

Frames in News Discourse on Nelson Mandela's illness and Hospitalisation: A Study of Nigerian and Zimbabwean Newspapers

Christian Chinedu Odoemelam
Dept of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
Judahmandate@Gmail.Com

Jakobe Bhekinkosi Ncube
Dept of Journalism and Media Studies, National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe
Bhekijncube54@Gmail.Com

Emmanuel Okorom
Dept of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
Okmorgan@Hotmail.Com,

Abstract

This study is a cross-national investigation in the use of frames in news coverage of an event which has international significance-the flashpoint of Nelson Mandela's illness and hospitalization in South Africa. The study is anchored on the framing theory as espoused by Erving Goffman (1974). While studies examining frames in news coverage have gained significant ground in literature, there is paucity of studies examining news frames of events with health-cum-political undertones and how differences in national communication policies may influence frames in media discourse on such issues. To meet this gap, this present study analyses the news report of the illness and hospitalization of Nelson Mandela in leading newspapers in Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The study will also examine if major differences in frame choice emerged in the coverage between the countries. Qualitative content analysis methods will be employed in analyzing the coverage in the year 2013. The reliability of the inter-coded data will be tested using the Holsti's index. The categories for measuring frames in the coverage are based on frames found in extant literatures. The expected contribution of this study would be an understanding of the congruence or disparity in the pattern of frames in the news coverage of similar events cross nationally. Understanding cross-national news discourse on the issue might be important for situating communication policy matters within health-cum-political contexts.

Keywords: Frames, News, Discourse, Nelson Mandela, Illness and Hospitalization, Newspapers, Political, Policy, Cross-national

Introduction

Production of meaning is according to Golding and Murdock (2005: 67) an exercise of power. This process of the production of meaning is related to the ownership of media companies which in turn has consequences for the exercise of control over their activities. Thus, according to (Mano, 2005). "It is not surprising that the dominance paradigm depicts journalists as people who seek to please their masters in the newsrooms in which they work". It is therefore against this background that the framing of the news about the illness of South Africa's former president, Nelson Mandela by Zimbabwe and Nigeria's mainstream newspapers can be looked at. Numerous empirical studies have examined the framing of controversial issues in newspapers concerning such topics as immigration, hate crimes, war on terror as well as the health condition of world leaders, etc. Their research findings consistently indicated that frames tend to focus on a certain set of issues and attributes while neglecting to provide readers with a balanced perspective (Anderson et al, 2005; Shah, 2002; Lawrence, 2004; Zillman et al, 2004; Odoemelam et al, 2013; Okoro et al, 2013, Olorede & Oyewole, 2013).

For instance, in 2010, Nigeria's sitting president, Yar Adua Musa, took ill and it became a source for media reportage. In their study of the press coverage, Olorede & Oyewole (2013) found that the Nigerian press gave a high degree of frequency to the coverage of news about President Yar'Adua's ill-health and that the press used emotional image to frame the condition and to draw public attention and generate concern for the President's ill-health through the use of haggard-looking pictures. It equally found that the relationship between media report of the President's ill-health and public perception of the issue is that it made the public to perceive the President as losing grip of control in administering the affairs of the country. Their study points to the fact that, public perception of issues and events in any given society are largely shaped by the media (Takanshi, 2008).

The fact that certain issues are covered by the media gives prominence, credibility and credence to such issues, and further moves such issues from media agenda to public agenda (Nwabueze, et al. 2010). This applies

to the news coverage of Nelson Mandela's illness and hospitalization. Although he has retired from public life, Mandela is still venerated by an entire people who see him as the incarnation of the end of three centuries of white-minority rule in South Africa. Equally, Mandela is admired throughout the world for his lifelong sacrifice in fighting the brutal regime of racial segregation installed with apartheid in 1948, and for his role in bringing multiracial democracy to South Africa, a country many feared would disintegrate into civil war. It is therefore assumed that the media in different countries would frame his predicament in particular perspectives and that such coverage would be dependent on the media or communication policy of the particular country. This study seeks to examine the frames in the news coverage of the illness and hospitalization of Mandela in leading newspapers in Zimbabwe and Nigeria.

To put the present study into context, a brief discussion of the issue surrounding the personality of Nelson Mandela is required.

Nelson Mandela

In 1994, Mandela became South Africa's first black president. Mandela, Black South African political leader, whose long imprisonment made him an international symbol of the struggle against apartheid, became president of South Africa (1994–1999) following the country's first multi-racial elections. In 1993 he shared the Nobel Peace Prize with F. W. de Klerk.

Mandela was born in Transkei, the son of a tribal chief. After attending university in Johannesburg he practiced as a lawyer, setting up the country's first black legal practice. An activist in the African National Congress (ANC) from his twenties, he responded to the banning of the organization in 1960 by inciting a wave of strikes; when nonviolent means made little impact, he formed the Spear of the Nation movement to undertake a campaign of sabotage and guerrilla activity. Mandela evaded arrest until 1962, when he received a five-year sentence for incitement; in 1964 this became a life sentence, following a second trial at which he was found guilty of sabotage and treason.

Mandela spent the first part of his sentence on Robben Island, a notorious high-security prison. A campaign for his release was spearheaded by his second wife, , whom he had married in 1958; she became a Winnie Mandela (1934– political figure in her own right, suffering imprisonment (1969–70) and harassment at the hands of the authorities. By the late 1970s he had become an internationally famous figure, showered with honours and tributes from sympathizers worldwide. His refusal to gain his own freedom by making a political deal with his captors had by this time invested him with an almost mythical status in the eyes of many black South Africans. In 1988 his seventieth birthday was marked by renewed calls for his release and much international publicity; later that year he was moved to more comfortable quarters (<http://www.voanews.com/content/mandela-hospitalized/1677788.html>)

Mandela was finally released in 1990, on the intervention of the new state president, F. W. de Klerk. He immediately engaged in talks about the country's future with de Klerk and other government figures and travelled widely to argue the case for continued international pressure on South Africa. In 1993 a transitional constitution extending the vote to all racial groups was adopted and the following year Mandela was overwhelmingly elected as his country's president, at the age of seventy-six. In this role he has fostered a mood of national reconciliation at home while also playing a prominent part on the world stage as a respected elder statesman. Since December 1997, when he), his role handed over the presidency of the ANC to Thabo Mbeki (1942– has been chiefly a ceremonial one (<http://www.voanews.com/content/mandela-hospitalized/1677788.html>)

Mandela has had more and more frequent health issues over the last few years. He was hospitalized in both 2011 and 2012, including a nearly three-week stay in the hospital in December with both gallstones and lung problems. The 94-year-old former president's lung problems date back to his 27-year imprisonment on Robben Island, where he was diagnosed with tuberculosis near the end of his prison time (<http://www.voanews.com/content/mandela-hospitalized/1677788.html>)

Following his hospitalisation on June 8 2013, what seems like a politics of health was observed for instance, as was reported in an online news report, some South Africans said that showing images of a clearly ill Mandela was inappropriate and appeared to reflect an attempt by the ruling party to benefit politically from its association with Mandela, a former ANC head, in the run-up to national elections next year. However, the party denied the accusation. Mandela's personality and what he represents globally, provides a strong context for examining how the media framed the coverage in two African countries.

Statement of Problem

Frames in media are key components in the study of selection and interpretation of news. The fact that certain issues are covered by the media gives credibility and credence to such issues, and further moves such issues from media agenda to public agenda (Nwabueze, et al. 2010). Framing affects how a story is told and influences public perception. One reason for this is that, the public's lack of awareness, along with their reliance on media

for information and decision-making, make them more likely to be influenced by framing. According to Papacharissi & Oliveira (2008) when the media place stories in specific frames, they lend a different meaning to the news. Thus, media increase or decrease the salience of issues, which allows the public to remember and make judgments on such issues. Mandela's illness and hospitalization, though a south African issue, has implications for the global world due to his profile. Therefore it was assumed that world press would be interested in bringing news on Mandela to their various national readers. But due to ideological and political and communication policies in different countries, there may be differences in coverage. However, there seems to be a gap in studies examining these differences in coverage, crosses nationally. Few which have done so, were not specifically on health related international-cum-political issue as the case of Nelson Mandela's illness and hospitalization. This gap prevents an understanding of how a common international issue may be covered by the media of different countries. To meet this gap, this present study analyses the news report of the illness and hospitalization of Nelson Mandela in leading newspapers in Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To describe the news report of the illness and hospitalization of Nelson Mandela in leading newspapers in Nigeria and Zimbabwe.
- ii. Examine if major differences in frame choice emerged in the newspaper coverage between the countries.
- iii. Identify the nature of the framing of news on illness and hospitalization of Nelson Mandela between newspapers in Zimbabwe and Nigeria.
- iv. Ascertain if the coverage framed Mandela's illness and hospitalization politically or health wise.

Literature Review

Studies in media framing (Eti, 2012; Shah, et al, 2002; Papacharissi and Oliveira, 2008; Listerman, 2008) continue to support the opinion that the media draw the public attention to certain topics and decides what people think about. These studies argue that the way in which news is presented, and the attributes used in the presentation, is a deliberate choice made by journalists (Eti, 2012). Thus, the way media organs and media gatekeepers organize and present the events and the issues they cover, and the way audiences interpret what they are provided with, are products of media frame. Therefore, Content analysis as a research method, has over time, represented an approach adopted by scholars to examine these patterns of media presentation of news. In the year 2012, Amune, using this method, examined newspaper coverage of the Boko Haram crises in Nigeria. The study analysed four Nigerian newspapers namely : *The New Nigerian*, the *Punch*, the *Guardian* and the *Vanguard* newspapers. He combined the quantitative analysis and the qualitative method by collecting numerical data and non-numerical data through in-depth interview. Media analysts have studied how reporters use frames to heighten aspects of the events or individuals they cover (Gamson, 1989; Iyengar, 1991). In the same vein, Shah et al (2002) have argued that news coverage can focus public attention on a particular topic and in so doing, alter the mix of cognition that are mostly readily accessible when forming political judgments . Their view is echoed by several other studies (Takanshi, 2008; Dispensa & Robert, 2003; Anderson et al, 2005; Lawrence, 2004). Emphasis on certain issues in news coverage is thought to prime the public to focus upon those considerations as standards for social judgment (Shah et al, 2002). Ownership is likely to affect media focus on an issue. Rooney (2012) analysed the characteristics of the Botswana newspaper and found that because of the large amount of because of the unfair advantage the state-controlled *Daily News* has in terms of resources and control over advertising, news coverage may be unbalanced. It is also important to consider external factors influencing the mass media. Factors such as industrial, economic and government structures can contribute to different media coverage across countries. Dispensa & Robert, 2003; Takanshi, 2008). For instance, Iran's Islam controlled media may differ in coverage of the same international issue with a US media.

• Factors that may Affect Media Framing

Most of the factors are more systemic than media ideological leaning, and are affected by government and society, such as a functioning economy, protections of free expression, and governmental transparency (Picard, 2013). In some countries in the communist enclave the media are censored or adopt the principle of self sponsorship in news coverage. Literature plots to the fact that such environment determines how media frame news events. According to Lee and Lin (2006) Self-censorship is a major threat to press freedom around the world. Even in democratic countries where direct government suppression of the press is absent, news organizations may still censor their own coverage of sensitive topics for political and economic reasons (Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2004). In authoritarian countries, self-censorship is often institutionalized in newsrooms and internalized by journalists (Mickiewicz, 2000; Sukosd, 2000). The most intriguing cases, however, occur in transitional societies where severe political pressure on the press is combined with a commercial/commercializing media system and a professional/professionalizing journalistic force. In these

societies, the possibility of direct political repercussions, on the one hand, could lead news organizations to think twice about whether to publish certain stories or how to cover particular topics (e.g. Amin, 2002; Zhao, 1998). But on the other hand, the commercial orientation of the news organizations and the professionalism of the journalists may occasionally require them to defy the attempts of government control. It results in tension and a politics of self-censorship that involves a strategic contest between media and political actors.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative technique and content analysed leading newspapers in Zimbabwe and Nigeria. A randomized process was adopted in selecting the newspapers. Thus, both state owned and privately owned newspapers had the chance of been chosen. The window period covered the period when Nelson Mandela took ill and was hospitalized in 2013 (January – September 2013). This period was important because despite the fact that there had been reason to hospitalize Mandela in 2011 and 2012 (mostly on routine basis and medical check up), this recent hospitalization (June –September) drew public attention and of course the media for very obvious reasons:

- According to reports, the elder statesman was in a critical condition
- A statement from the family and presidency of the criticalness of his present health.
- This was the longest period he had stayed in the hospital.
- He was approaching his 95th birthday and there were apprehensions if he would make it to his birthday.

The Zimbabwean papers selected were: *Sunday Mail*, *Sunday News*, *Chronicle*, *Newsday*, *Daily News*, *Herald*. While the Nigerian newspapers included: *The Guardian*, *Nigerian Tribune*, the *Punch*, *Vanguard* and *Thisday* newspapers. Majority of the Zimbabwean papers were public owned were two were privately owned. All the newspapers selected in Nigeria were privately owned. No newspaper in Nigeria was publicly owned. The only state owned newspaper (daily Times) had become defunct.

The contents of these newspapers were examined within the periods (June 8th –September 28th, being the day Mandela was released from hospital). To qualify for selection, Newspapers were to have contents on Mandela. This required a careful search on the pages of the selected newspapers for headlines on Mandela on the editions within the study period. After a headline was identified as addressing an issue on Mandela's illness and hospitalization, the researcher now read through the content to examine the nature, the tone and the manner of discourse on Mandela.

The researchers examined the content to see if the story described the news report of the illness and hospitalization of Nelson Mandela. They also looked at if major differences in frame choice emerged in the coverage between the countries. The researchers wanted to find out the nature of the framing of news on illness and hospitalization of Nelson Mandela in Zimbabwe and Nigeria newspapers. Finally, they examined if the coverage framed Mandela's illness and hospitalization in terms of health or politics. To achieve these tasks, the researchers adopted the discourse pattern in their analysis. The discourse technique is primarily a qualitative research methodology, which examines the pattern of discourse in communication content.

• Zimbabwean Newspaper Coverage

Two daily newspapers in the capital Harare were chosen (the Herald representing the State/public newspapers and the Daily News representing the privately owned newspapers.) and one weekend paper the Sunday Mail owned by the government. In Bulawayo, the second largest city two newspapers were chosen as well, (the Chronicle representing the public media and the Newsday representing the privately owned dailies) and one weekend paper, the Sunday News owned by the government.

Below are the stories published by these newspapers:

Sunday Mail, 9 June 2013 – Mandela admitted to hospital.

Sunday News, 7 July 2013 – Mandela almost a month in hospital.

Chronicle, 29 June 2013 – SA awaits word on Mandela as Obama visits.

Newsday, 29 June 2013 – SA won't be the same without Mandela.

Chronicle, 16th July 2013 – Little activity outside Mandela hospital.

Daily News, 18th July 2013 – Mandela spends 95th birthday in hospital.

Newsday, 1 September 2013 – Mandela back home after long hospital stay

Herald, 1 September 2013 – Mandela released from hospital.

All these stories were not on the first pages but were tacked in somewhere alongside other foreign stories.

• Analysis

Zimbabwe held its harmonised (local government; house of assembly, senatorial and presidential elections on the 31st of July 2013 with President Robert Mugabe and his Zanu-PF emerging as winners. This was heavily disputed by opposition parties led by Morgan Tsvangirai, the president of the main opposition party MDC. Many reasons were cited by the opposition among them that the election was "a farce" and the voters' roll was in a

shambles and therefore giving Mugabe's party an advantage. Prior to the elections, there was a protracted legal wrangle between the opposition and Zanu-PF over the date of the election. Zanu-PF wanted the election held on the 31st of July 2013 as per a court order while the opposition wanted elections delayed so as to address what it termed electoral reforms. Southern African Development Community (SADC) was roped in and it failed to solve the impasse.

This background therefore would explain the few numbers of stories about Mandela as he fell ill during the time 'news' in Zimbabwe was about whether elections will be held on the 31st of July or postponed. Media was therefore framing news, that is, the media was focusing on certain events (elections) and placing them within a field of meaning. Thus the media was drawing the public attention to a particular issue, that of elections in Zimbabwe. In this concept framing can be seen as closely linked to the agenda setting role of the media.

Since frames can be defined as abstract notions that serve to organize or structure social meanings, they can influence the perception of the news by the audience, that is the less Mandela's story was told the less the Zimbabwean public talked about him. Instead, the media was bombarding the audience with pre-election and post-election stories – thus not only telling them what to think about, but also how to think about it.

Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) posit that framing consists of three elements – language, thought and forethought. They argue that while language helps one to remember information and acts to transform the way in which someone can view the situation, to use that language first people must have thought on their interpretive frameworks and those of others. That is one must learn to frame spontaneously in certain circumstances. Being able to do so had to do with having the forethought to predict framing opportunities. In other words, one must plan in order to be spontaneous.

Against this background therefore is the assertion that media products, in this case, news stories are constructs that the audiences take for granted.

Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) further identify myths and legends (to frame a subject by anecdote in a vivid and memorable way) as among possibilities to frame situations. Thus in Zimbabwe, prior to the elections (after Mandela was admitted to hospital), the public media was fixated with presenting the Zanu-PF presidential candidate Robert Mugabe as a larger than life character, the only person who could solve the country's problems. After the elections, when Mandela was still in hospital, the public media was celebrating the victory of Zanu-PF and therefore relegated Mandela's story to the dustbins. It must also be borne in mind that Mandela is revered the world over and therefore to having state newspapers leading with Mandela stories – the man who only ruled South Africa for a single five-year term and is almost the same age with Mugabe – will have cast Mugabe in bad light. Mugabe has ruled Zimbabwe since 1980 and he is 89 years old.

On the other hand, the privately owned media was fixated with pushing the opposition's agenda. It was portraying Tsvangirai as the only person who could pull Zimbabwe out of the political and economic quagmire it find itself in. After the elections, the issue was to expose how the election was stolen and as such Mandela's stories were completely ignored.

The media therefore constructs social reality, that is, "by framing images of reality... in a predictable and patterned way," (McQuail, 1994: 331). What the media does is to set the frames of reference that readers used to interpret and discuss public events (Tuchman, 1978: ix) that is giving a story a spin. Against this background, Entman (1993: 51) describes framing "as a scattered conceptualisation.

Looking at frames as dependent variables (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978) that is explaining what are the extrinsic and intrinsic factors influencing the production and selection of news (framing of news) there are five factors:

- (a) Social norms and values
- (b) Organisational pressures and constraints
- (c) Pressures of interest groups
- (d) Journalist routines
- (e) Ideological or political orientations of journalist

• **Nigeria Newspaper Coverage**

The Guardian

Mandela now in critical condition says presidency Sunday, 23 June 2013.

25 June 2013 Global messages others pour in for ailing Mandela as condition remains critical

27 June 2013 Obama-ban kimono, others lead chorus of support for mandela

Nigerian Tribune

Friday, 29 March 2013: Nelson Mandela back in hospital over lung infection

Tuesday, 02 April 2013: Nelson Mandela's condition improving, doctors say

Monday, 01 April 2013: Churches hold prayers for ailing Nelson Mandela

Friday, 28 June 2013: Nelson Mandela much better - Jacob Zuma

Punch

September 27, 2013: Mandela sitting up and looking around –Grandson
August 25, 2013: Mandela showing ‘great resilience’ in hospital — Presidency
September 2, 2013: Mandela discharged from hospital
August 23, 2013: between Mandela and Mugabe

Vanguard

August 27, 2013: Mandela in “critical but stable condition” – Zuma
September 01, 2013: Mandela leaves hospital
September 01, 2013: Mandela: Prisoner, president and father of ‘Rainbow Nation’

Thisday

16 Jul 2013: Nelson Mandela Inspires a Nation as 95th Birthday Nears
01 Sep 2013: Former South African President, Nelson Mandela, discharged from hospital
Sunday, 23 June 2013: Mandela now in critical condition says presidency Sunday, 23 June 2013
11 June 2013 Nelson Mandela Faces Fourth Day in Hospital

• **Analysis**

The Nigerian papers analysed were *Guardian*, *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *ThisDay*. These papers were all privately owned and this meant that control by government was limited to laws governing communication and which obedience cut across all the newspapers.

To analyse the coverage and newspaper framing of the illness and hospitalisation of Mr Mandela, it is important to put in context the most prevailing situation in Nigeria before and during the subject of this research. At the time of Mandela’s illness and hospitalization, almost all the northern states of Nigeria were under siege by Boko haram. This period witnessed heavy attacks on lives, properties and government installations especially in the northwest and northeast geopolitical zones of the country. This culminated in the declaration of a state of emergency in three northern states by the Commander in chief and president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan. For instance the punch newspaper reported:

Jonathan decided to answer all these (Boko haram) questions on May 14, when he declared a belated state of emergency in the terrorist havens of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, and deployed the military there. That Jonathan meant business was evident in his recognition that the country had been under “terrorist” attacks: “what we are facing is not just militancy or criminality, but a rebellion and insurgency by terrorist groups which pose a very serious threat to national unity and territorial integrity. Already, some northern parts of Borno State have been taken over by groups whose allegiance is to different flags and ideologies. These terrorists and insurgents seem determined to establish control and authority over parts of our beloved nation and to progressively overwhelm the rest of the country.” (the *Punch* newspaper, may 14, 2013).

Previous studies have shown that the Boko haram issue has been a serious economic, political, social and religious challenge dating back to the year 2009, when the group’s insurgent activities were observed (Ekwueme & Akpan, 2012, Okoro & Okechukwu, 2012, Odoemelam et al .2013). Therefore it is assumed that media coverage would principally focus on the insurgent activities and give less consideration to other issues including the story on the illness and hospitalization of Nelson Mandela, even though, his antecedents and personal profile project him as a global hero who devoted his entire life to the Apartheid struggle and thereafter, showed exemplary leadership by ruling for just one term and relinquishing power-thereby distancing himself from the phenomenon of “Sit-tightism”-a paradigm for which most African leaders have come to be identified with.

However, available data showed that in contrast to the hypothesis that Nigerian media would give less attention to Mandela’s predicament due to the unfolding events in the country occurring simultaneously with Mandela’s hospitalization, Nigerian newspapers gave adequate concentration to Mandela’s illness and hospitalization. The coverage by Nigerian newspapers, as is evidenced in the headlines provided in this study, followed the coverage from the time the Mandela was announced as ill, his hospitalization, his continued stay in the hospital, the concern for Mr mandela’s life across the world, including reactions and sympathy shown, his imminent 95th birthday, the western media hype on the issue up to his release from the hospital. Another description of the coverage in Nigerian newspapers was the placement of the stories on Mandela. It was found that majority of the news were on the front page with screaming headlines, especially at the first news reports of his illness and hospitalization. E.g

- 08 Jun 2013 Nelson Mandela Back in Hospital (*ThisDay*)
- Sunday, 23 June 2013 Mandela now in critical condition says presidency (*Guardian*)

- August 27, 2013 Mandela in “critical but stable condition” – Zuma (*Vanguard*)
- *September 2, 2013 Mandela discharged from hospital* (The Punch)
- September 01, 2013 Mandela leaves hospital on (*Vanguard*)
- 01 Sep 2013 Former South African President, Nelson Mandela, discharged from hospital (*ThisDay*)

This outcome in coverage is in congruence with the result of the literature on framing. For instance, Domke et al (cited in Shah 2002), found that news coverage can focus attention on particular topics and in so doing, alter the mix of cognition that are most readily accessible when forming political judgments. Therefore by also focusing on Mandela, in the midst of an internal security challenge created by Boko haram, the media were altering the mix of cognitions that the citizenry may have on both issues.

Also, as Scheufele & Iyengar (2010) observed, framing could also be explained in terms of how the mass media promote a particular definition of an issue through selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration. Thus, through the combined use of selection and emphasis, Nigerian newspapers framed or defined the Mandela’s illness and hospitalization as primary by focusing on it in the face of an equally national issue-the Boko haram and subsequent government’s declaration of a state of emergency.

According to Shah et al (2002) theories of framing suggest that news coverage can foster changes in public opinion by promoting particular definitions and interpretations of political issues. Their perspective assumes that when constructing a news story, journalists must choose from among a multitude of vantage points and voices. Shared sets of normatively grounded news values help organize coverage, amplifying certain perspectives while quelling others. This was observed in the newspaper coverage on Mandela. While the issue was actually his health and the apprehension that he may die, the perspective promoted by the newspapers was political. For instance the contents in the news reports always drew attention to the fact that Mandela’s lung problem was as a result 27 years in prison at the Robben Island, South Africa due to his struggle against Apartheid. Thus, Nigerian newspapers coverage of the Nelson Mandela illness and hospitalization were framed in terms of politics, virtues of democracy, good leadership and self sacrifice as epitomized by Mandela’s struggle against the racist apartheid system in south Africa, for which he went to prison for 27 years. See excerpts below:

The 94-year-old former president's lung problems date back to his 27-year imprisonment on Robben Island, where he was diagnosed with tuberculosis near the end of his prison time

Former South African president Nelson Mandela was suddenly taken to a hospital for the second time this month, this time for a recurrence of a lung infection. Officials say he is in good hands, but the hospitalization is raising fears about the health of the 94-year old anti-apartheid icon (Nigerian Tribune, Friday, 29 March 2013).

Mandela is admired throughout the world for his lifelong sacrifice in fighting the brutal regime of racial segregation installed with apartheid in 1948, and for his role in bringing multiracial democracy to South Africa, a country many feared would disintegrate into civil war (Nigerian Guardian, Monday, 17 June 2013).

Nelson Mandela, who was discharged from a more than 80-day stay in hospital on Sunday, spent 27 years as a prisoner of apartheid before embarking on a “long walk to freedom”, becoming South Africa’s first black president and a Nobel peace laureate (Vanguard September 01, 2013) .

But with the father of democratic South Africa now fighting for his life in the hospital, wild rumours have been flying around the Internet about what life will be like without Mandela for the white population (Guardian, 27 June 2013).

Another example of political framing of a health issue, was the coverage by the Punch news paper of August 23 2013, which juxtaposed Mugabe and Mandela:

“Between Mandela and Mugabe” (The Punch August 23, 2013)

• Findings and Discussion

The data presented here strongly suggest that there were significant differences in the coverage of the illness and hospitalization of Former South African president, Nelson Mandela. Zimbabwean papers focused on the story on Mugabe’s re-election, and placed news stories on Mandela in the inside pages. This is in sharp contrast to the coverage in Nigerian Newspapers.

Nigerian papers focused the Mandela’s illness and hospitalization even amidst serious local news items like the increased Boko haram attacks and the placing of emergency rule in three northern states. Thus, in line with the agenda setting theory, the Zimbabwean newspapers framed the issue by selecting what they want the public to see and discuss with regard to election in which Mugabe was re-elected, while they excluded issues on Mandela’s illness. This pattern of coverage echoes the opinion of Papacharissi and Oliveira who observed that: “When the media place stories in specific frames, they lend a different meaning to the news. The media increase or decrease the salience of issues, which allows the public to remember and make judgments on such issues” (2008: 52) . But this major difference may not be unconnected with ownership status of Zimbabwean and Nigerian papers. While out of the five Zimbabwean newspapers examined, three were State owned. On other hand, there is no newspaper ownership that is in the hands of the government or public. All the Nigerian

newspapers were privately owned. Literature has shown that ownership plays a critical role in determining the ideological leaning of the media, which in turn influences how they cover news event. This opinion also finds expression in an African media paradigm, which states: "He who pays the piper, dictates the tone."

The study also showed that the coverage in Nigerian newspaper was framed in terms of politics, virtues of democracy, good leadership and self sacrifice as epitomized by Mandela's struggle against the racist apartheid system in south Africa, for which he went to prison for 27 years. The papers were always portraying Mandela as suffering ill health today, as a result of his incarceration. This type of framing has implication for setting the agenda for a reflection and initiating discourse on exemplary leadership and democratic virtues. In Zimbabwe, as the study found, prior to the elections (after Mandela was admitted to hospital), the public media was fixated with presenting the Zanu-PF presidential candidate Robert Mugabe as a larger than life character, the only person who could solve the country's problems. After the elections, when Mandela was still in hospital, the public media was celebrating the victory of Zanu-PF and therefore relegated Mandela's story to the dustbins.

On the other hand, the privately owned media was fixated with pushing the opposition's agenda. It was portraying Tsvangirai as the only person who could pull Zimbabwe out of the political and economic quagmire it find itself in. After the elections, the issue was to expose how the election was stolen and as such Mandela's stories were completely ignored. So in the case of Zimbabwe, the newspapers were drawing public attention to a particular issue, that of elections in Zimbabwe. In this concept framing can be seen as closely linked to the agenda setting role of the media. This reaffirms the position of Tuchman (1978: ix) who contended that, "What the media does (sic) is to set the frames of reference that readers used to interpret and discuss public events".

Summary and Conclusion

The study examined frames in new coverage of the illness and hospitalization of Nelson Mandela in Zimbabwean and Nigeria. Five newspapers were examined for each country. While all the Nigeria papers examined in were privately owned, three of the Zimbabwean newspapers were government owned. In analyzing the content, the qualitative approach was adopted, and this involved examining textual content and trying to make meaning out of the presentation. The study examined the patterns and differentials that exist in the press coverage in Nigeria and Zimbabwean. Result showed that, While Zimbabwean papers focused on the story on Mugabe's re-election, and placed news stories on Mandela in the inside pages, Nigerian papers focused Mandela's illness and hospitalization even amidst serious local news items like the increased Boko haram attacks.

The study also found that the coverage in Nigerian newspaper was framed in terms of politics, virtues of democracy, good leadership and self sacrifice as epitomized by Mandela's struggle against the racist apartheid system in south Africa, for which he went to prison for 27 years.

As the study found, prior to the elections (after Mandela was admitted to hospital), the public media was fixated with presenting the Zanu-PF presidential candidate Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. On the other hand, the privately owned media was fixated with pushing the opposition's agenda.

We conclude that, during the within which Nelson Mandela was hospitalized, Zimbabwean and Nigerian newspapers framed the event in different ways. This may not be unconnected to the communication policies operative in both countries. Some of the newspapers examined in Zimbabwe, were state onwed while there are no state onwed newspapers in Nigeria. Zimbabwean newspapers were fixated on the election in two different ways. Nigerian papers were fixated on both Mandela's hospitalization and the Boko Haram insurgency. Also Zimbabwean newspapers had stories on Mandela tucked in inside pages, while most stories on Mandela occupied cover page in Nigerian papers. Story placement is a strong index of prominence and framing. We note that in the coverage of Mandela's illness and hospitalization by both countries within the period of the study, the frame was more within political, leadership and democratic frames than on health frame.

Limitations and Suggestion for Future Studies

One basic weakness of our study is the lack of quantitative analysis. Further studies could adopt a quantitative technique and examine content categories based on categories or frames found in extant studies.

There is need to carry out a cross national research on the frames adopted by the broadcast media in the coverage of the illness and hospitalization of Nelson Mandela. This present study could be improved upon by examining the role media ownership may play in the framing of related events. In doing this the inter-coder reliability of the content categories should be tested.

References

- Amin, H. (2002) 'Freedom as a Value in Arab Media: Perceptions and Attitudes among Journalists', *Political Communication* 19(2): 125-35.
- Anderson, A., Allan, S., Petersen, A. & Wilkerson C. (2005). Framing of nanotechnologies in the British

- newspapers, *Science Communication*, Vol. 27 No2 December 2005, 200-220.
- Bagdikian, B. (2004) *The New Media Monopoly*. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Dispensa, J. & Robert, B. (2003). Media's social construction of environmental issues: focus on global warming- A comparative study. *International Journal of sociology and social policy* 23(10), 74.
- Ekwueme, A. & Akpan, C. (2012). Mass media & Boko Haram insurrection: A call for reportorial paradigm shift. *Media Terrorism and Political Communication*. Nigeria: ACCE 2012.
- Entman, RM, 1993, Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured paradigm, *Journal of Communication*, (43)4, 51-58.
- Fairhurst, G & Sarr, R (1996), *The Art of Framing*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gamson, W. (1989). News as framing. *American Behavioral Scientist* 33,157-161.
- Golan, J. (2010). Editorials, Op-ed Columns Frame Medical Marijuana Debate *Newspaper Research Journal* • Vol. 31, No. 3 • summer 2010
- Iyengar, S. & Kinder, D. (1987) *News that matters*. Chicago: University of Chicago press.
- Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is any one responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Korsnick, A. & Brannon, L. (1993). The media and the foundations of presidential support: George bush and the Persian gulf conflict. *Journal of social issues*, 49: 167-182
- Lee, F. & Lin, A. (2006). *Newspaper editorial discourse and the politics of self-censorship in Hong Kong*. *Discourse & Society* Vol 17(3): 331-358
- Lawrence, R. (2004). Framing Obesity: The evolution of news discourse on public health issues. *Press and Politics* 9(3): 56-75.
- Mandela, N. (.....). *Long Walk to freedom*
- Mano, W. (2005). *Press Freedom, professionalism and proprietorship: Behind the Zimbabwean Media Divide*. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* © 2005 (University of Westminster, London), Special Issue, November 2005: 56-70. ISSN 1744-6708 (Print); 1744-6716 (Online)
- McChesney, R. (2004) *The Problem of the Media*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- McQuail, D., 1994. *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction* (3rd Edition), Thousand Oak, CA: Sage
- Mickiewicz, E. (2000) 'Institutional Incapacity, the Attentive Public, and Media Pluralism in Russia', in R. Gunther and A. Mughan (eds) *Democracy and the Media*, pp. 85-121. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Urdock, G, & Golding, P, 2005, *Culture, Communications and Political Economy in Curran & Gurevitch, Mass Media and Society* (4th ed), London: Hodder Arnold.
- Odoemelam C., Okeibunor, C and Adibe, N. (2012). Visual analysis of frames in newspaper coverage of flood disasters in Nigeria. *International Journal of Communication*. N0.14. pp. 47-61
- Odoemelam, C; Ebeze U, Okeibunor N. & Adibe, K. (2013). Frames in newspaper coverage of Boko haram insurgency in Nigeria: A visual analysis approach. Paper presented at the East African Communication Association, Nairobi Kenya. 9th-11 Oct, 2013.
- Oloredo, J. & Oyewole, A. (2013). Press Reportage of President Yar'Adua's Ill-health: A Study *New Media and Mass Communication*. Vol.9, 2013.
- Pakard, R. G. (2013). Media sustainability, in Banda, F (Ed) *UNESCO Series on Journalism Education Model curricula for Journalism education: A compendium of new*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Rooney, R. (2012). Characteristics of the Botswana Press. *Global Media Journal, African Edition* 2012 Vol 6 (1)
- Shah, D., Watts, M., Domke, D. & Fan, D. (2002). News framing and cueing of issue regimes. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 66 (2).
- Shoemaker, PJ, & Resse, SD. 1996, *Mediating the Message* (2nd ed), White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Sukosd, M. (2000) 'Democratic Transformation and the Mass Media in Hungary: From Stalinism to Democratic Consolidation', in R. Gunther and A. Mughan (eds) *Democracy and the Media*, pp. 122-64. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Takanshi, B. (2008). A comparative analysis of US and Canadian newspapers. *International Journal of Science Communication* 3(2008) 152-170.
- Zhao, Y. (1998) *Media, Market, and Democracy in China*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Zillman, D; Chen, L., Knobloch, S. & Callison, C. (2004) *Effects of lead framing on selective exposure to internet news reports*. *Communication Research*. Vol. 31. No. 1 february 2004, 58-81.
<http://www.voanews.com/content/mandela-hospitalized/1677788.html>
<http://leadership.ng/news/170713/mandela-mark-95th-birthday-hospital>