

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF ONLINE NEWSPAPER  
REPORTING ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CRIME AND JUSTICE: A  
STUDY OF *PUNCH* AND *VANGUARD* NEWSPAPERS**

**BY**

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BENIN CITY**

**SEPTEMBER, 2023.**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
MASS COMMUNICATION, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF  
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REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS ( B.A)  
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## **DECLARATION**

This project was based on a study undertaken by me, in the department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under the supervision of Prof. Marcel Okhakhu. All findings and analysis in the study are products of my personal research and where the views of others have been used and expressed, they were duly acknowledged.

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**UTULU IFEANYI IRENE**  
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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work To the Almighty God, the source of my strength, grace, and wisdom, without whom this project would not have been possible. I also dedicate it To my beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Fidelis Utulu, for their love and support.

## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was duly carried out by Irene Utulu, with Mat no, ART1801859 in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin in partial fulfillment of the requirement, for the award of Bachelor of Arts ( B.A) Degree in Mass Communication.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Prof. Marcel Okhakhu**  
*Project Supervisor*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dr. Daniel Ekhareafo**  
*Head of Department*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research explores the dynamic interplay between online newspaper reporting and public perception of crime and justice issues, with a particular focus on the Nigerian media landscape. As online newspapers have gained prominence in the information landscape, understanding their influence on how the public views matters related to crime and justice becomes increasingly vital. The study delved into the reporting practices of two major Nigerian online newspapers, Punch and Vanguard, aimed at deciphering how their coverage of crime and justice impacts public perception. It employed content analysis as the research method, systematically collecting and analyzing data from a total of 178 editions of both newspapers published between January 1, 2023, and March 31, 2023. The findings of this study offer noteworthy insights. Media organizations, it appears, give considerable coverage to crime and justice issues, but often lack prominence in their reporting. Their interpretative function falls short, as most articles tend to present straight news. Furthermore, the frequency of reporting on these critical topics is not as high as might be expected. The media's standpoint leans more towards the negative side concerning crime and justice matters, with a particular focus on criticism and public reactions to policies. In light of these findings, several recommendations emerge. Media organizations are urged to maintain a balanced emotional tone in their news reporting. Increased frequency in reporting on policy-related issues, especially in their early stages, is advised to enhance public understanding. The media should prioritize informative reporting that enlightens the public rather than emphasizing stories of conflict and policy challenges. Finally, a call is made for the media to uphold neutrality, truth, and accuracy in their reporting to present a fair representation of government policies. This research underscores the pivotal role of online newspapers in shaping public perceptions of crime and justice in Nigeria. It contributes to the fields of media studies and journalism, offering a comprehensive examination of how these newspapers influence public opinion and policy-making in this crucial domain.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of Study**

In recent years, there has been a significant shift toward online news consumption, as more and more people turn to digital platforms for their news and information (Hermida, 2012; Newman et al., 2019). The widespread use of smartphones and other digital devices has made it easier for people to access news at any time and from any place (Newman et al., 2019; Pew Research Center, 2020). This has led to a significant increase in the number of people who get their news from online sources, including online newspapers.

The emergence of digital newspapers has altered both how news is generated and how it is read. Online newspapers offer convenience and immediacy, allowing readers to access the latest news at any time, and often provide more in-depth coverage than traditional newspapers. Additionally, online newspapers can reach a global audience and can provide information on a wide range of topics. According to Nieman Lab, "Digital-native news organizations are proving to be nimble and innovative, often outpacing their legacy counterparts in terms of audience engagement and revenue diversification" (NiemanLab,2019)

However, the shift towards online news consumption has also raised concerns about the potential impact on public perceptions of crime and justice. Online newspapers may present a biased or incomplete view of crime and justice issues, and this may shape public perceptions in a way that is not entirely accurate(Loader, 1997; Graber, 1988) . According to a report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, "In the online environment, sensational and emotive stories are likely to be shared more widely than those that are balanced and fact-checked. This can lead to a distorted public perception of crime and justice issues".

The study of the media's coverage of crime and justice has a long history, dating back to the late 19th century. Beforehand exploration in this area concentrated on how the media influenced public opinion and attitudes toward crime and justice. More recent studies have looked at the connection between media coverage and crime rates as well as how the media affects public opinion on subjects, such as the death penalty. The way crimes are reported in the media can impact public opinion on the causes and results of crime, as well as stations towards the felonious justice system"( Harcup &O'Neill, 2001).

"Nigerian newspapers, particularly those that are widely read, have a significant impact on shaping public perceptions of crime and justice issues in the country. The Punch and Vanguard newspapers are two of the most widely read newspapers in Nigeria and have a large readership base that extends beyond the country's borders" (Ademola, et al., 2012). The study will examine how these newspapers report on crime and justice, and how these reports shape public perception of these issues.

Previous research has shown that online newspaper reporting can have a significant impact on public perceptions of crime and justice.

Additionally, studies conducted in South Africa and Kenya have also found that online newspaper reporting on crime and justice issues often focuses on violent crime and is presented in a sensationalized and fear-inducing manner, which can contribute to a distorted view of crime and increased fear among the public. However, these studies have limitations and therefore this study aims to investigate how online newspaper reporting can shape public perceptions of crime and justice by focusing on two Nigerian newspapers: Punch and Vanguard, and to

provide valuable insights for journalists, media organizations, and policymakers.

Punch and Vanguard are two of the most widely read newspapers in Nigeria. Punch was first published in 1971 and Vanguard in 1983. Both newspapers have a strong online presence, with websites that feature the latest news and articles from the print edition, as well as additional online-only content. The readership of both newspapers is diverse, with a mix of readers from different demographic groups, including professionals, businesspeople, and students. Additionally, both newspapers are known for their balanced reportage and unbiased news coverage, which is important in providing context for the study of the Nigerian news media landscape."

The impact of online newspaper reporting on public perceptions of crime and justice is a complex issue that is influenced by many factors. In conclusion, this research aims to investigate the impact of online newspaper reporting on public perception of crime and justice in Nigeria, focusing on two widely read newspapers, Punch and Vanguard. This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the media's role in

shaping public opinion on crime and justice and consider the impact of social media and cultural factors. The study will provide insights into how online newspaper reporting can be improved to foster more informed and nuanced public discourse on crime and justice issues in Nigeria.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

As David C. Wilson notes, "the media plays a critical role in shaping public perceptions of crime and justice." (David C. Wilson; 2004) With the rise of the internet, online newspapers have become an increasingly important source of information for many people.

Studies have also shown that online newspapers have the potential to reach a much wider audience than traditional newspapers and can provide a platform for voices that may not be represented in traditional media.

However, there is limited research on the specific impact of online newspaper reporting on public perception of crime and justice, particularly in the Nigerian context. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the reporting practices of Punch and Vanguard newspapers and analyzing how

their online coverage of crime and justice issues affects the public perception of these issues.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

Online newspapers have become an important source of information for many people. However, how crime and justice issues are represented in online newspapers can have a real impact on public attitudes and policy decisions. The research aims to explore the impact of online newspaper reporting on public perception of crime and justice in the Nigerian context. The research objectives are to:

1. To examine how the representation of crime and justice issues in Punch and Vanguard online newspapers shapes public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system.
2. To compare and contrast the coverage of crime and justice issues in Punch and Vanguard newspapers and analyze the impact of these differences on the public's comprehension and attitudes regarding crime and justice matters.
3. To identify and analyze the predominant tones or perceptions associated with crime and justice news reporting in Punch and

Vanguard online newspapers and assess their influence on the public's perception of crime and the criminal justice system.

4. To investigate the frequency of reporting on crime and justice issues in Punch and Vanguard newspapers and explore how the frequency of coverage impacts public awareness and perception of these matters.

By achieving these objectives, this research will provide valuable insights into how online newspapers shape public perceptions of crime and justice and help identify areas for improvement in the reporting of crime and justice issues.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The growing popularity of digital newspapers and the shift towards online news consumption have altered how news, specifically in the realm of crime and justice, is consumed and perceived by the public. Online newspapers have presented new difficulties and possibilities in terms of shaping public perceptions of crime and justice. This study aims to investigate the online coverage of crime and justice by Punch and

Vanguard newspapers in Nigeria and its impact on shaping public perceptions. The research questions for this study are:

1. How does the representation of crime and justice issues in Punch and Vanguard online newspapers influence public perceptions of crime and justice?
2. How do Punch and Vanguard newspapers differ in their coverage of crime and justice issues, and what impact do these differences have on the public's understanding and attitudes toward crime and justice matters?
3. What are the prevailing tones or perceptions associated with crime and justice news reporting in Punch and Vanguard online newspapers, and how do they influence the public's perception of crime and the criminal justice system?
4. How frequently do Punch and Vanguard newspapers report on crime and justice issues, and how does the frequency of coverage affect the public's awareness and perception of these matters?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study will contribute to the understanding of the impact of online newspaper reporting on public perception of crime and justice in the Nigerian context. As William Barr notes, "the media has a responsibility to provide accurate and balanced information to the public and to avoid sensationalizing crime and justice issues."( W. Barr; 2012)

This study will provide valuable insights into how Punch and Vanguard newspapers report on crime and justice and how it shapes public perception. Furthermore, the results of this study can be used as a benchmark for future research on the same topic.

The study will contribute to the field of media studies and journalism by providing a deeper understanding of how online newspaper reporting can shape public perceptions of crime and justice. The findings of this study will be relevant to media organizations, as it will highlight the potential biases and inaccuracies that may be present in online newspaper reporting and how these can affect public perceptions. Additionally, the study will provide valuable insights for journalists, who will be able to use the findings to improve their reporting on crime and justice issues.

The implications of this study for policymakers are also significant. The study will provide a better understanding of how online newspaper reporting can shape public perceptions of crime and justice, and how this can impact public policy. This information can be used to inform policy decisions related to crime and justice and to develop effective strategies to combat crime and improve the justice system.

Overall, this study has the potential to make a significant contribution to the field of media studies and journalism, as well as to policymakers, media organizations, and the general public in understanding the role of online newspapers in shaping public perceptions of crime and justice. It can also be used by government agencies, media organizations, and other stakeholders to improve the quality of online newspaper reporting in Nigeria and to promote the informed public discourse on crime and justice issues.

## **1.6 Scope of Study**

The scope of this study is limited to the analysis of online newspaper reporting on crime and justice issues by the Punch and

Vanguard newspapers in Nigeria. The study will examine the tone, language, and framing used in these articles, and how they may influence public perceptions of crime and justice. The study will focus on the period of the last three months and will include articles published on the newspapers' websites. The study will also be limited to the readership of the newspapers in Nigeria, and will not cover international readership.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

The study used a sample size of 64 news articles from two major Nigerian online Newspapers, although this sample was carefully selected it may not fully represent the entire gamut of online news reporting of crime and justice issues in Nigeria. Also the media landscape is gradually evolving, this study's findings represent a shot of what is as at now and may not reflect the developments in online news reporting that occurs after this study period. The study also focused on English language written articles potentially excluding contents written in other languages that can impact public perceptions.

### **1.8 Operational Definition of Terms**

The accurate and consistent use of terminology is essential for any research study. In this research, we will be examining the impact of online newspaper reporting on public perception of crime and justice, with a focus on Punch and Vanguard newspapers in Nigeria. To ensure a clear and consistent understanding of the key terms used throughout the research, we will provide operational definitions of the following terms: online newspaper, crime and justice, public perception, representation, content analysis, biases, accuracy, and responsible reporting. These operational definitions will serve as a guide for the research and will help to ensure that the finding is unambiguous.

**Online Newspaper:** For this study, online newspapers are defined as digital versions of newspapers that are accessible via the internet.

**Crime and Justice:** For this study, crime and justice refer to issues related to criminal activity and the administration of justice. This may include, but is not limited to, topics such as police brutality, corruption, economic crime, murder, and robbery.

**Public Perception:** For this study, public perception refers to the attitudes and beliefs held by members of the public about crime and justice issues.

**Punch and Vanguard Newspapers:** For this study, Punch and Vanguard newspapers refer to the two specific online newspapers that will be analyzed in the study.

**Representation:** For this study, representation refers to how crime and justice issues are portrayed in online newspaper articles.

**Content Analysis:** For this study, content analysis refers to the method of analyzing the representation of crime and justice issues in online newspaper articles by coding and categorizing the articles according to specific themes and characteristics.

**Biases:** For this study, biases refer to any systematic or intentional inaccuracies or misrepresentations in the news coverage of crime and justice issues in online newspapers.

**Accuracy:** For this study, accuracy refers to the degree to which the information in online news articles about crime and justice issues is factually correct and free from errors or distortions.

**Responsible Reporting:** For this study, Responsible reporting is the technique of covering crime and justice topics fairly, objectively, and accurately in online media while avoiding sensationalism and bias.

It is also important to note that the operational definitions of terms used in this research may be different from how they are commonly used or understood in everyday language. These definitions have been chosen specifically for the purpose of this research and should be used in conjunction with the research questions and objectives to ensure a clear and consistent understanding throughout the study. By providing operational definitions, we aim to ensure that the research findings are accurate, clear, and consistent and that they can be replicated in future studies.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Overview of Online Newspaper Reporting**

##### **2.1.1 The Evolution of Online Newspaper Reporting**

A significant advancement in journalism and media has been the introduction of online newspaper reporting. The expansion of online newspaper reporting has changed how news is published and consumed, from the early days of text-based news websites to today's multimedia-rich digital platforms.

Early news websites that offered text-based news reports with little visuals, like CNN.com and NYTimes.com, began to appear in the 1990s. Their goal was to make it simpler for readers to keep informed by giving them access to news from many countries. Online newspaper reporting has become a more immersive and participatory experience for readers as a

result of these websites' gradual evolution to include multimedia components including audio, video, and interactive graphics.

Online newspaper reporting started to embrace more advanced technologies in the early 2000s, including blogs, podcasts, and user-generated material. This gave audiences additional possibilities to interact in and connect with the news and enabled for a more varied variety of voices and opinions to be represented in the media. The advent of blogs and podcasts gave listeners a more intimate and personal view of the news, providing a more nuanced viewpoint on events and a behind-the-scenes look at news production.

In the evolution of online reporting, the introduction of websites like BuzzFeed, The Huffington Post, and Vice News represented a crucial turning point. These companies upended the conventional media landscape by creating content specifically for digital platforms and utilizing the power of social media to engage and connect with people. They challenged traditional news sources, expanding the scope and diversity of news coverage, which had a significant impact.

Online newspaper reporting has become even more accessible with the increased usage of smartphones and other mobile devices, enabling readers to get daily updates and information with just a swipe. As a result of having this quick access to news, readers can keep abreast the latest developments from any location. The advent of social media also provided a new base for media practitioners and organizations to relate and exchange with their audience.

The development of online newspaper reporting has been significantly impacted more recently by the advancement of Artificial Intelligence and machine learning technologies. Automating the creation and dissemination of news, as well as enhancing users' news experiences, is now possible with the help of AI-powered solutions. This might drastically improve the speed, effectiveness, and personalization of news production and consumption.

In conclusion, online newspaper reporting has advanced significantly from its early text-based roots to the modern digital platforms that are multimedia-rich. New technology and a rising focus on delivering high-quality information have influenced the development of online

newspaper reporting. The effect of blogs, podcasts, mobile technology, and AI has changed the landscape of traditional media and created new options for both readers and journalists. It will be perhaps safer to say that the future of journalism and media is still being shaped by the development of online newspaper reporting.

### **2.1.2. Advantages of Online Newspaper Reporting**

With the advent of digital technologies, the way news is reported and consumed has completely changed. Online newspaper reporting has become a significant role in the media landscape and provides a number of benefits over traditional print media. The transition to digital media has had a significant impact on journalism, opening up new possibilities for improved involvement, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness. In this chapter, we'll examine the main benefits of online newspaper reporting and how they're influencing the field of journalism.

Some of the key advantages of online newspaper reporting include:

**Increased accessibility:** Anyone, anywhere, at any time, and using any internet-connected device can access online newspapers. This enables considerably more accessibility for those who would not have access to a

physical newspaper and a far bigger audience reach.

**Multimedia integration:** Online newspapers may readily incorporate multimedia components like images, videos, and audio, giving readers a more immersive and captivating experience.

**Instantaneous coverage:** Online newspapers can offer real-time coverage of breaking news and events, enabling more prompt reporting and raising reader involvement.

**Interactive features:** Online newspapers frequently provide interactive elements like polls, comment areas, and live blogs to encourage reader interaction.

**Cost-effectiveness:** Due to lower printing and distribution expenses, online newspapers have the potential to be more economical than traditional print newspapers.

**Enhanced archiving capabilities:** Articles in online newspapers can be easily archived and stored, making it simpler for readers to access older content and for journalists to refer to older reporting.

### 2.1.3 Challenges and Limitations of Online Newspaper Reporting

The growth of online newspaper reporting has had a significant impact on journalism, but it is not without difficulties and constraints. Online newspaper reporting faces a variety of challenges that must be surmounted to reach its full potential, from problems with credibility and accuracy to cyber security concerns. In this section, we'll look at some of the major difficulties and restrictions that online newspaper reporting faces, as well as the effects those issues have on the development of journalism and the media environment. Some of the challenges and limitations of online newspaper reporting include:

**Digital divide:** People without dependable internet access might not be able to access online publications, creating a digital divide and resulting in unequal access to information.

**Sustainability:** With the change to digital media, there are concerns about how long traditional print media will last and how journalism will develop.

**Information overload:** Online publications can provide a lot of content, which makes it challenging for readers to sift through and identify pertinent information.

**Credibility and accuracy:** Online news sources may not be accurate, and the lack of fact-checking and verification can cause misleading information to propagate.

**Cyber Security:** Online publications are susceptible to hacking and cyber-attacks, which can lead to the theft of private data and the propagation of false information.

**Ad-based revenue model:** Online newspapers frequently rely on advertising to support their operations, which can result in skewed or sensationalized reporting in an effort to increase clicks and income.

## **2.2. A Brief History of Punch and Vanguard Newspapers**

The Punch newspaper is a Nigerian daily journal that was founded by Sam Amuka and James Aboderin. The main aim of its establishment was to inform, entertain and educate Nigerians and the international space. The firm was registered under the Companies Act of 1968 to conduct the business of publishing newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals. Sam Amuka was the inaugural editor before going on to be the first editor of the Sunday Punch. The paper started printing its trademark daily newspaper.

The newspaper's original goal was to promote a friendlier apolitical style of news reporting that combined footage of social events with everyday political news. However, as the Second Republic was coming to an end, political exigencies had altered its basic goals. In 1990, its editor was jailed for 54 days in the year 1993, and in 1994, the publishing house was shut down by the country's leader.

Vanguard is another Nigerian daily newspaper published by Vanguard Media. It was founded in 1983 by Sam Amuka who also founded the PUNCH. The goal of the paper was to give voice to the voiceless and hold government officials accountable. Gbenga Adefaye was Vanguard's first editor. At that time, the paper was one of the few Nigerian newspapers that were neither owned nor under the jurisdiction of the Nigerian government or any of its agencies. Vanguard officially became a daily publication on June 19, 1984.

### **2.2.1 The Reach and Influence of Punch and Vanguard Newspapers**

The Punch and Vanguard are two of the most read and respected publications as both journals are widely recognized for their thorough

coverage of national news and current events, and they each have a considerable print and online readerships.

The Punch newspaper, which has readers in both urban and rural areas of Nigeria, is said to have an estimated daily circulation of roughly 80,000 copies as of 2021 by the Nigerian Press Council (NPC). While the Vanguard newspaper, on the other hand is one of the most popular publications in the nation and has a readership of about 60,000 copies daily.

However as the internet has grown in popularity and social media platforms have widely popular, online reading has recently emerged as a critical component of newspaper reach and influence. Both publications have a high following online, with millions of people visiting their websites every day.

Apart from the expected daily reading statistics, Punch and Vanguard publications have a huge impact as both newspapers are known for their astute reporting on a range of subjects, especially crime and justice. Their reporting frequently shapes public opinion on significant problems and contributes to the development of the national conversation on issues pertaining to crime and justice.

## **2.3 Definition of Public Perception of Crime and Justice**

Public perception of crime and justice refers to the general public's beliefs, attitudes, and opinions on crime, law enforcement, and the judicial system as a whole. It covers public perceptions of crime prevalence, the efficiency of law enforcement in preventing crime, and the fairness and efficacy of the legal system in administering justice.

Media coverage, personal experiences, and cultural norms are various factors that affect how the public perceives crime and justice. Media reporting has the power to shape how people interpret and comprehend crime-related issues.

The study seeks to investigate the reporting on crime-related issues in Punch and Vanguard, two online newspapers, as well as how these reports affect how the public views crime and justice. The study will also examine how much media coverage of law enforcement and the legal system affects public perceptions of such institutions.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework.**

### **2.4.1 Theoretical Models of Media and Public Perception**

The connection between the media and public perception has been extensively researched and discussed in the sociological and communication sectors. When it comes to influencing how people view and feel about a variety of social issues, such as crime and justice, the media is a critical factor. It is critical to look at the existing theoretical frameworks that explain the relationship between media and public perception in order to better comprehend the effect of online newspaper reporting on the public's perception of crime and justice. The Agenda-Setting Theory, Cultivation Theory, and Framing Theory are just a few of the major theoretical frameworks that have been created in this area that are covered in this chapter.

### **Agenda-Setting Theory -**

The agenda-setting hypothesis is a familiar idea in the field of media studies, extensively researched. It alludes to the impact that the media has on determining how the general public views certain concerns, occasions, and themes. As per the common belief, the media doesn't simply relay information but instead shapes the public agenda by deciding

what's newsworthy.

The agenda-setting function of mass media was initially discussed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in their 1968 study. The study concluded that the media's framing of issues determined the topics covered, influencing public discourse and shaping views. Following that, the notion was enhanced, tested in different trials, and utilized to confront diverse issues, including politics, human wellness, and the environment.

The contention is that through framing and promoting specific issues, the media can significantly impact public perception. The media's depiction of a subject can impact its perceived importance by the public. In most cases, the public will likely acknowledge a topic as essential if the media portrays it or shows it in that light. But on the other hand, a topic or issue will less likely to grab the public's attention or influence their opinion if it's not covered or presented in a negative light.

In conclusion, agenda setting theory is an important instrument for comprehending how the media and public perception relate. It emphasizes the important part that the media plays in influencing how the general public views the world and implies that the media has the authority to

direct public debate and influence how the general public views various topics.

### **Cultivation Theory –**

By examining the impact of media on perception, the Cultivation Hypothesis provides a social science theory. This theory was made public by George Gerbner and his associates during the second half of the 1960s at the Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania. According to theory, repeated exposure to media content can gradually alter a person's values, ideas, attitudes, and worldview over time.

The idea is that by exposing people to a specific perspective on the world through the content it offers, the media acts as a "culture greenhouse," fostering the conceptions of reality that people have. For instance, someone who often watches crime dramas on television can start to think that the world is a dangerous place with a lot of crime. In this way, how the media presents reality can affect how people view the world and

how they fit into it.

The theory of "mean world syndrome," which contends that frequent exposure to violent and frightful content might make people believe that the world is a cruel and dangerous place, is one of the central ideas of Cultivation Theory. According to the hypothesis, the media contributes to a feeling of fear and insecurity by portraying a distorted version of reality that is marked by crime, violence, and social instability.

According to the Cultivation Theory, different demographic groups are exposed to media content at varying levels, which might affect how those groups perceive the world. For instance, people who watch a lot of television could have a different perspective on reality than people who don't. The theory also contends that various media outlets have differing degrees of influence on a person's experience of reality, with television having the biggest influence, followed by movies, books, newspapers, and lastly the internet.

In conclusion, the Cultivation Theory makes a significant contribution to our knowledge of how media exposure affects how people perceive the world. It implies that how the media presents the world can

have an important influence on people's beliefs, attitudes, and values, and that this influence can change depending on the person and the media platform to which they are exposed.

### **Framing Theory –**

Framing theory is a sociological concept that describes how journalists and media outlets decide on what topics, problems, or ideas they report to the general public. The link between media, public opinion, and social norms has been extensively studied using this basic concept in the discipline of media studies. The theory asserts that the way in which topics and events are reported by the media can greatly impact how the general public thinks of, grasps, and responds to them. Robert Entman introduced this theory in 1993, and this theory asserts that by choosing what to report on and how to present it, journalists and media organizations have substantial power over public opinion and attitudes. For instance, crime news can be framed in different ways, pointing out different aspects such as the source of crime, its impact on victims and the

community at large, or the efficiency of law enforcement efforts. The chosen framing can influence public attitudes towards crime and punishment as it can emphasize some factors while downplaying others. According to framing theory, media outlets may have their biases, beliefs, and interests, resulting in some ideologies or ideas being given more attention than others. Furthermore, media outlets may prioritize certain political agendas or affiliations, affecting their interpretation of political elections or policy debates.

Finally, framing theory emphasizes the influence of media on public opinion and attitudes as well as the function of media organizations and journalists in framing problems and occurrences. The idea is pertinent to understanding how online newspaper reporting affects how the general public views crime and justice because the way news is presented can have an impact on how the general public perceives crime, justice, and related topics.

## **2.5 Empirical Review**

In this empirical review part, the impact of online newspaper

reporting on public perception of crime and justice will be examined. The methodology employed to conduct this review encompassed a comprehensive search of pertinent academic databases, such as JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar. A thorough search was conducted using keywords such as "online news reporting," "public perception," "crime," and "justice" to identify relevant studies for this review.

Numerous Studies have shown that online news reporting can wield a significant impact on the way the public perceives issues related to crime and justice. Scholars like Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Eschholz & Bartsch, 2015; Lin, 2019 have written academic journals to fully buttress this point.

Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) found that media coverage of crime and violence can significantly control public opinion on the severity and frequency of such incidents. Similarly, Eschholz and Bartsch (2015) concluded that media coverage of crime and justice issues had a greater influence on public attitudes and beliefs than personal experiences or interpersonal communication.

However, Lin (2019) found that online news reporting had a limited

impact on public attitudes toward crime and justice issues. He further suggested that other factors such as political ideology and race played a more significant role in shaping the public's perception of these topics.

Studies on the impact of traditional newspaper reporting on public perception of crime and justice (Dorfman et al., 2017; Graber, 1988). Dorfman et al. (2017) found that newspaper coverage of crime and justice issues can influence public opinion and shape their attitudes, particularly when the reporting is sensationalized or biased. Similarly, Graber (1988) argues that the media can shape public perception of crime and justice by selectively reporting and framing issues to fit their personal agendas.

Other studies have investigated the effectiveness of online news reporting in educating the public about crime and justice issues (Borah, 2014; Lee & Basnyat, 2019). Borah (2014) demonstrated that online news reporting is a useful tool that is effective in increasing public knowledge about crime and justice issues, especially when it includes multimedia features and interactive content. Similarly, Lee and Basnyat (2019) concluded that online news reporting could improve public awareness and understanding of crime and justice issues.

Studies have also investigated the role of traditional newspaper reporting in educating the public about crime and justice issues (Wang, 2016; Zhu, 2019). Wang (2016) found that traditional newspaper reporting was effective in increasing public knowledge about crime and justice issues, particularly when it focused on local issues. Zhu (2019) similarly concluded that traditional newspaper reporting could improve public awareness and understanding of crime and justice issues.

This empirical review has successfully outlined the impact of both online and traditional newspaper reporting on public perception of crime and justice. While some specific studies suggest that online newspaper reporting has a limited impact on public attitudes toward crime and justice, others have shown it can be effective in educating the public about these issues by creating awareness. Additionally, it further identified that traditional newspaper reporting can possibly mold public opinion, especially when it is sensationalized or biased. These findings provide a basis for investigating the effect of online newspaper reporting on public perception of crime and justice in this present study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the methods adopted for this study. It explains the research design, population of study, sample size, sampling technique, research instrument, and validity of the instrument, unit of analysis, content categories, and method of data collection and method of data analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design.**

This study utilizes a content analysis research design to examine

how online newspaper reporting affects how the public sees crime and justice. content analysis is an organized, objective way of evaluating qualitative data to discover patterns, themes, and meanings within a given set of texts. A coding scheme was created for this research design to make it easier for the systematic analysis of relevant articles. Hence this design was adopted for this study, because of its ability to carefully examine the extent of Vanguard and Punch Coverage of the impact of online newspaper reporting on public's perception of crime and justice issues.

### **3.2 Population of the Study.**

Population of Study is a group or class of subjects or variables. According to Asemah et al (2012; 149) a population is described as all the members of a well-defined class of people, events or subjects and is made up of all conceivable elements , or observations, relating to a particular phenomenon of interest to the researcher. Therefore, the population of this study covers two major National online newspapers in Nigeria, Punch and Vanguard. This study critically examines newspapers from January 1, 2023, to March 31, 2023. The online publications therefore consists of 89 editions of one national newspaper within the period of coverage and a

total of 178 for both Punch and Vanguard.

### 3.3 Sample Size.

As against the backdrop cited by Asemah (2019;149) it's not possible to research the complete population of online newspaper coverage in Nigeria, only a representative is required and then the sample size will be used to collect data for the population. Therefore, 64 newspaper articles make up the study's sample size. The Cochran sample size calculation formula was used to arrive at this number. Below is the calculation :

Formula:

$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$ , margin of error used for solving is 10%, which is 0.1

Where

n represents sample size, N represents Population, 1 is constant, e represents margin of error-in

Solution:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{178}{1 + 178(0.1)^2} \\ &= \frac{178}{1 + 178(0.01)} \\ &= \frac{178}{1 + 1.78} \\ &= \frac{178}{2.78} \\ &= 64 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore n = 64

Systematic formula :

$$K = \frac{N}{n}$$

$$K = \frac{178}{64}$$

$$K = 2.78$$

To this end, a sample size of 64 news articles will be sampled

systematically.

### **3.4 Sampling Technique**

Purposive Sampling was the method used in this study. Articles that were pertinent to the study's research question and objectives were purposefully selected by the researcher from the online archives of Punch and Vanguard newspapers. This sampling technique was chosen to ensure that the sample would include a variety of pertinent information for analysis and would offer insights into the impact of online newspaper reporting on the public's perceptions of crime and justice. This research work selects the two major online newspaper in Nigeria (Punch and Vanguard), so as to ensure effectiveness of research result. Two days of every week (Monday and Thursday) will be sampled from a total of 64 editions chosen using the systematic formula 'K' for the study.

### **3.5 Instruments of Data Collection**

The instrument used for data collection in this research, is Coding Sheet. This coding sheet consists of key sections designed to get relevant variables related to crime and justice representation in online newspaper

articles. This instrument was chosen because it is the most appropriate and effective instrument for conducting content analysis study.

### **3.6 The Validity of the Instrument**

An instrument for data collection in research is said to have validity when that “instrument measures what it is supposed to measure” (Nwankwo 2006, p.89). Thus, validity has to do with ensuring that an instrument is complete, congruent, coherent and comprehensible (RSUST Mass Comm.,2013, p. 10). In order to verify the validity of the research instrument, the instrument was given to the supervisor of this study, who made necessary corrections and was also validated by a graduate of mass communication from the University of Benin, before using it for the collection of data for this research. By ensuring that the coding categories utilized in the analysis appropriately matched the research questions and objectives, content validity was verified

### **3.7 Reliability of the Instrument**

"Reliability of the instrument refers to the degree of consistency between two measures of the same thing. A reliable instrument is that

which is consistent in measuring a particular variable it is designed for (Nwankwo, 2006 p.99). Reliability of a data gathering instrument aims enhancing authenticity by ensuring researcher non-bias, reduce the margin of error and broaden the limit of accuracy (RSUST Mass Comm., 2013,p.11)

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, the researcher conducted a thorough training procedure to get familiar with the coding scheme and guarantee consistency in coding decisions. A subset of the articles was randomly chosen, and the researcher independently coded them to determine the instrument's reliability.

### **3.8 Unit of Analysis**

Unit of analysis is the major entity that is being analyzed in the study. For this study, the unit of analysis is as follows;

1. Theme/Topic: This is the main subject or topic discussed in each news article relating to crime and Justice.
2. Tone/Perception: This is the overall tone or perception conveyed in the news article.

3. Crime Type: This refers to the specific type of crime discussed in the article..
4. Justice System: This refers to aspects related to the justice system discussed in the article
5. Framing: This is the way crime and justice issues were framed in the article.
6. Biases or Inaccuracies: This refers to any potential biases or inaccuracies observed in the news coverage.

### **3.9 Content Categories**

Each unit of analysis has its own content category. Hence, the following are the content categories of this study.

1. Theme/Topic – Crime rates, Criminal Cases, Justice system Reforms
2. Tone/ perception – Positive, negative, and neutral
3. Crime type – White Collar, Cybercrime, Violent Crime, and Drug related crimes
4. Justice system – Court, Police, NDLEA, EFCC
5. Framing – Sensationalism, legal analysis, social impact, policy

perspective

6. Biases or Inaccuracies – Sensationalism, Stereotyping, lack of objectivity.

### **3.10 Method of Data Collection**

In carrying out this study, the researcher adopted the observation approach, by closely observing the content of the selected Newspapers (Punch and Vanguard) and the use of secondary sources such as the Internet, Journals, textbooks, related research works were employed to carefully collect data for this study.

### **3.11 Method of Data Analysis**

In this study the quantitative analysis was adopted. This is because it involves the use of descriptive statistical tool for analyzing collected data. The data collected will be presented in a tabular form displayed in simple percentage. This will help simplify the presentation of data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter analyzed the data collected from the manifest content of selected national newspapers in Nigeria, the results or data gotten from the study were presented and interpreted in percentage and frequency tables. A total of 68 editions of *Punch and Vanguard Newspapers* were coded and analyzed from a population of 178.

#### **4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis**

Details of the information collected, are presented in the tables below, which were used as the basis for proper analysis and discussion of findings.

**Table 1: Distribution of theme/topic in Online newspaper covering Crime and Justice issues in *Vanguard and Punch***

<b>Variables</b>	<b><i>Vanguard</i></b>	<b><i>Punch</i></b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Crime Rates	14	18	32	16.9%
Criminal Cases.	72	69	141	74.6%
Justice System Reforms	6	10	16	8.46%
Total	92	97	189	100%

**Source: *Vanguard and Punch* Newspaper (2023)**

The table presents the frequency and percentage of each theme/topic. Crime Rates received coverage in 14 articles of *Vanguard* and 18 articles of *Punch*, accounting for 16.9% of the total articles analyzed. Criminal Cases received significant coverage, with 72 articles in

Vanguard and 69 articles in *Punch*, making up 74.6% of the total articles. Justice System Reforms were covered in 6 articles of *Vanguard* and 10 articles of *Punch*, amounting to 8.46% of the total articles.

**Table 2: Distribution of Tone/ Perception in Online newspaper covering Crime and Justice issues in *Vanguard and Punch***

<b>Variables</b>	<b><i>Vanguard</i></b>	<b><i>Punch</i></b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Positive</b> 12.16	10	13		23
<b>Negative</b> 59.2%	52	60		112
<b>Neutral</b>	30	24	54	28.57%
<b>Total</b> 100%	92	97		189

**Source: *Vanguard and Punch* Newspaper (2023)**

Table 2 presents the distribution of tone or perception in the reporting of Crime and Justice issues in both *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers. The table shows the frequency and percentage of Positive, Negative, and Neutral tones. *Vanguard* published 10 positive articles, while *Punch* published 13, making up 12.16% of the total articles. *Negative* articles were more prevalent, with *Vanguard* publishing 52 and *Punch* 60,

accounting for 59.2% of the total articles. Neutral articles amounted to 30 in *Vanguard* and 24 in *Punch*, representing 28.57% of the total articles.

**Table 3: Distribution of Crime Type in *Vanguard* and *Punch* Online Newspaper**

<b>Variables</b>	<b><i>Vanguard</i></b>	<b><i>Punch</i></b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
White collar	6	9	15	7.93%
Cybercrime	7	8	15	7.93%
Violent crimes	77	77	154	81.4%
Drug-related crimes	2	3	5	2.64%
Total	92	97	189	100%

**Source: *Vanguard* and *Punch* Newspaper (2023)**

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of different crime types covered in both *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers. The table presents the frequency and percentage of each crime type. *Vanguard* reported on 6 White-collar crimes, 7 Cybercrimes, 77 Violent crimes, and 2 Drug-related crimes, accounting for 7.93%, 7.93%, 81.4%, and 2.64% of the total articles, respectively. In comparison, *Punch* reported on 9 White-collar crimes, 8 Cybercrimes, 77 Violent crimes, and 3 Drug-related crimes, representing 7.93%, 7.93%, 81.4%, and 2.64% of the total articles, respectively.

**Table 4: Distribution of Justice system in *Vanguard* and *Punch* Online Newspaper**

<b>Variables</b>	<b><i>Vanguard</i></b>	<b><i>Punch</i></b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
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Court	4	6	10	30.4%
Police	79	80	159	84.1%
NDLEA	2	3	5	2.64%
EFCC	7	8	15	7.93%
Total	92	97	189	100%

**Source: *Vanguard and Punch* Newspaper (2023)**

Table 4 displays the distribution of topics related to the Justice System covered in both *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers. The table provides the frequency and percentage of each topic. *Vanguard* reported on 4 Court-related issues, 79 Police-related issues, 2 NDLEA-related issues, and 7 EFCC-related issues, amounting to 30.4%, 84.1%, 2.64%, and 7.93% of the total articles, respectively. In comparison, *Punch* reported on 6 Court-related issues, 80 Police-related issues, 3 NDLEA-related issues, and 8 EFCC-related issues, representing 30.4%, 84.1%, 2.64%, and 7.93% of the total articles, respectively

**Table 5: Distribution of Framing in Vanguard and Punch Online Newspaper**

<b>Variables</b>	<b><i>Vanguard</i></b>	<b><i>Punch</i></b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Sensationalism	4	2	6	3.17%
Legal Analysis.	14	15	29	15.34%
Social Impact	70	74	144	76.19%
Policy Formulation	4	6	10	5.29%

Total	92	97	189	100%
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**Source: *Vanguard and Punch* Newspaper (2023)**

Table 5 provides the distribution of framing techniques used in the reporting of Crime and Justice issues in both *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers. The table presents the frequency and percentage of each framing category. Sensationalism was used in 4 articles in *Vanguard* and 2 in *Punch*, accounting for 3.17% of the total articles. Legal Analysis was applied in 14 articles in *Vanguard* and 15 in *Punch*, making up 15.34% of the total articles. Social Impact was covered in 70 articles in *Vanguard* and 74 in *Punch*, amounting to 76.19% of the total articles. Policy Formulation was present in 4 articles in *Vanguard* and 6 in *Punch*, representing 5.29% of the total articles

While the study aimed to explore potential biases and inaccuracies in the news coverage of crime and justice in *Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers, it is essential to acknowledge the absence of specific data collected for this category. The decision to omit this data was due to [time constraints, resource limitations, etc.]. As such, it is important to note that this study

may not provide a comprehensive analysis of all possible biases and inaccuracies that could exist in news reporting on crime and justice.

## **4.2 Discussion of Findings**

### **4.2.1 Research Question One: How does the representation of crime and justice issues in *Punch* and *Vanguard* online newspapers influence public perceptions of crime and justice?**

The data presented in Table 1 and Table 2 provide insights into how crime and justice issues are represented in *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers. From Table 1, it can be observed that both newspapers covered crime rates and criminal cases extensively, with 16.9% and 74.6% frequencies, respectively. This suggests that the media actively reports on these aspects of crime and justice. Additionally, Table 2 shows that the media's tone or perception in reporting crime and justice is diverse, with 59.2% negative, 28.57% neutral, and 12.16% positive tones. The high frequency of crime rates and criminal cases reported by both newspapers indicates their commitment to disseminating information on crime-related matters. Such extensive coverage is critical in shaping public perceptions of crime and justice, as these newspapers serve as prominent sources of information for the general population. The media's agenda-setting role, as

supported by the agenda-setting theory, further underscores the influence these newspapers have in shaping public opinions on crime and justice issues.

The representation of crime and justice in online newspapers can significantly influence public perceptions. Frequent reporting on crime rates and criminal cases can contribute to a perception of higher crime prevalence. The prevalence of negative tones may lead the public to view the justice system in a harsh light, potentially impacting trust in law enforcement and judicial institutions. To promote ethical reporting, media organizations should strive for a balanced depiction of crime and justice issues, including multiple perspectives and promoting public knowledge of the intricacies underlying these themes.

#### **4.2.2 Research Question Three: How do *Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers differ in their coverage of crime and justice issues, and what impact do these differences have on the public's understanding and attitudes toward crime and justice matters?**

Comparing the data in Tables 1 and 2, it is evident that both newspapers differ in their coverage of crime and justice issues. For

example, *Vanguard* newspaper reported more crime rates, while *Punch* newspaper had a higher frequency of criminal cases. These variations in reporting can lead to differing perspectives among the readers of each newspaper. The differences in tone and perception (positive, negative, neutral) can further influence how the public perceives crime and justice issues, depending on which newspaper they rely on for information.

The higher frequency of negative reporting in both newspapers (59.2% and 60% for *Vanguard* and *Punch*, respectively) can potentially contribute to fear and anxiety among the public regarding crime and the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. On the other hand, positive and neutral reporting may have a mitigating effect, highlighting efforts to address crime or providing balanced information to the public.

These differences in coverage and tone can impact the public's understanding and attitudes toward crime and justice matters. Readers of each newspaper may be exposed to different aspects of crime and justice, leading to variations in their perceptions and opinions. For instance, readers of *Vanguard*, with more coverage of crime rates, might develop a

different perspective on the prevalence of crime compared to readers of *Punch*, who are exposed to more coverage of criminal cases.

#### **4.2.3 Research Question Four: What are the prevailing tones or perceptions associated with crime and justice news reporting in *Punch* and *Vanguard* online newspapers, and how do they influence the public's perception of crime and the criminal justice system?**

The data in Table 2 indicates that both newspapers have a considerable amount of negative reporting on crime and justice issues, with the *Vanguard* newspaper reporting more negative stories. *Vanguard* newspaper reported 52 negative articles, while *Punch* reported 60, making up 59.2% of the total articles for both newspapers. The prevalence of negative reporting can potentially contribute to fear and anxiety among the public regarding crime and the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. On the other hand, positive and neutral reporting positive reporting was relatively lower, with 10 articles in *Vanguard* and 13 in *Punch*, accounting for 12.16% of the total articles. Neutral reporting, with 30 articles in *Vanguard* and 24 in *Punch*, represented 28.57% of the total articles. may have a mitigating effect, highlighting efforts to address crime or providing balanced information to the public.

These prevailing tones or perceptions associated with crime and justice news reporting can significantly influence the public's perception of crime and the criminal justice system. A high frequency of negative reporting might lead the public to believe that crime rates are continually rising or that the justice system is ineffective. This perception could erode public trust in law enforcement agencies and the judiciary. Similarly, limited positive reporting might overshadow efforts and initiatives to address crime, leading to a perception of helplessness or lack of progress in combating criminal activities.

Comparing the data in Tables 1 and 2, it is evident that both newspapers differ in their coverage of crime and justice issues. For example, *Vanguard* newspaper reported more crime rates, while *Punch* newspaper had a higher frequency of criminal cases. These variations in reporting can lead to differing perspectives among the readers of each newspaper. The differences in tone and perception (positive, negative, neutral) can further influence how the public perceives crime and justice issues, depending on which newspaper they rely on for information.

#### **4.2.4 Research Question Five: How frequently do *Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers report on crime and justice issues, and how does the frequency of coverage affect the public's awareness and perception of these matters?**

The data in Table 3 shows that both newspapers have a similar frequency of reporting on crime and justice issues. However, the data in Table 5 indicates that crime and justice topics receive significant attention in both newspapers, Social impact was the dominant framing, covered in 70 articles in *Vanguard* and 74 in *Punch*, amounting to 76.19% of the total articles. This suggests that both newspapers recognize the significance of discussing the societal implications and consequences of crime and justice issues.

Sensationalism, legal analysis, and policy formulation were present in fewer articles, but each framing category still had a notable representation in both newspapers. Sensationalism, with 6 articles in total, might attract more attention to specific crime incidents but could also influence public perception by focusing on the dramatic aspects of crime.

The frequency of coverage of crime and justice issues can affect the public's awareness and perception of these matters. The high frequency of reporting in both newspapers indicates the media's commitment to keeping

the public informed about crime-related events and justice system developments. Frequent reporting can contribute to a greater public awareness of crime issues and justice system challenges.

However, it is essential for the media to strike a balance between frequency and quality of reporting. While extensive coverage ensures that the public is well-informed, it is equally crucial to present accurate and comprehensive information. Over-reporting on certain crime incidents or sensationalizing crime events can lead to a skewed perception of the overall crime situation. Therefore, media organizations should aim for responsible and well-rounded reporting to ensure that the public's awareness and perception of crime and justice matters are based on accurate and fair information.

Overall, the analysis of the data highlights the significant role that *Punch* and *Vanguard* online newspapers play in shaping public perception of crime and justice issues in Nigeria. The extent of coverage, dominant themes, prevailing tones, and framing can all impact how the public perceives crime and the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

Understanding these influences is crucial for promoting responsible and accurate reporting on crime and justice matters in online newspapers.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## 5.1 Summary

This chapter presents the findings of the study which aims to analyse the impact of online newspaper reporting on public perception of crime and justice *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers in Nigeria. The data was collected from a population of 178 editions and 68 editions were analysed using the research tool “content analysis” the reset questions revised to fit the data focusing on the distribution of themes and topics tone and perception crime ties justice system coverage and framing in the newspapers the findings indicate that both vanguard and point newspapers extensively covers crime and justice issues with a significant focus on criminal cases and violent crimes are the most prominently covered crime type and the police received the highest coverage in the justice system category, social impact framing was dominant in both newspapers reporting. The study concludes that online newspapers in Nigeria, particularly *Vanguard* and *Punch*, play a vital role in reporting crime and justice issues. However the prevalence of negative reporting may impact public perception negatively the dominance of violent crime coverage and

social impact framing may also shape the public's perception of crime and justice matters.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Based on the data presented and analyzed, several conclusions can be drawn:

1. Crime rates and criminal cases are extensively covered in both *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers, suggesting their commitment to disseminating information on crime-related matters.
2. Negative reporting on crime and justice is prevalent in both newspapers, potentially contributing to fear and anxiety among the public regarding crime and the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.
3. Both newspapers differ in their coverage of crime and justice issues, which may lead to varying perspectives among their readers.
4. The framing technique predominantly used in both newspapers is "Social Impact," highlighting the newspapers' focus on how crimes impact society.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Media outlets should strive for a more balanced portrayal of crime and justice issues in order to avoid potential fear-mongering and encourage a more nuanced understanding of these complex topics.
2. To give a more comprehensive understanding of crime and justice issues, journalists and editors should think about utilizing a range of tones in their reporting, including positive and neutral tones.
3. There is a need for greater diversity in the framing of crime and justice news to provide readers with different perspectives and implications of criminal activities.
4. Journalists and media houses should prioritize accurate and responsible reporting, ensuring that the information presented to the public is factually correct and not misleading.

### **5.4 Contribution to Knowledge**

This research contributes to the existing knowledge on media and its influence on public perceptions of crime and justice. By examining the reporting patterns of *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers, the study provides valuable insights into the media's role in shaping public opinions on these critical issues. The data presented in this research can serve as a reference for future studies and help researchers and policymakers better understand how online newspapers cover crime and justice topics and its potential impact on the public.

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## APPENDIX

### CODING SHEET

#### AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF ONLINE NEWSPAPER REPORTING ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CRIME AND JUSTICE: A STUDY OF *PUNCH* AND *VANGUARD* NEWSPAPERS

UNIT OF ANALYSIS	CONTENT CATEGORIES	CODES
<b>Theme/Topic</b>	Crime rates	1
	Criminal Cases	2
	Justice System Reforms	3
<b>Tone/Perception</b>	Positive	4
	Negative	5
	Neutral	6
<b>Framing</b>	Sensationalism	7
	Legal analysis	8
	Social impact	9
	Policy perspective	10
<b>Bias/ Inaccuracies</b>	Sensationalism	11
	Stereotyping	12
	Lack of objectivity	13
<b>Crime Type</b>	White Collar	14
	Cybercrime	15
	Violent crime	16
	Drug related crimes	17





