

Public Perception of Media Reportage of the 10th Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria from January to March 2025

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Received: 15.08.2025 | Accepted: 19.09.2025 | Published: 30.10.2025

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.17487118](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17487118)

Abstract

Original Research Article

The study was an investigation into Public perception of media reportage of the 10th senate of the federal republic of Nigeria from January to March 2025. This study examines the impact of media reportage on public perception of the 10th Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria between January and March 2025. It explores the nature and tone of media coverage, public assessment of its accuracy and fairness, factors influencing trust in media reports, the influence of reportage on public support for the Senate, and suggested improvements to media practices. Guided by Framing Theory, the study adopts a descriptive survey design combining content analysis of selected media reports and the administration of structured questionnaires to 200 respondents across four major Nigerian cities. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that media coverage of the Senate during the study period was predominantly negative in tone, with a significant portion of the public perceiving the reports as biased or inaccurate. Key factors influencing public trust included media source credibility, perceived political bias, and the transparency of Senate proceedings. Media framing of legislative actions significantly shaped public attitudes, often reducing trust and support for the Senate. Respondents advocated for more objective reporting, reduced sensationalism, and greater reliance on investigative journalism. The study concludes that media framing plays a critical role in shaping public perception of legislative institutions and recommends measures to improve reporting practices, enhance Senate transparency, and strengthen media literacy. The research contributes to understanding the media-democracy nexus in Nigeria and provides practical insights for journalists, policymakers, and civil society actors seeking to foster informed public discourse on governance.

Keywords: Public perception, media reportage, 10th Senate, framing theory, media bias, public trust, Nigeria.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Media plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, especially concerning political governance and legislative activities. In Nigeria, the Senate is a critical arm of government responsible for lawmaking, oversight, and representation of the people.

According to McQuail, media reportage refers to “the process by which news organizations gather, select, and present information on events to the public, shaping public understanding through editorial choices and framing.”¹ This process is crucial in influencing how the public perceives political, social, and economic issues.

Lippmann defines public perception as “the collective attitudes, beliefs, and opinions held by a population towards specific issues or entities, which are often shaped by media portrayals and interpersonal communication.”² Public perception is dynamic and significantly influenced by the nature and tone of information disseminated.

The 10th Senate, inaugurated in 2023, has attracted significant media attention due to its legislative agenda and political dynamics. Between January and March 2025, media reportage on the 10th Senate covered various issues, including policy debates, budget approvals, and public controversies surrounding lawmakers.

Public perception of such media reportage is crucial because it influences citizens' trust in both the media and governmental institutions, as well as their civic engagement. Previous studies have demonstrated that Nigerian media reportage on political

matters can shape public attitudes, either enhancing democratic accountability or fostering skepticism, depending on perceived media bias or credibility.³

Recent research has also highlighted the increasing role of social and traditional media in framing political narratives in Nigeria.⁴ However, much of the scholarship has focused on election coverage or executive performance with limited attention to legislative reporting and the corresponding public perception. Understanding how the public perceives media coverage of the Senate's activities can provide insights into the effectiveness of media communication and its implications for democratic governance.⁵

Given Nigeria's complex media landscape and political challenges, it is essential to examine how media reportage of the 10th Senate during the early months of 2025 has been received by the public. This study aims to fill this gap by assessing public perception of media coverage of the Senate during this period, exploring levels of trust, perceived bias, and perceived influence on political awareness and participation.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The Nigerian Senate, as the legislative arm of government, plays a vital role in governance and accountability. Media reportage of Senate activities significantly shapes how the public understands and evaluates legislative performance. Between January and March 2025, the 10th Senate attracted intensive media coverage due to key events such as budget approvals, electoral reforms, and leadership controversies. However, the nature and tone of this media coverage have raised questions about accuracy, bias, and its effects on public trust.

Despite the critical role of the media, there remains limited empirical understanding of how Nigerians perceive media reportage of their Senate, particularly in the early months of the 10th Senate's tenure. Preliminary observations suggest that public opinion is divided: while some citizens rely on media for information and hold positive views of legislative coverage, others express skepticism over perceived partisan biases and misinformation. This fragmented perception can influence political engagement, trust in democratic institutions, and the overall quality of governance.

The problem, therefore, lies in the gap between media presentations of Senate activities and the public's reception and interpretation of such information. Without a clear understanding of public perception, efforts to improve media accountability and enhance civic awareness may be compromised. This research seeks to address this gap by examining how Nigerians perceived media reportage of the 10th Senate during this critical period, find the implications of such perceptions for democratic governance.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine Public perception of media reportage of the 10th senate of the federal republic of Nigeria from January to March 2025

The specific objectives are;

- 1 .To examine how the public perceive the accuracy and

fairness of media coverage about the Senate during this period

- 2 To examine the key factors that shape public trust or distrust in media reports on the Senate
- 3 To examine in what ways has media reportage influenced public support and acceptance of Senate's activities
- 4 To examine what improvements can be made to media reporting practices on Nigerian legislative affairs

1.3 Research Questions

1. What was the nature and tone of media reportage of the Nigerian 10th Senate between January and March 2025?
2. How does the public perceive the accuracy and fairness of media coverage about the Senate during this period?
3. What are the key factors that shape public trust or distrust in media reports on the Senate?
4. In what ways has media reportage influenced public support and acceptance of Senate's activities?
5. What improvements can be made to media reporting practices on Nigerian legislative affairs?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways:

It provides insights into the dynamics of political communication between the media, legislature, and the Nigerian public, highlighting the role of media in democratic governance. Understanding public perception helps media practitioners improve reportage quality, promoting balanced and responsible journalism. The findings can inform policymakers and stakeholders on the importance of media transparency and accountability in legislative reporting. It contributes to academic literature on media effects, political communication, and governance in Nigeria. Ultimately, this study seeks to enhance public trust and engagement in legislative affairs, fostering stronger democratic participation.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the Nigerian 10th Senate and the media coverage of its activities within the three- month period from January to March 2025. It examines both traditional and social media platforms, assessing their reportage and public reception nationwide, with particular attention to urban centers such as Umuahia, Aba, Owerri. The study centers on public perceptions regarding specific critical events, including budget approval, electoral reform, and Senate leadership issues during this timeframe.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to media reportage and public perception within a three - month period, which may not



capture longer-term trends.

Access to certain media sources or respondents may be constrained by logistical issues or political sensitivities.

There may be respondent bias where individuals' political affiliations influence their perceptions.

The rapidly evolving media landscape, especially social media, can pose challenges in tracking and verifying all relevant reportage.

Generalization beyond the selected urban areas and time frame should be made with caution.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Media Reportage: The process by which information about events, especially political or legislative, is collected, presented, and disseminated by media outlets (McQuail, 2021).

Public Perception: The collective views, attitudes, or beliefs held by the general public regarding a particular issue or event (Lippmann, 2020).

10th Senate of Nigeria: The current legislative session of Nigeria's upper parliamentary chamber inaugurated in 2023 and active through 2025.

Legislative Oversight: The scrutiny and evaluation of government policies and actions by the legislature, often reported in the media.

Political Engagement: The extent to which citizens participate in democratic processes, influenced by information such as media reports.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual framework

2.1.1 Concept of Public Perception

Noelle-Neumann defines public perception as "the aggregate of individual attitudes, opinions, and feelings toward a particular issue or phenomenon, influenced by social interactions and media representation."¹

Fishbein and Ajzen describe public perception as "the beliefs and evaluations held by the public regarding an object or event, which guide behaviors and decision-making processes."²

According to Lippmann, public perception refers to "the mental pictures that the public forms in response to complex realities, shaped by selective exposure to information and media framing."³

Entman adds that public perception is "the result of framing processes in communication whereby certain aspects of a perceived reality are made more salient to promote a particular interpretation, influencing public understanding and attitudes."⁴ Entman stated that Public perception is "the result of framing processes in communication whereby certain aspects of a perceived reality are made more salient to promote a

particular interpretation, influencing public understanding and attitudes."

Examination: Entman's framing theory emphasizes media's active role in shaping perception, showing how selective emphasis guides public interpretation and potentially political or social behavior.⁵

2.1.2 Concept of Media Reportage

McQuail⁶ stated that Media reportage is "the process through which the media gathers, selects, interprets, and presents information or news to the public, often shaped by editorial judgment and organizational constraints."

Forms Includes news articles, broadcast news, documentaries, and digital news stories.

Effect are that it Shapes public opinion and agenda-setting by influencing what issues are considered important.

Examination: This definition stresses the role of editorial choice in shaping the news agenda, highlighting media reportage as both a product and process affecting public discourse.

Dearing and Rogers⁶ define media reportage as "structured communication of events and issues through various media channels, involving framing techniques to influence audience perception."

Forms include Print, television, radio, and online news with framing devices such as headlines, images, and story angles.

The Effects include Frames can bias audience interpretation, affecting attitudes and beliefs toward reported events.

Examination: This emphasizes the framing function of media reportage, showing that how the news is presented can alter public understanding and responses.

According to Shoemaker and Reese⁷: Media reportage refers to "the organized production and dissemination of information by media institutions, influenced by cultural norms, routines, and economic pressures. 'Forms include Investigative reports, feature stories, live coverage, and opinion pieces.

The Effects are that if Influences cultural norms and public awareness but can also perpetuate stereotypes or misinformation depending on institutional biases.

Examination: The definition highlights institutional influences on reportage, pointing to effects beyond information dissemination, such as reinforcing social norms or biases.

McNair⁸ stated Media reportage is "the process of reporting news that serves as a primary source of information, creating public knowledge and serving a watchdog role over authorities."

Forms include News bulletins, press releases, journalistic interviews, and special reports.

The Effect are that it Enhances transparency and accountability but may also lead to sensationalism impacting public trust.

Examination: Focuses on the societal role and effects of media reportage in democracy, illustrating both positive impacts like

accountability and risks like sensationalism.. Media reportage involves various formats—print, broadcast, and digital—with powerful effects on public knowledge, attitudes, and societal norms. The ways stories are framed and produced influence how audiences perceive events, which can support democratic engagement or foster bias and misinformation.

2.1.2 The Impact of Media Reportage on Public Perception

Media reportage plays a central role in shaping public perception by influencing how individuals understand, interpret, and respond to events, issues, and public figures. The framing of news stories, the frequency of coverage, and the tone used in reporting can significantly alter public opinion and societal discourse.

- 1. *Agenda-Setting and Framing Effects:* The agenda-setting theory posits that the media doesn't tell people what to think, but rather what to think about⁹. By selecting which issues to highlight and how prominently to feature them, media outlets can influence the salience of issues in the public's mind. Moreover, framing theory suggests that how news is presented (the angle, words, and context used) shapes audience interpretation¹⁰. For instance, framing protests as "riots" versus "peaceful demonstrations" can lead to drastically different public perceptions of the same event.
- 1. *Trust and Credibility:* Media credibility also influences perception. Individuals are more likely to believe reports from sources they trust. A study by Tsfaty and Cappella¹¹ found that public trust in media correlates with the perceived reliability of the information. In an age of misinformation and "fake news," the perceived integrity of media institutions becomes crucial in shaping informed public opinion.
- 2. *Stereotypes and Social Representation:* Media reportage can reinforce stereotypes, particularly when it repeatedly portrays certain groups in a negative light. According to Dixon and Linz¹², consistent negative portrayals of ethnic minorities in crime reports lead to distorted public perceptions and support for punitive policies. This highlights the ethical responsibility of media organizations to avoid bias and sensationalism.
- 3. *Political and Policy Influence:* Media coverage significantly impacts political attitudes and policy preferences. Studies have shown that extensive media attention to issues like immigration, terrorism, or health crisis can influence both public perception and political action¹³. The "CNN effect" describes how real-time media coverage of humanitarian crises can pressure governments into rapid policy responses¹⁴.
- 4. *Digital and Social Media Dynamics:* With the rise of digital and social media platforms, the speed and reach of media reportage have dramatically increased. These platforms allow for wider dissemination and also facilitate echo chambers where individuals are exposed primarily to viewpoints that align with their own,

reinforcing pre-existing beliefs and sometimes distorting perception¹⁵

2.1.4 Examination of the Events of the 10th Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria from January to March 2025

1.2025 Budget Deliberations and Passage

In January 2025, the Senate suspended plenary sessions to focus on the defense of the 2025 budget with various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). Plenary resumed on January 28, 2025, with the budget report presented for consideration.(The Guardian Nigeria)

On February 13, 2025, the Senate passed the 2025 budget, increasing it from the initially proposed N54.2 trillion to N54.9 trillion. The budget allocations included N3.6 trillion for statutory transfers, M14.3 trillion for debt service, N23.9 trillion for capital expenditure, and N13.8 trillion for fiscal deficit .(Premium Times Nigeria)¹⁶

- 5. *Tax Reform Initiatives:* In February 2025, the Senate held a two-day public hearing on four tax reform bills aimed at enhancing Nigeria's tax administration. These bills included the Nigeria Tax Bill 2024, Nigeria Tax Administration Bill, Nigeria Revenue Service Establishment Bill, and Joint Revenue Board Establishment Bill. The reforms are part of efforts to achieve a \$1 trillion economy by 2030 .¹⁷
- 6. *Capital Market Literacy Funding:* The Senate Committee on Capital Markets proposed a N10 billion allocation in the 2025 budget to Finance capital market literacy programs. This initiative aims to curb fraudulent investment schemes and restore investor confidence.

7. Controversies and Disciplinary Actions

- a. *Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan’s Suspension:* In February 2025, Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan accused Senate President Godswill Akpabio of sexual harassment, alleging the incident occurred in December 2023. The Senate Committee on Ethics and Privileges investigated the matter and, on March 6, 2025, recommended her suspension for six months due to misconduct, including violating Senate Standing Orders. Her petition was dismissed on procedural grounds,¹⁹
- b. *Senator Abdul Ningi's Budget Padding Allegation;* Senator Abdul Ningi alleged that N3.7 trillion of the 2024 budget was unaccounted for in terms of project distribution.

8. Legislative Developments

- a. *National Minimum Wage Increase:* The Senate passed a bill increasing the national minimum wage from N30,000 to N70,000, reflecting efforts to address economic challenges and improve workers' welfare²⁰
- b. *National Anthem Change:* In a swift legislative move, the Senate passed a bill reverting Nigeria's national anthem

from "Arise O Compatriots" to "Nigeria We Hail Thee." The bill underwent all three readings within 24 hours, sparking public debate about legislative priorities²¹

2.1.5 The impact of Media Reportage Of The 10th Senate Of The Federal Republic Of Nigeria From January To March 2025 on Public Perception

The Nigerian Senate, as a critical institution in democratic governance, significantly influences national discourse. Media reportage—how news outlets frame, cover, and interpret the Senate's actions—plays a vital role in shaping public perception. The period from January to March 2025 saw the 10th Senate involved in several legislative debates, oversight functions, and political controversies. Media coverage during this time has affected public opinion, trust in legislative processes, and the perceived legitimacy of the Senate's activities

Media Coverage of the 10th Senate (Jan-Mar 2025) during this period, the media prominently reported on: The screening and confirmation of ministerial nominees,

The controversy surrounding constituency project allocations, the debate over the Electoral Act amendment bill, and The Senate's response to national security and economic challenges.

Online newspapers like Premium Times, The Cable, Punch, and Channels TV provided intensive coverage, often highlighting partisan divisions and questioning transparency in legislative conduct.²²

Impact on Public Perception

1. **Declining Trust in the Legislature:** Media reports depicting internal conflicts, allegations of corruption, and perceived rubber-stamping of executive nominations contributed to public skepticism. This trend aligns with earlier findings that negative media coverage can diminish institutional trust ²¹. "When the media focuses on controversies and political patronage, the legislature is perceived less as a democratic institution and more as a self-serving elite group" ²⁴
2. **Increased Political Awareness:** Despite the criticisms, the high volume of reportage heightened political awareness. Social media amplification of news reports, particularly on Twitter (now X), fostered real-time engagement and civic debates, echoing previous trends where digital platforms drove participatory democracy
3. **Polarization of Public Opinion:** Media framing of the Senate's performance varied by outlet. Pro-government media emphasized stability and legislative cooperation, while independent or opposition-aligned outlets criticized inefficiencies, leading to a split in public interpretation.

This dual framing reinforces previous studies on how media partisanship influences audience alignment and ideological bias

Challenges in Media Objectivity and Legislative Transparency

Some scholars argue that media outlets often rely on press statements and lack independent investigative coverage of legislative activities, thereby amplifying elite narratives ~ The lack of nuanced reporting can misinform or manipulate public sentiment, especially when facts are selectively emphasized.

Media reportage of the 10th Senate from January to March 2025 significantly impacted public perception in Nigeria. While it enhanced political awareness and engagement, it also contributed to mistrust and polarization. This reflects broader challenges of media bias, institutional opacity, and the struggle to balance informative and watchdog journalism in Nigeria's democracy.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The study is underpinned by following theory

Framing Theory: (Entman, 1993)

Framing Theory was most prominently articulated by **Robert M. Entman** in **1993** in his seminal work titled "*Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm*." While the roots of framing can be traced to earlier works by **Erving Goffman** (1974) in *Frame Analysis*, Entman is credited with refining and popularizing the theory within the field of mass communication and political communication.²⁸

What the Theory Says

Framing Theory posits that **the way information is presented (framed) by the media influences how audiences understand and interpret that information**. Frames highlight certain aspects of a perceived reality while downplaying or omitting others, thereby guiding the public's judgment and emotional response ²⁹

Entman (1993) defines framing as the process of:

"selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation."

Key Components of Framing Theory (Entman, 1993)

According to Entman, effective frames typically perform four key functions:

1. **Problem Definition:** Identifying what a particular issue or event is about.
2. **Causal Interpretation:** Assigning blame or responsibility.
3. **Moral Evaluation:** Making judgments about the people or institutions involved.
4. **Treatment Recommendation:** Proposing solutions or courses of action.

These components work together to shape how audiences think

about an issue, not just what they think about.

Relevance of Framing Theory to the Study

Study Focus: *Media Reportage of the 10th Senate of Nigeria (Jan-Mar 2025) and Its Impact on Public Perception*

Framing Theory is highly relevant for analyzing this topic because:

- **Media Influence on Perception:** The theory helps explain how the media's choice of headlines, images, sources, and language influences public interpretation of the Senate's actions.
- **Interpretation of Legislative Activities:** News reports on corruption, transparency, and political wrangling in the Senate may frame these issues in ways that lead to **public disillusionment** or **support**, depending on the frame used (e.g., "accountability" vs "witch-hunt").
- **Polarization and Bias:** Different media outlets may frame the same legislative event differently, leading to **polarized public opinion**—a core concern of the study.
- **Agenda Reinforcement:** Framing also reinforces certain ideological stances. For example, framing the Senate as "pro-executive" or "anti-democratic" affects the perceived legitimacy of the legislative process.

Thus, **Framing Theory provides a robust analytical lens** for understanding the link between how the 10th Senate was reported in the media and how citizens formed opinions about its credibility, effectiveness, and democratic relevance.

2.3 Empirical Studies

Okoro and Odoemelam³⁰ conducted a content analysis of selected national newspapers and administered questionnaires to assess how legislative activities were framed in Nigerian media. Their findings revealed that the majority of reports portrayed the National Assembly in a negative light, leading to increased public distrust. This aligns with the current study's investigation into the tone of media reportage on the 10th Senate and its implications for public confidence.

Framing of political news influences public trust in state institutions. Using mixed methods, including focus group discussions and surveys, they found that sensational and emotionally charged reporting eroded trust and contributed to political apathy. Their study confirms the power of framing in shaping public sentiment, a central theme in this research.³¹

Similarly, Adeyemi³² conducted a survey on public perception of media fairness in covering the National Assembly. Results showed that a significant portion of urban Nigerians perceived the reports as biased or incomplete, suggesting the need for more balanced and investigative reporting. This supports the objective of assessing public views on the accuracy and fairness of Senate reportage.

Ukonu and Okon explored objectivity in legislative reporting through interviews with journalists and legislators. They found that editorial pressures and political affiliations often dictate the tone of stories, resulting in either overly critical or overly favorable portrayals. This highlights internal media dynamics

that may affect reporting quality. In a post-election context, Adebayo and Yusuf³⁴ examined the correlation between media trust and political engagement. Their survey of young Nigerians revealed that diminished trust in media led to lower civic participation and greater vulnerability to misinformation. This finding is important for understanding the broader consequences of media misreporting on democratic engagement.

A content analysis by Olayiwola¹⁵ focused on the thematic emphasis in newspaper coverage of the National Assembly. The analysis showed that scandals, conflicts, and political intrigues dominated headlines, while legislative achievements received minimal attention. This trend of emphasizing controversy over substance is also evident in media coverage of the 10th Senate. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that media tone, framing, credibility, and public literacy significantly influence how legislative activities are perceived. They provide robust empirical support for the current study's aim to evaluate media coverage of the 10th Senate and its effects on public trust, support, and perception.

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a **descriptive survey design**, combining both qualitative content analysis and quantitative data collection through questionnaires. The design is appropriate for assessing public perceptions and analyzing media content regarding the 10th Senate of Nigeria within a specific timeframe.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population includes:

- **Media Consumers** (general public with access to newspapers, online media, and television between Jan-Mar 2025)
- **Selected Media Outlets** (e.g., Premium Times, The Punch, Channels TV, Vanguard)

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample of 200 respondents was selected using purposive and stratified random sampling from major cities including Abuja and Kano. Media reports from 6 national newspapers and 3 television stations were purposively selected for content analysis.

3.4 Instruments for Data Collection

1. **Structured Questionnaire** with closed-ended items using a Likert scale (for public perception)
2. **Content Analysis Coding Sheet** (for examining tone, framing, and themes in media reportage)

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Face and content validity were ensured through expert reviews. A pilot study yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.83, indicating high reliability.

3.6 Methods of Data Collection

- Media reports were collected and coded based on predefined categories (positive, neutral, negative tone).

- Questionnaires were administered both online and physically.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages, mean)
- Thematic content analysis (for qualitative data)

Data was analyzed using SPSS Version 26.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequenc	Percentage
Gender	Male	110	55
	Female	90	45
Age	18-30	75	37.5
	31—45	80	40
	46 and above 45		22.5
Education Level	Tertiary	150	75
	Secondary	40	20
	Others	10	5

4.2 Answers to Research Questions (Descriptive Statistics)

Research Question 1: Nature and Tone of Media Reportage

Content analysis of 100 media reports showed:

- Positive Tone - 30%
- Neutral Tone - 25%
- Negative Tone - 45%
- Themes: Corruption, partisanship, legislative inefficiency

Research Question 2: Perceived Accuracy and Fairness

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Media reports on the Senate were accurate	40	20	40
Reports were generally fair and balanced	35	25	40

Research Question 3: Factors Shaping Trust in Media Reports Factor Rated as 'High Influence' (%)

Source credibility	70
Political bias of media	60
Transparency of Senate proceedings	50
Prior public distrust in institutions	45

Research Question 4: Influence on Public Support of Senate Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Media reports reduced my trust in the Senate	58	42
I support most activities of the 10th Senate	35	65

Research Question 5: Improvements to Media Practices

Suggestion	% of Respondents Supporting
Improve objectivity in reporting	85
Increase investigative journalism	78
Reduce sensational headlines	70
Engage independent fact-checking	60

4.3 Summary of Findings

- Media reportage was predominantly negative in tone.
- Public perceptions of fairness and accuracy were split, with a substantial portion indicating skepticism.
- Trust in media was influenced by source credibility and perceived political alignment.
- Media coverage had a notable impact on reducing public support for the Senate.
- Respondents called for improved journalistic integrity and balanced reporting.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings align with Framing Theory (Entman, 1993), suggesting that how media frames issues— particularly through tone and thematic focus—shapes audience interpretation. The negative slant in media narratives contributed to public mistrust and skepticism toward Senate activities. This supports earlier work by Okoro and Odoemelam (2020), who argued that unbalanced legislative reporting undermines democratic legitimacy.

Here’s a detailed discussion of my research findings:

Discussion of Findings

1. Media reportage was predominantly negative in tone

This finding suggests that the bulk of the media coverage of the 10th Nigerian Senate from January to March 2025 leaned toward criticism, conflict, or unfavorable interpretations. Such a trend aligns with what **Entman (1993)** described in his framing theory, where the selection and emphasis of certain aspects of news can shape audience perception. Negative media tones may result from journalistic tendencies to prioritize sensationalism and controversy over balanced or developmental reporting, particularly when

covering politics and legislative affairs. This has implications for the public’s understanding of the Senate's performance and roles, potentially reinforcing a perception of dysfunction or self-interest.

Public perceptions of fairness and accuracy were split, with a substantial portion indicating skepticism

The divided public opinion reflects growing concerns about media bias and selective reporting. This skepticism may stem from prior experiences of misinformation, perceived political affiliations of media outlets, or a lack of transparency in journalistic processes.

Studies by **Tsfati & Cappella (2003)** and **McQuail (2021)** highlight that audiences are increasingly discerning and critical of how news is framed. In a fragmented media environment, fairness and accuracy are crucial in retaining public trust. If a significant segment of the population doubts the integrity of political reporting, it can undermine the media’s watchdog role in a democracy.

2. Trust in media was influenced by source credibility and perceived political alignment

This finding supports existing research that media trust is conditional and often based on whether the audience perceives the media as objective or aligned with their values (**Shoemaker & Reese, 2019; Sunstein, 2001**). In Nigeria's polarized media landscape, where ownership structures often correlate with political interests, audiences tend to filter content through the lens of source affiliation. Trust is not merely a function of content quality but also of institutional reputation, past performance, and perceived neutrality. This creates echo chambers where citizens consume news that reinforces existing beliefs, further deepening political divides.

3. Media coverage had a notable impact on reducing public support for the Senate

This underscores the powerful role of agenda-setting

and framing in shaping public attitudes. According to **McCombs and Shaw's (1972)** agenda-setting theory, media influence what the public thinks about and how they evaluate issues. Negative portrayals of the Senate—such as highlighting inefficiencies, corruption, or internal conflicts—may have eroded public confidence in the institution. This can have far-reaching consequences for democratic governance, as weakened public support may reduce political engagement, fuel apathy, or undermine legislative legitimacy.

4. Respondents called for improved journalistic integrity and balanced reporting

This reflects public demand for higher ethical standards in news production. Calls for balanced reporting indicate that the audience values objectivity, pluralism, and fairness. The finding resonates with normative theories of the press, especially the social responsibility theory, which holds that the media has a duty to inform the public accurately and fairly. A transparent, accountable media system is crucial for democratic consolidation. Enhancing journalistic integrity may involve strengthening professional codes, editorial independence, and training in investigative and ethical journalism.

Overall, the findings highlight a complex interaction between media narratives, public perception, and political accountability. While the media plays a critical role in democratic oversight, its effectiveness is undermined when it lacks credibility or becomes a tool for political bias. These results call for reforms in media practice and public communication, particularly in politically sensitive periods like national legislative cycles.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Summary

This study examined how media reportage of the Nigerian 10th Senate (Jan-Mar 2025) influenced public perception. Using content analysis and survey methods, it identified a generally negative tone in reporting, mixed public trust in media fairness, and a measurable impact on support for Senate activities.

4.2 Conclusion

The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion about legislative institutions. This study concludes that the framing and tone of media reports can either enhance or erode public trust in democratic governance. Negative coverage, especially without balance, can delegitimize legislative efforts even when such efforts may be in the public interest.

4.3 Contributions to Knowledge

Empirically links **Framing Theory** to legislative

media coverage in a Nigerian context.

Provides real-time data on public perception of the 10th Senate during a critical governance period. Offers policy-relevant insights for media regulation and civic education initiatives.

4.4 Recommendations

- 1. **Journalists** need to Emphasize objectivity, reduce sensationalism, and increase investigative journalism.
- 2. **Media Houses** should Provide fact-checked and balanced reports on Senate proceedings.
- 3. **The Senate** should Enhance transparency by live streaming sessions and issuing regular public briefings.
- 4. **Regulators (e.g., NBC, NUJ)** should Enforce ethical journalism standards and support media literacy programs.

Civil Society must promote public engagement with legislative content and support independent media monitoring.

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