Assessment of Print Media Contribution to the Political Development of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *The print media played an important role in Nigeria's independence struggle in the 1950s. It remained a beacon of hope during the dark days of the military dictatorship. However, amid the turbulent waters of Nigerian politics, the fingers of accusation are being pointed at the media (print) for dividing the country along political lines. The press's constitutional right to hold the country's rulers accountable to the people would seem to be the most seriously affected. Thus, the argument that the print media is a destabilizing influence in Nigeria's political evolution is examined in this article. The outcomes of this study are crucial to Nigeria's democracy's long-term sustainability. This inquiry uses a content analysis approach. Publications from Nigeria's leading newspapers were examined to see if the assertion of the press being a source of political instability is valid, and whether the claim should be accepted or rejected. According to the survey, the media published numerous political reports, as evidenced by the experimental hypothesis, indicating that P> 0.05, which means that media coverage has nothing to do with political instability in the country, regardless of the size of the news. According to the study, regulatory agencies should address all concerns related to ethical and professional practices affecting the practice of journalism in the media in order to prevent the dissemination of published material in the media that may cause intolerance.*

KEYWORDS: Nigeria, political instability, political stability, print media, democracy

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INTRODUCTION

At every turning point in Nigeria's political and democratic history, especially when the country's chances of survival were fading, the print media of the nation stood out as a beacon of light, fostering the nation's togetherness via the spread of democratic values. In Nigeria's fight for independence, the media was crucial (Omu, 1978; Ikiebe, 2017). It served as a focal point because of its outstanding and brave performance as well as its capacity to move the crowd. There were

several factors that led to the establishment of the bulk of early African newspapers. One of them was the demand for adequate African representation in colonial governments of various African nations. Some African nationalists were looking for novel ways to attract attention, which was another influence. Enhancing native people's political consciousness was another goal, with the intention of making them more involved citizens.

Omu (1978), who received support from Aina (2007), asserts that the Nigerian Spectator and Nigerian Advocate were two newspapers that came into existence as a result of free and fair elections built on the Clifford Constitution of 1922 in order to provide voice to the public's views on politics. Dr. Richard Akinwande Savage founded the Nigerian Spectator on May 19, 1923, and S. H. Braithwate founded the Nigerian Advocate in August 1923. The West African Pilot and its sister publications, which were run by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, served as the NCNC's authorized organs (Sobowale, 1985, cited in Ugboajah, 1985, p. 31). In the heyday of nationalist sentiments, Chief Obafemi Awolowo founded the Nigerian Tribune in 1949 to advance Action Group ideas and the Daily Sketch was under the leadership of the Nigerian Youth Movement.

The reason journalists were so powerful during the colonial period, according to Ikiebe (2017), who wrote about the historical development of the Nigerian press, was that, in addition to the colonial office's stance on contentious issues, the reporters of that era were able to appeal to the political instincts of the populace. Because of this, Lagos residents actively contributed to the protection of journalists and showed their support for them in the open. Innocent, et al. (2020) assert that democratic elections in 1922 led to the development of the blatant and radical practice of journalism, which later gave rise to what was known as the party press (Omu, 1978).

The purpose of the press's informational, instructive, amusing, and other duties was to increase political literacy in order to support self-governance. The Weekly Record of the Jackson family, the African Messenger of Ernest Ikoli, the Lagos Daily News of Herbert Macaulay, the Comet of Duse Mohammed Ali, and other contemporary publications like The Guardian of Alex lbru, the Concord group of papers of the late Chief Moshood Abiola, the Vanguard of Sam Amuka Pemu, The Punch, Tell, The News, and others made a mark in the struggle for political integration (Olayiwola, 1991).

Similar to colonial times, Nigeria's contemporary media was crucial in the struggle for democracy and forced the military to disband. The government occasionally gives the impression that the process of political integration is militant in nature. To avoid government harassment, courageous publications like The News, Tell, and others were forced to use the Gorilla journalism method, which is why The Guardian was burned on fire (Olukotu, 2002). Ibelema (2002) noted that the press promoted democratic governance when military rulers had to rule against Nigerians' interests. The author thinks that the media was able to provide a venue for debate despite the nation's unstable political climate at the time. According to Olukotu (2002), the government's

destruction of civil society through coercion, corruption, and cooption further splintered the political landscape, leaving civil society so weak that the press took up the cause of an equitable political and social climate.

The military's rule over Nigeria would have persisted unchecked in the absence of the media (Olukotun, 2002). The newspapers resisted the military's attempts at monopolistic integration to undermine Nigeria's democratic development process in order to fulfill its commitments. The print media, with its pluralistic unifying nature, aids in the advancement of democracy by enlisting Nigerians in the fight to establish democracy (Olukotun, 2002). Despite its benefits, studies show that Nigeria's print media has been irresponsible in its attempts to foster an atmosphere that is conducive to the nation's political progress. According to investigations into development, civil governance, and administration carried out by the International Press Centre, Lagos, in 2008 (Adebiyi, 2009, quoted in Ojo and Adebayo, 2013; Omenugha and Oji, 2008), the media failed to foster the ideal environment for Nigeria's political development.

The data, in the authors' opinion, supported the widely held assumption that the media focuses more on political shame than on development-related issues. The four media outlets were found to have spent 52% of their time criticizing politicians, leaving only 28% for development and 20% for parliamentary matters. In actuality, political abuse took up 86% of the available area, while just 15% was devoted to problems with development. For instance, in the month under consideration, 68.44% of the reports came from government sources, whereas 4% came from expert opinion. A typical individual on the street provided information in 6.35% of those surveyed. It makes sense that social issues that affect growth will be misrepresented by the media given the tilt described above. Normally, the press would be praised for its attention to governance, but this is clearly not a healthy development, especially as the media has frequently abdicated its duties to hold accountable the public officials of the government in pursuit of brown envelope bribes, a type of bribery used by Nigerian journalists (Ojo and Adebeyo (2013).

When it comes to integrating the populace politically, say during the First Republic, the partisan tone of the Nigerian media was a significant weakness. Olukotun (2008) said that the First Republic's press was split into geo-ethnic rival factions, with The Sketch and Action Groups Nigerian Tribune supporting the West, The Nigerian Citizen and Gaskya supporting the North, The Outlook leading NCNC misinformation efforts supporting the East, and Nigerian Citizen and Gaskya supporting the North. Seng and Hunt (1986) assertion was in tune with Sobowole, 1985 cited in Ugboajah, 1985 , and stated that the politicized tone of the press imprisoned it and laws prohibiting the circulation of competing party newspapers were swiftly established in the West and East of the nation. The West banned the distribution of the Daily Times, Morning Post, and New Nigerian. In the East, it was against the law to distribute the Daily Times, Daily Sketch, The Post, and New Nigerian.

The media's function as an integrative force in the nation's political advancement was significantly diminished as a result of the polarization of the political space, which also resulted in polarization of the press. The First Republic's witnessed lack of professional standards in the Nigerian media and its abject failure to foster the proper political environment contributed to the Western crises of 1962–1963 and the census impasse of 1963–1964 as well as the confusion that greeted the elections of 1964–1965, the Kaduna Nzeogu coup of 1966, and the intrigues in the Nigerian Army, which culminated in the Nigerian civil war. Omenugha (2004) cited the Daily Champion account of the Danish Cartoon Crisis that occurred in Maiduguri, in Nigeria's northwest, in 2006. The author discovered that the report was slanted in favor of Eastern Nigeria, where the Daily Champion owner was from and where Igbo people predominate.

Defining dominant-power politics as the most prevalent political syndrome in the gray area, Carothers (2002) explored them. The author claims that the "gray zone" consists of developing nations that exhibit certain political characteristics of democracy but have little room for independent civil organizations or opposition groups. These nations experience minimal but significant political competition. However, one political party appears to be in control of the system in such a way that it seems unlikely that a conventional democratic system would allow for a seamless transfer of power to the other parties. This is a significant statement when related to the Nigerian system. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country, particularly given the reality that the varied ethnic makeup of Nigeria has at various times presented significant obstacles to leaders and forced various questions and declarations, especially when the media was involved. For instance, Chief Obafemi Awolowo reportedly said that Nigeria was "only a geographical expression." In his broadcast on October 1, 1964, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe issued a challenge to the nation, asking: "Is Nigeria still a group of tribes or is it a nation?" (one year after becoming a republic, four years after gaining independence).

As observed by Daily Trust (2003), IkuAkubaka et al. (2019), and Okoro (2013 A), Nigeria's integration issues would persist as a serious concern as long as the media and other channels of communication continue to give priority to racial motives above strives for national development. The study continued by stating that Nigerian media outlets should concentrate on collaborative, integrative, and strategic communication as a way to accomplish ethnic integration and long-term political rule. This would foster a culture of unity in an environment where everyone could contribute their innovative drive, creativity, and scholarly knowledge equally.

Daily Trust (2003) came to the conclusion that national integration could offer a solution to the Azikiwe and Awolowo conundrums in a document titled Diversity: Strength for National Integration. According to the document, national integration is essential for the country's survival and uses Yugoslavia as an example of a nation that disintegrated as a result of Thus, Ansah (1988) worry that the quest for political stability and development encompassed all societal plans, institutional frameworks, economic systems, political structures, and societal plans for addressing

the challenges of contemporary society, as well as Ojo and Adebayo (2013), Dare (2006), and Akinfeleye (2003) concern that mass media outlets may threaten Nigeria's political progress by inciting discontent in the society

The study's objectives

The main goal of this research is to evaluate the role of print media on Nigeria's political growth. The study will be used to:

I. determine whether Nigerian print media publish more stories that help to stabilize the country's political development than stories that destabilize the country's political development.

II. determine the relative importance given to news items that contribute to the stabilization of Nigeria's political development against those that destabilize it.

Hypothesis for the Research

Regardless of the number of publications, published print media stories in Nigeria do not significantly contribute to the destabilization of Nigeria's political development.

Previous Studies' Review

There are stories all across the world that stray from the norm and harm a nation's political development. Smith (2007) asserts that advanced countries use of the media frequently perpetuates intolerable stereotypes about other races. Smith's claims are comparable to a professional media enterprise. The role of the media in political time, according to Curran (2012), Oji (2011) and Frey (1973), depends on the manner in which it may be utilized to boost awareness on poverty alleviation, create an environment for discussion, and increase public understanding of governance and the rule of law. This role also requires the press to serve as an outlet for various viewpoints, obtain backing for what is appropriate, including rights for people and appropriate democratic procedures, established the tone for discussion, while keeping the country's interests in mind.

In the words of Frey (1973), the social and political rallying force of news media will increase as citizens become more aware of and able to connect with their country's lofty values and objectives. The author claims that people's eagerness to discover what is real in media outlets is constantly connected to their appetite for news. Media outlets has to depict what is considered right as such and what is bad in that regard, and vice versa. Which clarifies how the army's efforts to unify Nigeria under one political system in order to support its authority therein failed. Whenever ideas contend for popularity in the marketplace, full and candid debate reveals the false, so they gain few adherents. A society can avoid remaining stagnant by having an inclusive and transparent discourse (Edgar and Schmidt (1951); Seng and Hunt (1986).

It is apparent that media coverage is significant in a democracy (Ekstrom, 2008). In addition to preserving democratic systems, building a nation is a further component of the media's role and influence to take into account, especially among governments that are generally identified as

fragile and weak developing states. The nation-building process in a nation can be greatly impacted by the media as they carry out their duties (Adibe, 2015). The media has been regarded as a crucial part of political advancement and nation-building (World Bank (2009); Diamond (2004).

In addition to the viewpoints listed above, the World Bank (2009:9) identifies five main domains where the media's function in the course of political development and nation-building is evidenced: heterogeneity and transparency, behavioral, architectures, socioeconomic status, and business. When analyzing the importance of the media in political development of nations, Okoro (2013 B) points out the crucial impacts that a positive media climate can contribute to effective governance and the smooth functioning of democratic markets. In Africa's customary societies, the media's contribution to altering long-held beliefs and elucidating the importance of developments is critical.

Theoretical Foundation for the Study
The theoretical foundation for this study is the idea of social responsibility. The approach emphasizes proper press conduct in an effort to make the media's societal obligations workable for growth and stability. Through self-regulation and other organizations, the Nigerian Press Council (NPC), the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), and a variety of other professional organisations in the media industry are enforcing the media's duty to society. The notion of social responsibility provides six distinct functions, according to Folarin (1998: 28). These are listed below:

To support the electoral process by increasing public access to information, debate, and decisions.
• To inform the general public in order that it can take action on its own.
• By keeping an eye on the government, individual liberties are safeguarded.
• To stimulate the economy, for instance, by using advertising to connect buyers and vendors.
• To offer pleasurable amusement, in whatever form it might take in the culture at the moment.
• To keep one's finances independent in order to avoid becoming dependent on certain interests and forces.

The social responsibility hypothesis's use in this study enables a proper determination and comprehension of what ethical press or media behavior should include. While an unprofessional press will establish agenda that leads to destruction and ultimately results in disintegration, a responsible press will contribute to building, or integration. According to Oji and Bebenimibo (2021), Eger et al. (2021) and Negedu and Atabor (2015) media outlets ought to create a social and political environment that enables individuals to take part in worthwhile and beneficial pursuits aimed at development while also promoting a sense of nationhood and stability of nations.

The main concepts of social responsibility theory provide a better understanding of how the media in a multi-racial country like Nigeria can play different integration roles. Therefore, the importance of theory in defining responsible media activities is crucial in pursuing this research. This is especially true when nationalism has presented serious challenges to leaders at different times and has caused much concern and declarations at different times.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

The study employed a content analysis research methodology. A random sample method was used to pick two newspapers from a repository   national dailies published in Nigeria. The study covers the years 1994 (military government) and 2003 (democracy).Selected articles in The Guardian and Vanguard take a month to complete each year, covering all seven days of the week. The parameter established by Jamieson and Campbell (2001) for the analysis of published and broadcast media stories was followed. This includes the categories of articles, the number of articles supported, the importance of the stories, the journalist's style, the claim made in the story, and the evidence used to support the claim, and in essence, how the story was presented and how the story was constructed.

In the study, anti-military writings were seen as inclusive and integrative efforts whereas anti-democratic writings were seen as disintegrative information. These issues were identified using the parameters of Jamieson and Campbell (2001). Anti-military myths were seen as unifying because they elaborated on the voices of Nigerians who opposed the military that overthrew the country's constitution, imposed a terrorist regime, froze freedom of speech, and engage in violations of basic human rights. Anti-democratic issues were judged to be incoherent because they encouraged a return to non-democratic laws, often seen as detrimental to the development of any country.

The data were analyzed with chi-square using the statistical program for social sciences (SPSS) version 22 to determine whether Nigerian media stories, regardless of the volume of publications, are significant to the nation's disintegration. The stories that were discovered were coded to help the data analysis.

Analyzing the Data

Table 1: Content Categories 1 – Prominence (Integrative Stories, 1994)

		The Guardian		Vanguard	
	Unit of Analysis	Frequency of Prominence	Percentage of Prominence	Frequency of Prominence	Percentage of Prominence
1	Front Pages	70	63%	35	81%
2	Editorials	12	11%	-	0%
3	Back Page	9	8%	-	0%
4	Inside Pages	20	18%	8	19%
	TOTAL	N=30 (POP=111)	100 (POP=111)	N=11 (POP=43)	100 (POP=43)

Points awarded: Front page 5 points; Editorial 4 points, Back page 3 points and inside pages 2 points.
POP – Point on Prominence

Table 1 shows The Guardian's prominence and value for integrated stories, with 14 news stories on the front page (70 points on prominence), 3 editorials (12 points on prominence), 3 stories on the back page (9 points on prominence), and 10 pieces on the inside pages (20 points on prominence). On the other hand, the Vanguard Newspaper contains 7 front-page stories (35 points on prominence), no editorial (zero points on prominence), no back-page stories (zero points on prominence), and 4 inside-page stories (8 points on prominence). It demonstrates the newspapers' strength in publishing integrative articles.

Table 2: Content Categories 2 – Prominence (Disintegrative Stories, 2003)

		The Guardian		Vanguard	
	Unit of Analysis	Frequency of Prominence	Percentage of Prominence	Frequency of Prominence	Percentage of Prominence
1	Front Pages	-	0%	30	71%
2	Editorials	-	0%	-	0%
3	Back Page	-	0%	-	0%
4	Inside Pages	-	0%	12	29%
	TOTAL	-	0%(N=0)	N=12 (POP=42)	100 (POP=42)

Points awarded: Front page 5 points; Editorial 4 points, Back page 3 points and inside pages 2 points.

There is no listing in the Guardian for disintegrative stories (zero point on prominence). It demonstrates that the paper has a strict editorial policy that keeps disintegrative stories out. Some

International Journal of International Relations, Media and Mass Communication Studies

Vol.9, No.2, pp.13-24, 2023

Print ISSN: 2059-1845 (Print)

Online ISSN: 2059-185 (Online)

Website: https://www.eajournals.org/

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development -UK

disintegrative stories were published in the Vanguard newspaper. There are 6 front page stories (30 points on prominence), no editorial entry (zero point on prominence), no back page story entry (zero point on prominence), and 6 inside pages (12 points on prominence).

Table 3: Content Categories 3 integrative Stories Versus Disintegrative Stories

	Unit of Analysis	Frequency of Prominence	Percentage of Prominence
1	Integrative Stories	41(154)	79%
2	Disintegrative Stories	12(42)	21%
	TOTAL	N=53(POP=196)	100(POP=196)

Table 3 reveals that the media places more values on integrative stories 79 percent higher than disintegrative ones (21%).

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question One: Research question one that sought to establish if Nigerian mass media publish more integrative stories than disintegrative stories. Table 3 shows 41 integrative stories as against 12 stories that were found to be disintegrative. This shows that the Nigerian media publish more integrative stories than news and other features that tend to be disintegrative in their values and claims.

Research Question Two: With 27 front page stories, 3 back page stories and 3 editorials and 20 inside page that are integrative as against 6 front paged stories, no editorial, no back page and 6 inside page stories that are disintegrative, it is obvious that the Nigerian mass media give prominence to integrative stories than disintegrative stories.

Hypotheses Testing
The data generated was analyse with chi square using SPSS version 22. The data used for the analyses is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Data for Hypothesis

		Stories News paper		Total
		1 integrative	2 disintegrative	
Pages	1 Front page	21	6	27
	2 Inside page	14	6	20
	3 editorial page	3	0	3
	4 back page	3	0	3
Total		41	12	53

Table 5: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)

Pearson Chi-Square	2.377 a	3	.498
Likelihood Ratio	3.662	3	.300
Linear-by-Linear Association	.578	1	.447
N of Valid Cases	53		
a. 5 cells (62.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .68.			

Table 5 above shows that the calculated chi-square (2.377) is lesser than the critical chi-square (7.815) at P>0.05. Thus, the model is not significant, then the null hypothesis (Ho) is accepted. This implies that Nigerian media publications are not significant to disintegration of the nation regardless of the number of publications.

CONCLUSION

When the media is said to integrate, it is a sign that it has some sort of influence. The research shows that Nigerians have been exposed to a political and democratic culture through the Nigerian media. As the media performs its socialization, education, surveillance, news analysis, information, and entertainment tasks, it has been utilized to demonstrate both the media's strengths and flaws. The media has successfully resisted oppressive colonial and military rule, which is a plus. The media has also helped to unite the populace in the fight for independence and the establishment of democracy by offering a forum for discussion and enabling everyone to broadcast/publish their viewpoints. The salient ideas shared in this paper resonates with ideas for peace shared in Oji (2006).

Although the Nigerian media has been found to publish integrative stories which resonates with the ideas for peace shared in Oji (2006), there are some noteworthy gaps that the country's regulatory media organizations, in particular the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) and the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), must fill in order to prevent the nation from making the same mistakes again. Therefore, it is advised that regulatory agencies concentrate their attention on media organizations as well as individual media practitioners.

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