

The Impact of Mass Media on Political Mobilization Process in Plateau State Radio Television Corporation, Jos (PRTVC), Nigeria

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Abstract. The aim of this study is to identify the impact of Mass Media in the Political mobilization process. The study was restricted to Jos city and its environs due to some unavoidable factors. Through personal contacts with the staff of Plateau State Radio Television Corporation Jos (PRTVC), questionnaire administration, documented materials, books, journals, newspapers, seminars and direct observation, the researcher was able to carry out this study. Also, the objective of the study was to determine the level interference of government in the activities of mass media affects the political mobilization process. The population consists of all the staff of Plateau Radio Television Corporation Jos (PRTVC) who answered the simple designed choice and opened questionnaires. The sample size of 196 employees of Plateau Radio Television Corporation Jos was used to gather relevant information for analysis. The researcher used frequency and percentage as a statistical tool of analysis to analyze all data collected. The study established that without a vibrant press and free flow of information, government cannot fully function to its full potentials. It also revealed that freedom of the press is vital to the growth of Nigerians democracy. The research thus recommends that in order to ensure, efficient and unbiased political mobilization by the mass media, there Should be total autonomy, which will in turn ensure a free and independent press.

Keywords: Impact, Mass Media, Political, Mobilization, Radio and Television.

1. Introduction

Politics in democratic states across the world have become standard and acceptable procedure for democratic leadership and constitutional governance (Jendele, 2011 & McChesney, 2015). During this time, voters democratically elect their preferred leaders who, in return, serve them for a specified

period of time depending on the constitutional term limit in their respective countries.

Following the promulgation of Nigerian Constitution 1999, the country, like most other African nations, pegged her constitutional limit for a political elected office such president, senators, house of representatives both federal and state level, local government chairman counselors etc. to go for two terms of 4 years each. During elections, those gunning for political office engage in campaigns, and use various strategies to mobilize their electorates into casting the ballot in their favor. And as such, elections are given a lot of attention the world over, attracting massive expenditure of financial resources on political advertisement. For instance, national elections in the United States of America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK), have continued to attract global attention given their global geo-political influence (Fourie, 2013).

In Nigeria 2004, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 political campaigns, presidential candidates went out full throttle to mobilize voters, leaving nothing to chance. They deployed various strategies to persuade voters to cast the ballot in their favor, during the highly competitive political campaigns.

Massive use of political advertisement in television, radio, social media, posters, billboards, cars and aircraft paintings was done to mobilize and inform voters on various contenders for different public offices. Cognizant of the important role of the mass media in electoral processes, the contest saw political contenders deploy massive resources to sell their agenda and manifestos through news, political talk-shows or advertisements in mass media (IEBC, 2012).

Extensive use of mass media as an effective communication tool is evident during political

campaigns period worldwide. It stands out as a political mobilization medium in different countries. Its coverage, diversity and change with social context have made it a social mobilization tool. Television, radio, newspapers, posters are among different forms of mass media that are mostly used in political mobilization during the election period worldwide (Akpor, 2013; Jendele, 2011; Ngugi, 2014).

Politicians have adopted political advertising as a form of wooing their supporters. Political advertisement is done in return for supporting or opposing a candidate for election to the public office (Edegoh et al.2013). While television is the medium of choice by politicians in the developed world, radio is dominantly used in many developing countries (McChesney, 2015; Myers, 2008). This is largely because of reach.

In Africa, for example, over 80% of its population listen to radio because of its geographical distribution, cost effectiveness, portability and communal living pattern (Myers, 2008).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The history of elections in Nigeria generally has afforded us the golden opportunity of assessment of the divergent roles of the mass media in Nigeria political process within the framework of our national political goal. The issue and question of education, information, mobilization and monitoring has become a very crucial factor in the realization of the national objectives in the context of the political process. This is as a result of the ugly incidences of various forms of electoral malpractices which have repeatedly threatened the possibility of credible elections and national integration in Nigeria. Though the issue at stake is the responsibility of all stakeholders in the body politic, there is however, a rationale in assigning this responsibility as a primary concern of the mass media on the ground of professional competence as the fourth estate of the realm.

It has therefore, become very important to assess the roles of the mass media in the political mobilization. Iredia (2007) the former Director General of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), states the problem in this regard very clearly that, the people must be assisted to premise their choices of rationality and vote wisely during elections. They must have all information that is needed to elect the right candidates who can ensure good governance. Where such public awareness is lacking, those of us in the media must accept a share of the blame of failed elections in Nigeria. This paper presumes an

understanding the role of mass media in political mobilization process.

1.3 Objective of the Study

To determine the level interference of government in the activities of mass media affects the political mobilization process.

1.4 Research Question

Does the interference of government in the activities of mass media affects the political mobilization process?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Mass Media and Political Mobilization

The report by Political Bureau (1987) noted that all along human history, there were points where a massive effort was engineered to bring people together to achieve some set objectives. The report further conceptualized political mobilization as an increase the level of awareness, of a people, to specific set objectives intending to achieving those objectives (Political Bureau 2012). Mustapha (2016) conceptualization of political mobilization to mean simultaneous engagement of large masses of people in activities that have a predominantly social or collective objective in the same vein, political mobilization is opined as change in the attitudes, values, and expectation of people from those associated with the traditional word it is a consequence of literacy, education, increased communication, mass media exposure and urbanization' (Huntington, 2015), and more recently it is the consequence of social media. Hence, from the foregoing political mobilization encapsulates the sensitization of the citizenry, increase and improvements in their political consciousness to effect change in a political process. It is the ability to emotionally organize people, which in the process breeds organic solidarity towards a course of action.

Enemaku (2013) stated that, the role of the media in any democratic process cannot be downplayed. Journalists are the trustees of the public trust in any sustainable democracy. Information is power. Information is an accelerator for any meaningful development and it is adequate information that can propel or bring about sustainable democracy.

In view of this, the mass media should be taken seriously. Many studies have concluded that the instruments of mass communication are useful

vehicles with the potential to bring about social change and, consequently development in societies where they exist.

2.2 Role of the Mass Media in Political Mobilization

It is an acknowledged fact that the mass media has a very important role to play in channeling political mobilization to serve the goal of national development. This is because the mass media is described as “a pivot of social interaction, seeking to use the power of mass information to solve the problem of national cohesion and integration, which are both critical to the growth of healthy political mobilization” (Agba: 2013). Becker, S. and Lower, E (2010) name the functions of the mass media in political mobilization as “reporting and interpreting events, defining issues, portraying personalities, and investigating support”. But the 2015 political campaign did not live up to the expected standard. The mobilization was characterized by misuse of the media by political parties and their candidates through the publication or mass of unwholesome information passed to the public as the truth. The mass media lent themselves to most of the negative factors in Nigerian politics and became partisan. Most mass media organizations aligned with one politician, political party or one region against another. They acted as the mouthpiece of some of the political parties they are aligned with. This posture did not give room for objectivity, fairness and justice in the discharge of their responsibilities to the public.

Edogbo (2016) traces this act to media ownership structure and the owner’s relationship with the political system. It is widely believed that most media owners with political interests prevent their media outfits from adhering to the fundamental principles of balance, fairness and objectivity.

This level of unprofessionalism is detrimental to the growth of a healthy political culture in the country. Agba (2013) is of the view that the mass media should internalize the concept of public interest in the discharge of their functions in any electoral process. In this regard, the mass media is expected to set the pace for a healthy electoral process and also ensure they are guided by public interest. The media can achieve this by directing the goals of political campaign to the desirable goal of responsible democratic principles that recognize the sovereignty of the people’s votes. Nwaozuzu (2010) advises the media to seek out relevant truths in political mobilization for the people who cannot witness or comprehend the events that affect them. This means the media should interpret campaigns in the light of

the electoral needs of the people. It is also incumbent on the media to channel the electoral process towards the desirable goal of national development. Buttressing this point, Kalu (2017) posits that “the ordinary expectation is that the mass media will focus on serious matters that portend serious consequences for the people and their political choices”.

Ciroma, A. (2015) submits that the media through their commentaries, editorials, articles, reviews, columns, mass discussion forums, should raise and answer pertinent questions that help to elucidate confusing issues, particularly those relating to policies and leadership. Critics have singled out the mass media for their failure to measure up to the expected standard during the 2015 political mobilization despite having the greatest power of influence when compared with other media. The television, for instance combines images and voice while the radio transmits to every community in the country and is therefore easily accessible by every family irrespective of their socio-economic status.

Adaba, (2015) posits that the mass media must be in the vanguard for the promotion of peace for progress and development. “The mass media has an immeasurable role to play in this. Though a lot of harm and hurt feelings have been engendered by various mass segments, this ‘half time’ is auspicious for us to mend fences and resolve to be better, fairer and more professional in the second half. If we preach hate, we shall reap hate and destruction. If we preach love and peace, we shall reap same. Let us endeavor to preach the latter with our media for the good of this nation and its wonderful people. Nigeria needs peace for progress and development.

Section 22 of the Constitution provides that “the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people”. This implies freedom for the mass media to transmit information but such freedom should come with responsibility. Unfortunately, the mass media, particularly the mass media, threw caution to the wind during the 2015 political mobilization by allowing themselves to be compromised by desperate politicians and political parties rather than making them answerable to the electorate. The political gladiators went beyond stipulated and acceptable norms and practices, casting aspersion on political opponents beyond the realm of decency with the active support of the mass media, especially the mass media. The media became highly partisan in their mass, which is against the code of professional practice (Adaba, 2015).

Emmanuel Onwubiko, (2015) state that, during political mobilization in Nigeria, political parties are usually in hot pursuit of prime time on the air waves and this puts a lot of pressure on massing stations, which cannot operate beyond 24 hours in a day, unlike the print media which can easily increase pagination to accommodate pressure of space. Yet the mass media is still expected to be fair to all. In order to address this challenge, the Nigeria Massing Commission (NBC), a body statutorily responsible for monitoring operations of electronic media institutions, introduced what it called “Nigeria Massing Code”, stipulating the standards for public mass

The Nigeria Massing Code in article 3.3.3 states that “all sides to any issue of public interest shall be equitably presented to ensure fairness”. What has become a source of worry to media observers is that the parties and their candidates, despite the directives by NBC, engaged in the use of foul language, abusive words, and inciting, provocative and highly divisive comments during live mass of their campaign rallies in some of the nation’s mass stations. The NBC, as the regulator of the nation’s massing industry had in May 2014 directed TV stations nationwide to notify the commission in writing at least 48 hours before live-transmission of any political programme. It stated that authorities were worried that the contents of political programmes were threatening Nigeria’s unity and peace ahead of the 2015 general political. It maintained that its directive was due to “rampant violation” of section 1.5.1 of the Nigeria Massing Code, which requires massers to submit quarterly programme schedules at least a week before the beginning of each quarter (Emmanuel Onwubiko, 2015).

Emmanuel Onwubiko, (2015) also said that, for the mass media to play positive role in political mobilization, the following points should be noted:

- The true test of their success is the quality of their contribution to entrenching a culture of accountability, transparency, good governance, and ultimately, the entrenchment of a true and virile democratic culture.
- An enlightened electorate is an asset to democracy. Voter education is an important element that guarantees the success of electoral process and the mass media must be seen to be doing this. In many parts of Nigeria today, people still exhibit apathy towards political, mostly because they do not understand why they must participate in such exercise, and perhaps because they do not know their rights as citizens.

- Introduction of Communication-Education- in order to offset the influence of those who use the mass media to fool, deceive and manipulate the public, our government could consider the introduction of communication education into our secondary school curriculum. Such courses should be designed to serve as a defense against political deceit or manipulation.
- It is the role of the mass media to educate, investigate and keep members of the public informed. In carrying out this function, objectivity in reporting should be the fulcrum of its master piece. It should be noted that because of the strategic role of the media in any society, the media can be dysfunctional.
- The press as a major factor in this direction should take the issue of national unity and security with importance and fight to sustain Nigeria’s corporate existence. Journalists should cross check their facts and figures. There should be difference between national interest and economic interest. Making profit at the expense of the unity of the nation should be shunned by all.

The study also recommends that for the mass media to exert influence on voters’ decision, they should exhibit fairness, balance, equal opportunity and access in their coverage of political mobilization of all political parties and candidates.

2.3 Citizens’ Mobilization and Participation

Mobilization could be seen as the process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce other people to participate in politics to win elections, to pass bills, and to influence policies (Strandberg 2016). Political organizations may contact people and provide a specific opportunity for political action. In most instances, mobilization is a key prerequisite before any participation can occur. Political mobilization can further be defined as the way in which citizens organize people to put pressure on the political representatives. Thus it could be any sort of movement which in the end results in a change of policy, for example when a newspaper writes about malfunctioning within a government, a lot of people read it, and it gets picked up by the politicians who will start working with it, and in the end are able to change the government’s composition. It could be actions such as signing a petition to bring about change in public policy on issues.

Marc, et al (2010) asserts that mobilization is an important precondition for most forms of political

participation and engagement. Potential participants have to be informed and recruited before they can participate. In fact, mobilization and recruitment processes are essential preconditions before citizens can become engaged in any form of civic or electioneering action. In recent years, these mobilization processes have been transformed rapidly from direct to an indirect process. Instead of relying on face-to-face contacts or print media, mobilization agents increasingly have adopted new electronic media and the Internet to reach out to potential participants.

Katerina (2010) distinguishes between the direct and indirect types of mobilization. Direct mobilization includes canvassing on the streets, TV campaigning, direct mails and phone calls. Indirect mobilization takes place through social networks individuals are subscribed to. Citizens are indirectly mobilized by their family members, playmates from their football team or in the church or mosques they belong to. Involvement in social networks implies that a particular person is available and that he or she is reachable for the request for participation. Indirect mobilization occurs when political leaders contact citizens through social media/networks of friends, neighbors and colleagues. Mass media in this account are a facilitator of political mobilization. This is the focus of this study.

3. Theoretical Framework

Theory that could be used in analyzing the impact of mass media in the political mobilization process abound but the theoretical framework of this study will be limited to the Agenda Setting Theory. The Agenda setting theory of the media according to Zhu and Blood (2007), "is the process whereby the mass media to lead the public in assigning relative importance to various public issues". This is because the action of the mass media is towards influencing people's perception of what is important, acceptable, or desirable. Attention is drawn to certain aspects of reality and away from others, thus influencing people in terms of what to think.

Folarin (2013) in his own view notes that "Agenda setting implies that the mass media predetermines what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a given society". In Folarin's submission, the mass media through its educative and enlightenment functions brings to light different issues of importance during political mobilization. Elections are paramount to the success of any democratic engagement in any country. Different media are usually employed by politicians, civil society groups, electoral bodies, government and its agencies in the

quest for successful free and fair political mobilization and elections.

The rationale behind adopting the Agenda Setting Media Theory in this study is because it explains the impact, role or function of the mass media in determining public agenda before mobilization, during mobilization and after elections. It further describes the influence of the mass media in mobilizing, molding and shaping the opinion of the public towards some topical issues such as politics, of which election is paramount. In fact, the main thrust of the agenda setting theory is that the mass media set agenda on the burning issue such as politics in the society for public discourse.

4. Empirical Literature Review

Rasheed, B. O. (2016) examined the role of broadcast media as an instrument of change during 2015 electioneering campaign in Nigeria, Broadcast Media played a key role in ensuring that Nigerians participate in the electoral process and that its outcomes are credible and acceptable to the generality of the entire nation. In an attempt to strengthen the effectiveness of broadcast media in promoting balanced, conflict sensitive reporting, a well-informed audience and accountability of public representatives and institutions, the broadcast media owners and editors shared information, advance mutual understanding, enhance cooperation, and harmonized their commitment on ethical issues relating to election reporting from their various organization. This paper employed quantitative research design, and the methodological approach is survey, the instrument of data collection is questionnaire with a sample size of 120 respondents and the sampling procedure is purposive sampling, and the method of data analysis is simple percentage and frequency tables. The paper achieved that broadcast media embarked on meaningful political awareness and public enlightenment to the Nigerian and did a holistic and thorough analysis of relevant provisions of the constitution as they relate to elections, Promotion of public interest and consciousness in participatory elections, organize series of campaigns to educate the citizens on their civic rights and electoral duties.

James A. J. (2016) carried out a study on the Influence of Mass Media on Voting Pattern in Rural Areas of Nigeria. Mass information, in a democracy, is a necessity. As a result, the roles of mass media as harbingers of information, education and providers of entertainment become indispensable. However, the mass media of mass communication have failed in their effort to provide the traditional social responsibility functions with which they have been

identified for ages, especially in the rural areas of Nigeria. The rural dwellers in Nigeria are not adequately informed about the political process and development like their urban counterparts. Many newsworthy events, which should be reported by the media, are not given attention in the rural areas. Radio, which is the favorite and the most loved among the rural dwellers, has not also done enough to orientate, re-orientate, educate, enlighten, and mobilize the rural areas. This is because most programmes done on radio are elitist and are carved in a foreign Language-English-which most rural dwellers do not find easy to comprehend. Programmes about agriculture which concern the rural dwellers, if done at all, are aired in English Language. The study is driven by agenda-setting theory and two step- flow of information theory. The agenda setting theory posits that the media think for the audience by disseminating information which they think is important. The two step-flow of information theory states that some individual have better access to the media than others in the society. These people are called opinion leaders, while the others who have less access to the media of communication are called opinion-followers. The study recommends the establishment of community radio station in rural areas for political mobilization and information.

5. Research Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study were 385 staff of PRTVC. (Source: PRTVC Jos). Sample size of 196 staff was taken as the sample size. Simple random sampling technique was used to carry out the study. The instrument for data collection is structured questionnaire. Questionnaire was used for collection of data.

6. Data Presentation and Analysis

6.1 Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

Table 1: Age Range

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 25 years	21	10.71
26 – 35 years	67	34.18
36 – 45 years	73	37.24
46 years and above	35	17.86
Total	196	100

Field Survey: 2021

The table 1. above show the frequency and percentage age range of the respondents from the age range of 18 – 25 years constitute 21 respondents with 10.71%, 26 – 35 years constitute 67 respondents with 34.18%, 36 – 45 years constitute 73 respondents with 37.24% and 46 years and above constitute 35 respondents with 17.84%.

Table 2: Sex of respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Male	127	64.80
Female	69	35.20
Total	196	100

Field Survey: 2021

The table 2 above show the frequency and percentage distribution of sex of respondents which indicates that 127 respondents are males with 64.80% while 69 respondents are females with 35.20%.

Table 3: Marital Status

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Married	137	69.80
Single	59	30.20
Total	196	100

Field Survey: 2021

The table 3: above show the frequency and percentage distribution of the marital status of the respondents which indicates that 137 respondents are males with 69.80% while 59 respondents are females with 30.20%.

Table 4: Educational Qualification

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
SSCE	11	5.61
Diploma/NCE	99	50.51
B.sc/BA/HND	63	32.14
Msc/MA/Ph.D	23	11.73
Total	196	100

Field Survey: 2021

The table 4 above show the frequency and percentage distribution of educational qualification of the respondents which indicate that 11 respondents have SSCE qualification with 5.61%, 99 respondents have Diploma/NCE qualification with 50.51%, 63 respondents have B.sc/BA/HND qualification with 32.14% and 23 respondents have Msc/MA/Ph.D qualification with 11.73%.

Research Question: Does the interference of government in the activities of mass media affects the political mobilization process?

S/N	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Remark
1	Media organizations in Nigeria operate without any interference by government.	6 3.06%	10 5.10%	19 9.69%	61 31.12%	100 51.02%	Disagreed
2	The media always serve as a tool for political mobilization in the democratic era.	199 60.71%	77 39.29%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	Agreed
3	There is effective development of democracy due to the evolvement of media under any ruling government.	126 64.29%	70 35.71%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	Agreed
4	The programme of all media are been obstructed by government on power but the media never relent in her operations.	176 89.80%	18 10.20%	2 1.02%	0 0%	0 0%	Agreed
5	The media operate base on her house policy and editorials most often and it deliver effectively.	72 36.73%	31 15.82%	1 0.51%	81 41.33%	11 5.61%	Agreed

Field Survey: 2021

The table above shows that the respondents agreed to items 2, 3, 4, and 5 with percentage of both strongly agreed and agreed of 100 % each for items 2, 3, 4 and item 5 with 52.55% respectively. The respondent disagreed with item 1 with percentage of both strongly disagreed and disagreed of 82.15% that media organization in Nigeria operate without the any interference by government.

7. Summary of Findings

This study discussed the impact of mass media in the political mobilization process. Critically, from the enquiry results revealed that media has a great impact in the political mobilization process. This study also examined how government should depend on media for the peace building and national development in the country. From foregone analysis; the media is said to be of great help or impact to the course of political development in any society.

8. Conclusion

The research concludes that Plateau Radio Television Corporation Jos (PRTVC) and the media in Nigeria as a whole will not achieve its basic objective which is fundamental to the survival and growth of man as a political being, if political mobilization is not carryout effectively.

9. Recommendations

From the findings of the research work the following recommendation are made:

- To ensure effective, efficient and un-biased political mobilization by the mass media, there should be completely total autonomy, which will in turn ensure a free and independent press.
- It is the researcher's opinion that the independence of the media can go a long way to make things right and purposeful in political mobilization by the media to the general public benefit.
- However, appointment of general manager should be based on merit, duties and responsibilities should also be spelt out clearly and be adhered to strictly.
- Media workers and journalist should be encouraged or motivated through giving adequate remuneration to boost their morals put in their best in their undertaking.
- Journalist should be allowed to go for training to develop their skills and potentials, and sometimes send abroad to gain exposure.
- Furthermore, to meet up with the challenging world, the right modern equipment should be used and funds should be release to maintained this equipment.

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