

# MEDIA AGENDA SETTING AND PARTY DEFECTIONS IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF VOTER PERCEPTIONS AND NEWSPAPER FRAMING IN LAGOS AND ABUJA (2015–2024)

Prof. Sunday Olayinka Alawode<sup>1</sup>, Adeyemi Adegoke Adelowo<sup>2</sup>, Precious Damilola Oginni<sup>3</sup>  
& Joy Kelechi Godwin<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Broadcasting, Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo, Lagos  
[Sunday.alawode@lasu.edu.ng](mailto:Sunday.alawode@lasu.edu.ng)/+2348033881520

<sup>2</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State  
[adelowo.adeyemi@adelekeuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:adelowo.adeyemi@adelekeuniversity.edu.ng)/[adelowoadeyemi6@gmail.com](mailto:adelowoadeyemi6@gmail.com)/+2347058520283

<sup>3</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State  
[oginniprecious02@gmail.com](mailto:oginniprecious02@gmail.com)/+2348089779930

<sup>4</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State  
[joyu305@gmail.com](mailto:joyu305@gmail.com)/+2348168426193

## ARTICLE INFO

**Article No.:** 0161

**Accepted Date:** 23/01/2026

**Published Date:** 16/02/2026

**Type:** Research

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between media reportage and the perception of political stability within Nigeria's Fourth Republic between 2015 and 2024. Utilising a triangulation of Agenda Setting and Spiral of Silence theories, the research examines how the volume and framing of party switching narratives influence the psychological climate of the electorate. The methodology employed a survey of 400 registered voters in Lagos and Abuja, determined through the Taro Yamane formula, alongside a content analysis of 1,080 newspaper editions from The Punch, The Vanguard, and The Nation. Findings reveal a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.682$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between the volume of media reports and public perceptions of party instability. Content analysis indicated that 72 percent of stories utilised game changer frames, which correlated with a high mean perception score = 4.10) regarding party weakness. The study concludes that media narratives are significantly associated with a normalisation of instability in public perception and represent a critical psychological variable in the cognitive environment of Nigerian politics. These findings suggest that the communicative environment facilitates a perception of institutional fragility, regardless of the underlying ideological or economic drivers of political behaviour.

**Keywords:** Agenda Setting, Democratic Consolidation, Media Framing, Nigeria, Party Defection.

## Introduction

Political parties are theoretically designed to aggregate social interests and manage the peaceful transition of power (Cheeseman & Fisher, 2019). In many African states, however, parties often function as vehicles for resource accumulation and elite patronage rather than ideological blocs (Ibrahim, 2022; Oarhe, 2010). This creates a volatile ecosystem where political loyalty is frequently transactional. In the Nigerian context, the period between 2015 and 2024 has been marked by significant fluidity in party membership (Aleyomi, 2022). This timeframe encompasses the historic 2015 transition of power, the consolidation of the All Progressives Congress in 2019, and the emergence of a three-way race in 2023 (Nwangwu, 2023; Onapajo & Babalola, 2020). During these cycles, the mass migration of governors and legislators between dominant parties has become a recurring trend (Yiaga Africa, 2023). While institutional weaknesses such as the lack of internal party democracy are well documented (Ibrahim & Iyekekpolo, 2022), the communication infrastructure that mirrors and potentially amplifies this instability requires further empirical scrutiny.

The mass media operates as a significant institution in shaping the perceived viability of political organizations (Oso, 2021). Through the agenda-setting mechanism, news outlets determine the salience of specific political issues in the public domain. In Nigeria, political reportage often emphasises the "horse race" aspect of elections, saturating the public sphere with narratives of impending party collapses (Pate & Dauda, 2019). Existing scholarship has explored the institutional and economic drivers of defection, yet there is a shortage of empirical inquiry into how media framing conditions public and elite perceptions of party stability. While it is established that media can create a bandwagon effect by framing specific events as strategic masterstrokes, the extent to which these frames correlate with a perceived loss of party confidence among the electorate remains under-examined.

The core problem addressed by this study is the potential for the media to construct a perceived reality that validates political instability through specific framing techniques. By prominently featuring rumours of defection and utilising frames that portray such movements as strategic maneuvers, the press may inadvertently create a self-fulfilling prophecy of party failure. This media-constructed environment can exert pressure on political actors to align with the perceived winning side to avoid isolation, a concept grounded in the Spiral of Silence theory. Without empirically isolating the media's contribution to these perceptions, the psychological and communicative drivers of membership fluidity remain unchecked (Yagboyaju & Simbine, 2020). Therefore, this research investigates the correlation between the volume of speculative newspaper reportage and public perception of party stability in Lagos and Abuja between 2015 and 2024.

The primary objective is to determine the extent to which media framing of political party crises influenced public perception of party viability in Lagos and Abuja between 2015 and 2024. This involves an analysis of how the language and tone of reporting shape the electorate's belief in the ability of a party to remain stable or survive. The second objective is to analyse the correlation between the volume of media coverage regarding speculated defections and the public perception of party instability during the election cycles of 2019 and 2023. By mapping the frequency of defection rumours against perception indices, the study seeks to establish the strength of the relationship between media agenda setting and public opinion.

To address the research problem, specific objectives guide the inquiry into public perception rather than political behaviour. The study aims to determine the extent to which media framing of party crises influenced the perception of party viability in Lagos and Abuja between

2015 and 2024. Additionally, it analyses how the language and tone of reporting shape the electorate's belief in a party's stability. Finally, the research seeks to establish the correlation between the volume of speculative media coverage and public perception of party instability during the 2019 and 2023 election cycles.

The research focuses on media agenda setting and perceived party instability from 2015 to 2024, covering the election cycles of 2015, 2019, and 2023. Geographically, the survey is restricted to registered voters in Lagos and Abuja. Because data is drawn exclusively from these two urban centers, the findings are not nationally generalisable and reflect only the perceptions of voters in these jurisdictions. The analysis is limited to print media, specifically *The Punch*, *The Vanguard*, and *The Nation*. These publications were selected for their wide circulation and historical influence in setting the political agenda. While social media is influential, this study focuses on traditional print media to maintain a focused inquiry into established journalistic framing

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual Review**

The study moves beyond a thematic summary of isolated concepts to propose an integrated triangulation where Media Agenda Setting, Party Defection, and Democratic Consolidation function as interlocking components of political instability. In the Nigerian Fourth Republic, the media serves as the primary catalyst that shapes the perception of political reality, which in turn triggers rational-choice defections, ultimately eroding the foundations of democratic maturity.

#### **Agenda Setting and Reality Construction**

The conceptual point of departure is the evolution of Agenda Setting from the simple transfer of issue salience to the active construction of political attributes. While McCombs and Shaw (1972) established the power of the media to prioritise topics, contemporary Nigerian scholarship (Udeze & Nwodu, 2023; Oso, 2021) identifies second-level agenda setting as the mechanism through which the media determines the attribute salience of political entities.

In this context, the media constructs the reality of party politics by highlighting specific internal crises while suppressing others. By consistently framing a party as distressed or fractured (Pate & Dauda, 2019), the media manufactures a narrative of inevitable failure. This narrative acts as a cognitive trigger. It primes the political elite and the electorate to view certain platforms as non-viable, initiating a psychological shift that precedes physical movement. Thus, the media does not merely report instability. It provides the framing that makes instability appear as the only logical conclusion for political actors (Amobi, 2019).

#### **Framing and the Rational Choice of Defection**

The transition from media narrative to political action is bridged by the concept of Party Defection (Cross-carpeting). Rather than viewing defection as an isolated event, this review operationally links it to media framing as a rational-choice response to a perceived loss of utility. When the media creates a bandwagon effect by framing defections as strategic masterstrokes (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2020), it provides the psychological validation for politicians seeking survival. This aligns with the politics of the belly (Adebayo, 2025), where the politician, responding to the media-generated perception of a sinking ship, moves to a more viable platform to secure state resources. Consequently, the media acts as an accelerant. By normalising the gale of defections (Azubike et al., 2025), it renders constitutional barriers like Section 68(1) (g) culturally irrelevant. The transactional nature of these movements, driven by the push and pull

factors identified by Yusufu and Ogaji (2022), reduces political parties to special-purpose vehicles (Omotola & Aremu, 2020) rather than stable ideological platforms.

### **Systematic De-consolidation**

The final stage of this causal chain is the erosion of Democratic Consolidation. While consolidation traditionally refers to the unlikelihood of a reversion to authoritarianism (Cheeseman & Fisher, 2019), it is redefined in this study by the stability of political parties and the existence of a viable opposition (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019). The conceptual map reveals that the interplay between transactional media framing and opportunistic defection creates a cycle of de-consolidation. When media narratives consistently favour the winning side and marginalise opposition actors, they facilitate the contraction of the political space toward a one-party dominant state (Azubike et al., 2025). As opposition leaders systematically defect to the ruling party to access patronage, the checks and balances essential for a robust democracy are hollowed out (Ibrahim & Iyekekpolo, 2022). Consequently, the inability to manage party transitions and enforce discipline constitutes a significant barrier to maturing a democratic culture (Jega, 2023), as the system remains trapped in a loop of personal ambition over institutional loyalty.

<b>Conceptual Stage</b>	<b>Role in the Argument</b>	<b>Theoretical Basis</b>
<b>Media Framing</b>	Sets the stage by defining party viability or failure.	Second-Level Agenda Setting
<b>Party Defection</b>	The behavioural act triggered by the media-constructed reality.	Rational Choice / Elite Theory
<b>Democratic Consolidation</b>	The systemic casualty of the narrative-behaviour loop.	Institutionalisation Theory

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the integration of Agenda Setting Theory and the Spiral of Silence Theory. These frameworks move beyond descriptive utility to provide the operational basis for the research hypotheses and the design of the survey instrument. By combining these theories, the study accounts for both the cognitive influence of media narratives and the subsequent behavioural responses of political actors in Nigeria.

#### **Agenda Setting Theory**

Propounded by McCombs and Shaw (1972), this theory posits that the media determines the salience of issues in the public domain. For the purpose of this study, the theory is operationalised through Attribute Salience, which is the second level of agenda setting. This level suggests that the media does not merely bring a party to public attention but actively assigns specific evaluative characteristics to that party, such as being a sinking ship or being in a state of terminal crisis.

In terms of operationalisation, this construct is measured through survey items that assess the frequency of news exposure and the perceived credibility of defection reports. For example, Item 4 and Item 8 of the questionnaire specifically track how media saturation of crisis stories influences the respondent's cognitive ranking of party stability. The primary proposition here is that a high volume of media reports on internal party friction directly correlates with a decline in the perceived viability of that platform among the political elite.

#### **Spiral of Silence Theory**

Proposed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, this theory suggests that individuals possess a quasi-statistical organ that allows them to sense the prevailing climate of opinion. Due to a

fundamental fear of isolation, individuals are more likely to voice opinions or take actions that align with the perceived majority. In the context of Nigerian politics between 2015 and 2024, this fear of isolation is operationalised as the fear of political irrelevance or loss of access to state patronage.

This theory is operationalised in the study through survey items that measure the perception of the winning side and the pressure to align with dominant political trends. Item 12 and Item 15 specifically map onto the spiral of silence construct by evaluating whether a politician's decision to defect is motivated by the media-generated narrative of an inevitable majority. The core proposition is that when media outlets frame the ruling party as an invincible majority, opposition members will defect to avoid the social and economic isolation associated with being on the losing side.

### **Theoretical Integration and Hypotheses**

Clarification on Hypotheses and Analysis: While hypotheses reference behavioural implications such as legislative switching, the present study empirically tests only perceptual relationships between media volume and voter perceptions on party instability. References to the behavioural defection are therefore interpreted as theoretical inferences grounded in Agenda and Spiral of Silence frameworks rather than directly measured variables

The interaction between these two theories creates a causal path where Agenda Setting builds the perception of reality and the Spiral of Silence drives the behavioural outcome of defection. Based on this integration, the study formulates testable hypotheses to bridge the gap between theory and empirical data. Hypothesis One predicts a significant relationship between the frequency of media reports on party crises and the actual rate of legislative switching. Hypothesis Two posits that media framing of a political party as the winning side significantly increases the likelihood of bandwagon defections. Finally, Hypothesis Three suggests that the perceived fear of political isolation serves as a stronger predictor of party switching than ideological conviction.

### **Operational Mapping of Research Items**

To ensure the framework is explanatory, specific sections of the questionnaire are mapped directly to these theoretical constructs. The construct of Media Salience is measured by items 1 and 2, which focus on the intensity of defection news. The construct of Attribute Salience is operationalised through items 6 and 9, which evaluate the specific framing of party distress. The Fear of Isolation construct is tested via items 11 and 13, which explore the desire for political belonging. Finally, the Spiral Effect is measured by items 18 and 20, which record the actual intent or action of shifting party loyalty in response to the perceived majority..

### **Empirical Review**

Scholarship on Nigerian political instability between 2019 and 2024 reveals distinct thematic clusters.

A substantial body of work attributes political movement to internal party failures and the structural nature of the Nigerian state. Omotola and Aremu (2020) utilised a qualitative approach to examine political entrepreneurship, discovering that approximately 70% of defections are driven by the necessity to access state resources and patronage rather than ideological disagreement. This perspective is reinforced by Ibrahim and Iyekekpolo (2022), who argue that the winner takes all nature of Nigerian politics renders opposition financially unsustainable, compelling politicians to defect to the ruling center for survival. Similarly, Aleyomi (2022) examined legal frameworks and concluded that the inconsistent judicial interpretation of Section 68(1)(g) of the Constitution has emboldened politicians to defect

without fear of losing their seats. These studies provide a robust foundation for the material incentives of defection but focus primarily on the physical act rather than the cognitive environment that precedes it.

Focusing on the communication aspect, Pate and Dauda (2019) analysed media patterns in the 2019 elections and found that the press frequently prioritises personalities over policies, thereby amplifying the significance of individual defectors. Nwangwu (2023) extended this analysis to the 2023 elections, observing that the media framed the Group of Five Governors crisis in the Peoples Democratic Party as a death knell for the party, which significantly demarketed the opposition. Furthermore, Egwu (2022) provided a linguistic analysis of newspaper headlines, noting a prevalence of heroic metaphors such as decamped or stormed when reporting defections. This linguistic choice subconsciously validates the act as a display of power rather than betrayal. While these studies identify that the media frames events, there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding how these frames are psychologically internalised by the political elite and the electorate to create a sense of inevitable instability.

Reviewing the consequences of these trends, Onapajo and Babalola (2020) and the Centre for Democracy and Development (2023) posited that the high rate of defections has led to the APC's grip on the political space, drifting Nigeria toward a dominant party state. Their findings suggest that while media coverage drives the excitement of the transfer window, the long term effect is voter apathy as the electorate struggles to distinguish between parties. These works successfully map the macro-level consequences of instability but do not investigate the micro-level perceptual shifts that occur within the individual voter or politician before the system reaches this state of de-consolidation.

### **Identification of the Research Gap**

The existing literature is comprehensive in its analysis of the economic and institutional causes of party switching, yet it exhibits a significant gap at the perceptual and psychological level of analysis. Most Nigerian studies focus on political behaviour as an established fact measuring the number of defectors or the economic reasons for their movement rather than investigating the psychological climate that makes such behaviour appear necessary.

The gap in current scholarship is not merely a lack of mixed-methods research, as many scholars have utilised varied approaches. Rather, the deficiency lies in the failure to measure how the perception of party distress, as constructed by media framing, serves as a psychological precursor to the spiral of silence and subsequent defection. This study addresses this gap by focusing on the perceptual dimensions of instability. It explores how the cognitive internalisation of media narratives creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of party collapse, a dimension of political behaviour that remains largely neglected in the current focus on patronage and legal loopholes.

### **Methodology**

The study employs a survey research design supported by content analysis to assess the influence of media volume on the psychological climate of the Nigerian electorate. To eliminate temporal bias, content analysis utilises a stratified random sampling of 1,080 newspaper editions from 2015 to 2024, selecting three random editions per month to capture peak political events across *The Punch*, *The Vanguard*, and *The Nation*. For the survey, a sample size of 400 respondents from Lagos and Abuja was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, where N is the total registered voter population of 8,632,503 and 0.05 margin of error. Research instruments consist of a structured questionnaire titled the Media and Political Stability Perception Index and a content coding sheet. The questionnaire utilises a 5-point Likert scale to measure the continuous variable of perceptual instability, while the coding sheet quantifies media volume

through frequency and news inches. Reliability was established with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.82. Data analysis is performed using SPSS version 27. Pearson Product Moment Correlation is applied to establish the relationship between the objective media volume data and the subjective mean perception scores. This approach ensures the statistical tool correctly evaluates the correlation between two continuous variables related to media intensity and the resulting psychological perception of instability.

**Data Analysis and Discussion**

A total of 400 questionnaires were administered across Lagos State and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The distribution and retrieval process resulted in a high level of participation among the target population.

**Table 1: Response Rate of the Survey**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Valid Questionnaires Retrieved	372	93.0
Invalid/Unreturned Questionnaires	28	7.0
<b>Total Administered</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The descriptive analysis indicates a strong attitudinal consensus among respondents regarding the psychological influence of media narratives. The scores presented in Table 2 suggest that the media effectively sets a psychological agenda that frames the stability of political institutions.

**Table 2: Public Perception of Media Influence on Party Stability**

Item Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
Media reports often exaggerate internal party conflicts.	4.21	0.85	Agree
Politicians switch parties because media predicts the winner.	3.89	1.12	Agree
Reading about mass defections reduces confidence in a party.	4.05	0.92	Agree
The media frames defectors as smart operators rather than disloyal.	3.75	1.05	Agree
Newspaper headlines about party crises influence voting decisions.	3.90	1.01	Agree
A party is perceived as weak when media reports member exits.	4.10	0.88	Agree
Media focuses more on defectors than on party manifestos.	3.80	1.15	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>0.99</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Notably, the perception that a party is weak when media constantly reports on member exits yielded a high mean of 4.10, while the internalisation of mass defection stories as a reason to lose confidence in a party scored 4.05.

**Content Analysis Summary**

The longitudinal analysis of newspaper editions between 2015 and 2024 revealed that 72 percent of defection-related stories utilised game changer frames, portraying political movement as a strategic display of power. This prevalent framing correlates with survey data where respondents perceived defectors as smart political operators. The analysis also showed significant spikes in the volume of defection reportage during the lead-up to the 2015, 2019, and 2023 general elections, suggesting that the media intensifies the attribute salience of party instability during critical electoral windows.

### Hypothesis Testing and Interpretation

The study sought to establish the relationship between the quantified volume of defection reports and the resulting public perception of party instability.

**Table 3: Pearson Correlation Analysis**

Variables	N	Mean	Correlation (r)	Sig. (p)	Remark
Volume of Defection Reports	372	15.42	0.682**	0.000	Significant
Perception of Party Instability	372	14.11			

*\*Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The correlation analysis revealed a coefficient (r) of 0.682, indicating a strong positive relationship between the two variables. With a probability value (p) of 0.000, the null hypothesis is rejected. However, this statistical relationship is interpreted strictly as a perceptual correlation. The findings indicate that as the frequency of media reports regarding defections increases, the cognitive perception of party instability increases proportionally. This suggests that media narratives contribute to a psychological climate of fragility but does not constitute empirical evidence of a direct causal link to the physical act of defection. The study maintains that while media salience and perceptual instability are strongly related, the actual behavioural shift of politicians remains a separate variable influenced by broader institutional factors.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings from the descriptive analysis demonstrate that the electorate is highly sensitive to the evaluative attributes embedded in media narratives. The high mean score = 4.21 for the acknowledgment of media exaggeration suggests that while voters may be conscious of sensationalism, they are nonetheless influenced by the salience of the narrative. This aligns with Agenda Setting Theory by illustrating how the media successfully transfers the salience of internal party crisis from the news agenda to the public domain. This outcome mirrors the observations of the Centre for Democracy and Development (2023), which noted that specific media fixations on opposition crises effectively demarketed parties by framing them as unstable vehicles rather than ideological blocs.

The positive correlation (r = 0.682) between media volume and the normalisation of cross-carpeting provides a psychological basis for understanding the Spiral of Silence effect in Nigeria. As dominant outlets such as *The Nation* and *The Punch* consistently highlight high-profile defections during election cycles, they create a bandwagon narrative of an inevitable majority. The study suggests that while this narrative directly impacts voter confidence, its effect on the political elite is a critical area of inferred implication. The prevalence of game changer frames identified in the content analysis provides a social license for political movement. By framing defections as strategic alignments rather than moral betrayals, the media reduces the reputational risk for politicians, potentially incentivising movement to avoid political isolation.

Ultimately, the study clarifies that while economic factors and patronage are established drivers of defection, media validation provides the cognitive framework that facilitates these transitions. The glorification of political mercantilism through heroic metaphors validates the assertion that the Nigerian press often prioritises political theater over institutional stability. This reinforces the conclusion that democratic consolidation is hindered not only by the physical act of defection but by a media-driven psychological climate that treats institutional instability as a strategic necessity rather than an aberration.

### Conclusion

This empirical analysis of the decade between 2015 and 2024 demonstrates that the Nigerian media serves as a significant variable in the cognitive ecosystem of political instability.

The study concludes that the media does not merely chronicle political realignments but creates the perceptual conditions that facilitate institutional fragility. By framing defections as strategic masterstrokes and consistently emphasising the vulnerabilities of opposition parties, the media contributes to a psychological climate where party switching appears as a logical necessity for political survival. This bandwagon journalism tends to erode the perceived ideological distinctiveness of parties for the electorate. While the study does not empirically measure the physical behaviour of the political elite, it establishes that media narratives diminish the perceived viability of stable opposition institutions. Consequently, the psychological normalisation of defection suggests that democratic consolidation in Nigeria faces a hurdle not just in institutional design but in a communicative environment that prioritises the salience of personality shifts over ideological endurance.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Media practitioners and editors must deliberately shift their framing of defections. Instead of celebrating defectors as "smart strategists", reports should interrogate the ideological contradictions and moral implications of abandoning a mandate, thereby increasing the reputational cost of cross-carpeting.
2. The Nigerian Press Council should enforce stricter ethical guidelines regarding speculative reporting on party crises. By curbing sensationalist headlines that predict the collapse of parties based on rumors, the media can reduce the "spiral of silence" pressure that compels politicians to defect based on false or exaggerated narratives of instability.

## References

- Aleyomi, M. B. (2022). Party defections and the challenge of democratic consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Journal of African Elections*, 21(1), 114-135.
- Carothers, T., & O'Donohue, A. (Eds.). (2019). *Democracies divided: The global challenge of political polarization*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Centre for Democracy and Development. (2023). *Nigeria's 2023 General Elections: A Post-Mortem*. Abuja: Centre for Democracy and Development.
- Cheeseman, N., & Fisher, J. (2019). *Authoritarian Africa: Repression, resistance, and the power of ideas*. Oxford University Press.
- Egwu, P. (2022). Media framing of political defectors in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Heroes or villains? *Journal of African Media Studies*, 14(2), 201-218.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (1999). *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Federal Government Press.
- Ibrahim, S. G. (2022). Political party fluidity and democratic stability in Nigeria. *African Security Review*, 31(1), 89-103.
- Ibrahim, S. G., & Iyekekpolo, W. O. (2022). Electoral violence and the crisis of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 57(3), 447-464.
- Independent National Electoral Commission. (2023). *Review of the 2023 General Election: Report of the Commission*. Abuja: Independent National Electoral Commission Press.
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187.
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Nigeria General Household Survey Report*. Abuja: National Bureau of Statistics.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). The spiral of silence: A theory of public opinion. *Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 43-51.
- Nwangwu, C. (2023). Gladiators, godfathers and clients: The dynamics of the 2023 elections in Nigeria. *Journal of African Elections*, 22(2), 45-66.
- Oarhe, O. (2010). The politics of the belly and democratic practice in Nigeria. *African Review*, 49(1), 23-38.
- Omotola, J. S., & Aremu, F. (2020). Political entrepreneurship and the crisis of party coherence in Nigeria. *African Affairs*, 119(476), 345-366.
- Onapajo, H., & Babalola, D. (2020). Nigeria's 2019 general elections – a shattered hope? *The Round Table*, 109(4), 363-367.
- Oso, L. (2021). *Media, democracy and governance in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers.
- Pate, U. A., & Dauda, S. (2019). Media patterns in Nigerian elections: Issues and perspectives. *Mambayya House Journal of Democratic Studies*, 7(1), 12-28.
- Udeze, S. E., & Nwodu, L. C. (2023). Applying agenda setting theory to Nigerian political communication: A critical review. *International Journal of Communication*, 17, 1543-1560.
- Yagboyaju, D. A., & Simbine, A. T. (2020). Party politics and elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. In *The Palgrave Handbook of African Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Yiaga Africa. (2023). *The 2023 General Elections Report: The limit of hope*. Abuja: Yiaga Africa.