Election Coverage of Security Issues in Contemporary Nigerian Society: An Interface of Development Media Theory

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ABSTRACT

This work is focused on the study of "Election Coverage of Security Issues in Contemporary Nigerian Society: An Interface of Development Media, Theory with Democratic Participant-media Theory." It is a historical research, which, involve broad review of secondary sources of knowledge. In the process of this work, Development media theory and Democratic participant-media Theory were jointly used to form theoretical foundation of the study. And the principles of the two development media ideologies were critically re-examined and discussed in relation to the topic/focus of the study. After a systematic, in-depth and comparative analysis based on the joint theoretical framework, the study revealed that Nigerian mass media have performed low in election coverage of security issues in contemporary Nigerian society due to some problems in the society. In view of that, the study recommend among other things that stakeholders of Nigerian electoral/political system, security agencies and members of the nation's media institution should join hands and improve our society and of course the media systems for better coverage of the issues in the country's future elections.
Keywords: Election coverage, Security issues, Nigerian society.

INTRODUCTION

The current democratic dispensation in Nigeria started in the year 1999. And since then there have been general elections across the country [1]. In the progressive manner, general elections took place across contemporary Nigeria in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 respectively [2]. During the election periods there were various forms of political activity and development in nation [3]. Struggle for elective positions directly or indirectly led to destruction of lives and properties in some parts of the federation [3]. In all the general elections recently conducted in Nigeria many inhabitants of the land experienced or witnessed various levels of political crisis, conflict, violence, thuggery, etc. and these created many security issues/problems in the society. Being the watchdog of the developing society, mass media covered and communicated some of the issues to the people. And there were mixed reactions to contents of the communication [4].

Statement of Problem

According to [5], a clear statement of research problem is necessary from the beginning of a research work because it helps to direct research activity. Therefore, the concern of this study is to find out the role our mass media systems have so far played in the election coverage of security issues in Nigeria based on the combine frame works/principles of development media theory and democratic participant-media theory. This is in view of the fact that our media operations in the country reflect some of the principles of the two theories. The study further examined whether the media coverage based on the theoretical principles was satisfactory or not [6].

Objective of Study

The following are objectives of this study:
a) To identify security issues that have characterized process of elections in contemporary Nigerian society;
b) To examine the effects of the security issues on our electoral process;
c) To critically analyze mass media coverage of the security issues;
d) To x-ray how the media coverage so far reflect the principles of Development media theory and democratic participant-media theory;
e) To find out whether the media did the coverage satisfactorily or not;
f) To see if there is any failure of the media in the process of the coverage and then proffer remedies in favour of future elections in the country.

Research Methodology

In the process of this study, the researcher based on historical research which involves broad review of secondary sources of knowledge. According to [7], historical research aims "...at establishing the validity or authenticity of past event for possible acceptance, reconstruction of outright rejection." However, secondary sources "refers to other materials from which information or data, is obtained," [8]. In the field of research, such sources refer to works of other persons, reports or events already documented which are more detailed and better organized most of the time than primary sources [9].

Limitations of the Study

In the research process, some inherent factors are likely to have affected the result of this study but not in significant way. Such factors are lack of time, data, logistics problems, secretive attitudes of people in our security, media and electoral systems, absence of research assistants [10].

Theoretical Foundation of the Study

[11] rightly pointed out; that every academic study is based on specific theory, depending on the subject and dimension of the study. Therefore, this study is based on the joint theoretical framework of Development Media Theory and Democratic Participant-Media Theory. To [12] these two media theories are jointly taken as development media ideologies, recently established by the third world scholars for the developing countries (Nigeria inclusive). The theories came up to take care of the development needs of developing nations which could not be well settled by the first four normative press theories (Authoritarian media theory, soviet-communist media theory, libertarian theory and social responsibility theory); partly due to special socio-political and cultural sets-up in those nations. At this juncture, the researcher wishes to summarily discuss the two theories in separate form.
(a) Development Media Theory: This theory originated from UNESCO's McBride Commission established in 1979. [13] stated that the theory is opposed to dependency and western domination and to arbitrary authoritarianism. It accepts economic development and nation building as overriding goals. It believes that press freedom should be restricted to a reasonable extent, depending on the economic priorities and development needs of the society. The theory equally believes that the state through its government has the ultimate control of the media so far as such control is in favour of societal development, [14]. [15], outlined the major principles of the theory as follows:
i. That the media must accept and carry-out positive development functions in line with the established policy of the nation,
ii. Freedom of the media should be regulated by the economic priorities and societal development needs;
iii. In the process of media content production, priority should be given to national culture and languages
iv. Media should give priority attention to the tasks of information gathering and dissemination; v. And that in the interest of development ends, the state through its government has right to intervene in

or restrict media operations, using means that are reasonable and justifiable.

(b) Democratic Participant-Media Theory: This is the sixth normative theory of the press. It is applicable to liberal democratic society, as the theory is a reaction against the exclusion of audience majority in such society from active participation in the process of producing mass media contents. The major principle of the theory derives from (he needs, interests and aspirations of the active 'receiver[1] in n political society and has to do .with the right to relevant information, the right to answer back, the right to use the means of communication for interaction, [16]. The reason for the development of the theory was reaction against commercialization and monopoly of privately owned media or monopoly journalism, centralism and bureaucratization of government owned media/institutions. [17], critically pointed out that there, is a mixture of libertarianism, utopianism, socialism, egalitarianism, environmentalist and localism, in this theory. To McQuail in [18] the basic tenets of the theory are:

a) That individual citizens and minority groups have media access right (right to communicate) and right to be served by the media according to their own determination of communication needs;

b) The organization and contents of media should not be subjected to centralized political and bureaucratic control;

c) Primarily, media should exist for their audience, not for media organizations, professionals or clients of the media;

d)Small-scale,interactive and participative media forms are better than large scale, single-way, professionalized media;

e) Some social needs relating to the media are neither adequately expressed through individual consumer demands, nor through the state and its basic institutions. For communication is too important to be left to professionals alone.

This implies that many members of mass audience become active part of, not just the nominal target of unidirectional mass communication. Therefore, the media operators should plan media contents with the audience instead of single-handedly planning the contents vertically/Lop-down for the audience.

Significance of the study

The following will benefit directly or indirectly from the findings of this study:

a) Research/academic institutions established for the study of POLIMEDIA-politics cum media;

b) Mass media practitioners;

c) Electoral bodies in Nigeria,

d) Government development agencies;

e) Public policy makers and analysts;

f) Non-governmental organizations; etc.

Literature Review

Election coverage of security issues in contemporary Nigerian society: An interface of Development Media Theory with Democratic Participant-Media Theory.Preamble: This historical research involves wide review of secondary sources of knowledge. Such sources are other materials from which information, or data, is obtained, [19]. There are person's works, reports or events already documented which are mostly detailed and well organized. However, literature review is a careful and critical survey of what is already known and documented about a problem under study. It is investigation of previous studies done in the area of current study or research that are closely related to it, [20]. Interface/SimilaritiesBetweenDevelopment Media Theory and Democratic-Participant

Media Theory

The interface/similarities between these theories are:

1) Both Development media theory and democratic participant media theory express the need for horizontal rather than vertical (top down) communication. That is, the need for participatory and people oriented communication.

2) Both theories were propounded by a group of African experts with the aim of

channeling communication to development needs in third world countries.

3)Both were the last two normative theories propounded to make up situations not properly catered for by the other four-authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and soviet communist theories.

4)Both theories underscores the relevance of the people (audience) and their participatory right in a communication process. Both are of the view that communication is too important to be left to government, ruling class, and media professionals alone; rather, everybody including ordinary citizens should be active players in communication cycle. 5) Both are development oriented theories. That is they jest on the premise that communication should be channeled towards development need of the people.

Major Mass Media for Election Coverage of Security Issues in Modern Nigeria

In the modern day Nigeria, radio, television, newspaper and magazine exist as the major mass media. Security issues like other events or occurrences, provide the mass media with the raw material for their news presentation. Kidnapping, arm robbery, insurgency, ethnic, religious and political crises, trafficking, etc, are some of prevalent security issues being witnessed in Nigeria today. The mass media usually find such issues newsworthy. While responsible media operators and the reporters are faced the challenge of ascertaining how much of such coverage is necessary to avoid inciting the audience or retaliatory reaction from aggrieved segment of the society or those sympathetic to the victims; irresponsible media operators especially those working as spokesman of political opponents tend to sweep this under the carpet. However, it is the duty of the mass media to tell the truth about, including update on security issue around and involving them. Mass media, especially the government owned ones today often exercise restraint in providing detailed report of the country's security issues, apparently in realization of the need to forestall negative reaction in other places. For instance, the 2011 post election crisis in the Northern part of the country and the present Boko Haram insurgency is under reported by government owned media and responsible privately owned ones to forestall negative reaction from other parts of the country whose people were victims. Handling security issues are always very challenging to the mass media, especially television due to the impact the visuals could have on the audience. The way Nigerian mass media; especially television report/cover security issues has been attracting diverse opinions, some of which are criticisms and others are defense. Realities of Modern Nigerian society and their Implications on election Coverages of Security Issues: Nigeria is a developing West African country with an emerging democracy. The country has a land mass of about 98 million hectares accommodating over120,000 autonomous communities; over 150 million people; over 250 ethnic groups that are often suspicious and hostile to each other (especially in political matters) with Igbo, Hause and Yoruha as dominant groups; over 250 mutually unintelligible languages made more complex by 1000 dialects; 2 major opposing religions (Christianity and Moslem) plus the third African Traditional Religion (A.T.R) which often compliments the first two; 60% of rural dwellers; 60% of illiterates and innumerate by western standards, and the illiterates mostly behave like animals due to lack of education whose aim is to transform animals into human beings. Furthermore, the country spent 28 years under military dictatorship which badly affected its social, health, educational, political, infrastructural, economic and media systems. This situation has made journalism in the country to become a mixed bag of headaches and "panadol". Journalists in the corrupt nation are poorly paid and there is high level of corruption in the media which take the form of brown envelop journalism, bribery, journalism of terrorism, sensationalism, plagiarism, slanting of

news stories, selling of news stories to other media houses, distortion of facts and withholding of information, publication of half truths and deliberate falsehood, wrong application of advocacy-journalism and the likes. Due to the above factors, journalists in the nation have become chatter boxes and sycophantic megaphones of government, political and business comprador bourgeoisies. Although, the government of president Goodluck has brought about a little "breath of fresh air" and that to some extent has restored hope, national rebirth with renaissance, the country is still at the crossroads of decadence and democracy now which has made Nigerians to be wondering with hard questions for our leaders,[21,22,23]. What Election Coverage is all About: During elections, there are appropriate public institutions that generate and share information about, the exercise. These public institutions create a structure of rights; privileges and obligations, including the right to be informed and to express opinions about matters of public interest within the context of accepted rules and norms. The mass media interestingly, occupy the most valuable place among these institutions.The mass media ensure that the populace is adequately educated and informed on election campaigns, candidate manifests, as well as proper reportage of candidates profile, promises, antecedents and actions. The mass media also interpret various political activities and information in a context that will be meaningful to the polity. Mass media equally create forums for public debate and discuss about the issues surrounding the election. Such forum links aspirants/candidates and electorates. This establishes understanding among political actors and electorates. Another crucial aspect of election coverage is monitoring compliance with the rules, procedures and set guidelines, with a view to fishing out defaulters. During elections, the mass media represent the people's mandate and feelings. The media police the traffic of information flow to the audience and report any anomaly. Reportage of this kind has the capacity to inflame passion or douse the people.

Election coverage also means managing and packaging of political candidates to the public. Public perception of political aspirants is based on political information made available to the audience by the mass media. The media do this through the tool of political advertising. This has the advantage of providing the electorate with more information about the manifestos of the parties and the qualities of the candidates. Ideal coverage of an election requires the mass media to follow the voting process till the time the result is announced. The media is expected to review the activities that were witnessed during the election, the result of the election, the views of the electorates, etc, and give balance, objective analysis and interpretation of them. The live transmission of the election by radio and television gives credibility to the election and eschews the feelings of rigging and other electoral malpractices. Proper coverage of an election in this manner, reduce violence and post election crisis. This is because losers accept defeat and the belief that their votes were counted is usually cultivated in the minds of the electorates.

The media and election Coverage of Security Issues in Nigeria
Analysis of role Expectation and performance

As social structures, mass media can, either serve as tools that strengthen security system of a given society or tools that weaken it. When used with high sense of responsibility in the process of election coverage of security issues, the media can:

i. Improve security knowledge of the electorate;

ii. Promote right attitudinal and behavioural changes in citizens for security benefits;

iii. Provide people with balanced information on the security situation of the election;

iv. Promote democratic culture, peace and security consciousness among the electorate;

v.Promote diplomatic relation among political rivals;

vi.Employ creative function for the success of political/electoral process in the society;

vii.Educate people on security matters during election;

viii.Play surveillance role and gate keeping function in the interest of security during the election;

ix. Confer status and set agenda in the interest of security during the exercise;

x.Ensure responsibility and accountability of people (especially security agents) that play roles in the electoral process;

xi. Investigate and interpret security issues properly to enhance mutual understanding among the electorate for peaceful co-existence;

xii. Help socialize and civilize electorate in the interest of peace and security during election Etc. Some studies show that mass media have not performed the above duties satisfactorily in our recent elections, [24,25].Legal and ethical consideration necessary for good coverage of security issue during elections in modern Nigerian society: The considerations are accuracy, fairness, truthfulness, respect for individual privacy, opportunity to reply, objectivity [26]. A Reflection at Election Security Issues in Contemporary Nigerian Society: A countdown from 1999, to 2O11 Elections. General elections held in Nigeria in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 respectively where characterized by politically motivated kidnappings, killings, riots, terrorisms, crises, robberies, destruction of property, etc.

(f)Extent the media coverage of the security issues reflected principles of Development Media Theory and Democratic Participant-media theory has been discussed earlier in this study indirectly. Some government officials deceptively hid under the principles of Development media theory to selfishly and negatively influence coverage of security issues during the elections. Meanwhile, mass communication and mass media systems were democratized to some extents during the elections. And that helped audience electorate to be active part of electoral/political communication process.

Media Adherence to the Professional Laws and Ethics in Coverage of Security Issues during the Elections: Media adherence to the laws and ethics was little especially in 201 1 general election. This was proved in "An Analysis of Journalism Practice in a Nigerian City During the 2011 Political Transition period", conducted by [27].

Reasons Behind the Little Adherence to the Media laws and Ethics During the Election Security Issues Coverage: Some of the reasons are:

1.Lack of any or inadequate professional training;

2.Partisanship and personal interests of journalists;

3.Self censorship as a survival strategy;

4.Publisher/owners quest for financial and material gains;

5.Inadequate working tools and non-conducivemedia/communication environment;

6.Pressures and time demands or challenges;

7.Bribery and corruption in the society;

8.Ignorance of laws and ethics of journalism;

9.Financial difficulties faced by journalists;

10.Pressures from government or opposition side;

11.Greed on the part of journalists;

12.Sheer contempt and disobedient to laws and ethics of professionalism. Etc. [28,29,30].

CONCLUSION

Elections in contemporary Nigerian society have witnessed many security issues which resulted some problems/challenges in the society. In various ways, the nation's media systems have covered the issues and communicated them to the members of the society who received the messages with mixed reactions. Many criticisms have been leveled against the media in the recent past over poor coverage of the issues. This proves in terms of

professionalism that the media have not performed satisfactorily in the coverage of the security issues in the recent elections conducted in the nation. Some societal factors are partly responsible for the low performance. This study has x-rayed the factors and how to handle them so that there will be improvement in the coverage of election security issues in future elections that will take place in the country. For the improved coverage will help to reduce electoral/political problems Nigeria normally experience when general elections is near, during the elections proper and after the elections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher hereby makes the following recommendations:

1.There should be improvement of the legal and ethical environments of the media institution in Nigeria;

2.Government and other concerned members of the society should improve payment of the journalists in the country so that they will pay more attention to the professional coverage of security issues in the time of election;

3.Nigerian journalists should be given more training on the better way of covering election security issues;

4.Having been trained, journalists should bear in mind their professional ethics under the umbrella of the media code of conduct;

5.Based on the principles of Development Media Theory and Democratic Participant-Media Theory, our media practitioners should always put the welfare of Nigerian society first whenever they are covering election security issues;

6.Our journalists and security agents should complement patriotic efforts of each other and should work with mutual understanding during elections;

7.And government should make our electoral and media systems more democratic in the interest of societal development.

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