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PERCEPTION OF OBJECTIVITY AND BIAS IN NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF BUHARI-LED ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN

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ABSTRACT

The negative impact of corruption on underdevelopment cannot be overemphasized. It is one of the factors that impede the accelerated development of third world countries. Since Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari assumed office on May 29, 2015, the mass media, especially newspapers, have been replete with issues on corruption and the government's efforts to overcome it. The activities of the nation's anti-graft agencies, notably the EFCC, ICPC and CCT/CCB were the frequently seen media offerings. This study was set out to investigate the perception of free newspaper readers on the Buhari-led anti-corruption campaign and its reportage in newspapers. The survey method was adopted via the use of available sampling of one hundred and thirty free newspaper readers at five newspaper stands in Ikeja, the capital city of Lagos State, South-West Nigeria. The survey method was supported with in-depth interview of six free newspaper readers. It was found that majority of the free readers positively perceived newspapers' coverage of corruption but believed that the Buhari-led anti-corruption crusade, though commendable, is largely one-sided. Some of the readers also revealed that newspaper reports are not absolutely objective and reliable as they take side with the government. Findings of the study correspond with the assumptions of selectivity theory which serves as the theoretical framework of the study. It was recommended that the media should imbibe the culture of investigative journalism in their reportage of corruption in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Corruption, Buhari, Newspaper, Perception, Free Readers.*