

IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT MEDIA OWNERSHIP ON THE PROFESSIONALISM OF MEDIA PRACTITIONERS IN EBONYI STATE: A STUDY OF FRCN ABAKALIKI.

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Abstract

This study assessed the impact of government media ownership on the professionalism in media practitioners in Ebonyi State: A study of FRCN Abakaliki. The finding of the study was based on secondary data. From the review of the literature available on the subject, it was discovered that ownership influence is a global phenomenon. The study traced the trajectory of the media influence in Nigeria from the colonial to the fifth republic and discovered that the influence on media practice is as long as the history of media itself. Government; colonial, military, democratic and private media owners wield influence on the media they operate. It was discovered that the owners have used their media platform to suppress the truth, influence the public opinion, denied the dissidents access to the media, peddled false information, settled political scores, character assassination, sacrifice their workforce for relationship and mislead the public. The study recommends as following: Journalist should be given freedom as it demands in the constitution that there should be freedom of the press, Arbitrary influence and control be discouraged, while excellence should be the watchword of the practitioners.

Keywords: Government Impact, Ownership, Professionalism, Media practitioners

INTRODUCTION

Professionalism in the media for some time has been a subject of discussion with different headings; editorial independence, media freedom, to being socially responsible which engender accuracy, objectivity, fairness and balance on the path of journalist in the discharge of their professional responsibilities to the public. Wen (2021) said "the availability and accuracy of information are therefore of utmost importance for the massive public, including voters, investors, consumers, and executives, to make rational decisions on daily matters in modern economies and societies", while the ownership of the media structure determines to a great extent the tune of the subject disseminated to the public.

Mass media are a creation of technology. They have moved on for ages spurred by technology. New media technology herald each age in human history ever since man perfected the art of writing. As creations of technology, mass media have become an integral as well as an indispensable aspect of human society. A society without the mass media is unthinkable. The world owes the mass media great gratitude for making social, worldwide interactions possible. The place of the mass media in modern mass society is easily clear.

Interestingly, most societies have spent huge amount of time and resources to work out effective system for using the mass media. Some societies have, however, left the media at the whims of rulers as they come and go. The mass media will remain a useless lot unless there is an effective system to harness and use them as instruments of social communication. The concern therefore is examining and analyzing patterns of media ownership in Nigeria in a bid to draw useful conclusions. This will help establish a correlation among media ownership, media freedom and professionalism. Media ownership and control have been a matter of debate globally. The influence of the government on media ownership and control has significant implications for press freedom and the ability of the media to hold those in power accountable. This article discusses the impact of government media ownership and control on press freedom, drawing from examples across different countries.

In many countries, the government directly owns and controls media organizations, such as national broadcasters¹ and newspapers. For instance, in China, the government owns and controls all major media organizations, which has led to censorship and restrictions on the reporting of certain topics (Buckley, 2020). Similarly, in Russia, the government controls most of the country's media, which has resulted in limited press freedom and restrictions on the reporting of opposition views (Fisher, 2021). Even in countries where the government does not directly own media organizations, it still exerts significant control over them through regulatory bodies and financial incentives. For instance, in Hungary, the government has been accused of using financial incentives to influence the media. The government has provided advertising revenue to media organizations that support its political agenda, which has led to biased reporting and self-censorship (European Federation of Journalists, 2019).

In addition to financial incentives, the government can also exert control over media organizations through regulatory bodies. In India, for example, the government has established regulatory bodies that oversee the media, which has led to censorship and restrictions on the reporting of certain topics (Bhasin, 2021). Similarly, in Turkey, the government has used regulatory bodies to shut down media organizations that are critical of its policies (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). The influence of government media ownership and control on press freedom cannot be overstated. It leads to a lack of diversity and independent voices in the media, limits the ability of the media to

hold those in power accountable, and restricts the free flow of information. As a result, it is crucial to ensure that media ownership and control are not concentrated in the hands of the government or a few individuals with close ties to the government.

Media ownership in Nigeria started in private hands ever before government got interested in mass-media. Reverend Henry Townsend, an Anglican missionary, established the first newspaper in Nigeria, *Iwe Irohin* in 1859. Other newspapers followed suit to tap the gains of the growing interest in reading and western education. Additionally, the urge for self-government spurred Nigerians to organize mass movements to challenge colonial repression. Mass media appeared as a second tool used to challenge colonialism. In British colonies of the East, West and South Africa, the promise of eventual independence led the people to organize nationalist movements. The growth of these movements led directly to the birth of small newspapers. Therefore, before any media ownership laws were enacted, colonialism and the struggle for self-governance triggered private ownership of the mass media. It is believed that colonialism, Christianity and nationalism worked together in shaping the nature of the media in Nigeria. Early press owners were Christian missionaries.

The British government also went into publishing, though it did not float a full-fledged newspaper. "Part of their communication structure in Nigeria was in form of colonial information handouts. In Southern Nigeria, the colonial administration effectively used its periodical, the *Nigerian Gazette*, which was established in Lagos immediately the government took shape" as from 1900 during which such publication became popular (Braithwaite 2020, p.135). The Gazette was published in bond volumes like weekly or monthly magazines. It was therefore not a conventional publication. While the British government wanted to spread information about its administration with its publication, mercantilist and nationalistic motives propelled the private press. The pungency of the early private press thus earned it the haughty eyes of government. The latter quickly responded with gagging laws. The Newspaper Ordinance of 1903 and the Seditious Offences Ordinance of 1909 were among such early laws. To date, the driving force of private press remains opposition to government misrule, ensuring the accountability and responsibility of government to the people. As such, countless laws of sorts have been churned out to terrify the press in Nigeria, in addition to innumerable cases of assault on pressmen and press freedom. The quest for independence, additionally, led many nationalists like Herbert Macaulay, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, to name a few into establishing papers. Macaulay formed the first party paper, the *Lagos Daily News* in 1925 to champion the cause of his party, the *Nigerian National Democratic Party* (NNDP).

This trend sparked off an era of party papers - the *Daily News*, 1925; *Daily Service*, 1933; and the *West African Pilot*, 1937, were effective party organs. Party papers continued to exist up to the post-independence era. After independence, three regions — North, West and East- had ethnic-based political parties and the private press aligned with the trend. The *Pilot* and the Zik's chain of papers, *the Nigerian Tribune* and *the Nigerian Citizen* became the mouthpieces of the *National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons* (NCNC)- East; the Action Group- West; and *the Northern Peoples Congress* - North respectively. And with the creation of 12 states in 1967, each state established its own newspaper. This practice continued as state creation continued. The newspaper industry in Nigeria has, no doubt, gone through trying times and has become very strong and audacious and has built itself a great name. The reason is that newspapers fought hard to liberate society from the shackles of oppressive leaders. It is believed that newspapers constitute the only potent opposition to government in power in Nigeria.

However, the influence of government press with government support and

monopoly of government information is still noticeable. In 1975, government acquired 60% of the *Daily Times* shares, making the paper reflect the spirit of government in its content. *Daily Times*, formerly a very powerful and influential paper, started to dance to the tune of government. Government extends its influence over some media (especially government media), as well as over the federal ministries and state ministries of information. The audience often alleges that these media organizations and ministries have become government tools of propaganda, and official misinformation and deceit.

Statement of the Problem

It has always been claimed by people in government and private that both government and private owner do not interfere with the activities of the media, yet non-conformity to the policies of the owners have always resulted in the immediate dismissal of journalist from their duties. How true is the observation that the attitudes of those journalist of ten conflict with those of the executives who delegates the job to gather and write news for them the big problem now is how the owners policies influence the performance of the mass media practitioners. Thus, assertion is going to be resolved after proper analysis of the research data to find out the truth.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to determine the influence of government media ownership in professionalism of media practitioner in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to

- i. Determine how media ownership affect the performance of the media practitioners,
- .ii. Ascertain if Private owned media fill the information gap skipped by the government owned media.
- iii. Find out if the policy of a particular media determines the mediums and its practitioner output.
- iv. Know if the interest of government influence the media and its practitioner's style of reporting,

Research Questions

- i. Does ownership affect the performance of the media practitioners?
- ii. Privately owned media fill the < information gap skipped by the, government owned media?
- iii. Does the policy of a particular media determine the mediums and its practitioner output?
- iv. Can the interest of a media influence the medium and its practitioner's style of reporting.

Scope of the Study

There are ethical lights which guide the journalistic enterprise. A good journalist is judged by the extent of his commitment to these ideas of them acting based on their codes. The research will be concerned with FRCN Abakaliki.

Significance of the Study

This study will help government policy makers, radio owners, Journalist and all students conducting

research on the same topic. In the same vein it will be of immense help to the students in Mass Communication department.

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Professionalism

Professionalism is one of the concepts that have brought about a chain of elusive meaning. The word professionalism falls under three meanings firstly, amateur, secondly, the unification by special training, thirdly, a code of conduct giving priority to the interest of the recipient client. Delta as quoted in Odo (2017) mentions three aspects of a profession, expertise, self determination and public recognition. Professionals have rules and regulations guiding them, in every profession there is code of ethics.

However, although the question of whether journalism 'counts' as a profession has been important to the extent it has provided a basis upon which particular rights and privileges have been claimed, recognized and refused, critical perspectives on professionalism have long disputed approaches that simply regard it as an objective and definitive set of qualities that qualify or disqualify occupations as 'professions' (Johnson 1972, Hughes 1963).

Others have recently emphasized both historical and recent attempts of employers to exercise influence over professional education in order to promote instrumentalist training agendas and to de-emphasize, or altogether remove, critical aspects within journalism courses (Reese 2019, Reese and Cohen 2000). Soloski's study of news professionalism also explicitly draws on this critical perspective to identify journalistic objectivity as an effective 'transorganisational control mechanism' (2017) that works in tandem with the editorial system as a mechanism for ensuring that journalists operate in a disciplined and relatively standardized fashion. As journalism's 'most important professional norm', objectivity displaces journalists' responsibility for what they report onto procedures of gathering 'facts' and presenting 'fair and balanced'¹ reports, leads them to develop collective assumptions about what is socially 'normal', and supports a routine reliance on centers of political and institutional power as these are drawn upon to support the 'authoritative' credentials of the professional journalist. Similarly, Michael Schussing has developed an historical analysis of objectivity that incorporates both a Durkheimian perspective on its adoption as an occupational norm, and a Weberian perspective on its instrumental use by employers as a mechanism to exercise control over employees, both of which are implicated in the gradual 'professionalization of American journalism' (2001).

A related perspective on journalism's historical 'professionalization' in the US informs Daniel Hallin's (2000) claim that professionalism now appears to be in decline. Hallin quotes the 1947 Hutchins Commission of Freedom of the Press call for the press to 'look on itself as performing a public service of a professional kind' (2000), and suggests that rather than a watershed, this was consistent with a trend toward an ethos of 'public service'¹ and 'social responsibility' across various sectors: The professionalization of journalism was part of a general trend, beginning in the Progressive Era, away from Partisan politics as a basis for public life, and towards conceptions of administrative rationality and neutral expertise. The journalist was supposed to serve the public as a whole, and not 'particular interests, whether the partisan causes journalists had championed in the nineteenth century, or the narrow commercial interests of advertisers and owners.

Hallin (2000) With hindsight, Hallin argues, this period of 'professionalization'¹ may be seen as a brief period of 'high modernism'¹ that, though perhaps not entirely displaced, today merely maintains a

residual influence over the field of journalism. This decline of professionalism, he suggests, has occurred as a result of a combination of transformations within media industries and broader processes of political and cultural change that have each served to undermine the structural conditions upon which it rested. In the case of the former, an intensified competition, the relaxation of broadcast regulation, and a blurring of formal lines of separation between business and editorial roles within media organizations are cited as key influences that have coincided with, and contributed to, the merging of news and entertainment. Here, Hallin also cites the effect of identity politics and its progressive critique of claims to speak from either an 'objective' or consensual position, alongside the emergence of widespread distrust in centers of political authority. While largely pessimistic about the trends he describes, Hallin is careful to avoid an uncritical nostalgia, and explicitly points toward the many inequities and shortcomings of this 'high modern'¹ tradition.

Is it justified, however, to regard such trends as a decline of professionalism itself? To answer this, we must return to the question of what 'professionalism' is. If professionalism is not a fixed set of attributes but a basis of social identity that forms a site of social struggle, then claims that an historical 'professionalization' of journalism occurred appear well founded. However, it follows from this approach that what 'professionalization' represents is *not* the establishment of a 'profession' with definitive qualities, but rather the mobilization of both particular claims regarding the professional status of journalism itself (or, at least, some areas of it) and the deployment of particular techniques to promote 'professionalism'. The question of whether professionalism in journalism is in decline, in this sense, cannot be equated to the question of whether a previously accepted definition of professionalism is no longer widely held. Rather, we must ask whether, 'today, there are fewer agents who seek to mobilise discourses of professionalism, and fewer mechanisms through which forms of professional identity are promoted.

Government Influence on Media and Its Control

The relationship between the government and the media has been a contentious issue for many years. Governments have historically sought to control the flow of information to their citizens, often using the media as a tool to disseminate their own views and suppress dissenting opinions. This essay explores whether government influences the media and its level of control with a view to examining its effect on the news reportage because, as the saying goes, he who pays the piper dictates the tune. Governments around the world have historically used a variety of tactics to control the media, from censorship to propaganda. In many cases, this has resulted in a lack of freedom of speech and the suppression of dissenting voices. For example, in China, the government tightly controls the media through a combination of censorship, self-censorship, and propaganda. As a result, the Chinese media is largely controlled by the government and serves as a tool for the ruling party to disseminate their views to the public (Hong, 2016).

In other countries, governments have sought to control the media through direct ownership or financial incentives. For example, in Russia, the government owns or controls many of the country's major media outlets. As a result, these outlets often report news in a way that is favorable to the government, while ignoring or suppressing dissenting views (Freedom House, 2021). Even in countries with a long tradition of press freedom, governments have sought to control the media through financial incentives. For example, in the United States, politicians often use their influence to shape news coverage in their favor. This is often done by rewarding friendly journalists with exclusive access to government officials or providing financial incentives to news outlets that report news in a favorable way (Lichtenberg, 2018).

The effect of government influence on media and its control is clear. By controlling the flow of information to their citizens, governments are able to shape public opinion and suppress dissenting voices. This, in turn, can have a profound effect on the democratic process, as citizens are unable to make informed decisions about their government and its policies.

Government surrenders

Protracted economic constraints over the years led to government's inability to continue funding broadcasting. As a result, government, first, allowed commercialization of both radio and television services.' This helped the financial situation of the stations especially for those operating in large commercial centres such as Lagos, Ibadan, Jos, Kano, Enugu and Port Harcourt. But although some of these stations were able to raise up to 70 percent of their annual operating cost, commercialization harshly affected programming and public service broadcasting -programmes of sorts came on air.

By the early 80s, it became clear that government failed completely in the trusteeship (paternalistic) rule of managing broadcasting media in public interest. As Agbe (1994) puts it: government monopoly became "a major constraint to the rapid 'development of the nation's media and democratization process". Politicians used the media at their whims. Members of the audience, disenchanted as they were, turned to foreign stations for succour. Added to the fast changing media climate worldwide (the trend towards free market), government came under intense pressure to privatize broadcasting. Furthermore, political developments in Nigeria had posed serious challenges to Decree 24 of 1976 and Decree 8 of 1979, that vested broadcasting on NTA and FRCN. When the military government of then Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo that centralized radio and television handed power to a civilian government in 1979, it became clear that the situation must be reversed to achieve harmony.

The 1979 elections made the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) the ruling party. NPN had seven states out of the then nineteen. The other twelve states shared by the other four political parties, could not have their programmes and policies spread through the electronic media. The Senate as a result introduced broadcasting into the concurrent legislative list of the 1979 constitution. Consequently, the twelve states in opposition applied for allocation of UltraHigh Frequency (UHF) channels for TV broadcasting. As from then, the federal-controlled NTA stations existed side-by-side with state-owned TV stations in such states.

Next, government chose to privatize broadcasting to allow individuals to own broadcast media as profit making venture and this has, to a reasonable extent, resuscitated quality programming, responsibility and professionalism. Privatization as achieved in 1992 via Decree 38 (as amended in Decree 55 of 2019), also led to the creation of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to regulate the broadcast industry (both Decrees are now Acts 38 and 55). The federal government through broadcast privatization dumped its paternalistic model of orientation, wherein the airwaves are seen as public property that must be managed by government on behalf of the people.

By 2017, NBC had licensed nine independent private television stations, two private radio stations, two direct broadcast satellite and 40 re-transmission stations. There were 262 government-owned broadcast stations as at 2003, comprising federal, radio and television as well as state-owned broadcast stations. They are grouped as follows: Voice of Nigeria, (VON) 1; NTA, including satellite outfits, 135; FRCN national stations, 8; FRCN FM stations,37; State Broadcasting Corporations (radio & TV, including Aso FM, Abuja)-81; Udejah, (2014), reveals that as at 2003, there were 88 pulsating

broadcast organizations that are privately owned. Of these, 84 are private transmitting and re-transmitting institutions in Nigeria's electronic web. Four of these are specialized stations, namely, Atlantic FM, French; Brilla FM, Sports Spectrum FM, News; and UNILAG FM, Academic. The aforesaid 84 private stations comprise 14 Private Terrestrial TV (PTTV); 8 Private Terrestrial Radio (PTR); 2 private satellites - Global Transmission (PSGTx) ;60 Private Cable Satellite Re-Transmission Stations (including sub-stations). Added to the 262 stations earlier noted, the number of broadcast organizations in Nigeria comes to 350 as at 2003 (both federal, state and private).

Implications of ownership structures on media professionalism

The foregoing shows that the nature of media ownership in Nigeria is principally dual- there is private ownership and government (public) ownership. The mixed ownership (government and individuals managing one media firm) is at best, not pronounced. However, government is unwilling to let go of its characteristic dominance of the media. Government exerts choking control by the regulation of both the private and public broadcast media. Laws are readily churned out to gag the press. Nwachukwu (2018, p.46) writes: "these pernicious laws and decrees against the media gave government officials legal backing to persecute, fine, detain, and imprison journalists, and to proscribe media houses".

Aside from government control of the media through laws, Uche (2019, p.32) adds that government uses certain preferential treatment to "buy" the most influential journalists in the media to top posts within the government. When Tony Iredia became "notorious", or is it popular, with his "Point Blank" on NTA network, asking his guest (who were mostly government officials) fiery questions, the federal government quickly responded by first appointing him Director-General of the National Orientation Agency and the Director-General of NTA. That ended its knack for asking too many hard questions. Nwachukwu writes further' that in .addition, regulatory bodies set up by government can be a source of negative or positive control of the media. Where there are defects or loopholes in the Decree that set up such regulatory" bodies, this can be for repressing freedom of expression. It is thought that government may intentionally leave loopholes to exploit in silencing any opposition. It is widely believed that one pitfall in the Decree that set up the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is the power given to the commission to revoke the licence of stations which do not operate in accordance with the code and in the public interest. The Decree did not specify either how to seek redress or to what the public interest is as in the American Federal Communication. The decree (now Act 38) allows the NBC to provide licence in perpetuity only to withdraw them at whim!

In October 2005, the premises of African Independent Television, AIT, was arbitrarily sealed off for over 24 hours by NBC officials, who alleged that AIT unethically beamed gory visual signals from the crash site of the Bellview plane. But, in fact, prior to AIT's intervention, Nigerians, and indeed the families of victims of the crash, had waited in vain for three days to see if any Nigerian station or government agency could locate and report the crash. In May 2006, the federal government cancelled the network licence of AIT and gave the media house a 21-day ultimatum to dismantle its transmitters and relocate its operational from Asokoro, Abuja, Nigeria. According to Aziken and Ayodele (2006, p. 15): 'Noting the increasing intimidation of opponents of the third term proposal, Senator [Uche] Chukwumerije said: this is first harassment and intimidation of a major TV station, AIT, solely on the ground that it is performing its constitutional duty of remaining dispassionate and professional - in its coverage of all activities pertaining to the on-going third term controversy.' The 'sin' of AIT was that it beamed live coverage of the House of Representatives' debate on the third term agenda. Government must have been irked because proceedings from the debate on May 9, 2006

revealed that more members opposed third term (on day one (May 9), 18 members were against, while 11 were in support).

Still on AIT, Akunna and Nweze (2006, p.1) write: What could be described as a renewed clampdown on the media over President Olusegun Obasanjo 's ailing third term ambition came to the fore yesterday [May 14, 2006] when State Security Service (SSS) operatives raided the Asokoro, Abuja station of African Independent Television (AIT), ordering the stoppage of a documentary on tenure elongation. The security operatives who raided the station yesterday afternoon were said to have carted away a master tape of the documentary after stopping its transmission. AIT was trying to portray the history of efforts at tenure elongation in Nigeriain a documentary which succeeded in showing the faces of a set of incurable sycophants, who, many times across regimes, always tried to goadincumbent rulers into tenure elongation.

The result of government's hostile stance is that the media are forced to remain government stooges, especially government media. Even the private press finds itself in the same trouble when owners have political interest. Such owners may force their workers to do the wish of government to curry political favour from government. In 1992, Moshood Abiola asked his editor (of Concord newspaper), Bayo Onanuga, to tender an apology to president Ibrahim Babagida, (over a publication) as he then was. The editor refused, however, choosing to resign, alongside three others. Abiola later apologized to Babangida.

External forces

Private broadcasting, nay national media systems, are also prone to the manipulation of the global media giants and the global capitalist system. The IMF and World Bank (key global players in capitalism) were part of the factors that led to broadcast liberalization in Nigeria. The two bodies had coaxed the Nigerian federal government into liberalizing broadcasting if it (federal government) would continue obtaining loans. The IMF has a way of supporting the interest of capitalism and the global capitalist media. Clearly, global trends in political pluralism and international market economy are spurring interest in decentralization of trade including broadcast communication.

This is the newest world order championed by Western Industrialized countries of Europe and North America. This has been called the doctrine of free private enterprise or the *liberal model*. Liberalization will allow foreign interest opportunity to sponsor the establishment of local private media organization and thereby open doors for unrestrained ferrying of culturally unsuitable foreign programmes into Nigeria. A lot of literature and research have been done on the development implications of cultural invasion of, and media imperialism in Africa as a whole. See Ukonu (2008): *Perspectives in international communication and global media system*.

Worse, private cable/satellite stations are often affiliates of foreign stations and their contents jump national boundaries straight into homes. "The rise of cable and satellite channels has radically changed the face of the broadcast industry, opening up national markets to scores of new channels arid revenue streams" McChesney (2018). The rise of the global media system is closely connected to the global capitalist economy. The global media system is the direct result of a sort of 'neoliberal' deregulatory policies and agreements that have helped to form global markets for goods and services.

The emerging global communication system thus rubbishes the pride of national systems. Mergers, cross ventures and the web of ownership structures make the global media system more of a cartel

and oligopolistic market than a competitive enterprise. The system, therefore, works against the very essence of free enterprise and democracy which it purports to uphold. New media firms (that may have opposing ideology) cannot enter the market since they can not thrive alone. National systems must be linked to the global giants like the *Time Warner/AOL* group, *Sony*, *Bertelsmann*, etc, before they have access to the global market. And national systems may be losing control over their own cultural identity. The WTO in 2017 ruled that Canada could not prohibit Time Warner's sports illustrated from distributing a Canadian edition of the Magazine. A High Court in Australia ruled against the legality of the Australian domestic media, content quotas in April, 2018, maintaining that international treaty obligations supercede the national cultural objectives in the broadcasting Act (McChesney, 2018).

Globalization pressures though seem to make it imperative that nations must trade in the international media marketplace. Yet, it is important to protect local media and cultural industries. "Nations ranging from Norway, Denmark and Spain to Mexico, South Africa and South Korea for example have government subsidies to keep alive their domestic film production industry" (McChesney, 2018).

Theoretical Frame Work

The study uses Social responsibility theory

The theory was propounded by Siebert, Peterson and Scramm in their book theories of the press in 1956. The normative theories are: authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and soviet communist (Suresh, 2003). The social responsibility theory of the press as developed in America in the 20th century charges the press to inform, entertain, and uphold the truth. Just anyone, who has anything to say must be given a hearing via uninhibited access to the media. Control of the media is not expected to rest with media owners or operatives. Rather, public opinion, consumer actions and professional ethics are expected to regulate the activities of the media. In short, the press bears a social responsibility to the society.

To the extent that this does not hurt profit, the entrepreneur (owner) is pleased. His interests and those of his elite class are often well represented and presented by the media. Alternative views, as represented by the masses are often either ignored or given just a passing mention. Here comes the role of the operative. It must get the press to perform its social responsibility functions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The design used for this study is survey research design. Survey design techniques are used to gather contemporary data either by direct measurement or by solution from others. According to Ogili (2005). Survey is a form of descriptive research that studies both large and small population for the study. It studies a group of people, considered to be representative of the entire group. The research instrument employed in this study were questionnaires which were used in preference to other survey techniques.

Area of Study

The study area is specifically based on Abakaliki metropolis, Ebonyi State where media stations are mostly located in Ebonyi.

Population of the Study

Population of the study according to Ogili (2005) involves a group of persons or aggregate items, things the researcher is interested in getting information from the study". The population of

the study is the journalist of Federal Radio Cooperation Ebonyi State. The population is made up of the entire journalist in FRCN, with the total number of 450.

Sample Size

A sample is a representative of the whole population. Osuala (1982). Sampling is taken to be any proportion of a population as a representative of that population. Ogili (2005) defines sample as the actual number of or part of the study of population that is objectively selected for the purpose. Sampling is necessary because the entire population cannot be studied as it may be too large and cannot be controlled.

Sampling Techniques

The sampling technique adopted for this study is simple random sampling technique which gives every member of the population the chance of selection. The researcher also used purposive sampling technique in the study to get the actually size that was studied. The sample size of this study 140 randomly selected from the 450 journalists in FRCN and this Journalist were Purposively selected.'

Description of Research Instrument

A total number of twenty (20) items drawn and administered to the respondents. They were divided into two section, section A contained item in on the demography of respondent and section B answered the research question. Item 1-5 answered questions on the demography of the respondents. Items 8-14 answered research question one Items 15-17 answered research question two Items 18-19 answered research question three Item 20 was used to find out if there are unions that protect journalist.

Validity of Instrument

After construction and critical study of the questionnaire. It was passed to the researcher's supervisor for proper modifications of aspect of the questionnaire.

Reliability of the Instrument

For the objective of this study, test and test method were used to test the reliability of the data collectively, questions were given to the respondents and after a week the same questions were given to the same respondents. The first set of questionnaire was served to their respondents were marked „X" while the second set of the questionnaire were marked „Y". The correlation between these two answers were determined by using co-efficient correlation to arrive at the degree of liability of two set answers from the selection.

Method of Data Collection

Data was collected using the questionnaire which the researcher administered face to face to the respondents. Out of 140 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, 120 copies were retrieved. This represented a response rate of 85.7%.

Method of Data Analysis

In analyzing the data collected tables and responses were grouped and their percentage was calculated. Research questions were answered and analyzed using responses from respondents.

Data Analysis presentation

Analysis of Demographic Data

The number of questionnaire sent out and the number of questionnaire returned.

Variables	<u>No of Respondents</u>	Percentage
Questionnaire filled and returned	12	79%
Questionnaire not returned	0	21%
Total	20	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The table above shows that out of 140 copies of questionnaire structured and distributed, 120 (85%) of the returned questionnaire while 20 (15%) copies of questionnaire not returned. The analysis is now based on 120 respondents view on the influence of government media ownership on the professionalism in media practice in Nigeria.

Question 1: What is your sex?

Table 1: Response to question 1

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Male'	60	50%
Female	60	50%
Total	120	100
	0	%

Source: Field survey 2021

The above table shows that 60 respondents representing 50 are males and 60 respondents representing 50 are females.'

Question 2: Age bracket

Table 2: Response to question 2

Response	Frequency	Percentage
18-20	40	33.3%
21-30	30	25%
31 and above	50	41.7
Total	120	100%

Source: Field survey 2021

The above table indicated that 40 respondents representing 33% were between the age of 18-20years, 30 respondents representing 25% are between the age of 21 - 30, 50 or

41.7% were between the age of 31 and above.

Question 3: What is your educational qualification?

Table 3: Response to question 3

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
O'level	20	16.7%
OND/GCE/NCE	30	25%
B.Sc.	40	33.3%
M.Sc.	25	20.8%
Ph.D	5	4.2%
Total	120	100%

Source: Field survey 2021

The table above shows that 20 respondents, represents 6.7% are „O" level holders, 30 or 25% are OND/GCE/NCE holders, 40 or 33.3% are B.Sc. holders, 25 or 20.8% are M.Sc. holders,5 respondents representing 4.2% are PhD holders.

Question 4: What is your marital status?

Table 4: Response to question 4

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Single	70	58.3%
Married	50	41.7%
Total	120	100%

Source: Field survey 2021

The table above indicates that 70 respondents representing 58.3% are single, 50 respondents representing 41.7% are married.

Question 5: Does Government influence media ownership in journalism practices?

Table 5: Response to question 5

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	17	14.2%
Agree	13	10.8%
No idea	9	7.5%

Strongly disagree	60	50%
Disagree	21	17.5%
Total	120	100%

Source: Field of survey 2021

From the table above 17 or 14.2% strongly disagree that government have cordial relationship with journalist, 13 or 10.8% agree, 9 or 7% had no idea, 60 or 50% strongly Disagree that government have cordial relationship 21 or and journalist 17.5%

Question 6: In which area of n you practicing?

Table 6: Response to question

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	40	33.3%
Television	30	25%
Freelancer	10	8.3%
Newspaper	20	16.7%
Magazine	20	16.7%
Total	120	100%

Source: Field survey 2021

The table above shows that 40 respondents, representing 33.3% practice in radio stations, 30 respondents, representing 25% practice in Television stations, 10 respondents representing 8.3% are freelancers, 20 respondents, representing 16.7% practice in newspaper house, 20 respondents representing 16.7% practice in magazine house.

Question 7: Does government influence media ownership in journalism practice?

Table 7: Response to question 7

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	17	14.2%

Agree	13	10.8%
No idea	9	7.5%
Strongly disagree	21	17.5%
Disagree	60	50%
Total	120	100%

Source: Field of survey 2021

From the table above 17 or 14.2% strongly disagree that government influence media ownership in journalism practice, 13 or 10.8% agree, 9 or 7% had no idea, 21 or 17.5% strongly disagree that government and journalist have cordial relationship 60 or 50% disagree.

Question 8: Government influences its Practitioners style of reporting?

Table 8: Response to question 8

Response	Frequency	Percentages %
Strongly agree	70	58.3%
Agree	20	16.7%
No idea	2	1.7%
Strongly disagree-	10	8.3%
Disagree	18	15%
Total	120	100%

Source: Field of survey 2021

The above table showed that 70 respondents, representing 58.3% strongly agree that Government influences its Practitioners style of reporting, 20 or 16.7% agree, 2 or 1.7% said no idea, 10 or 8.3% strongly disagree that there are solutions to the constraints, 18 or 15% disagreed.

Summary of Findings

The study was focused on the influence of government media ownership in professionalism of media practitioners in Nigeria, journalism has their constraints as they practice anywhere, either in a radio or television house. Literatures were reviewed. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The design was considered most relevant because it gives the researcher a chance to make references and generalization of the population by studying the sample size obtained from the study. The selection was carried out through the simple random sampling technique. The main instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire designed by the researcher with the help of the supervisor and personal interview, journalist working with them or for them. The result of the analysis indicated that radio owners put constraints on professional journalist and these makes the journalist not to do their job or perform their duties.

Conclusion

Government Media Ownership have significant implications for press freedom and the ability of the media to hold those in power accountable. Direct ownership and control of media organizations, financial incentives, and regulatory bodies are some of the ways in which governments exert control over the media. It is crucial to ensure that media ownership and control are diverse and independent to guarantee press freedom and the free flow of information.

Government influence on media and its control has a huge effect on news reportage because, as the saying goes, he who, pays the piper dictates the tune. Governments around the world have historically used a variety of tactics to control the media, from censorship to propaganda.

As a result of the scenario painted above, one commentator offers this explanation: although private stations have strong points, they have been found wanting in a number of areas, especially in broadcasting violent films and ambitious miracle cure claims by pastors during religious broadcasts. The NBC however has always come up with regulations that could be interpreted to be aimed at killing investment spirit in private broadcasting. Asking private broadcasters to pay 20million license and survey in Lagos does not encourage investments in that regard. Though the fee lasts five years before it is renewed, there is no guarantee that it would not be increased again after five years. And this is worsened by the fact that public stations most times sustained with public funds are not made to operate under such stifling conditions (via www.nbc.nig.org/contact.htm).

Rodney (2005) says that experts are of the view that the stature of licencing and registration fees is "destroying deregulated broadcasting business and pushing private owners out of businesses. Government uses its huge network monopoly to tamper with the growth of broadcasting standards and values, prevent market forces from putting broadcasting with highest and best use -profit maximization according to free market demands".

Government should begin to show impartiality by making both NTA and FRCN real commercial enterprises or run them as true public chartered corporations, which are not under direct influence of government. If the stations are to be run totally with public funds, they should be out of the advertising market, or have a percentage of advertisements they can take, perhaps, government advertisements aimed at protecting the image of Nigeria. Therefore, government should cease massive budgetary allocations to NTA and FRCN and run them like real business enterprises or like authentic public service stations.

Recommendations

Recommendations Having x-rayed the events and incidents of arbitrary influence on the media in Nigeria and the review of the empirical studies that confirmed that ownership influence is a global phenomenon, the researcher recommends as following:

1. Journalist should be given freedom as it demands in the constitution that there should be freedom of the press.
2. Government should begin to show impartiality by making both NTA and FRCN real commercial enterprises or run them as true public chartered corporations, which are not under direct influence of government.
3. Arbitrary influence and control be discouraged, while excellence should be –the watchword of the practitioners.

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