

FRAMING HEALTHCARE INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES IN ONLINE NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

This study, Framing Healthcare Infrastructure Challenges in Online Nigerian Newspapers, employs quantitative content analysis to investigate the portrayal of healthcare infrastructure challenges in Nigerian online newspapers, focusing on Daily Trust, The Sun, and The Guardian. Drawing from Framing Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory, the research explores the frequency, themes, and framing techniques used in the coverage of these challenges. The analysis reveals that Daily Trust has a higher frequency of coverage than The Guardian and The Sun, highlighting diverse emphases across these newspapers. The predominant themes identified encompass financial barriers, health care reforms, supply chain issues, infrastructure deficiencies, and low insurance coverage. Additionally, a spectrum of framing techniques, such as problem-centric, human interest, and policy emphasis, was observed, influencing readers' perceptions and potentially impacting governmental attention. The study concludes that the media has an influential role in shaping audience perceptions through framing which emphasizes a multifaceted presentation of critical healthcare infrastructure challenges in Nigerian newspapers. The study recommends, among other things, a shift beyond the mere frequency of coverage, stressing the importance of in-depth qualitative analysis within articles to offer comprehensive insights.

Introduction

The concept of access to quality health care as a fundamental human right has been at the forefront of international discussions and agreements. Access to health care is not merely a luxury but a fundamental

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necessity that underpins human development and societal progress (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018). This recognition is deeply embedded in international declarations such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), which explicitly recognizes the right to healthcare as an integral component of the right to an adequate standard of living.

In Nigeria, a nation characterized by its vast and diverse population exceeding 200 million people (World Bank, 2021), ensuring equitable access to health care has emerged as a persistent and intricate challenge. The Nigerian health care system faces several multifaceted issues, collectively hindering the provision of quality health care services to its citizens. These issues include inadequate health care facilities, acute shortages of health care workers, and stark disparities in the distribution of healthcare resources. These interconnected challenges have profound and far-reaching implications for the health and well-being of Nigeria's diverse population.

Nigeria's health care system, like those in many developing countries, faces a complex web of challenges that collectively obstruct the delivery of quality health care services to its citizens. Among these challenges, one of the most pressing and visible issues is the deplorable state of health care infrastructure. Hospitals, clinics, and primary health care centers across the nation often serve as grim symbols of neglect and decay (WHO, 2020). These facilities frequently lack essential medical equipment, access to a consistent supply of drugs, and even basic amenities such as reliable electricity. The consequences of this dire situation are grave: compromised patient care, limited treatment options, and the loss of lives (Okonkwo et al., 2019).

In addition to infrastructure challenges, Nigeria faces a severe shortage of health care workers, a crisis that further intensifies access barriers. The physician-patient ratio in Nigeria is significantly lower than the WHO recommended standards. This shortage is most acutely felt in rural areas where most Nigeria's population lives. Consequently, access to qualified medical professionals is unevenly distributed, with urban areas benefiting from a higher concentration of health care workers (Oleribe et al., 2014). This urban-rural disparity amplifies health care inequities and perpetuates the struggle for quality care among rural populations.

Furthermore, the allocation and distribution of health resources in Nigeria are plagued by inefficiencies, mismanagement, and corruption. Nigeria's healthcare system primarily relies on public funds, and the process of allocating these resources is frequently characterized by opacity and misappropriation (Aregbeshola & Khan, 2017). Consequently, disparities in healthcare access are exacerbated, with certain regions and socioeconomic groups receiving preferential treatment while others are left underserved.

In this intricate and multifaceted landscape, the media plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, influencing policy decisions, and holding institutions accountable (McQuail, 2010). Online newspapers, in particular, have emerged as significant sources of news and information for a wide and diverse readership in Nigeria. They can exert substantial influence on public discourse and policy formulation.

This research aims to delve into the phenomenon of media framing within the specific context of health care infrastructure challenges in Nigeria. Framing theory, introduced by Erving Goffman (1974) and subsequently expanded upon by Entman (1993), posits that media organizations selectively emphasize certain aspects of an issue while downplaying others, with the intention of making certain aspects more salient in order to shape public perception. Within the realm of health care infrastructure challenges, the framing choices made by online Nigerian newspapers can significantly impact how these complex issues are understood by the public and policymakers.

Framing health care infrastructure challenges in online Nigerian newspapers is a critical aspect of public discourse, policy formulation, and accountability. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of

how these challenges are portrayed in the media, ultimately contributing to efforts to improve health care access and delivery in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The health care infrastructure in Nigeria is facing numerous challenges, which have been widely discussed in online Nigerian newspapers. These challenges encompass issues related to health care accessibility, quality of care, and healthcare facilities' capacity to meet population needs. Although there is a substantial body of literature addressing health care challenges in Nigeria, a critical research gap remains in the framing of these challenges within the context of online Nigerian newspapers. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how these challenges are presented and discussed in online Nigerian newspapers, while highlighting the pertinent research gap created by previous studies.

Several studies have explored health care challenges in Nigeria, focusing on various aspects, such as health care financing, infrastructure development, and health care outcomes. However, these studies have not specifically examined how these challenges are framed and discussed in online Nigerian newspapers. Some relevant studies in this regard include Oladipo's (2017) study entitled "Healthcare Financing in Nigeria: Implications for Achieving Universal Health Coverage." Adeloye, David and Olaogun's (2018). "Health Workforce and Governance: The Crisis in Nigeria." Okeke, Odeh and Alhassan's (2020) presented a study on "Hospital Infrastructure Development in Nigeria: A Critical Review of Challenges and Prospects."

The research gap in this context lies in the absence of comprehensive studies that have examined the framing of health care infrastructure challenges in online Nigerian newspapers. Although the aforementioned studies contribute valuable information regarding health care challenges in Nigeria, they do not address the critical issue of media representation and framing. Understanding how these challenges are portrayed in online Nigerian newspapers is essential because the media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions, influencing policy decisions, and mobilizing public opinion.

Research Questions

The following research questions seek to provide a structured framework for investigating the framing of health care infrastructure challenges in online Nigerian newspapers and help achieve the research objectives.

1. What is the frequency of reportage of health care infrastructure challenges in online Nigerian newspapers?
2. What are the predominant themes that emerge within articles framing health care infrastructure challenges in online Nigerian newspapers?
3. What framing techniques are commonly used by online Nigerian newspapers when reporting on health care infrastructure challenges?

Review of Related Literature

Framing Healthcare Infrastructure Challenges

The media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing policy decisions. Regarding health care infrastructure, the way issues are framed in newspapers can have a profound impact on public understanding and political discourse. Brown, Smith, and Johnson (2020) stated that newspapers often frame health infrastructure issues in terms of resource shortages, focusing on problems such as a lack of hospital beds, medical equipment, and healthcare professionals. This framing emphasizes the immediate and tangible aspects of infrastructure challenges that potentially generate public concern.

Newspapers tend to underreport structural issues, such as outdated health care facilities and inefficient health care systems (Brown, Smith & Johnson, 2020). These structural problems may not be as attention-grabbing as shortages, but they have long-term implications for health care delivery. The way health care infrastructure

challenges are framed in newspapers can significantly influence public perception. Jones and Johnson (2018) asserted that individuals who read articles highlighting resource shortages are more likely to express concern about the state of health care infrastructure and advocate for immediate solutions. On the other hand, those exposed to articles focusing on structural issues are more inclined to support long-term systemic reform.

Gupta and Lee (2017) argue that sensationalized framing, which is common in newspapers, can lead to public panic and calls for quick fixes without considering the broader context. This can put pressure on policymakers to allocate resources reactively rather than strategically.

The framing of health care infrastructure challenges in newspapers can impact health care policy decisions. Williams and Davis (2019) suggested that media framing can influence policymakers' priorities, shaping the allocation of resources and the emphasis on short-term versus long-term solutions. Policymakers may feel compelled to respond to the immediate concerns highlighted in the media. Thomas, Miller, and Williams (2021) emphasized the need for a balanced and informed media discourse on health care infrastructure to facilitate evidence-based policy decisions. They argued that journalists should provide comprehensive coverage that considers both immediate resource shortages and structural issues.

Frequency of Reportage

This aspect of media coverage plays a crucial role in shaping public awareness and policy priorities regarding health care infrastructure issues. Abdullahi and Yusuf (2021) asserted that inadequate coverage of health care infrastructure challenges has hindered public understanding and engagement. There are several factors contributing to the infrequency of reportage. Economic constraints within the media industry, political considerations, and a lack of awareness regarding the significance of health care infrastructure issues may all play a role (Adeyemi, 2020).

The ownership structure of Nigerian newspapers significantly influences the quality and quantity of health care infrastructure reportage (Smith & Johnson, 2018). Media outlets with certain ownership affiliations may be more inclined to cover or ignore these issues because of their political or financial interests. The media portrayal of health care infrastructure challenges has a direct impact on public perception and policy priorities. A lack of coverage can result in misinformed public and subsequent policy neglect (Ogunbanjo et al., 2017).

Inadequate and biased media coverage can intensify health care infrastructure issues. Sensationalism, political bias, and the prioritization of other topics may distort the true state of these challenges (Anderson, 2019). The frequency of reportage and framing of health care infrastructure challenges in online Nigerian newspapers are critical factors in addressing the health care crisis in the country. The media's power to illuminate these issues and frame them effectively is pivotal to raising public awareness and influencing policy decisions. It is incumbent on both media outlets and policymakers to recognize the significance of these dynamics and work collaboratively to ensure adequate coverage and impactful framing of health care infrastructure challenges.

Predominant Themes

Framing theory posits that media organizations have the power to shape the narrative surrounding issues by emphasizing certain aspects while downplaying others (Entman, 1993). The framing of health care infrastructure challenges in the media is therefore pivotal for influencing public understanding and policy formation. Okonkwo and Adekunle (2022) identified the most prominent themes in health infrastructure to be inadequate health care facilities, insufficient funding, and health care workforce shortages. This suggests that online newspapers frequently emphasize certain themes when framing health care infrastructure challenges.

One of the most prevalent themes in the framing of health care infrastructure challenges is resource scarcity. Nigerian newspapers frequently emphasize the shortage of funds, medical equipment, and qualified personnel

as major hindrances to the health care sector's development (Adeyemi & Okonkwo, 2020). The decay of existing healthcare infrastructure is a recurring theme. This framing highlights the deplorable conditions of hospitals and clinics, including issues such as dilapidated buildings, broken equipment, and inadequate maintenance (Ojo, 2018).

The theme of access and equity in health care coverage is another significant focus when framing healthcare infrastructure challenges. Nigerian newspapers often address healthcare access disparities, with an emphasis on the urban-rural divide and regional imbalances (Nwosu & Ibe, 2019). Framing health care infrastructure challenges frequently involves discussions about government accountability. Articles often highlight the government's role in funding, management, and oversight, highlighting where accountability may be lacking (Eze, 2017).

Media articles frequently frame health care infrastructure challenges by discussing their direct impact on health outcomes. This theme relates the deficiencies in health care infrastructure to preventable illnesses, fatalities, and decreased life expectancy (Ojo, 2018). The theme of solutions and innovation emphasizes efforts to address health care infrastructure challenges. Media outlets often report on initiatives, innovations, or success stories aimed at improving healthcare infrastructure (Eze, 2017).

Framing Techniques

Okeke and Nwabueze (2023), while providing insights into the framing techniques utilized by Nigerian media in the context of healthcare infrastructure, found that media outlets often used crisis framing to depict the severity of infrastructure challenges, thereby influencing public and policymaker perceptions. A frequently used framing technique is problem definition. This technique defines health care infrastructure challenges as significant issues requiring attention and action (Onyekachi & Adebayo, 2019). By framing problems as pressing and consequential, the media can mobilize public and governmental interest.

Human interest stories are a powerful framing technique used to elicit empathy and engagement. These stories feature individuals and communities directly affected by health care infrastructure challenges. They provide a human face to the issues, making them relatable and emotionally charged (Ogundele, 2020). Health care infrastructure challenges are frequently framed through political lens. The media may emphasize the role of political leaders and government institutions in addressing or irritating these issues. This framing can influence public opinion and call for political action.

Another technique is framing, which focuses on potential solutions and innovations. This approach highlights initiatives, projects, and policies aimed at improving health care infrastructure. By highlighting positive developments, the media can inspire hope and encourage further efforts (Onyekachi & Adebayo, 2019). In times of acute health care infrastructure challenges, the media may use crisis framing to depict the situation as dire and in need of immediate attention. This technique can drive emergency responses and allocates resources.

Framing health care infrastructure challenges within the context of international comparisons is another technique. By contrasting Nigeria's health care infrastructure with those of other countries, the media can highlight the disparities and pressure policymakers to address deficiencies (Ogunbiyi, 2018). This technique involves framing the challenges in terms of equity and healthcare access. The media may highlight disparities in health care access between urban and rural areas or different socio-economic groups.

Empirical Review

Several studies have explored health care challenges in Nigeria, focusing on various aspects, such as health care financing, infrastructure development, and health care outcomes. However, these studies have not specifically

examined how these challenges are framed and discussed in online Nigerian newspapers. Some relevant studies in this regard include the following:

Oladipo(2017)conducted a study entitled “Healthcare Financing in Nigeria: Implications for Achieving Universal Health Coverage.” This study investigates the financial aspects of health care in Nigeria and discusses issues related to funding and health insurance. While it contributes to understanding healthcare challenges, it does not illuminate how these challenges are framed in online Nigerian newspapers.

Adeloye, David and Olaogun (2018) conducted a study “Health Workforce and Governance: The Crisis in Nigeria.” This research focuses on health care workforce issues and governance in Nigeria. The study highlights the shortage of health care professionals and governance challenges but does not analyze the media representation of these problems in online Nigerian newspapers.

Okeke, Odeh, and Alhassan (2020). Hospital Infrastructure Development in Nigeria: A Critical Review of Challenges and Prospects. This study provides insights into the challenges related to hospital infrastructure development in Nigeria. However, it does not explore how these challenges are portrayed in online Nigerian newspapers.

The research gap in this context lies in the absence of comprehensive studies that have examined the framing of health care infrastructure challenges in online Nigerian newspapers. Although the aforementioned studies contribute valuable information regarding health care challenges in Nigeria, they do not address the critical issue of media representation and framing. Understanding how these challenges are portrayed in online Nigerian newspapers is essential because the media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions, influencing policy decisions, and mobilizing public opinion.

Theoretical Framework

Framing Theory

Framing Theory posits that the media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception and constructing the understanding of events and issues by presenting them through particular frames or lenses (Entman, 1993). This study applies Framing Theory to analyze how healthcare infrastructure challenges are framed in online Nigerian newspapers, as effective communication of such issues is crucial for promoting awareness, policy change and public engagement (Tankard, 2001). Understanding the framing of health care infrastructure challenges is particularly pertinent in Nigeria, where a robust health care system is essential for the well-being of the population.

Framing theory, rooted in communication and media studies, posits that news media selectively emphasize certain aspects of an issue while downplaying or omitting others to shape public perceptions (Entman, 1993). Frames act as interpretive filters through which audiences make sense of complex issues. Nigeria faces numerous health care infrastructure challenges, including a lack of adequate facilities, a shortage of medical personnel, poor equipment maintenance, and financial constraints (Ezeonu et al., 2020). These challenges hinder the delivery of quality health care services to a vast and growing population.

Framing Theory is highly relevant to this study, offering a comprehensive framework for comprehending how healthcare infrastructure challenges are portrayed in Nigerian online newspapers and how these portrayals influence public awareness, attitudes, and the potential for policy change. This application of Framing Theory provides insights that are not only academically valuable but also crucial for addressing the pressing health care needs of the Nigerian population.

Agenda Setting

Agenda-setting theory posits that the media plays a significant role in determining the importance and salience of issues in the public mind (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In conjunction with Framing Theory, this study seeks to unravel how the media's framing of healthcare infrastructure challenges in online Nigerian newspapers influences not only how the issues are understood but also how they are prioritized on the public agenda. This is crucial in the context of Nigeria, where health care infrastructure challenges have profound implications for the well-being of the population.

Agenda-setting theory suggests that the media can influence the public's perception of the world by emphasizing certain issues over others. The theory posits that the more attention a media outlet gives to an issue, the more likely it is to become salient in the public's mind (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Nigeria grapples with numerous health care infrastructure challenges, including insufficient facilities, inadequate medical personnel, equipment maintenance issues, and financial constraints (Ezeonu et al., 2020). These issues contribute to the hindered delivery of quality health care services to a population growing rapidly.

The combined use of Agenda Setting Theory and Framing Theory in the analysis of health care infrastructure challenges in online Nigerian newspapers highlights the complex and symbiotic relationship between media and the public agenda. The media's framing choices not only shape how these challenges are understood and determine the level of public attention, awareness, and potential action on these critical issues. Understanding this relationship is pivotal in addressing the pressing health care needs of the Nigerian population.

Methodology

This study examines how health care infrastructure challenges are portrayed in Nigerian online newspapers using quantitative content analysis. To achieve this, a quantitative content analysis research approach was employed to investigate *Daily Trust*, *the Sun* and *The Guardian*, which were selected purposively from 51 newspapers. The population for this research includes all editions/issues published between 1st September 2022 and 31st August 2023.

In the study, 279 editions/issues of the newspapers were systematically sampled over a year using Krejcie and Morgan Table, with each paper contributing 93 samples. This means an interval of 4 days between editions (population/sample size = interval).

The sampling technique employed involved two steps: Judgmental or purposive sampling: This technique was used to select the online newspapers for content analysis, ensuring that *Daily Trust*, *the Sun*, and *The Guardian* were chosen. The rationale behind this selection was to reflect diverse viewpoints, geographic representation (North and South), varied editorial approaches, and a mix of audience demographics. For the days, editions, and issues of the newspapers, a systematic selection method was applied to ensure representative coverage over the 12-month period.

The analysis includes news reports, features, editorials, interviews, and visuals to understand framing strategies and thematic elements. The study categorized content into specific story genres and identified various framing types used in the coverage.

Quantitative content analysis involved coding language-based or visual data, initially deductive and later inductive to form overarching themes. Additionally, the study identified the following thematic elements within health care infrastructure coverage: financial barriers, risk protection, healthcare reforms, supply chain challenges, infrastructure, and human resources. Low insurance coverage and high out-of-pocket expenditure. Moreover, the study explored different framing types used in newspaper coverage of health infrastructure like problem-centric, human interest policy emphasis, and comparative crisis or urgency, expert analysis, data and statistics, socioeconomic impact and solutions-oriented.

Inter-coder reliability was measured using Cohen's Kappa coefficient, which indicated a moderate level of agreement (0.3913) between coders in categorizing themes, beyond what would be expected by chance. These findings suggest reasonable consensus in their assessment of health care infrastructure challenges.

The data on health care infrastructure challenges are presented and analyzed using straightforward percentage tables. This method allows for a comprehensive examination of the content and context surrounding these challenges, offering a deeper understanding of their nuances and implications.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents and analyzes the data collected as part of the study, which focuses on how health care infrastructure challenges are framed in the online versions of Nigerian newspapers. The research employed a quantitative approach and used content analysis as the primary research method. The study concentrated on the content of articles and reports related to health care infrastructure challenges from three selected online newspapers: *Daily Sun*, *Daily Trust*, and *The Guardian*.

Out of the 51 online newspapers published in Nigeria, three were purposefully selected for this study. The research population encompassed all editions and issues published between September 1, 2022 and August 31, 2023. Sample size determination was conducted using the Krejcie and Morgan Table, resulting in a sample size of 279 editions/issues of online newspapers, with an interval of 4 days between editions. This equated to a sample size of 93 editions/issues per selected newspaper. The following research questions shaped the analysis:

Research Question One: What is the frequency of reportage of health care infrastructure challenges in online Nigerian newspapers?

Table 1: Extent of Online Newspapers Reporting Health care Infrastructure Challenges

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage
Daily Trust	119	42.7
The Guardian	86	30.8
The Sun	74	26.5
Total	279	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table illustrates the frequency and percentage of reports focusing on health care infrastructure challenges by three prominent online newspapers: *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, and *The Sun*. *Daily Trust* is the leading publisher on health care infrastructure challenges, reporting 119 instances, representing 42.7% of the total coverage. *The Guardian* follows closely with 86 reports, accounting for 30.8% of the overall coverage. Conversely, *the Sun* exhibits the least coverage, reporting 74 instances (26.5% of the total).

The collective frequency across these newspapers is up to 279, encompassing 100% of the coverage of health care infrastructure challenges. This distribution indicates that *Daily Trust* contributed the most coverage for these challenges, followed by *The Guardian* and *the Sun*. These differing frequencies might suggest different priorities or emphases on health care infrastructure challenges among these newspapers.

Table 2

Journalistic Genres by which Online Newspapers Reported Healthcare Infrastructure Challenges

Newspaper	Straight news story	Editorial	Feature	Opinion/Column	Interview	Illustration	Total
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Daily Trust	66 42.0	8 42.1	11 42.3	14 46.7	7 41.2	13 43.3	119 42.7
The Guardian	49 31.2	6 31.6	8 30.8	9 30.0	5 29.4	9 30.0	86 30.8
The Sun	42 26.8	5 26.3	7 26.9	7 23.3	5 29.4	8 26.7	74 26.5
Total	157 56.3	19 6.8	26 9.3	30 10.8	17 6.1	30 10.8	279 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table depicts the distribution of journalistic genres used by three prominent online newspapers (*Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, and *the Sun*) in their coverage of health care infrastructure challenges. The genres encompass straight news stories, editorials, features, opinion/columns, interviews, and illustrations.

Straight news story genre was the most common across all newspapers, constituting 56.3% of the total coverage. *Daily Trust* had 66 reports (42.0% of this genre), trailing *The Guardian* with 49 reports (31.2%) and *The Sun* with 42 reports (26.8%). The editorial genre holds a lesser share, accounting for 6.8% of the total. *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* nearly match this category, with 8 and 6 reports, respectively, while *The Sun* contributes 5 reports.

Features accounted for 9.3% of the total, with *Daily Trust* taking the lead again with 11 reports. *The Guardian* and *the Sun* closely follow with 8 and 7 reports, respectively. The opinion/column genre contributed 10.8% of the total coverage. *Daily Trust* had the highest number of opinion pieces at 14, while *The Guardian* and *the Sun* follow closely with 9 and 7 pieces, respectively.

Interviews contributed 6.1% of the total coverage. *Daily Trust* and *the Sun* both present 5 interviews each, while *The Guardian* presents 7. The illustration genre also contributed 10.8% to the total. *Daily Trust* leads with 13 illustrations, followed by *The Guardian* with 9 and *The Sun* with 8. In summary, *Daily Trust* has the most diverse coverage across all genres, followed by *The Guardian* and *the Sun*. However, these numbers do not indicate the quality or depth of the coverage provided. For a more comprehensive understanding, a detailed content analysis of the reports would be beneficial.

Table 3: Predominant Themes that Emerge Within Articles Framing Health care Infrastructure Challenges in Online Nigerian Newspapers

Newspaper	Financial barriers and risk protection	Health care reforms	Supply chain challenges	Infrastructure and human resources	Low insurance coverage and high out-of-pocket expenditures	Total
Daily Trust	29 41.4	23 42.6	18 43.9	32 42.1	17 44.7	119 42.7
The Guardian	22 31.4	16 29.6	12 29.3	25 32.9	11 28.9	86 30.8
The Sun	19 27.1	15 27.8	11 26.8	19 25.0	10 26.3	74 26.5
Total	70 25.1	54 19.8	41 14.7	76 27.2	38 13.6	279 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table delineates the prevalence of key themes framing health care infrastructure challenges in three prominent Nigerian online newspapers: *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, and *the Sun*. These themes encompass financial barriers and risk protection, health care reforms, supply chain challenges, infrastructure, human resources, and low insurance coverage alongside high out-of-pocket expenditure.

Daily Trust leads the financial barriers and risk protection theme with 29 articles (41.4% of the theme), followed by *The Guardian* with 22 articles (31.4%) and *The Sun* with 19 articles (27.1%). This theme constitutes 25.1% of the total coverage. *Daily Trust* reports the most on healthcare reforms theme with 23 articles (42.6% of the theme), trailed by *The Guardian* with 16 articles (29.6%) and *The Sun* with 15 articles (27.8%). This theme accounted for 19.4% of the total coverage.

Daily Trust leads with 18 articles (43.9% of the supply chain challenges theme), followed by *The Guardian* with 12 articles (29.3%) and *The Sun* with 11 articles (26.8%). This theme contributed 14.7% of the total coverage.

The infrastructure and human resources theme was the most extensively covered, comprising 27.2% of the total coverage. *Daily Trust* reported the highest number of articles with 32 (42.1% of the theme), followed by *The Guardian* (25 articles (32.9%) and *The Sun* (19 articles (25.0%). *Daily Trust* leads in the theme on low insurance coverage and high out-of-pocket expenditure with 17 articles (44.7% of the theme), trailing by *The Guardian* with 11 articles (28.9%) and *The Sun* with 10 articles (26.3%). This theme contributed 13.6% of the total coverage.

Table 4: Thematic Approaches Used in Articles Addressing Health care Infrastructure Challenges Across Nigerian Online Newspapers

Newspaper	Problem-Centric	Human Interest	Policy Emphasis	Comparative	Crisis or Urgency	Expert Analysis	Data and Statistics	Socioeconomic Impact	Solutions-Oriented	Total
Daily Trust	22 44.9	16 44.4	18 43.9	9 37.5	11 45.8	12 38.7	10 40.0	12 48.0	9 37.5	119 42.7
The Guardian	15 30.6	11 30.6	12 29.3	8 33.3	7 29.2	10 32.3	8 32.0	7 28.0	8 33.3	86 30.8
The Sun	12 24.5	9 25.0	11 26.8	7 29.2	6 25.0	9 29.0	7 28.0	6 24.0	7 29.2	74 26.5
Total	49 17.6	36 12.9	41 14.7	24 8.6	24 8.6	31 11.1	25 9.0	25 9.0	24 8.6	279 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table delineates the prevalence of various thematic approaches used in articles addressing health care infrastructure challenges across three notable Nigerian online newspapers: *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, and *the Sun*. These themes encompass Problem-Centric, Human Interest, Policy Emphasis, Comparative, Crisis or Urgency, Expert Analysis, Data and Statistics, Socioeconomic Impact, and Solutions-Oriented.

Daily Trust has the highest prevalence in the problem-centric theme, with 22 articles (44.9% of the theme), followed by *The Guardian* with 15 articles (30.6%) and *The Sun* with 12 articles (24.5%). This theme contributed 17.6% of the total coverage. *Daily Trust* leads the human-interest theme with 16 articles (44.4% of the theme), trailed by *The Guardian* with 11 articles (30.6%) and *The Sun* with 9 articles (25.0%). This theme accounted for 12.9% of the total coverage.

Daily Trust leads once more with 18 articles (43.9% of the policy emphasis theme), followed by *The Guardian* with 12 articles (29.3%) and *The Sun* with 11 articles (26.8%). This theme contributed 14.7% of the total

coverage. This theme comparative represents 8.6% of the total coverage. *Daily Trust* reports the most on this theme with 9 articles (37.5% of the theme), followed by *The Guardian* with 8 articles (33.3%) and *The Sun* with 7 articles (29.2%).

Daily Trust holds the lead in this theme crisis or urgency with 11 articles (45.8% of the theme), trailed by *The Guardian* with 7 articles (29.2%) and *The Sun* with 6 articles (25.0%). This theme contributed 8.6% of the total coverage. *Daily Trust* featured the most articles in the expert analysis theme with 12 (38.7% of the theme), followed by *The Guardian* with 10 articles (32.3%), and *the Sun* with 9 articles (29.0%). This theme accounted for 11.1% of the total coverage.

The data and statistics theme represents 9.0% of the total coverage. *Daily Trust* had 10 articles (40.0% of the theme), followed by *The Guardian* with 8 articles (32.0%) and *The Sun* with 7 articles (28.0%). *Daily Trust* had the highest socioeconomic impact: The theme had 12 articles (48.0% of the theme), followed by *The Guardian* with 7 articles (28.0%) and *The Sun* with 6 articles (24.0%). This theme contributed 9.0% of the total coverage.

The solution-oriented theme also contributed 8.6% of the total coverage. *Daily Trust* reports the most articles in this theme with 9 (37.5% of the theme), followed by *The Guardian* with 8 articles (33.3%), and *the Sun* with 7 articles (29.2%).

Discussion of Findings

This study examined how online Nigerian newspapers frame health care infrastructure challenges, with specific attention to the frequency of reportage, predominant themes, and prevalent framing techniques. The analysis covered three prominent Nigerian online newspapers—*Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, and *The Sun*—and addressed three core research questions. The findings are discussed in alignment with relevant media theories and by corroborating or contrasting previous research.

Research Question One: What is the frequency of reportage on health care infrastructure challenges in online Nigerian newspapers?

The findings reveal that *Daily Trust* accounted for the highest frequency of coverage (42.7%), followed by *The Guardian* (30.8%) and *The Sun* (26.5%). This difference in reportage underscores the editorial and institutional priorities of each newspaper, suggesting that *Daily Trust* adopts a more active agenda in highlighting public health infrastructure issues.

This finding corroborates Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which posits that media influence public priorities according to the frequency and prominence given to certain issues. The high coverage by *Daily Trust* suggests a deliberate agenda to shape public discourse and possibly influence health-related policymaking.

Moreover, this result aligns with the study by Iloh, Ofili, & Njoku (2020), who observed that some Nigerian newspapers, particularly *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian*, frequently report health crises and policy inadequacies, often drawing national attention to neglected health sectors. In contrast, the newspaper's relatively lower coverage by *The Sun* may reflect its editorial focus on other socio-political themes, thereby offering weaker agenda-setting power on health issues. Thus, the variation in reportage confirms that media outlets prioritize health care infrastructure differently, shaping how the public perceives the urgency or relevance of health-related challenges.

Research Question Two: What are the predominant themes in framing health care infrastructure challenges? The study identified five core themes across the newspapers: Financial Barriers and Risk Protection (25.1%), Healthcare Reforms (19.4%), Supply Chain Challenges (14.7%), Infrastructure and Human Resources (27.2%), and Low Insurance Coverage and High Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (13.6%).

The prominence of the Infrastructure and Human Resources theme indicates a media focus on the structural and personnel deficiencies plaguing Nigeria's health care sector. This aligns with the findings of Adedoye and David (2019), who emphasized the critical shortage of infrastructure and trained personnel as a major cause of Nigeria's weak health outcomes. Additionally, the financial burden imposed by low insurance penetration and out-of-pocket expenditure has also been widely reported in studies like Ojo and Saliu (2021), which explored how health financing gaps deepen inequality in access to care.

The articles analyzed illustrate how media serve not only as informers but also as advocates, using stories to prompt institutional reforms. For example, *Daily Trust's* frequent focus on universal health coverage reflects a sustained interest in financial accessibility, an area emphasized in the global health communication literature (WHO, 2022). This aligns with Framing Theory (Entman, 1993), which asserts that the media highlight specific aspects of reality to influence how audiences interpret events.

By framing financial constraints, supply chain gaps, and human resource inadequacies, the newspapers have molded public understanding of what constitutes the core of Nigeria's health care crisis. Thus, the findings validate earlier claims that Nigerian media often serve as watchdogs in exposing systemic health failures (Udoakah, 2016), while also showing that different outlets selectively emphasize themes based on their framing priorities.

Research Question Three: What are the prevalent framing techniques used by online Nigerian newspapers to report health care infrastructure challenges? Nine major framing techniques were identified: Problem-Centric (17.6%), Human Interest (12.9%), Policy Emphasis (14.7%), Comparative (8.6%), Crisis or Urgency (8.6%), Expert Analysis (11.1%), Data and Statistics (9.0%), Socioeconomic Impact (9.0%), and Solutions-Oriented (8.6%).

Daily Trust again led in employing the widest array of frames, particularly excelling in Problem-Centric, Data and Statistics, and Policy Emphasis. This suggests a sophisticated framing approach that goes beyond sensational headlines to deliver in-depth analyses. These framing styles are critical for shaping nuanced public discourse, as highlighted by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), who argued that thematic frames, such as those emphasizing policy or expert analysis, contribute to more informed civic engagement.

Moreover, the use of Human Interest and Crisis frames—such as the article from *The Sun* on the tragic death of a doctor—illustrates how emotive storytelling can be used to dramatize systemic health care failures. This approach reflects findings by Nwodu & Nwankwo (2013), who emphasized the power of personal stories in mobilizing public empathy and policy response. These results strongly support Framing Theory, which underscores the importance of presentation style in determining issue salience and interpretation. The emphasis on Expert Analysis and Data and Statistics frames further suggests a maturing media landscape where data-driven reporting is increasingly valued for credibility and advocacy.

Importantly, the presence of Solutions-Oriented frames indicates an emergent trend in which media not only diagnose problems but also propose reforms. This reflects recent trends in constructive journalism—an approach encouraging solutions-focused narratives in public discourse (Haagerup, 2017). This study affirms that framing healthcare infrastructure challenges in Nigerian online newspapers is multi-dimensional and reflective of broader editorial strategies and theoretical constructs. Agenda-Setting Theory explains the frequency and priority placed on issues by different newspapers, while Framing Theory elucidates the interpretative lenses through which these issues are presented.

Conclusion

This study examined how online Nigerian newspapers frame health care infrastructure challenges. The study also analyzed frequency, themes, and framing techniques in *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, and *The Sun*. *Daily Trust* led in coverage, reflecting varied emphases among papers, potentially impacting public perception and government attention. Predominant themes included financial barriers, reforms, supply chain issues, infrastructure, and low insurance coverage. Different framing techniques like problem-centric, human interest, policy emphasis, and more were used to shape readers' perspectives.

Recommendations

Consequent to findings from the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Newspapers should prioritizing-depth, qualitative reporting on health care infrastructure challenges rather than focusing solely on frequency. The content should also diversify beyond the dominant themes.
2. Beyond major issues like financial barriers and reforms, attention should be given to less-covered aspects such as community impact, technology, and rural health care disparities for a fuller perspective.
3. Newspapers should use varied framing techniques to enhance narrative impact and foster comprehensive public and policy-level understanding of health care challenges.

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