

## **Newspapers Coverage of Electricity Tariff increase in Nigeria: A Content Analysis of the Punch and the Nation Newspapers**

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### **Abstract**

*Power sector in Nigeria has been one of the challenging sectors for Nigerian development. It has faced challenges ranging from corruption, lack of infrastructure, insufficient power generation, inadequate supply of electricity to consumers, inflexible tariff system, to non-payment of large bill arrears by the power consumers. Despite all these, Nigerians have increasingly demanded for electricity in the country. This study examined newspaper coverage of tariff increase in the power sector to know how the issue was deemed important. The study used agenda-setting theory to buttress and explain the work while content analysis was the research design used to content analyse The Punch and The Nation newspapers for the period of six (6) months. The universe of the study was 366 out of which 192 was the sample size while coding sheet and coding guide were the instruments of data collection. Findings revealed that the selected newspapers did fairly well in their coverage on tariff increase in the power sector. Both newspapers gave prominence and high frequency to the stories reported. The study recommended that since so many people rely on media messages there is need for the print media to be more proactive on the interpretative function of the mass media and that media professionals should not rely solely on media briefings, conferences and press releases from electricity power brokers; they should equally get the opinions of the common man on the street and know what the masses are saying on any issue of importance.*

**Keywords:** Content Analysis, Newspapers, Newspapers Coverage, Power sector, Tariff Increase

## Introduction

Communication is crucial to the development of any society. The mass media are central to the provision of relevant communication for nation building. The press brings to the public notice, issues that require attention with a view to mobilizing development efforts in that area (Nwosu, 2004). Nigeria power sector has gone through various challenges which include under-investment and corruption in the sector, lack of infrastructural facilities which has resulted in insufficient generation of power and inadequate supply of electricity to consumers. High cost of production as often claimed by power operators has equally led to tariff increase times without number. Billing system in Nigeria has been a serious problem coupled with distribution and transmission losses. A lot of consumer do not pay their electricity bills, which include governments – federal, state and local, large commercial and industrial consumers as well as individuals (Kalejaye, 2012). Yet, the demand for electricity has been on the increase in Nigeria. Though, previous governments tried hard to ensure stable power supply through the commercialisation and privatisation policies but it was to no avail in the power sector (Onakoya, Onakoya, Jimi-Salami and Odedairo, 2013).

The increase demand for electricity supply in Nigeria is attributed to increased companies, population and personal income levels. This suggests that the increasing demand is not matched with increase in power sector infrastructural development. As a result, the Nigeria government liberalised the power sector during the privatisation policy of President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2001 to attract private investors. Despite the liberalisation of the industry the story has remained the same. Tariff increase persists almost on a yearly basis while government officials try to justify their action that tariff increase is the only way to enhance stable power supply in the country.

However, it has become a serious concern to continually mention the paltry electricity which Nigeria generates because it constitutes threat to the state that, more than 57 years after independence, Nigeria still generates below 5,000 megawatts of electricity. It is sad to consider that electricity generation for Nigeria, with her about 180 million people and a GDP of about \$537 billion, oscillates around 5,000 megawatts in December, 2017. In comparison, it is worthy of note that, South Africa, with a population of about 53 million and a GDP of \$350 billion, generates 44,000 megawatts. Spain has a GDP of \$1.4tn and generates 102,000 megawatts of electricity for her 47 million people (Olarewaju, 2017; Olowookere, 2017). Abiola and Adebayo, (2011) assert that Nigeria economy can never be fixed if the country's power sector remains unfixed.

Energy is an important input to production. Therefore, without electricity mass production of goods becomes virtually impossible. While erratic supplies of electricity disrupt production, voltage fluctuations negatively affect the durability of machines. Better electricity-related infrastructure can, thus, raise the efficiency and durability of physical capital. (Ahmed, 2010). Despite the economic palaver in Nigeria, tariff increase continues year-in-year-out. Tariff increase in the power sector has not only affected the

growth of business, but has also had an increase in the plight and hardship of Nigerians. Energy is an important input to production. Therefore, without electricity mass production of goods becomes virtually impossible. While erratic supplies of electricity disrupt production, voltage fluctuations negatively affect the durability of machines. Better electricity-related infrastructure can, thus, raise the efficiency and durability of physical capital. (Ahmed, 2010).

The work and functions of the mass media within the society cannot be overemphasised. Franceschelli and Tella (2011) submit that:

The media play an important role in modern democracies. For example, media provide a large proportion of the information with which policymakers and voters make decisions, as well as analysis and editorial content that may influence the conclusions reached by potential voters. (p.1).

Mass media influence the policies and decisions of the policy makers therefore, mass media serve to represent the voice of the masses. The media can change whatever situation if they continue to emphasise on the popular opinion. However, there is the possibility that there is bias in the media the way they carry out their duties and this has worried communication researchers, as well as many social and political commentators. Thus, the nature of mass media report on this event in enlightening the public constitutes the thrust of this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is observed, that there has been no documented research on the media coverage of electricity tariff increase in Nigeria. It is in the light of this that this study investigated newspaper coverage of electricity tariff increase which covered a period of six (6) months (October 2015-March 2016).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are:

- (i) To examine the types of stories on electricity tariff increase reported by *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers.
- (ii) To determine the direction of the stories on electricity tariff increase reported by *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers.
- (iii) To find out the frequency of reportage of stories on electricity tariff increase by *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers.
- (iv) To examine the prominence given to stories on electricity tariff increase by *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- (i) What are the types of the stories on electricity tariff increase reported *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers?
- (ii) What is the direction of the stories on electricity tariff increase reported by *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers?
- (iii) What is the frequency of reportage of stories on electricity tariff increase by *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers?
- (iv) What is the prominence given to stories on electricity tariff increase by *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers?

### Literature Review

Nigeria is one of the countries of the world with abundant human and natural resources while her energy deposit is surprisingly in excess. According to Ladan (2009), Nigeria is blessed with abundant renewable energy sources like wind, solar, biomass, geothermal and hydro but the country continues to experience epileptic power supply. Over 60% of Nigerians rely on wood fuel for their entire energy needs resulting in massive deforestation. Babanyara, Usman and Saleh (2010) corroborate that the country between 1990 and 2000 lost an average of 410,000 hectares of forest to deforestation without considering that the nation can generate power from solar energy to replace the conventional power generation. According to Aliyu, Ramli and Saleh, (2013), low power factor, high transmission and distribution are responsible to power blackout in Nigeria. They assert that the problems bedevilling the power sector in Nigeria stem from decades of neglect, mismanagement and inadequate capacity improvement. Most of the authors focused their attention on the challenges and potentials of power generation in Nigeria with limited details on the recent policies adopted by the Government to curtail the crisis and how the decision to always increase tariff to cover cost affects the citizenry.

### The Power Sector in Nigeria

Electricity generation plant was first installed in Lagos in 1898 (Isola, 2012). Since then, the country has not consolidated the gesture to commensurate with the expanding population. There has been a decline in electricity generation capacity despite an increase in population, with no visible plan to commensurately increase generating capacity. This caused electric power demand to increasingly overshoot available supply. By year 2000, the problem had sent Nigeria into electricity supply crisis. Therefore, the Federal Executive Council (FEC) in year 2001 established a reform policy to address the issue of power shortage and expand the economy to benefit the citizens and the prospective investors (Makwe, Akinwale and Atoyebi 2012). The reform policy as at the time was a welcome policy because experts believed that the erratic power supply in the country would be a forgotten issue (Agboola, 2011; Agunloye, 2008; Ojobo 2005).

According to Alohan (2012), as cited in Olugbenga, Jumah, and Phillips (2013, p.34), the problems which led to the reforms of power sector as highlighted by the Bureau

of Public Enterprises (2011) are “limited access to infrastructure, inadequate power generating capacity, inefficient usage capacity, lack of capital for investment, ineffective regulation and high technical losses and vandalism”. Years after the privatization was established major problems still persist such as distribution and transmission equipment problem, sabotage, security of gas transportation pipelines and the inefficiency of contractors handling most of the contracts meant to upgrade and improve power generation in Nigeria.

### **Empirical Studies**

Grace and Steve (2013) in their study titled “Recovery of Cost of Electricity Supply in the Nigerian Power”, stated that tariffs have been increased using the Multi-Year Tariff Order (MYTO) in 2008 to last for five years. From the result of their findings, increased tariffs have not resulted in significantly stabilisation of the Nigerian power sector. This reveals that there is difference in tariff increase of the study and power stabilization.

Aminu and Peterside (2014) carried out a study on the impact of privatisation of power sector in Nigeria. They concluded that there is an increase in tariff without commensurate electricity supply. They further state that the ordinary consuming masses are at the receiving end as their electricity bills go up in multiple folds. The argument of the government, according to Ayodeji (2012), is that price increase and total deregulation of electricity tariff would attract “foreign investors” but such is yet to manifest.

Zubairu and Abbasoglu (2014) in their study suggested that the absence of a cost-reflective tariff is one of the reasons for the failure of the power sector to serve Nigerians in the past three decades. Anyaka and Edokobi (2014) state that the increased electricity tariff has negative impact on the end-users since there is no significant increase in the amount of power supply as promised to complement the situation, rather, the existing capacity dropped drastically by more than half of what it used to be and resulted to frequent nationwide load shedding. They advised that Government should do more by providing all the necessary assistance to the successful investors (beneficiaries) in the deregulation exercise to enable them do their part and make power available for Nigerians at affordable price.

Amadi (2012) maintains that the absence of a cost reflective tariff caused the inability of the power sector to render effective services. Grace and Steve (2013) stated that there is no significant difference in power generation despite the increase in electricity tariff through MYTO since 2008 and that the increase in power tariff has no impact on power generation.

It is observed, from the literature, that there has been no major research on the media coverage of electricity tariff increase in the country. It is in the light of this that this study investigated newspaper coverage of tariff increase in the power sector which covered a period of six (6) months (October 2015-March 2016). The period was chosen

because that was the period when electricity stakeholders notified the public about tariff increase which generated controversy. However, it should be noted that content analysis exists on various topical issues in Nigeria but these researchers have not come across anyone on electricity tariff increase.

For example, Onwubere in 2016 looked at the content analysis of three newspapers to analyse the frequency, nature and prominence of the coverage given to 2015 presidential election campaigns, the political party that was featured most and the total number of news contents that were carried. The finding revealed that there was inequitable distribution of newspaper coverage among the political parties covered while newspaper stories on 2015 electioneering campaigns were not thoroughly analysed in features and editorials because majority of the stories appeared in form of news stories.

Again, Lamidi and Olisa (2016) content analysed newspaper framing of the APC Change Mantra in the 2015 Nigerian Presidential Election. Their finding showed that the framing of APC change was dominantly positive throughout the 2015 presidential election. In the year 2016, Bassey (2016) carried out a research on the coverage of citizens' socio-economical rights and political issues in the *Pioneer Newspaper* owned by the Government of Akwa-Ibom State. The researcher discovered that prominence was not given to the stories reported on socio-economic rights and political issues by the studied newspaper.

Ogwo (2016) carried out a study on the analysis of citizen journalists' reports of the 2015 Nigeria General Elections. The outcome of his study revealed that stories covered on the topic were mainly negative. In the same vein, Ekhareafo (2016) used content analysis design to study press coverage of women and children's rights in Nigeria. The outcome of his work showed that the nature of the coverage was more of news; prominence was not given to the issue raised because only 1% of the content analysed was in the front page but the direction of the coverage was favourable.

Ududo and Iwok (2017) did a study on the contributions of newspapers to the development of fishing industry in the coastal communities of Akwa-Ibom State in Nigeria. The findings revealed that nothing was reported on the development on any fishing activities in the coastal area of Akwa-Ibom State. Therefore, newspapers in Nigeria both national and local did not take fishing seriously in the coastal area of Nigeria. Furthermore, Talabi (2017) did a content analysis on newspapers reportage of housewives' abuse in *the Punch and Vanguard newspapers* from January to June, 2016. He submitted that though the newspapers studied reported housewives' abuse but the stories were inside page stories — prominence was not given to the topic. Again, the angle frame given to the same topic was neutral.

Furthermore, Gayer, and Viscusi, (2002) did a research on how newspaper used housing market data to examine the relationship between newspaper coverage of local hazardous waste sites and housing prices. Their major concern was to measure newspaper

publicity with the number of superfund-related articles and the number of such articles that focus on the risk levels at the sites. Their findings revealed that newspaper publicity on the perceived environmental health risk on hazardous waste sites and housing prices could lead residents to lower their perceptions of risk or lead them to increase their expectations of a clean-up or both because the residents used the newspapers to update their knowledge on the environmental risk.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on agenda-setting theory. It presupposes that mass media sets the agenda for public opinion by highlighting certain issues. The agenda-setting theory states that the media tell the audience not so much what to think as what to think about. The major thrust of the theory according to Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2012, p. 89) are that; “the mass media do not reflect social reality because news is filtered, chosen and shaped by newsroom staff”. They explain further that “few media agenda, which were chosen by professional gatekeepers, lead people to perceive given issues as important”. The agenda setting role of the media in this wise is expected to raise the issue of tariff increase to the level of public discussion in Nigeria. The theory makes us to understand tariff increase in the sense that media discussions on such issue could become the public agenda therefore raising issues to the level of public discussions. The frequency of reportage on tariff increase will make it too important to be ignored. Baran and Davis (2003) support that the press prioritizes issues by setting agenda while such priorities become public agenda.

### **Methodology**

Content analysis was the research design used to execute the study. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) explain that, content analysis as a research design is anchored on the premise that it is systematic, objective, quantitative in nature and that, its unbiased and heuristic ability in describing communication contents is a plus to it. Content analysis is a method of studying and analysing in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables. The universe of this study comprised all editions published by the two selected national newspapers (*The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers) from October 2015 to March 2016 because the period equally constituted the period when the issue of electricity tariff increase became another public issue of discuss in Nigeria. The two newspapers were purposively selected because they are among the major newspapers in Nigeria and among the most read dailies with visibility in print and online for sometimes now and they are listed among the top 50 Nigeria Newspapers with wider coverage of issues and popularity (Amobi, 2010; Onlinenewspapers.com, n.d). Therefore, 366 editions constituted the universe of the study irrespective of their days of publication. Simple random sampling techniques

through lottery ballot was used to choose sample size after using Taro Yamane formula to determine the sample size at 95% confidence level thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N * (e)^2}$$
$$n = \frac{366}{1+366 (0.05)^2}$$
$$n = 192$$

The instruments of data collection were coding sheet and coding guide. The units of analysis in the study were words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, pictures, cartoons, editorials, news stories, features, commentaries and opinion articles. The content categories were classified as types of stories, direction of stories, frequency of stories, depth of stories and prominence of stories (please see Nwodo, 2006, p. 88-89; Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, p. 159-161).

**(i) Types of the Stories:** Whether stories carried by the selected newspapers were news, features, editorials, letters, articles, business and cartoons.

**(ii) Direction of the Story:** It means whether the stories covered by the selected newspapers were:

(a) **Favourable** – In this research, favourable means whether the report carried by the newspaper was favourable to people and support people’s opinion against the tariff increase.

(b) **Unfavourable** – In this research, it means whether the report was in support of the tariff increase.

(c) **Neutral** – In this study, it means whether the story was unbiased, neither clearly in support nor against the electricity tariff increase.

**(iii) Frequency of Coverage:** This means the number of times the stories carried by the selected samples appeared in a single edition of the newspaper. It means, 1-3 times — low, 4-6 times — average, 7 times and above — high.

**(iv) Prominence:** This implies the placement accorded to the stories in the selected newspaper samples. The story for instance, could be placed in the Front Page (FP), Inside Page (IP) and Back Page (BP). Where a story is placed determines to an extent, its level of significance or importance.

(a.) **Front Page:** A story displayed on the front page is more prominent than one tucked in inner pages. Similarly, a story on the front page with a banner headline is more prominent than the one whose headline covers fewer columns

(b.) **Back Page:** Story published on the back page enjoys more prominence than inside pages’ stories, though some of the national newspapers reserve their back pages for sports stories, but this method is often broken when there is an important story to display.

(c.) **Inside Page:** A story published in inside pages is relevant, though not all that prominent as the one published on the front page.

Data generated were analysed within the context of the research questions using simple percentage frequency method and charts for easy interpretation and analysis.

## Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 1: Number of Stories Covered by the Newspapers**

Newspapers	Oct. 2015	Nov. 2015	Dec. 2015	Jan. 2016	Feb. 2016	March 2016	Total
<b>Punch</b>	11(48%)	10(53%)	5(42%)	6(55%)	7(54%)	5(83%)	44(52%)
<b>Nation</b>	12(52%)	9(47%)	7(58%)	5(45%)	6(46%)	1(17%)	40(48%)
<b>Total</b>	23(100%)	19(100%)	12(100%)	11(100%)	13(100%)	6(100%)	84(100%)

**Source:** Content analysis, 2017

Out of the 192 editions sampled from the month of October 2015 to March 2016, 84 stories were reported on tariff increase in Nigeria by the two newspapers studied. This is relatively fair in the sense that there are so many other events competing for media attention daily. Despite that, the issue of tariff increase alone got 84 stories share of the media attention. *The Punch* newspaper carried the highest number of 44 stories (52%). Though, the two newspapers closely contested for the story with *The Nation* newspaper having 48% of the stories. It should be noted here that the month of October 2015 has the highest newspaper coverage on this issues.

**Table 2: Types of the Stories**

Newspaper	News	Editorial	Features	Cartoon	Article	Business	Letters	Total/%
<b>Punch</b>	21	3	2	2	5	6	5	44 (52%)
<b>The Nation</b>	18	2	1	3	2	11	3	40(48%)
<b>Total</b>	39	5	3	5	7	17	8	84(100%)
<b>%</b>	46	6	4	6	8	20	10	100

**Source:** Content analysis, 2017

Table 2 displayed the types of stories in the two newspapers sampled. The electricity tariff increase stories within the newspapers were majorly presented in news format; followed by the business stories on tariff increase, letters, articles, cartoons, and editorials. Feature articles only carried the stories 3 times throughout the period examined in all the newspapers combined (clarification on Feature and Article(Newspaper articles frequently do not list authors. They are less serious in tone compared to the feature. Feature stories will normally attribute authorship. Features are longish in nature compared to an article. In a serious issue or event, features would call for lot of investigation, and details. Similarly, it can be a topic from any genre. Features are usually

filed in by more experienced journalists. Newspaper articles can inform the audience of a particular event or issue using formal, simple and factual language while feature articles are subjective, emotional, go beyond information provided by an article and can be about anything. They don't go outdated soon as newspaper articles do).

**Table 3: Direction of Stories**

Variables	The Punch		The Nation		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Favourable</b>	11	25	9	22.5	20	23.8
<b>Unfavourable</b>	18	41	17	42.5	35	41.66
<b>Neutral</b>	15	34	14	35	29	34.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Content analysis, 2017

The direction of the story within the sampled editions showed that 41.66% of this was not favourable because the stories supported electricity tariff increase — though there were justifications provided to support the increase. About 34.52 of the stories was neutral the way they were reported because they were neither in clear support of the increase nor clearly stood against the increase. However, 23.8% of the reported stories on electricity tariff increase in Nigeria was favourable as reported by newspapers sampled. It means that the large chunk of the story was not favourable.

**Table 4: Frequency of the Story**

Newspaper	Low	Average	High	Total
<b>Punch</b>	28 (55%)	12 (52%)	4 (40%)	44
<b>The Nation</b>	23 (45%)	11 (48%)	6 (60%)	40
<b>Total</b>	51 (61%)	23 (27%)	10 (12%)	84 (100%)

**Source:** Content analysis, 2017

Table four revealed that most of the editions of the newspapers sampled had the story on electricity tariff increase carried between 1 and 3 times in a single edition. For instance, 51(61%) of the editions carried the story in less than 3 times within a single edition while only few of the editions sampled carried the story in any related form above 3 times. Within the editions studied, 23(27%) of the studied newspapers carried the story between 4 and 6 times within a single edition while 10(12%) editions carried the story 7 times and above within a single edition.

**Table 5: Prominence of the Story**

Variables	The Punch	The Nation	Total
Front Page	10 (23%)	8 (20%)	18 (21%)
Back Page	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Inside Page	34(77%)	32 (80%)	66 (79%)
<b>Total</b>	44 (100%)	40 (100%)	84 (100%)

**Source:** Content analysis, 2017

Data presentation in table 5 showed that 18(21%) editions carried the story on the front page while 66(79%) had the story on electricity tariff increase published inside the page. Though the stories appeared more inside the page, the 21% prominence given to the story is good enough since so many events compete for the front page of newspapers on the daily basis.

### Discussion of Findings

Two newspapers — *The Punch and The Nation Newspapers* were content analysed to know how the two newspapers reported the event of electricity tariff increase in Nigeria within six months, that is, towards the end of year 2015 and the early part of 2016 (last quarter of 2015 and the first quarter of 2016). Results from the data analysis showed that the two newspapers closely contested the reportage of the event but, *The Punch Newspaper* carried the highest number of stories on the topic having 52% of the stories reported. It is worthy of note to mention that *The Nation Newspaper* carried the highest number of stories on the topic in the last quarter of 2015 but *The Punch* had the highest number of the stories on the event in the first quarter of 2016 and equally had the total highest number of reportage in all. However, it should be noted that any of the two newspapers could record the highest number of reportage on this topic if more editions were to be content analysed based on the way both of them closely reported the event.

### Research Question 1: What are the types of the stories on electricity tariff increase reported by *The Punch and The Nation Newspapers*?

Table 1 on the types of stories reported on electricity tariff increase by the newspapers revealed that the editions studied reported the events more in form of news stories. It means that the newspapers studied actually carried out their surveillance function as they ought to. This is in agreement with Nwosu (2004) and Onwubere (2016) that the press brings to the notice issue of importance to public attention. The correlation function of the press was equally taken care off by analysing the stories in form of editorials, features, and letters to the editor — though, the proportion of this was small compared to the stories displayed in form of news for the topic being studied.

## **Research Question 2: What is the direction of the stories on electricity tariff increase reported by *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers?**

From the data analysis, it was discovered that newspapers reportage on the electricity tariff increase was unfavourable. For example, there were reportage of stories where justifications were provided on the need to increase electricity tariff. Probably, such stories came through press releases from government and electricity providers and such were reported to the public. There were equally stories meant to persuade the public to accept tariff increase on electricity based on the cost of providing electricity for the public but, all of them were negative and contrary to electricity consumers' opinions. This is contrary to Lamidi and Olisa (2016) who found out that the framing of APC change was dominantly positive throughout the 2015 presidential election. About 41.66% of the stories did not support the public outcry against the tariff increase the way they were reported giving justification to the increase. This is contrary to the popular public voices that electricity tariff should not be increased because of the erratic power supply of electricity in the country. As a rider to that, 34.52% of the stories reported was also neutral by neither supporting nor going against the tariff increase. Probably, the objectivity and balance benchmark of the media were observed in this sense. However, it was a huge surprise to know that the favourable stories that supported public opinion that electricity tariff in the country should not be increased got only 23.8% of the entire stories reported. In this sense, the reportage on this issue was one-sided; people's opinion might not have been properly taken care of or captured. This current study further legitimises the study of Ogwo (2016) that Nigerian newspapers are negative in their reportage. The unfavourable stories might have been as a results of press conferences and press releases that came from the electricity power brokers.

## **Research Questions 3: What is the frequency of reportage of stories on electricity tariff increase by *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers?**

Research question three was designed to know how many times the story on electricity tariff appeared in each edition of the newspapers. It was discovered that the stories appeared between 1 and 3 times in most editions. The stories that appeared 1 and 3 times in a single edition had 61%, stories that appeared between 4 and 6 times had 27% while stories that appeared from 7 times and above in a single edition were just 10 (12%) out of the 84 stories. Therefore, the frequency of stories within a single edition was low. The two newspapers are not to blame for this because, so many other things competed for the newspapers' space within the same period. Despite that, some editions were still able to carry the story in various forms — features, articles, letters, business stories, editorials, news, and cartoons.

## **Research Questions 4: What is the prominence given to stories on electricity tariff increase by *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers?**

Research question four wanted to know the importance attached to the story of electricity tariff increase by the newspapers studied. It is interesting to note that 21% of the stories analysed were on the front page. This is quite amazing. Despite the importance of other stories within the period, prominence was given to the story. This also disagrees with the work of Bassey (2016) which discovered that prominence was not given to the stories reported on socio-economic rights and political issues by the studied newspaper. This study and Bassey's research dwelt on issues that concerned social and economic activities of the citizens. Notwithstanding, it is of great surprise to know that no single edition carried the story on their back page — this is not good enough since both newspapers examined usually carry diverse boiling issues on their back page. After the front page, back page of the print media is the next most important. Therefore, there is the need to publish on the back page stories of events of national importance.

### Conclusion

The study examined Newspaper coverage of tariff increase in the power sector by two selected Newspapers, *The Punch* and *The Nation*. The media are known to be indispensable in any society because of their potency to shape germane issues and set such issues before the public. It is used to inform both the public and the government, create a particular view in the minds of the people, educate, sensitize and mobilize the people for actions and serve as social regulator. Many aspects of this study as observed from the data collected and analysed have shown that, the two Newspapers content analysed reported the topic of discussion within the period examined. More so, the data generated have shown that, these two Newspapers really covered the manifest content of electricity tariff increase in Nigeria. Both newspapers reported the types of the stories, direction of story, frequency and prominence of coverage.

From the result of the study, the research showed that out of 192 editions of the two selected newspapers (*The Punch and The Nation*), 84 stories on the topic of discussion were reported on tariff increase. Though, 84 stories in a 192 editions sampled was small, but, the number was significant. This implied that the press did a relatively seeming adequate report on the issue within the period studied. Thus, corroborating the views of the proponents of the agenda setting theory of the press that the public sees as important, what the media tell them. The findings of this study pointed to the fact that the press did fairly well in the coverage of tariff increase in the power sector.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made: Print media should correlate part of the society the more by setting the agenda and raising issues of public importance like the electricity tariff increase to the level of public

discussion to effectively balance their four cardinal points functions. In this study, surveillance function overshadowed other functions. Since mass media professionals are knowledgeable in shaping public opinions — they should use features, editorials, articles and other nature of stories to enlighten the members of the public. There is the need to do critical analysis on the effect of stories or events like the electricity tariff increase so that members of the society could avail themselves of all sides to the issues at hand. Since so many people rely on media messages there is need for the print media to be more proactive on the interpretative function of the mass media.

Newspaper editors of these two newspapers should endeavour to give prominence to important or controversial national issues by publishing the stories both on the front and back pages since their back and front pages usually carry diverse issues.

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### Appendix

**Table 1: Coding Guide for Analysis of Newspaper Coverage on Tariff Increase in the Power Sector in Nigeria Using *Punch and the Nation* (October 2015-March 2016)**

Study Purpose	Unit of Analysis	Content Categories	Code Letter
To determine the degree of newspaper coverage given to Tariff Increase	(1) Newspaper	<i>Punch</i>	a
		<i>The Nation</i>	b
	(2) Months	October 2015	C
		November 2015	d
		December 2015	e
		January 2016	f
		February 2016	g
		March 2016	h
	(3) Types of the Story	News	i
		Editorials	j
		Features	k
		Cartoon/Pix	l
		Article	m
		Business Column	n o
	(4) Direction of the Story	Favourable	P
		Unfavourable	q
		Neutral	r
	(5) Volume/Frequency of the story	Extremely Low	s
		Low	t
		High	u
	(6) Placement/Prominence	Front Page	V
		Back Page	w
		Inside Page	x
	(7) Extent to which the story enhance Reversal of tariff Increase	Total Reversal	y
		Partial Reversal	z
		Non Reversal	aa
	(8) Suggested Solution	Audience Opinion	Bb
		Commentaries	cc
		Straight News	dd