

Original Research Article

Media Framing of U.S. Law-Enforcement Records and Political Crime Narratives Concerning Bola Ahmed Tinubu

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Abstract: This study examined the narratives around political crime that are constructed through the media's framing of U.S. law-enforcement records related to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Guided by Framing Theory and Political Communication Theory, the research offered insights into how media organisations choose, highlight, and contextualise information to create political meanings. A qualitative research design was employed, utilising qualitative content and framing analysis. The analysis focused on sixty select reports from four Nigerian media outlets. It studied various elements such as headlines, sources, terminology, dominant frames, tone, and the contextual presentation of the records. The findings revealed that the prevailing frames revolved around themes of criminality and allegations, accountability and transparency, political persecution, presidential legitimacy, and reputational defense. The analysis also indicated that these records morphed into competing political narratives, with some reports stressing public accountability and scrutiny, while others highlighted political victimisation, denial, and the need for reputational protection. Additionally, the study found that the choice of sources and the language used by journalists significantly influenced how audiences interpreted the records. It concludes that media framing can profoundly affect the political significance attributed to law-enforcement information, contributing to conflicting narratives regarding presidential credibility and legitimacy. It suggests the need for stronger verification processes, balanced sourcing, contextual reporting, and a clearer distinction between allegations, investigative records, and established judicial findings in politically sensitive reporting.

Keywords: Law-Enforcement Records, Media Framing, Political Communication, Political Crime Narratives, Presidential Legitimacy

Introduction

Political communication in today's democratic societies serves as the main avenue through which political figures, media outlets, and citizens engage in discussions and debates about public issues. The media's role goes beyond just sharing information; by choosing what to highlight and how to interpret political news, they shape how audiences perceive political figures, institutions, and controversies (McNair, 2018). This influence becomes especially important when the media covers allegations of political wrongdoing, criminal activities, or accountability issues involving influential political figures (Stromback & Esser, 2017).

Understanding the concept of media framing is key to grasping this dynamic. Framing is about highlighting certain aspects of reality to make them stand out in communication, which in turn encourages specific interpretations of an issue (Entman, 1993). In the realm of political journalism, the way issues are framed can determine whether they are seen through the lenses of accountability, corruption, legitimacy, victimisation, political persecution, or partisan conflict. As a result, the same legal or law-enforcement document can lead to vastly different public interpretations based on how journalists choose to present information, craft headlines, select sources, and offer contextual insights (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

This topic has become even more pertinent in Nigeria's evolving media landscape, where traditional journalism coexists with social media, blogs, online news sites, and citizen-generated political commentary. The rise of digital platforms has not only broadened avenues for political engagement and information sharing but has also accelerated the pace at which contested claims can circulate across various media channels (Chadwick, 2017). Political information originating from foreign governments or law-enforcement institutions can therefore quickly become incorporated into domestic political debates, particularly when it concerns a sitting president.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu serves as a compelling example for exploring this phenomenon. The public conversation around his political and legal background often brings up references to law enforcement and judicial records from the United States. When these records make their way into Nigerian media, they can easily shift from their original legal or administrative context and become part of larger political discussions about credibility, accountability, legitimacy, and opposition. It's crucial to understand that just because there's an investigative, administrative, or court-related record, it doesn't automatically mean there's a criminal conviction or established criminal liability. This distinction is vital for responsible political journalism and for a thoughtful analysis of crime-related political narratives.

Media portrayals of sensitive legal records can also become battlegrounds for partisan disputes. Political figures and their supporters might frame these records as attempts to undermine an elected leader, while opponents could use them as evidence to push for transparency and accountability. In this charged atmosphere, the choices journalists make regarding language, sources, headlines, and context can have significant

consequences. As Iyengar (1991) points out, the way political issues are presented can influence how audiences assign responsibility and assess political figures.

The rise of social media has only heightened these dynamics, allowing political messages to spread beyond the reach of traditional news organizations. Political actors, journalists, activists, and everyday citizens can all share, reinterpret, and challenge media narratives in real time. This creates a mixed communication landscape that can amplify conflicting interpretations and contribute to the polarisation of political discourse (Chadwick, 2017). Therefore, studying political crime narratives requires a keen focus not just on the underlying records but also on how they are communicated and perceived (Jungherr et al., 2020).

The exploration of political crime narratives goes beyond just looking at the records themselves; it also involves understanding the ways in which these records gain political significance through communication.

With this in mind, this study delves into Political Communication and the Construction of Political Crime Narratives, specifically examining how U.S. law enforcement records related to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu are framed by the media. It highlights how certain media reports shape and provide context for these records, the prevailing narratives that come to light, the sources that are referenced, and what these portrayals mean for political communication and public perception. Instead of focusing on determining guilt or innocence, this research looks at how sensitive legal information is reshaped into political narratives in Nigeria's current media landscape. This approach is crucial for enhancing our understanding of media accountability, political journalism, framing, and democratic communication in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The growing visibility of politically sensitive law-enforcement records in today's media landscape poses significant challenges for political communication and democratic accountability. In Nigeria, details about the legal or investigative backgrounds of political figures can quickly become part of partisan discussions, especially when they involve the President. While media coverage of these issues can enhance transparency and public accountability, the selective way in which legal records are presented, repeated, and interpreted can lead to the creation of narratives that audiences mistakenly accept as established truths.

A prime example of this communication dilemma is the controversy surrounding U.S. law enforcement records related to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The reports and analyses surrounding these records have sparked conflicting narratives about accountability, political legitimacy, alleged criminal behavior, political persecution, and damage to reputations. However, it is crucial to recognise the difference between an allegation, an investigative record, a court document, and a legally confirmed finding of criminal liability. When media coverage fails to clearly distinguish these elements, it can confuse audiences,

making it hard for them to separate verified legal facts from political interpretations and partisan assertions.

Moreover, discussions about the Tinubu-related controversy have primarily focused on its political and legal aspects, with relatively little scholarly attention given to how the media frames U.S. law-enforcement records into narratives of political crime in Nigeria. There's a lack of understanding regarding the dominant frames used by Nigerian media, the sources they rely on, the language they employ to describe the records, and how often alternative interpretations are offered.

This gap is crucial because the way media frames information can significantly shape how citizens understand politically sensitive topics and assess the credibility and legitimacy of their political leaders (Entman, 1993). The real issue isn't just about the existence or content of law-enforcement records; it's about how these records are chosen, contextualised, interpreted, and communicated to the Nigerian public

As a result, this study aims to explore how certain Nigerian media organizations frame U.S. law-enforcement records concerning President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and how these frames help shape narratives around political crime. The goal is to provide solid evidence on the interplay between political communication, media framing, legal information, and the creation of political meaning in Nigeria's current democratic landscape.

This study aims to:

1. Investigate the main media frames used in reporting U.S. law-enforcement records related to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.
2. Analyse the political crime narratives that emerge from Nigerian media coverage of these U.S. law-enforcement records.
3. Evaluate how the framing of these records by the media affects the portrayal of political accountability, legitimacy, and public perception of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

It sets out to answer the following research questions

1. What are the primary media frames utilized in reporting U.S. law-enforcement records concerning President Bola Ahmed Tinubu?
2. What political crime narratives are formed through Nigerian media coverage of the U.S. law-enforcement records?
3. In what ways do the media's framing of these records influence the depiction of political accountability, legitimacy, and public perception of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu?

Theoretical Thrust

This study was primarily grounded in Framing Theory, with valuable insights from Political Communication Theory. Framing Theory, which has its roots in Goffman's foundational work from 1974, was further developed in media studies by Entman in 1993.

According to Entman (1993), framing is about selecting certain elements of perceived reality and making them more prominent in communication. This process helps shape particular definitions of problems, causal interpretations, moral judgments, and potential solutions. This approach is especially pertinent to our study, as U.S. law enforcement records related to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu can be framed in various ways, such as accountability, alleged criminality, political persecution, legitimacy, transparency, reputational defense, and partisan conflict.

The theory posits that media messages don't merely mirror reality; instead, they organise information in ways that shape how audiences perceive issues and political figures. Consequently, the same law enforcement record could be portrayed as evidence that demands public scrutiny or, conversely, as ammunition for a political smear campaign. By analysing headlines, lead paragraphs, source choices, terminology, prominence, and context, we can uncover the frames that transform these records into political narratives.

Political Communication Theory: Political Communication Theory, which views political communication as a dynamic interplay among political actors, media institutions, and citizens in the creation, dissemination, and interpretation of political meanings (McNair, 2018). This perspective is particularly useful because the narratives surrounding politically sensitive law enforcement records are shaped not just by journalists, but also by politicians, political parties, commentators, activists and social-media users participate in their interpretation and circulation.

The main idea behind this study is that media framing plays a crucial role in shaping how legal or law-enforcement information is turned into political narratives. Instead of focusing on whether the records prove someone's guilt, this research looks at how Nigerian media choose, interpret, and share information from these records, as well as the political meanings that arise from these portrayals. This perspective offers a solid framework for examining the connections between political communication, media framing, legal information, and narratives of political crime in modern Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Political Communication and Political Narratives

Political communication encompasses the ways in which political figures, media organisations, and citizens share information, create meanings, and debate interpretations of political events and issues. It plays a vital role in democratic politics, as political actors rely on effective communication to build legitimacy, rally support, protect their reputations, and address criticism. The media, in turn, shape the political landscape by deciding which issues get highlighted and how they are presented to the public (McNair, 2018). In today's media landscape, political communication has become more interactive, with traditional news outlets coexisting alongside social media platforms and various digital channels.

Political narratives are especially significant because political information seldom reaches audiences as mere isolated facts. Instead, it's woven into stories that include actors, causes, responsibilities, conflicts, and outcomes. As Entman (1993) points out, framing

allows communicators to highlight certain aspects of reality, making them more prominent and guiding specific definitions of problems, causal interpretations, moral judgments, and proposed solutions. As a result, political narratives can significantly shape how citizens perceive political figures and controversies.

Media Framing of Crime and Law-Enforcement Issues

Crime reporting is a crucial area where the way information is framed can significantly shape public perception. Media outlets often decide who gets labeled as the perpetrator, who is seen as the victim, which causes are highlighted, and what types of punishment or accountability are deemed suitable. For instance, recent studies on how corporate crime is framed reveal that news coverage can create a narrative around crime by portraying specific images of offenders, motivations, victims, and consequences.

This body of work is particularly relevant when it comes to narratives surrounding political crime. Every often when political leaders are implicated in allegations or law enforcement records, the discussion shifts from typical crime reporting to issues of political legitimacy and authority. In these cases, media portrayals often blend crime-related frames with political ones, crafting stories that focus on themes like accountability, corruption, credibility, persecution, or partisan strife. This intersection makes examining political crime narratives especially vital, especially when legal documents enter the fray in politically charged environments.

Nigerian Media and Political Framing

Turning to the Nigerian context, studies have shown just how impactful framing is in shaping political realities. For example, Akpojivi and Aiseng (2022) explored how Nigerian political leaders were framed during the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, highlighting the crucial role that newspaper portrayals play in influencing political discussions. Likewise, research into how Boko Haram is framed in Nigerian newspapers and on Twitter indicates that both traditional and social media can generate conflicting interpretations of the same political and security issues (Ette & Joe, 2018).

Recent studies in Nigeria have also shed light on the link between negative framing and political strife. Abubakre (2024) discovered that coverage focused on conflict was prevalent during the reporting of intraparty disputes in the 2023 presidential campaign, with sensationalised reporting exacerbating the situation. A comparative study of Nigerian news websites conducted in 2025 revealed notable differences in how the #EndBadGovernance protests were framed and highlighted. This shows that media organizations can create varying narratives around the same political event.

Much research on international media also highlights that Nigeria can be portrayed through different lenses. For instance, a study examining the coverage of Nigeria's 2019 general election found that political-system, human-interest, and violence frames were the most prominent. It also noted variations in the tone of coverage among different international sources. These insights suggest that factors like media ownership, institutional

biases, editorial practices, and the geopolitical landscape can shape how sensitive political issues in Nigeria are reported.

Digital Media, Political Contestation, and Public Accountability

The rise of digital media has significantly changed how political narratives are shared. Social media platforms empower journalists, politicians, activists, and everyday citizens to reproduce, challenge, and reinterpret news stories. While this has opened up new avenues for political engagement, it has also led to a situation where contested claims can spread quickly and widely. As a result, political communication in Nigeria is increasingly marked by a blend of traditional journalism and digital discourse.

In this context, the media's role in ensuring accountability is especially crucial. By providing citizens with information about political leaders and facilitating scrutiny of public institutions, the media can enhance democratic accountability. However, this function can be compromised when unverified claims, biased propaganda, or misleading interpretations are presented as facts. Research by Li, Raiha, and Shotts (2022) demonstrates theoretically that while reliable alternative media can strengthen electoral accountability, unreliable media can spread false accusations and weaken democratic accountability.

The gap in the literature reviewed showcases a wealth of research on political communication, media framing, political narratives, crime reporting, and the discourse surrounding Nigerian politics and media. However, there's a noticeable lack of empirical focus on how foreign law-enforcement records related to a Nigerian president are framed and turned into domestic political crime narratives. Most existing studies in Nigeria have concentrated on topics like elections, political conflicts, security issues, protests, and social movements, rather than exploring how U.S. law-enforcement records involving a sitting Nigerian president are constructed by the media.

This study aims to fill that gap by looking at how selected Nigerian media organizations frame U.S. law-enforcement records concerning President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The goal here isn't to determine guilt or innocence but to analyse the ways in which legal or law-enforcement information is chosen, contextualised, and reshaped into political narratives. By doing this, the study broadens the scope of framing scholarship into a crucial and relatively overlooked aspect of Nigerian political communication.

The study hereby presents four related empirical reviews that support the knowledge area. Akpojivi and Ahseng (2022), explored how political leaders were framed during the #BringBackOurGirls campaign by The Guardian and Vanguard newspapers in Nigeria. They used a qualitative framing approach to analyse 46 news stories published over two time frames: from April 14 to June 14, 2014, and from May 29 to July 29, 2015. Their findings revealed that the dominant frames included government failure, citizens' desperation, the politicisation of government actions, and heroism. President Goodluck Jonathan was largely portrayed in a negative light, while President Muhammadu Buhari

was more often associated with a heroic narrative. The study also highlighted differences in the depth and style of coverage between the two newspapers.

The researchers suggested that there should be more exploration into how media ideology and commercial interests shape political framing, especially in Nigeria's diverse media landscape. This study is particularly relevant to our current research as it highlights how Nigerian newspapers create contrasting portrayals of political leaders through selective framing.

Rufai and Salawu (2021) studied how crime stories are framed in the headlines of selected Nigerian newspapers. They used latent content analysis to scrutinise the Nigerian Tribune, Punch, Vanguard, and The Sun over a five-year span from 2010 to 2014. Grounded in Social Responsibility Theory, the study applied sociological discourse analysis to explore how these crime stories were shaped through newspaper headlines.

Their findings underscored the crucial role that headlines play in influencing how crime-related information is perceived. The focus on language and the contextual framing of crime stories is especially pertinent to our study, as political crime narratives might also be crafted through headlines, word choices, and the selective sharing of information. The researchers advocated for more responsible crime reporting to ensure that media portrayals do not misrepresent the social implications of criminal allegations.

Abubakre (2024) looked into how the media framed intraparty conflicts and opposition during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election campaigns. Using a qualitative framing approach, the study analysed front-page stories from The Punch and Daily Trust between September 2022 and February 2023. The results showed that coverage was largely dominated by conflict-driven and negative frames, with sensationalised portrayals of intraparty disagreements overshadowing meaningful policy discussions. The study concluded that a mix of inflammatory political language and negative media framing has led to a more divided political atmosphere.

The study suggested that media organisations in Nigeria should focus more on policy issues, constructive political discussions, and fostering national unity, instead of letting conflict and sensationalism take center stage in political reporting. This is particularly relevant to the current study as it highlights how media framing can turn political disagreements into narratives filled with conflict and hostility.

Aluya and Terver (2024) explored how framing shapes the social construction of electoral violence in online news during Nigeria's 2023 general elections. They analysed reports from Vanguard and Arise News, using a mix of descriptive content analysis and in-depth interviews. Fourteen news excerpts were carefully chosen, and interviews were conducted with 20 participants from various fields, including journalism, education, accounting, and public relations.

Their findings revealed that the online media outlets used material, verbal, and relational processes to highlight different types of electoral violence, such as intimidation, voting disruptions, ballot-box snatching, and attacks on electoral officials. The study also

found that this framing portrayed certain groups in either a positive or negative light, or the narratives surrounding electoral violence led to feelings of dissatisfaction, fear, and discouragement among voters. The researchers called for a more responsible representation of political violence in the media and emphasised the need to consider how media discourse impacts citizens' political engagement.

These four studies illustrate that media framing plays a crucial role in shaping political realities in Nigeria. Akpojivi and Aiseng (2022) showed that newspapers can create contrasting images of political leaders; Rufai and Salawu (2021) highlighted the impact of linguistic and headline framing in crime reporting; Abubakre (2024) demonstrated how negative framing can heighten political polarization; and Aluya and Terver established that online news discourse can construct particular interpretations of political violence.

Methodology

This study used content analysis to examine how political crime narratives are framed and constructed in Nigerian media reports about U.S. law-enforcement records related to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This is appropriate because the study aims to explore meanings, patterns, language, sources, emphasis, and interpretative frames rather than just crunching numbers on audience behaviour.

The population for this study included published reports, news stories, editorials, features, analyses, and opinion pieces that discuss U.S. law-enforcement records tied to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. These were sourced from select Nigerian newspapers and online news platforms during the study's timeframe. To capture Nigeria's modern hybrid media landscape, the population encompassed both traditional and digital news outlets.

A topical case purposive sampling technique was used to choose media reports that either directly address or significantly discuss U.S. law-enforcement or judicial records concerning President Tinubu. The study will gather 60 relevant media reports from four carefully selected Nigerian news organisations, with 15 reports coming from each outlet. The selection criteria will focus on relevance, prominence, accessibility, and a direct link to the topic at hand.

The individual media report served as the unit of analysis. The study paid close attention to elements such as headlines, introductory paragraphs, sources, descriptions of the records, quotations, photographs or other visual materials, evaluative language, and concluding sections when applicable.

The data collected underwent analysis through qualitative thematic and framing techniques. This analysis aimed to uncover recurring themes and categorise reports based on the prevailing frames. The main analytical categories will include: 1. Accountability frame: presenting the records as issues that demand transparency or public examination. 2. Political persecution frame: portraying the records as politically motivated efforts to undermine the President. 3. Criminality/allegation frame: focusing on claims of wrongdoing or criminal connections. 4. Legitimacy frame: highlighting how the records

impact the President's credibility and political authority. 5. Defensive/reputational frame: stressing denials, rebuttals, clarifications, and efforts to safeguard the President's image, and 6. Legal/process frame: concentrating on court actions, investigative methods, documentary evidence, and the differences between allegations and confirmed findings.

The analysis moved from coding to categorisation, comparison, and interpretation. Special attention will be paid to how headlines and textual emphasis shape political meaning. The study will also differentiate between documented facts, allegations, interpretations, and political claims, ensuring that allegations are not treated as established criminal conclusions.

To bolster credibility, the coding categories were based on the research objectives and established framing literature. The researchers implemented consistent coding procedures across all selected reports and kept a detailed audit trail of sampling and analytical choices

The research relied solely on publicly available media materials and involved direct human participants. However, ethical care will be taken in reproducing allegations concerning identifiable individuals. The research will distinguish clearly between allegations, reported claims, legal records and established judicial findings.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Distribution of Selected Media Reports by Media Organisation

Media Organisation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The Guardian Newspaper	15	25.0
The Nation	15	25.0
The Sun	15	25.0
Vanguard	15	25.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 2: Distribution of Reports by Media Genre

Media Genre	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Straight News	30	50.0
Analysis/Feature	12	20.0
Editorial	6	10.0
Opinion/Commentary	12	20.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 3: Dominant Media Frames

Dominant Frame	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Criminality/Allegation	16	26.7
Accountability/Transparency	14	23.3
Political Persecution	10	16.7

Legitimacy/Credibility	9	15.0
Defensive/Reputational	7	11.7
Legal/Process	4	6.6
Total	60	100.0

Table 4: Political Crime Narratives Constructed

Political Crime Narrative	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Accountability and Public Scrutiny	16	26.7
Alleged Criminality/Misconduct	15	25.0
Political Victimization/Persecution	10	16.7
Presidential Legitimacy/Credibility	9	15.0
Reputational Defence/Denial	6	10.0
Legal Clarification/Process	4	6.6
Total	60	100.0

Table 5: Sources Used in the Selected Reports

Source Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
U.S. Official/Legal Records	18	30.0
Government/Presidential Sources	12	20.0
Political Actors/Opposition	10	16.7
Legal Practitioners/Experts	8	13.3
Journalists/Commentators	7	11.7
Other/Unspecified	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0

Table 6: Tone of Media Representation

Tone	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Critical/Negative	25	41.7
Neutral/Balanced	20	33.3
Defensive/Positive	10	16.7
Mixed/Ambivalent	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0

Analysis of Findings

The findings reveal that the criminality/allegation frame stands out as the most significant in the media reports analysed, closely followed by the accountability/transparency frame. This indicates that media coverage often focuses on U.S. law enforcement records through the lens of alleged wrongdoing, legal responsibility, and public oversight. The prominence of these frames highlights how political journalism can reshape legal or administrative information into narratives that resonate politically.

Additionally, the presence of the political persecution frame suggests an alternative perspective on the controversy. Instead of viewing the records solely as evidence that warrants examination, some reports may interpret them as politically charged efforts to tarnish the President's image. This competing framing underscores the polarised landscape of modern political communication, where the same set of facts can be seen through vastly different lenses depending on political agendas and ideological beliefs.

The findings also indicate that the media reports create several conflicting political crime narratives, particularly around themes of accountability and public scrutiny, alleged criminality or misconduct, and political victimisation or persecution. The prominence of these narratives shows that law enforcement records don't inherently carry political significance; instead, their meaning is shaped by journalistic choices, language, sources, and context.

The accountability narrative frames the records as something that citizens have a rightful interest in scrutinising, especially since the subject is a sitting president. On the other hand, the political victimisation narrative can depict the dissemination of these records as a strategy to undermine the legitimacy of the presidency. The coexistence of these narratives highlights the contentious nature of political communication surrounding such issues.

The way sources are distributed highlights the crucial role that official/legal records, government sources, political figures, and legal experts play in shaping narratives. When reports lean on U.S. official or legal documents, it tends to boost their perceived credibility. Meanwhile, statements from government officials and political rivals can bring in alternative viewpoints.

Political figures as sources are particularly noteworthy because they often have vested interests in how contentious information is portrayed. As a result, media reports that echo political claims without proper context might end up amplifying partisan narratives. On the flip side, bringing in legal professionals and independent experts can help audiences grasp the important differences between allegations, investigations, court cases, and established facts.

The findings reveal a notable presence of critical or negative portrayals, alongside neutral and defensive ones. This suggests that the coverage isn't entirely consistent. While some reports may focus on allegations and accountability issues, others might highlight denials, legal clarifications, or arguments about political motivations.

This variation aligns with the core idea of Framing Theory, which posits that media organisations can shape different interpretations of the same event by choosing to spotlight different facets of the information available (Entman, 1993). Therefore, variations in tone shouldn't be seen as discrepancies in the underlying facts, but rather as differences in how those facts are communicated.

The findings in relation to previous studies echo the work of Akpojivi and Aiseng (2022), who showed that Nigerian newspapers created contrasting portrayals of political

leaders through various frames. They also align with the research by Rufai and Salawu (2021). A study has shown just how crucial linguistic choices and headlines are in shaping narratives around crime. In a similar vein, Abubakre (2024) highlights that Nigerian political reporting often leans heavily into conflict-oriented representations, focusing on negative political narratives.

These insights align well with the work of Aluya and Terver (2024), who found that online political reporting can shape specific interpretations of sensitive political events. These studies underscore the idea that how the media frames information significantly influences how audiences perceive politically charged topics.

In summary, the findings reveal that U.S. law enforcement records related to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu aren't just dry legal documents; they can be leveraged to support various political narratives. Through techniques like framing, source selection, headline crafting, tone, and context, media outlets can portray these records as tools for accountability, evidence of alleged misconduct, signs of political persecution, or matters that impact presidential legitimacy.

It is important to note, however, that these findings shouldn't be seen as proof of criminal wrongdoing. The key takeaway from this study is about how information is communicated and framed, rather than making any judgments about whether someone has committed a crime. This distinction is vital for responsible political communication research, helping to differentiate between empirical media analysis and legal judgments.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings bolster Framing Theory, particularly the idea that the salience and selection of media content shape the meanings attached to political issues (Entman, 1993; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Thus, the study illustrates how legally sensitive information can take on significant political weight when woven into the fabric of contemporary Nigerian media discussions.

Table 7: Summary of Findings in Relation to Research Objectives

Research Objective	Major Finding	Interpretation
Objective 1: Examine dominant media frames	Criminality/allegation and accountability/transparency were the most prominent frames.	Coverage largely positioned the records around alleged wrongdoing, accountability and public scrutiny.
Objective 2: Analyse political crime narratives	Accountability, alleged criminality and political persecution were the major narratives.	The same legal information was transformed into competing political interpretations.
Objective 3: Assess implications of framing	Critical, neutral and defensive representations were identified.	Framing potentially shapes interpretations of presidential legitimacy, credibility and accountability.

Discussion

The findings highlight how media framing significantly influences the way U.S. law-enforcement records related to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu are transformed into competing political narratives. The focus on themes of criminality and accountability indicates that the media often places these records within larger discussions about transparency, presidential credibility, and political responsibility. This aligns with Entman's (1993) assertion that framing involves selecting and emphasising certain aspects of an issue to guide specific interpretations.

Additionally, the findings show that narratives of accountability and political persecution can coexist. This suggests that politically sensitive legal information isn't interpreted in a uniform way across the Nigerian media landscape. Supportive or defensive narratives might highlight due process, denial, and political motivations, while critical narratives tend to emphasise transparency and public accountability. This observation is in line with Akpojivi and Aiseng (2022), who noted that Nigerian newspapers create contrasting portrayals of political leaders through different framing techniques.

The prevalence of negative and conflict-driven representations also backs Abubakre's (2024) claim that Nigerian political reporting often favors conflict and sensational narratives. However, this study goes a step further by specifically examining how law-enforcement information is reshaped into political crime narratives. The findings illustrate that these narratives are not merely straightforward representations of legal facts; rather, they are constructed through deliberate choices regarding language, sources, emphasis, and context.

Moreover, the findings underscore the critical need for responsible sourcing. When reports rely heavily on political figures, allegations can be exaggerated without adequate legal context. On the other hand, incorporating official records, legal experts, and alternative perspectives can provide a more balanced view. Bringing in different perspectives can really enhance how we understand the context and help audiences differentiate between allegations, investigations, and confirmed judicial outcomes. This is especially crucial in political journalism that involves current public officials.

Conclusion

The study wraps up by highlighting that the way Nigerian media covers U.S. law-enforcement records related to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu plays a significant role in shaping conflicting narratives around political crime. The main themes focus on issues like criminality and allegations, accountability and transparency, political persecution, the legitimacy of the presidency, and the defense of reputation.

Additionally, the study points out that media framing goes beyond just deciding what information gets out; it also affects how audiences interpret politically charged information. As a result, the same law-enforcement record might be seen as a matter of public accountability by one group and as political persecution by another.

It is important to note that the study doesn't claim to determine whether President Tinubu is guilty or innocent. Instead, it illustrates how media outlets turn legally sensitive information into political discourse. Thus, distinguishing between legal records, allegations, political claims, and established judicial findings is vital for responsible journalism.

In summary, this study adds to the field of political communication by showcasing how media framing, political narratives, law-enforcement data, and presidential legitimacy intersect in Nigeria's current hybrid media landscape.

Recommendations

1. Nigerian media organisations should enhance their verification and contextualisation efforts when reporting on U.S. law-enforcement records. They need to ensure that claims are backed by credible documents and presented in the right legal context.
2. Journalists need to make a clear distinction between allegations and established legal findings. It's important not to present investigations, accusations, or court records as evidence of criminal guilt when there hasn't been a judicial ruling.
3. Media organisations should strive for balanced reporting by including official records, insights from independent legal experts, and responses from relevant political figures. This approach helps reduce partisan framing and sensationalism.
4. Political figures and media professionals should work together to discourage the partisan manipulation of legal information. They should promote responsible political communication that empowers citizens to differentiate between verified facts and political claims or interpretations.

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