproduces social reality	1	2	1	2	1	3
	• Purely abstract	3	3	3	3	3	3
	• Expressive of social need/want	1	2	1	2	1	3
	• Metaphorical	3	3	3	3	3	3
	• Mythical	3	3	2	3	3	3
	• Allegorical	3	3	3	3	3	3
	• Simile	3	3	3	3	3	3
	• Satirical	3	3	3	3	3	3

Scoring dimensions: 1=High; 2=Medium; 3=Low; N=Not Applicable

8. INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

As procedural methodology, a distinction was made between the narrative *content* (‘the sequence of events as they occurred in the actual story’) and the narrative *form* (‘the sequence in which the news events were presented to us’). Thus, female news stories were considered in terms of the way the

stories were framed, the events reported, the settings for the events, and the outcomes or audience response as captured in the story (Richardson, 2007). Keeping this distinction in view was considered essential for a successful analysis of the female news stories at *The Guardian* and *The Sun* newspapers.

Obj. 1: How women reporters construct news.

Textual analysis reveals that a lot of women are getting involved in news reporting in Nigeria. Women's visibility in news reportage of the two newspapers is on a 'high' side. However, *The Guardian* newspaper engages more women in news reporting than *The Sun*. This is a proof that, though the menfolk are still dominant in the newspaper industry and the newsroom practice in Nigeria, the argument about the marginalization of women in news reportage, often echoed a decade or two ago (cf. Anyanwu, 2001; Chude et al., 2002), is no longer tenable.

This study also examined the language use in news construction by women reporters at *The Guardian* and *The Sun* newspapers. Generally, *The Guardian* is an elite newspaper, whose specific target audience is the well-educated people in the society. *The Sun*, on the other hand, is a populist newspaper with its overall targeted reading public being both the educated and semi-educated citizens. The language of the female news reports in *The Sun* was found to be 'highly' generically identifiable with the in-house formats of the newspaper (sensationalism and populism), with distinctive 'high' and 'medium' authorial identifiable stylistic formats found to be present as well. But for *The Guardian*, the generically identifiable format (intellectualism and elitism) was a near split between 'high' and 'medium' measurements. The measurement for distinctive authorial style was also a split between 'high' and 'medium' scoring across bi-monthly polarities.

While both papers are national mainstream newspapers, however the distinctive ideological orientations of the two newspapers (liberalism vs conservatism for *The Guardian*, and liberalism vs sensationalism for *The Sun*) could be identified as partly responsible for the ways events and issues have been verbalized, negotiated, and mirrored in news 'texts' by their female reporters.

Ideology, as argued by Richardson (2007: 32), when applied within the field of discourse and language, can become the means for the expression of beliefs, values, and opinions as well as the exercise of power over 'the other'. As a product of our social and intellectual environments and formed on the basis of our experiences, ideology is never entirely free of prejudices and attempt to express "the contradictions of class society" (Richardson, 2007: 34) and to "symbolize social problems" (Chiluwa, 2011: 13).

Thus, the emergent language of women's news reports of the two Nigerian newspapers is perceived as deliberate attempts to meet the ideological variation needs of the papers and the expectations of the Nigerian audience. As noted by Chiluwa (2011), news language is ideological to the extent that it causes us to think not just in ways that support the interest of groups in a society but also of the news media institutions themselves.

In this regard, this paper recognizes the political positioning of the two newspapers of study as influential. They constitute attempts to reshape public discourses as well as to force audiences to think of life circumstances, social events and realities in ways that are consistent with the ideological positions of the papers.

However, empirical evidence (under the 'news orientation' conceptual category) also shows that each paper's ideological stance does not remain static; it changes over time and aligns itself with oppositional political stance, guided of course by existing social, economic, and discursive contexts (cf. Ajiboye, 2016; Chiluwa, 2011).

Whether of conservative or liberal orientation, the inevitable fact remains that certain truths about reality and people's true interests are logically being constructed and asserted through ideas reflected even in news texts of women reporters at *The Guardian* and *The Sun*. The predominant emotional/liberal sentimental formations that underlie female news stories in *The Sun* and the conservative/liberal formations evident in *The Guardian*, it is argued, are political. To some extent, they could be seen to provide 'sites' of struggles for 'hegemony' (Gramsci, 1971) in terms of class equality and institutional values. Ideologies, when factored into news stories, this paper maintains, can also become expressive of how news organizations conceptualize their audiences – as markets or citizens. In this way, news media institutional ideologies could also provide covert conditions for

winning legitimacy from news readers for specific institutional interests – commercial or non-commercial interests.

Gender bias in the language of news construction was found to be predominantly ‘low’ across the two newspapers; but relative ‘high’ and ‘medium’ measurements were recorded between May-June and September-October for *The Guardian*, respectively. While a ‘high’ scoring was made against *The Sun* between May-June, ‘medium’ measurement was evident only between January-February and November-December each year.

Evidently, these periods with ‘high’ and ‘medium’ measurements were noticeably pre-Yuletide and post-Yuletide periods. Thus, the percentage of ‘gendering’ in relation to the language of news was varied across the two newspapers and based on seasonal differences. Gendering in *The Sun* was, however, slightly higher than in *The Guardian*.

The relationship between news language and how language use in the press reveals identity political question is also well documented in scholarship (Ajiboye, 2016; Chilwa, 2011). Ideologies and language are generally fashioned and utilized to represent specific material realities or circumstances of life - economic, emotional, political or cultural (Richardson, 2007). As recognized by Chilwa (2011: 10), news language reveals the assumptions often taken for granted in the structures of groups’ power relations. The author avers that, as it were, news writers and editors in Nigeria have rarely been able to resist these structures in shaping the ways they want us to perceive the realities around us.

While female news reports in both newspapers were found to be seriously ‘low’ in the use of such linguistic devices as metaphor, allegory, simile, satire and mythical expressions, they were nevertheless ‘high’ in their reproductions of social realities and expression of citizens needs/wants through news coverage and feature storytelling. Purely abstract thinking in news writings was equally ‘low’ across the two newspapers, as well as the social positioning of the women news writers in terms of age and social status. The presence of these elements (abstraction, age category and social category) in the news contents was never self-evident. The noticeable low ‘abstraction’ level in women’s news reports of the two papers was, however, interesting. It tends to support the age-old association of intuitive thinking with women and hard logical thinking with the menfolk (Lewis, 2013; Wayne, 2011).

Obj. 2: The qualities that underlie women’s news reports.

The values of female news making were measured in terms of news framing, unifying idea behind each news story, and the specific news orientations of the female reporter. In terms of news framing ‘hard’ news took on the central stage in both newspapers with predominant ‘high’ measurement. This was followed by ‘soft’ news framing with predominant ‘medium’ measurement across the two newspapers. Feature stories by women reporters were, however, better represented in *The Sun* than in *The Guardian*. While these findings partially supports earlier discoveries (Djerf-Pierre, 2007; Oyewole&Olisa, 2017), the near tally between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ news scoring for the two newspapers also tends to suggest a optimization attempts in combining analytic and intuitive thinking in relation to female news narratives (Lewis, 2013).

The predominant ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ news narratives were, however, organized along the inverted pyramid structural logic. Though there are a number of other writing formats available, the inverted pyramid, alongside the ‘dropped intro’ form (Richardson, 2007), was found to be the standardised format for news writing by female journalists working at the two Nigerian newspapers. The inverted pyramid structure places the most important information in the *lead* of the story and the least important information at the bottom. Essentially, it attempts to answer the 5Ws and the H questions: Who? What? Why? Where? When? and How?.

The particular episodic narrative form evident in the ‘hard’ news was predominantly the non-chronological format. The chronological ordering of events was used often in the arrangement of ‘soft’ news. This discovery fit in well with Bell’s (1991) earlier finding that ‘hard’ news rarely takes on a chronological form. Also, feature stories examined were exceptionally rich in background information which is the standardized element of feature news writing. The relationship between story and actual events (that is, the question of truthfulness) was self-evident in all cases. The contents of the news stories were also expressive of the cultural values and assumptions deemed assertible and those deemed publicly condemnable.

In terms of news normative orientation, objectivity and neutrality were measured as predominantly 'high' in *The Guardian* than *The Sun*. The female news reports in the two papers were, however, found to be generally rich in supporting evidence in the form of contextualizing information, in 'scare quotes' to show that the truth-claims were not the reporter's, in the use of credible sources in verbalizing truth-claims, and in the use of the inverted pyramid structure of news reporting. These four qualities, generally, define what may be considered as objective news reports (Richardson, 2007; Tuchman, 1972).

However, both newspapers' female news had 'low' subjectivity measurement, except for *The Guardian* whose subjectivity scoring level for November-December was discovered to be relatively 'high'. A 'medium' subjectivity scoring was noticed in relation to *The Sun*'s female reports of that same period. It was not clear from the news texts why this is the case. The finding, however, contradicts Djerf-Pierre's (2007) earlier discovery that women's news stories are shaped principally by personal ethics. For this paper, the presence of 'high' and 'medium' subjective dimension in *The Guardian* and *The Sun* for a particular period could have been influenced by a number of factors, including the special focus of news reports on the pre- and post-Yuletide events as well as the pre-electoral events of 2015.

Objectivity and neutrality are never synonymous concepts. However, they constitute some of the central ethical codes of journalistic professionalism (Harcup, 2002). Arguably, the objectivity code attempts to resist the economic values of the market, through its application, while the neutrality code positions news reports processes as something never entirely free of value judgements and labelling which, in ways, could reveal institutional ideological positioning or the possible individual reporter's attitudes towards the labelled subjects (Ajiboye, 2016; Chilwa, 2011; Richardson, 2007). However, the ultimate goals in the application of both principles in news reports are, firstly, to enable the reporter to distance her personal interests from the truth claims of the news reports; and secondly, to encourage the provision of information that could be considered as unbiased, balanced, credible and verifiable.

While the predominance of the objectivity principle in the female news analysed is a plus for the local print industry in the drive towards the attainment of professionalism, it is never expressive of the fact that the pressures of the market and sentimentalism have been completely uprooted in the press industry in Nigeria. However, the relative 'low' subjectivity scores for the two newspapers' female stories are expressive of the conscious efforts to write for the audience. High subjectivity would have implied that the 'voice' of the female journalists was too central for their news stories to address issues based on statistics that were of concern to the audience (Peelo et al., 2004).

This paper, therefore, accepts that it was the specific focus on a sense of the audience that also would have accounted for the 'low' subjectivity measurements and that it was this distinctive focus that bore positive fruits, not just in the choice of the female story published, but also in the tone and style of news presentations across the two newspapers.

While the predominant but tacit focus on the objectivity principle by the female reporters rather than on subjective consideration contradicts Djerf-Pierre's finding and could be seen as expressive of the women reporters' conscious attempts to satisfy audience expectations and interests, it could also be seen to validate past trust relationships between audience and the newspaper producers rather than working only to legitimize institutional interests (Richardson, 2007).

This study's finding has, therefore, confirmed that the qualities that underlie female news making are not very much different from those that characterise news stories written by their male counterparts. What counts most is fidelity to the professional code of practice. This discovery has somewhat negated the second assumption of this study, that female reporters at mainstream newspapers' houses in Nigeria do not construct news in exactly the same way that their male counterparts do; that their way of constructing and representing news realities relates, in part, to the qualities of their gendered identity.

With regards to the subject areas in news reports, women reporters at *The Guardian* were found to have a relatively 'high' and 'medium' scorings in reporting politics and economy; while female reporters at *The Sun* had a similar scoring differentials in relation to politics and culture (religion and cultural heritage). Reporting on politics, economy and culture was, therefore, found to be the common subject fields across the two newspapers. Women's news focus on politics and economy also aligns

with WACC's discovery in 2000. Reporting on culture appears as an additional area of focus for women reporters in Nigeria. The least news areas for *The Sun* were found to be science/technology and education; and for *The Guardian*, they were sports and education. These dimensions, incidentally, were not covered in the WACC's report. Oyewole and Olisa (2017), however, did indicate that reporting on the beats were gendered sexist sensitive.

Obj. 3: The dominant perspectives in women's news stories.

The dominant perspectives in women's news reportage were measured in terms of 'othering' in the news to reflect male and female issues or purely social issues, as well as the style of news writing. 'Othering' in news was clearly 'high' in social issues considerations for *The Guardian* newspaper. A split between 'high' and 'medium' was recorded in relation to female gendered stories; and a predominantly 'low' measurement was recorded in relation to male gendered stories. Similar measurement divisions were recorded in relation to *The Sun* newspaper. Generally, where female news reports centred on gendered issues, female gender considerations scored 'high' in both newspapers than othering in stories relating to male issues.

While gender considerations were significant, it was discovered that social concerns and the ideological bent of each newspaper were perhaps the most influencers of news construction style than even the gender identity issue. This finding, apparently, fails to support the first assumption of this study that our definition as either male or female also affects how we frame narratives and respond to issues even in news stories. In this regard, the alternate assumption tends to hold true: that it is social issues and institutional ideology or practice norms that predominantly drive female news constructions and reportage in Nigeria.

The style of female news writing for both papers remained predominantly narrative, descriptive and informative. Attempts at expository stories were predominantly low; but slightly higher in *The Sun* than in *The Guardian*. Scoring units for argumentative writing were almost the same across the two newspapers, with 'high' scoring recorded only for the periods between May and June of each year.

The contextual reason for this was not clear from the texts. Nevertheless, these variations in stylistic values, it is argued, were not apolitical. They have histories and socio-political contexts behind them. The month of May, for instance, signals Democracy Day celebration in Nigeria. It is also a good time to heighten political arguments of all sorts. Additionally, adopted style can also be consistent with the writing style guide of each newspaper. As noted by Van Dijk (1988: 27), stylistic variation is never arbitrary; it is contingent upon the relationship that exists between context and text formation. This specific could, invariably, have impinged upon the approaches adopted by women reporters at the two newspapers to the constructions of their news stories.

9. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to explore the ways women reporters at *The Guardian* and *The Sun* construct news as well as the qualities in the women's news reports. While this study did not concern itself principally with the identification of linguistic semantics in women's news language to position them in relation to particular ways of ideological thinking, nonetheless it did consider the dominant elements in women's news framing in terms of news focus, news orientation and writing styles and how differences in ideology and prevailing socio-political activities provide the contexts for their advancements.

The findings of this study have, however, failed to confirm the two assumptions offered at the beginning of the study. Instead, findings reveal the following: Firstly, that it social issues and industrial practice norms often factored into institutional ideologies, rather than their gendered subjectivity, that affect how women reporters frame news and direct audiences' responses to issues presented to them; and, secondly, the qualities that underlie female news making are not very much different from those that characterize news stories written by their male counterpart, except in the areas of the use of hard logical arguments and coverage of diversity of news beats. What counts most in female news reportage, just like in the male, is fidelity to the professional code of practice. The gendered identity quality of reporters has been found to play only minimal role in influencing the language and structure of news reportage.

The persuasion components centred, of course, on the packaging of information in a particular context, either to sell the papers or to inform citizenship (Omojola, 2012). This is the context in which

the newspapers serve either as the marketplace of ideas or promoters of the common interest. Objectivity and neutrality politics in the press have, historically, been seen as the benchmarks of accountable and fair reportorial narratives that can function to sustain the common good. Their predominant emergence in women's news reports in *The Sun* and *The Guardian* is therefore commendable. It is a signpost to the fact that the gate-keeping tasks performed by reporters and editors in Nigeria and elsewhere should continue to favour contents that are unbiased, balanced, credible and verifiable.

In view of these findings, this paper recommends that, apart from working to address the question of why newsroom practice and reportage are still relatively skewed against women, the professional bodies in Nigeria (the Press Council of Nigeria, the Nigerian Union of Journalist, and the Nigerian Guild of Editors) should continue to take actions to discourage elements that lower reportorial standards and limit pluralism in news reports. Incidentally, *The Guardian* and *The Sun* are well represented in these bodies. By prioritizing solidarity among women reporters, these newspaper institutions can get these professional bodies to optimize their efforts in providing socio-political platforms and policies that checkmate low standards and lack of pluralism in the press industry in the country.

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Patrick E. Okon is a lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication of Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. He holds a doctorate degree on media policy and alternative journalism from the Edinburgh Napier University (Scotland) and two Masters Degrees in Pastoral Communication (M.A) and Film Studies (M.Litt) from the University of Calabar (Nigeria) and the University of St. Andrews (Scotland), respectively. His research interests include media and society (policy and alternative media interface), development communication, broadcast journalism, media and religion interface, and film theories and criticism.

Dr. Esther Ajiboye lectures in the Department of Languages, Covenant University, Nigeria. She holds a PhD degree in English (Critical Discourse Studies & New Media Communications), and her research generally applies the principles and theoretical provisions of critical discourse analysis, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics to the exploration of crisis/ conflict discourse, online discourse, as well as media discourse. She is a fellow of the African Humanities Program of the American Council of Learned Societies.

Miss Thelma Ekanem is an assistant lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication at Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. She is also a Ph.D candidate at Covenant University. Her current research focus is on corporate communication and new media usage within universities in Nigeria.

Dr. Oladokun Omojola is an Associate Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication in Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria with interest in media performance, advertising and communication research. He was a writer with *Daily Times* and senior editor with *The Guardian* in Lagos, Nigeria before he switched to academics. He is the inventor of the House Sign Outdoor Advertising system and originated the use of Symbols and Shapes for Analysis in Small Focus Group Research.

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