Gender Imbalance in President Buhari's Ministerial Nominations and Reactions by the Nigerian Press: Advocacy or Complacency?

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Abstract

President Muhammadu Buhari's list of ministerial nominees, which was sent to the Senate for confirmation, on September 30, 2015, had twenty –one (21) names. Of this, eighteen (18) were male while three (3) were female. It is against the backdrop Of MDG 3(Gender Equality and Women Empowerment) and SDG (5) that this study sought to find out how the Nigerian press reacted to this gender imbalance with a view to streamlining their disposition within the frame of advocacy and complacency. Content analysis was employed to study the manifest content of three national newspapers – The Guardian, This Day, and The Punch, and two national magazines – Tell and News watch- which were purposively selected based on outlook and spread. The actual issues of the newspapers studied were also selected based on a consecutive day period with October, 2015 as the period of study. Measurement was done using column centimeters. The inter-coder reliability which employed Holsti formula stood at 0.91. Findings showed a lack of will by the Nigerian press to constructively criticize, through content, the President's disproportionate gender distribution in political appointments. Findings further revealed that the Nigerian press did not proactively engage in advocacy geared towards enthroning best practices in the light of the MDGs and SDGs especially as they relate to governance and women empowerment. The inference from the foregoing therefore contextualized the disposition of the Nigerian press as complacent. To this end, it was recommended that the Nigerian press should deploy editorial content embellished in advocacy to chart the pathway for egalitarianism through government policies that serve to optimally integrate the potentials of women in the socio-political repertoire of Nigeria.

Key Words: * Advocacy * Complacency * Equality * Gender * Press

Overview

The issues of gender and sex have in contemporary times become planetary concerns. The underlying notion is that women, by virtue of gender, can no longer be limited in capacities and capabilities bearing in mind the fact that sex is biologically determined while gender is socio-culturally determined. This awakening has brought to fore concepts like gender equality, gender balance and gender bias. The presupposition however is that man, in generic terms, can only be limited by sex and not gender.

Focus, in view of the foregoing, is hinged on attitudinal disposition which in explicit terms is borne out of socio-cultural orientations. Descriptively, socio-cultural inclinations in many societies evolved from patriarchal orientations which inadvertently made the societal role of the female gender to be perceived as second fiddle. Interestingly, this age long stereotype is fast giving way to reorientations and attitudinal conditioning that ascribe societal roles on the basis of capabilities rather than sex.

This ideological tilt gained prominence at the turn of the millennium with the conceptualization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Kayode, Thanny and Abisiga (2011) describe the MDGs as demonstrable commitments by countries of the world-developed and developing- to consciously add value to the living conditions of the peoples of the world. The MDGs are hereunder listed in their order:

Goal 1 - Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
Goal 2 - Achieve Universal Primary Education
Goal 3 - Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women
Goal 4 - Reduce Child Mortality
Goal 5 - Improve Maternal Health
Goal 6 - Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other Diseases
Goal 7 - Ensure Environmental Sustainability
Goal 8 - Global Partnership for Development

A synthesis of MDG 3 will show that its realization predominantly depends on collaboration among mainstream media and cognate interpersonal variables. This is so because the word-promote-as used in MDG 3 connotes a proactive effort to discard stereotype and institutionalize best practices especially as they relate to sex and gender. The cardinal role of the mass media in this regard can never be overemphasized. In this context, Baran and Davis (2000) note that "the world looks different to different people depending not only on their personal interests, but also on the map that is drawn for them by the writers, editors and publishers of the papers they read" (p.300).

The imputation therefore according to Okon (2013) is that "there is an association link between media coverage and cognition because the agenda setting function of the media clearly establishes that there is an important relationship between media reports and the peoples' ranking of public issues" (p.10). By extrapolation, if the mainstream media focus attention through content, on MDG 3 (SDG 5) and how it can be actualized, attitudinal disposition will no doubt be gravitated towards practices that engender equality among men and women in the socio-political milieu. Conversely, if the reverse is the case, MDG 3 (SDG 5) suffers.

In unequivocal terms, the dynamics of MDG 3 (SDG 5) naturally dovetail within the framework of media advocacy bearing in mind the fact that attention needs to be drawn to key practices that can most certainly necessitate the actualization of MDG 3 (SDG 5). These key practices can unarguably be condensed into ideologies that serve as the fulcrum of media advocacy. Media advocacy according to Okon (2013) requires the identification of an issue and an accompanying initiative to address that issue. An issue is a burning concern that drives an initiative. Whether it is a problem or vision statement, an issue defines the boundaries from which an initiative is shaped.

The issue in this regard is on how to promote gender equality and empower women in the different spheres of human Endeavour. The Beijing conference of 1995 and the affirmative declaration no doubt served as veritable platforms for ventilation. Through robust media content, these issues can be further illuminated for mainstream acculturation in traditional societies like Nigeria. How the Nigerian mass media, especially the press, has fared in this regard reinforces the premise of this study. According to the 2006 census reports, the population distribution of Nigeria by sex shows that the male gender constitutes 51% of the population while the female gender constitutes about 49% of the population. Ironically, this distribution index does not seem to reflect role assignments in the Nigerian socio-political milieu.

Just recently, precisely four months after the inauguration of the present democratically elected government in Nigeria, the President, Muhammadu Buhari, sent his list of ministerial nominees to the Senate for confirmation. The list had 21 names out of which 18 were male while 3 were female. The gross gender imbalance in the recent ministerial appointments in Nigeria becomes even more glaring when viewed against the backdrop of the ideals of the then MDG (3) and now SDG (5). It is however expected that the Nigerian press, in the face of this anomaly, should crusade for truth, fairness, justice, and equity with a view to redressing this gender imbalance. Viewed from a continuum, the press can at least channel content towards advocacy or at worst tilt same towards complacency. How the Nigerian print media deployed content in the light of the foregoing becomes the primary concern of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3, and now Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, by inference, may have been borne out of the negative attitudinal disposition many races/peoples of the world hold towards the feminine gender and the stereotypes that emanate there from. Since stereotypes are culturally held mental constructs of people, issues and places, their correlation with social reality is often times unfounded. The presumption however is that in a free market place of ideas, what is not real will most definitely give way to what is real given the right information in its proper context. This therefore holds justification for the widespread crusades for gender equality and women empowerment.

Hooks (2000) argues that:

The fact that participants in the feminist movement could face critique and challenge while still remaining wholeheartedly committed to a vision of justice, of liberation, is a testament to the movement's strength and power. It shows us that no matter how misguided feminist thinkers have been in the past, the will to change, the will to create the context for struggle and liberation remains stronger than the need to hold on to wrong beliefs and assumptions (p.58).

Arthur (2003) cited in Boyles (2008) notes that:

In the British context for example, debates at the National Women's Liberation Movement Conferences repeatedly for grounded women's different positions of privilege in relation to regional, class, and sexual identities. At the regional and local levels, groups organized around single issues including reproductive rights, wages for housework and violence against women (p.175).

These issues, as in above, are issues that can be explicitly or implicitly purveyed through the mainstream media of communication. Kwansah-Aidoo (2003) in an expository study affirmed that news and general media coverage of issues and events impact significantly on public opinion. Agenda setting scholars (McCombs and Estrada, 1997) postulate that beyond merely providing cues about salience of certain topics and issues, the mass media also tell people how to think about these topics and issues. This according to Rogers and Dearing (1997) is done by way of framing which is referred to as "a second dimension of agenda setting" (p.246).

In corroboration, Squire (2002) notes that "the Oprah daytime show aims to entertain, inform and encourage communication about difficult issues… but the show also tries to empower women" (p.355). Interestingly, O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2011) uphold that the social constructionist ideology sees "gender characteristics as constructed by external social forces such as the media, family, education, religion, and expectations of community members" (p.361).

They (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2011; p. 368) further note that earlier feminist concerns and struggles produced many social changes that are now part of the media landscape that feature in contemporary life for women.

i.   Equal rights in terms of pay and job opportunities
ii.   Acceptance that women can enter any field of work
iii.   Acceptance that having children does not preclude full participation in the paid workforce.

It will be recalled however that the president of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, on 30th September, 2015 submitted a list of 21 ministerial nominees to the National Assembly for screening and confirmation. Of that list, 18 were male while 3 were female. In line with MDG3 (SDG5) it will be very much expected that media content should gravitate towards enshrining best practices in terms of gender equality and women empowerment. In view of the foregoing development, therefore, analyzing Nigerian media content, especially newspapers and magazines, against the backdrop of O'Shaughnessy's and Stadler's (2011) typology will no doubt lend itself to scholarly propulsions. The justification therefore is premised on propositions by Campbell, Martin and Fabos (2015) that "over the years, the agenda setting research has demonstrated that the more stories the news media do on a particular subject, the greater the importance audiences attach to that subject" (p.524).

Udoudo and Neku (2011) posit in a study that "if the press can set agenda for the discussion of the imbalance noticed in gender representation in Nigeria, the press can prove an aspect of being instruments that engender development in the society"(p.390). How the press has fared five years after in this regard becomes a yawning gap. Interestingly, the crux of this study is premised on the need to appraise how news content, especially that of Nigerian newspapers and magazines, provided illumination on President Buhari's overt gender imbalance in ministerial appointments as well as the underlying disposition of the press, towards these issues, as inferred from content and distilled in the context of advocacy and complacency. The problem of this study is therefore preconceived in the foregoing.

Objectives of the Study

The primary focus of this study was necessitated by the need to find out how the Nigerian press reacted to the overt gender imbalance in President Muhammadu Buhari's first batch of ministerial nominations. The objectives among others were to:

1. Ascertain the nature of coverage the newspapers and magazines (studied) accorded the subject matter.
2. Infer from this nature of coverage the disposition of the Nigerian press as contextualized in advocacy and complacency.
3. Find out the frequency of coverage the subject matter enjoyed in the newspapers and magazines within the study period.

Research Questions

1. What nature of coverage did the issue of President Buhari's list of ministerial nominees generate among the newspapers and magazines studied?
2. How can this nature of coverage be contextualized in terms of advocacy and complacency?
3. How often did the newspapers and magazines report the subject matter within the highlighted period of study?

Operationalization of Terms

- Advocacy
- Nature of coverage
- Complacency
- Gender
- Coverage
- Imbalance
- Disposition
- Nigerian press
- Reactions
- Ministerial nominees

Literature Review

Emerging scholarly concerns show that discourses on gender inequality and gender discrimination are attracting so much emotions, sensibilities, and idiosyncrasies. O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2011) observe that: Gender study arises from concerns about the relative social positions of men and women, and about the inequalities and the social struggles between them,… the question of gender comes from the fact that sex and gender are two of the most important ways that humans classify themselves and other people (p.360). Such classifications and categorizations are often borne out of stereotype which, according to Dyer (2002), "expresses a general agreement about a social group and it is more apparent than real… we make a fuss about and produce stereotypes about the difference between men and women yet biologically this is negligible compared to their similarity" (p.248). Succinctly described, therefore, the social categories in most organic societies may often times be misplaced.

In corroboration Okon and Omodu (2012) note that "stereotypes can rarely communicate accurate information about others" (p. 479). They further note that "the weight of scientific evidence demonstrates that children learn gender stereotypes from adults with the media reinforcing those stereotypes from one generation to another" (p.480). Deaux and Lewis (1983) note that gender stereotypes vary on four dimensions: traits, role behaviour, physical characteristics, and occupations. In Nigerian traditional settings, however, the female stereotype role is to marry and have children while the male stereotype role is to be the financial provider. Unfortunately, Okon and Omodu (2012) uphold that these sorts of stereotype can prove harmful, stiffle self expression as well as professional growth. Neku (2012) avers that "it is impossible to realize the nation's goals while discriminating against half the human population of the nation" (p.3). She further notes that gender equality will not only empower women to overcome but also their children, families, and communities.

An adaptation from UN women, defines gender equality as "equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys and further implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups; men and women (Medical Women's International Association, Training Manual for Gender Mainstream in Health, 2012; pp. 10-19)

www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm). This is however hinged on Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) "… all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". Article 1 of CEDAW defines discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field'(www.health-genderviolence.org/training-programme for health care providers).

Stevens (2010) however observes that "an increasing number of studies indicate that gender inequalities are extracting high economic costs and leading to social inequities and environmental degradation around the world" (para 4). With regard to hiring and promoting women, Stevens (2010) proposes "quantitative targets for women by government." The analysis notes that:

… since 2003, Norway has required corporate boards to be at least 40% women and the country now leads the world in the number of female directors. Norway also has quotas for the number of women managers in governments at all levels. The French government has recently proposed that at least half of company board members must be female within five years (para 10).

Contemporary studies by the United Nations and the World Bank show that focusing on women in development assistance and poverty reduction strategies leads to faster economic growth than gender neutral approaches. The Gender Gap index of the World Economic forum, as highlighted by Stevens (2009), has established a correlation between gender equality and wealth per capita which cuts two ways: while economic progress can improve the status of women, a country on the other hand cannot advance if its women are left behind (Draft Report for Sustainable Labour, 2009).

In this regard, the importance of gender equality in the socio-political/socio-economic milieu of any country can never be overemphasized. This however calls for concerted efforts and structures that can engender its realization. Interestingly, the mass media can indeed play a pivotal role in the context of the foregoing.
In corroboration, Ross (2010) posits that:

The media and in particular, the television, with its huge audience share are arguably the primary definers and shapers of the news agenda and perform a critical cultural function in their gendered framing of public issues and in the gendered discourses they persistently promote (p.288).

White (2009) notes that "the media can be very important in the promotion of gender equality within the working environment, likewise in issues related to employment and promotion of female staff at all echelons and in the representation of men and women with regard to fair language (p.v). Okoro, Ajaero and Nwachukwu (2015) in their summation, see the mass media as "a powerful force in society that can bring about change in the status-quo… ideas and thoughts can be promoted to a large audience using the media" (p.12). In a study - current trends on female gender representation in selected Nigerian newspapers – by Neku (2012), it was found that the volume of coverage on the female gender by the Nigerian press is not proportionate when compared with the male gender. The inference drawn from a study by Anorue, Obayi and Onyebuchi (2012) points to the need for the presence of the mass media in the campaign against gender inequality in the political sphere" (p.22). How this need has been addressed four years after this study becomes a question begging for an answer.

Study Design

The peculiarities of this study necessitated content analysis. In terms of illumination, Wright (1986) sees content analysis as "a research technique that allows for the systematic classification and description of communication content according to certain usually predetermined categories" (p.125). In justification, therefore, Berger (1993) posits that content analysis is often used to get information about a topic" (p.207). Three national dailies – *The Guardian*, *This Day* and *The Punch* as well as two national magazines- *Tell* and *News watch* - were purposively selected not only based on the fact that they are foremost national dailies and weeklies but also due to their editorial outlook and spread in circulation.

The period of study was determined based on the dynamics of the agenda setting theory which hinges salience of news stories to their currency. Based on this premise it was however considered that since the first list of President Muhammadu Buhari's ministerial nominations was sent to the Senate on September 30, 2015, the issue may naturally remain topical for about two weeks from the date of submission. To this end, the study period fell within 1st October – 14th October, 2015. Technically, all days of the week excluding weekends fell within the study period. This is however hinged on the fact that *The Guardian*, *This Day* and *The Punch* run only soft sell editions on weekends. Descriptively, therefore, the study calendar featured ten days spread across a two week period. Specifically the featured days fell on 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 12th, 13th and 14th October, 2015. *Tell* operates a weekly print run while *News watch* operates a monthly print run. The issues that fell within the study period were selected and studied. Riffe, Aust, and Lacy (1993) describe this sampling technique as consecutive day sampling with fixed intervals. An aggregation of the population stood at 30 issues of the newspapers spread across ten days with each newspaper presenting 10 issues, two issues of the weekly(*Tell*) and one issue of the monthly(*News watch*). Since this was considered manageable, all the issues within the study period were selected and studied. The procedure for analysis consisted of an operationalization of the subject matter. The subject matter was therefore operationalized to refer to "any form of interpretative writing representing the corporate and allied opinion of the newspapers which implicitly or explicitly draws attention to the need to redress gender imbalance in the prevailing ministerial appointment with corresponding recommendations thereto."
Going by the foregoing consideration, therefore, the editorial pages and the feature columns formed the principal units of this analysis. Advertorials in the form of public service announcements (PSA) by the newspapers were also incorporated and studied. As a corollary, pictorials in the form of political cartoons were also incorporated and studied. These no doubt are tools that naturally lend themselves to advocacy.

Data analysis was guided by coding categories and units. Descriptively, the procedure entailed five (5) categories: story ID, newspaper/magazine, genre/type, direction (condemning or defending or none), and date of newspaper. Measurement was carried out for news content that fell within the purview of the foregoing classifications. News space was measured in column centimeter and this formed the basis for quantitative analysis. Inference on advocacy or content was made based on the direction of the story as delineated in category 4 (direction: condemning or defending or none).

To ensure reliability and researcher non-bias, a professional coder was employed to assist in the coding. A total of 180 items were categorized. Based on the categorization, the coders agreed on 165 categories and disagreed on 15 categories. Differences in coding were correlated using Holsti (1968) formula:

$$\frac{2(C1..3)}{C1 + C2}$$

Where:

C1.2 = Number of category assignments made by both coders
C1+2 = Total number of category assignment made by both coders
r = correlation

= 2(165)
= (180 + 180)

$$= \frac{2 \times 165}{360}$$

$$= \frac{330}{360}$$

= 0.91

With a correlation coefficient of 0.91, the content categories hold a very high validity for the instrument.

Data presentation and Analysis

Table 1a: Space allocation by content categories in *The Punch*

Content	Allocation of space in column centimeters	Space in percentage
Straight news	219,894	40.96
Features	33,637	6.26
Editorial	9,100	1.70
Advertorial	254,951	47.58
Sports	19,318	3.60
Total	536,900	100

Table 1a above shows that the bulk of the space in *The Punch* was allocated to advertorials with about 41% of the news space being devoted to straight news. How this space was utilized outside the sports content category in the light of the subject matter formed the focus of table 1b.

Table 1b: Utilization of space for content on ministerial nominations in *The Punch*

Content	Space in col. cms	Space in percentage
Straight news	12,040	2.33
Features	2,730	0.53
Editorial	910	0.17
Advertorial	0	0.00

N = 517,582 col.cms

The table focused on how much content was devoted to reportage on ministerial nominations.

As shown in table 1b, content for straight news had dominance with a total news space of 12,040col.cms representing 2.33 percent of the total space. For features, the total space allocated stood at 2,730col.cms representing 0.53 percent while that of editorial was 910 col.cms representing 0.17 percent. On the other hand, no content was recorded for advertorial.

Table 1c: Focus on gender imbalance in ministerial nomination in *The Punch*

Content	Allocation of space in col.cms			Space in percentage
	Condemning	Neutral	Defending	
Straight news (12,040col.cms)	112	0	0	0.93
Features (2,730 col.cms)	910	0	0	33.33
Editorial (910 col.cms)	0	0	0	00

N = 15,680 col.cms

Figures in parentheses represent actual space on ministerial nominations Table 1c shows that out of a total space of 12,040 col.cms devoted to straight news on ministerial nominations only 112 col.cms representing 0.93 percent focused on gender imbalance. For features, 33.3% of content highlighted the imbalance in gender with an overt criticism when viewed against the backdrop of story direction.

Table 2a: Space allocation by content categories in *The Guardian*

Content	Allocation of space in column centimeters	Space in percentage
Straight news	300,430	41.31
Features	71,136	9.78
Editorial	9,880	1.36
Advertorial	335.842	46.19
Sports	9,880	36
Total	727,168	100

Content spread among the categories listed above in table 2a shows advertorial to have the highest space allocation of 335,842 col.cms, representing about 46%.

Table 2b: Utilization of space for content on ministerial nominations in *The Guardian*

Content	Allocation of space in column centimeters	Space in percentage
Straight news	9887	1.38
Features	1976	0.27
Editorial	494	0.06
Advertorial	0	0.00

N = 717,288 col.cms

As shown in table 2b, *The Guardian* devoted 1.38 percent of its space on straight news to the ministerial nominations. Features and editorials have 1,976 col.cms, representing 0.27 percent and 494 col.cms representing 0.06 percent respectively. No space was devoted to advertorial on the subject matter.

Table 2c: Focus on gender imbalance in ministerial nominations in *The Guardian*

Content	Allocation of space in col.cms			Space in percentage
	Condemning	Neutral	Defending	
Straight news (9,887 col.cms)	0	0	0	0
Features (1,976 col.cms)	0	0	0	0
Editorial (494 col.cms)	0	0	0	0

N = 12,357 col.cms

Figures in parentheses represent actual space on ministerial nominations.

Table 2c shows that out of a total news space of 12,357 col.cms devoted to the ministerial nominations by *The Guardian*, no content was focused on gender imbalance.

Table 3a: Space allocation by content categories in *This Day*

Content	Allocation of space in column centimeters	Space in percentage
Straight news	283,715	52.87
Features	48,053	8.96
Editorial	5,010	0.94
Advertorial	182,798	34.06
Sports	17.017	3.17
Total	536,593	100

Table 3a shows space distribution in *This Day* to be predominantly tilted towards straight news with a news space of 283,715 col.cms representing about 52% of the total space.

Table 3b: Utilization of space for content on ministerial nominations in *This Day*

Content	Allocation of space in column centimeters	Space in percentage
Straight news	17,369	3.34
Features	1,502	0.29
Editorial	0	0
Advertorial	0	0

N = 519,576 col.cms

Table 3b shows that the focus on ministerial nominations was spread across straight news and features. Descriptively, a space of 17,369 col.cms representing about 3 percent was devoted to straight news on the subject matter while a space of 1,502 col.cms representing 0.29 percent was devoted to features.

Table 3c: Focus on gender imbalance in ministerial nominations in *This Day*

Content	Allocation of space in col.cms			Space in percentage
	Condemning	Neutral	Defending	
Straight news (17,369col.cms)	0	0	0	0
Features (1,502 col.cms)	0	0	0	0
Editorial (494 col.cms)	0	0	0	0

N = 18,871 col.cms

Figures in parentheses represent actual space on ministerial nominations.

As shown in table 3c, content on ministerial nominations did not focus on the inherent gender imbalance thus making it a non issue in *This Day.*

Table 4a: Space allocation by content categories in *Tell*

Content	Allocation of space in column centimeters	Space in percentage
Straight news	9,500	18.2
Features	17,000	32.7969
Cover story	6,500	12.50
Advertorial	16,000	30.77
Others	3,000	5.77
Total	52,000	100

Space allocation in *Tell* as shown in table 4a reflects a preponderance of advertorials with the least space- 3,000col.cms- representing about 5.7% being allocated to ancillary categories like letters, sports and panorama.

Table 4b: Utilization of space for content on ministerial nomination in *Tell*

Content	Allocation of space in column centimeters	Space in percentage
Straight news	1035	2.11
Features	2173	4.43
Cover story	0	0
Advertorial	0	0

N = 49,00col.cms

Table 4b shows a total space of about 3208 col.cms to have been allocated to stories on ministerial nominations.

Table 4c: Focus on gender imbalance in ministerial nominations in *Tell*

Content	Allocation of space in col.cms			Space in percentage
	Condemning	Neutral	Defending	
Straight news (1035 col.cms)	0	0	0	0
Features (2173 col.cms)	2173	0	0	72.4
Cover story	0	0	0	0
Advertorial	0	0	0	0

N = 3000 col.cms

Figures in parentheses represent actual space on ministerial nomination.

Focus on gender imbalance in ministerial nominations in *Tell* was relatively high as shown in table 4c. Interestingly, the bulk of the content condemned the act of gender imbalance.

Table 5a: Space allocation by content categories in *News watch*

Content	Allocation of space in column centimeters	Space in percentage
Straight news	9,817	23.49
Features	7175	17.17
Cover story	5775	13.81
Advertorial	15,408	36.86
Others	3,625	8.67
Total	41,800	100

Table 5a presents a preponderance of advertorials in terms of space allocation in *News watch.*

Table 5b: Utilization of space for content on ministerial nominations in *News watch*

Content	Allocation of space in column centimeters	Space in percentage
Straight news	950	2.49
Features	0	0
Cover story	0	0
Advertorial	0	0

N = 38,175 col.cms

Table 5b shows that the total space allocated to stories on ministerial nominations in *News watch* within the period under study stood at 2.49%.

Table 5c: Focus on gender imbalance in ministerial nominations in *News watch*

Content	Allocation of space in col.cms			Space in percentage
	Condemning	Neutral	Defending	
Straight news (960 col.cms)	0	0	0	0
Features	0	0	0	0
Cover story	0	0	0	0
Advertorial	0	0	0	0

N = 950 col.cms

Table 5c shows that of the 950 col.cms space allocated to stories on ministerial nominations in *News watch*, there was no focus on gender imbalance in the nominations.

Table 6a: Frequency of coverage on ministerial nominations

Newspaper/Magazines	Number of issues studied	Number of times story was reported
The Punch	10	6
The Guardian	10	5
This Day	10	8
Tell	2	2
News watch	1	1

The story on ministerial nominations enjoyed a relatively high frequency in terms of reportage. Deductively, the story enjoyed 67% frequency as inferred from table 6a.

Table 6b: Frequency of focus on gender imbalance in ministerial nominations

Newspaper/Magazines	Frequency of reportage on ministerial nominations	Frequency of focus on gender imbalance
The Punch	6	1
The Guardian	5	0
This Day	8	0
Tell	2	1
Newswatch	1	0
Total	22	2

Focus on gender imbalance did not enjoy a fairly commendable frequency in the newspapers and magazines studied. Frequency of focus as shown in table 6b was about 9%.

Table 7: Aggregation Index (Advocacy/complacency)

Content categories	*The Punch*		*The Guardian*		*This Day*		*Tell*		*News watch*	
	Focus on MN col.cms	Focus on GI col.cms	Focus on MN col.cms	Focus on GI	Focus on MN col.cms	Focus on GI	Focus on MN col.cms	Focus on GI	Focus on MN col.cms	Focus on GI
Straight news	12,040	112	9887	0	17,369	0	1035	0	950	0
Features	2,730	910	1976	0	1502	0	2173	2173	0	0
Advertorials	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	15,680	1022 (6.5%)	12307	0 (0%)	18,871	0 (0%)	3208	2173 (68%)	950	0 (0%)

Figures in parentheses represent percentage focus on gender imbalance by the newspapers and magazines studied. The aggregation index on table 7 shows that focus on gender imbalance was shrift with the tilt on features, editorial and advertorial dismally low.

Discussion

A synthesis of the data reveals that the nature of coverage given to the issue of ministerial nominations by President Muhammadu Buhari and its attendant gender imbalance was basically reportorial – straight news. Interestingly, the subject matter revealed two streams as shown in tables 1b, 1c, 2b, 2c, 3b, 3c, 4b, 4c, 5b & 5c: the ministerial nominations and the gender imbalance. Deductively, the issue of ministerial nominations was treated merely as a news story by the newspapers and magazines studied thus accounting for its preponderance over the second stream: the gender imbalance. In description, therefore, out of a total news space of 15,680 col.cms devoted to the ministerial nominations in *The Punch*, the focus on gender imbalance enjoyed a space of 6.5% whereas for *The Guardian*, *This Day* and *News watch*, the glaring gender imbalance did not receive attention as shown in table 7. Commendably, *Tell* accorded 68% focus to the subject matter.

The imputation, however, when viewed against the backdrop of the semantics of news, as "an unusual event", is that the newspapers studied, through content, did not cumulatively see the gender imbalance in President Buhari's ministerial nominations as unusual. This is in consonance with Neku (2012), who found that the volume of coverage on female gender by the Nigerian press is low. Aligned with this school of thought is the finding by Amobi (2013) that "gender inequality appears to be supported by the media treatment of women who are mostly ignored, denied, or invisible" (para. 6).

How the newspapers and magazines reacted through content to the glaring gender imbalance in the ministerial nominations formed another strand in the analysis. The synthesis as shown in tables 1c, 2c, 3c, 4c & 5c was three dimensional: condemning, neutral and defending. Commendably, the focus on gender imbalance in *The Punch* enjoyed a space of 1022 col.cms. Content (*The Punch*) in this regard overwhelmingly condemned the act. A similar pattern also played out in *Tell* where the total space of 2173 col.cms allotted the subject matter predominantly titled towards condemnation. While that of *The Punch* was titled: "*Buhari's road to misogyny*"; that of *Tell* was titled: "*Buhari's blow against women.*" A critical discourse analysis of the focus on *The Punch* revealed an illumination by Adelakun (2016). In an expository prose, she posits that "studies after studies of contemporary Nigerian politics show that gender bias is real and the socio political structure inherently hostile to women thus limiting their participation to the fringes" (p.60). Aptly described, the cumulative reaction of the newspapers and magazines studied, when viewed against the backdrop of gender imbalance in ministerial nominations, was abysmal bearing in mind the fact that the corporate opinion of the newspapers and magazines, as demonstrated through editorial and public service announcements (PSA), did not accord the issue any focus.

When stretched on a continuum of advocacy and complacency, an aggregation of content (table 7) as synthesized in 3195 col.cms representing 6% out of a space of 51066col.cms can structurally dovetail within the frame of complacency. In terms of frequency, table 6a shows that the ministerial nominations, as a political story, enjoyed a frequency of 67% while table 6b inferentially shows that the focus on gender imbalance merely enjoyed a frequency of about 9%. The synthesis in this regard can at best be negative.

Conclusion

The inference drawn from the findings tilts to the fact that the Nigerian press is yet to rise to the occasion of using content to dispel the negative stereotypes that inhibit women participation in politics through proactive editorial and concerted advocacy. By not lending voice to the glaring gender imbalance in President Muhammadu Buhari's ministerial nominations, the Nigerian Press may not be contributing positively to the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment as structurally captured in MDG3 and SDG5 respectively. This editorial disposition at its worst can aptly be described as journalistic complacency.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made based on the findings of this study.

i. The Nigerian press should through content precipitate rational discourse that will serve to enthrone best practices in the socio-political milieu.

ii. Since editorials, features, and advertorials lend themselves to advocacy, there should be a conscious effort by the press to use these tools to address the ills in the society with a view to proffering solutions.

iii. Nigerian journalists should proactively break the inertia of reporting political issues as mere accounts of events. Rather, there should be a conscious effort to report issues interpretatively and analytically so as to bring to fore the far-reaching implications of the actions/inactions of our policy makers.

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