

PRESS AND POLITICS: EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MEDIA AND POLITICS

Buike Oparaugo¹, Nasiru Alhaji Salihu², Bilyaminu Bello Sokoto³ and Jamila Musa Isah⁴
Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic, Sokoto, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The press/media has had a long and seemingly unending relationship with politics leading to various communication scholars to describe this relationship as 'polimedia', 'a tug of war', 'a symbiotic relationship', 'marriage de raison', 'a tango of give and take', 'trust and distrust, love and hate', 'uneasy exchange and reliance', etc. Majority of newspaper contents in Nigeria and around the world are on politics as it is the most selling news. Thus, this paper sought to find out through observations and literatures, the relationship between the press and politics by determining how they both influence each other. The researchers reviewed existing literatures for the study since the subject is theoretical based. These literatures were works already published on the relationship between the press and politics. This study is anchored on the Politics-Media-Politics Principle model. The researchers concluded that there exist a significant relationship between the press and politics. The researchers also found out that the press has as much influence on politics as politics on the press. On the influence of the media on politics, the media have been the predominant source of political information for citizens in a democratic society. On the influence of politics on the media, politicians, even governments can manipulate the coverage of information to achieve their political and economic goals through diverting audience attention. The researchers recommended among others that the press should also endeavour to give an unbiased report about politics no matter which politician or political actor is involved.

Key words: Press, media, news, politics.

INTRODUCTION

Information is disseminated to a large audience through the media from a variety of sources. Political propagandists use these materials to further a personal objective. Since their inception, the media have been a part of every great social revolution, including intellectual, political, industrial, and revolutions in preferences, aspirations, and values. The growth of the press and politics in Nigeria are intertwined. The early press, especially Townsend's Iwe Irohin fun awon ati Egba Yoruba, the first newspaper published in Nigeria, was employed as a political propaganda tool to oppose the Lagos colonial government throughout the battle for independence. Media are vehicles for transmitting information from one person (the sender) to another (the recipient(s)). The media can encourage political participation by the public, including voting, joining political parties, and taking part in elections and campaigns. Traditional media, print media, electronic media, and social media are the four main categories of media.

The mass media has been employed successfully over the years to spread political views and beliefs among the general public. An essential function of the political system is the dissemination of political knowledge, and the mass media are crucial to this process. The mass media accomplishes this through informing the electorate about candidates, political parties, and voting through what is referred to as "political news." The media also aids in the comprehension of past, present, and future events by the general public (audience).

De Ziga and Chen (2019) noted that as more people utilize digital media technologies for information and communication globally, digital media have grown to play a significant role in individual citizens' political life in this era of digitization. It has become customary for the news media to participate in politics rather than merely covering it. The role of the news media in a democracy is widely regarded. Ideally, they serve as a vital conduit for communication between the general public and elected officials. The public's perception of which topics are essential and the general consensus of how those issues should be addressed are shaped by news coverage. Politics and news organizations have traditionally had a strong relationship. Parties often had power over the press in the representational political systems of the nineteenth century. When the appropriate party came into power, a



newspaper either actively represented that party or, in order to be financially viable, depended on the lawful advertising and government printing contracts of local, state, and federal governments (Schudson, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

It is the duty of the mass media to keep their audience up to date on events both close to home and abroad. No matter who is involved, the news media must report on these events, good or bad. However, when it comes to news substance, the press and media in Nigeria and around the world have been accused of exclusion and selection bias. This phenomenon has been attributed to media ownership by scholars in the media and communication. Politics and politicians have a significant influence on media companies, as has been observed, and media coverage of politics and elections has had a reciprocal influence on politics. The purpose of this essay is to explore the relationship between the press and politics by identifying the ways in which each influences the other through observations and literature.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to find out among other things, the following objectives:

1. To find out if a significant relationship exists between the press and politics.
2. To determine the influence of politics on the press.
3. To ascertain the influence of the press on politics.

Meaning of News

News is a mass media report on a recent/current happening, or unfolding event which is of interest to a large number of people. News is not only something bad, negative or shocking; it can also be good and positive (Oparaugo, 2021).

News is a report in the mass media on a recent, ongoing, or developing event that interests a broad audience. According to Kammath (2008), a newsworthy event, idea, or viewpoint is one that is current, affects a sizable portion of a community, and is understandable to that group. According to Mencher (2002), news is knowledge that assists individuals in deftly resolving their issues. He continued by saying that news is defined as an event, statement, or occurrence that is noteworthy or uncommon. Not everyone is interested in news. But news transcends all geographical borders.

News can be nice and positive as well as something nasty, surprising, or negative. Consider a town that lacked social amenities until gaining them at last. Describe a woman who gave birth to twins after 20 years of a trouble-free marriage. A nation's attempt to host a sporting event, as well as a team's qualification for a tournament, is news to its population in sports. But nothing there will make headlines unless it is covered by the media. Dominick (2002, p. 327), who held the position that "before something becomes news, however, it must be reported," supports the aforementioned.

According to Hodgson (2000, p.9), events of all kinds—people, animals, and things—some amazing, some insignificant—become news only after their existence is made public. An event that no one is aware of—such as a renowned person's secret marriage, like that of Flavour or 2face Idibia—cannot be news; it only becomes news when it is made public, maybe years later. To be published, whether they are news pieces or anything else, all writing is referred to as "copy."

Theoretical Perspective

The study is anchored on the Politics-Media-Politics Principle model. Gadi Wolfsfeld created this model in 2013. According to him, the PMP principle is based on two claims. The first assertion is that the role of the media in politics is cyclical, with changes in the political climate causing changes in media behavior within this cycle. This in turn caused the political environment to change further. The second assertion is that because of their capacity to turn political reality into news stories that occasionally have a considerable impact on political outcomes, the media can play a leading role in political processes. The first assertion is based on theories of political context and contends



that any analysis of the function of the media must always begin by taking the local political climate into account (Wolfsfeld, 2013). The second assertion is based on a strategy known as the news distortion method. Editorial choices alter politics in ways that benefit journalists' specialized interests (Wolfsfeld, 2013). The second claim also emphasizes how these changes might occasionally have a considerable impact on the political process (Wolfsfeld, 2013).

The use of a "strategic frame" by the news media to cover politics is discussed in a related body of research (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; 1996; De Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Hallin, 1992; Hollihan, 2010). One of the most significant studies in this genre, according to Wolfsfeld (2013), was written by Cappella and Jamieson (1996, 1997). They discussed, among other things, how much news coverage tended to focus on victors and losers and to employ vocabulary from combat, games, and competition. They claimed that because of this emphasis, journalists, particularly during election campaigns, paid less attention to important concerns. Furthermore, Cappella and Jamieson asserted that this emphasis increased popular mistrust toward politics. Norris (2000) adamantly disagreed with this theory and offered evidence showing, with a few notable exceptions, news consumers actually displayed the highest levels of political engagement and trust.

The Concept of Politics

When anything is characterized as politics, it can be everything that has to do with the state, including things like actions that either involve or indirectly affect state institutions, people who work for or with the government, and locations where these things happen.

Achieving and using positions of organized authority over a human society, particularly a state, is referred to as politics. Obasi (1999) defined politics as an effort to affect the distribution of power, either across states or among factions inside a state, and to share power.

Politics is the method used to make both individual and societal decisions. Goals are decided upon and then pursued through the use of appropriate policies throughout this activity (Vuskane, 2009). It is a feature of the majority of social systems, including those in the family, community, region, state, and global community. The method used to settle these disputes is politics. To a greater or lesser extent, politics affects everyone on some level.

Politics, in the opinion of Ponton and Gill (1982, p. 6), is the process through which we comprehend, organize, and take greater control over our social affairs.

Politics, according to Tuibeo (1998, p. 1), is a method for promoting harmony among people who have diverse wants and aspirations in life or for settling disputes within a group, whether it be a family, tribe, village, or nation-state.

Hence, politics is:

- bilateral (or two-party) meetings between two different political parties to field a common candidate in elections
- multilateral meetings (between multiple groups) organised under the auspices of the United Nations to discuss issues such as climate change or nuclear non-proliferation
- the day-to-day activities of the African Union, ECOWAS, on issues affecting Africa
- debates and votes in the National Assembly on government policy or proposed legislation
- or citizens voting in the general elections to choose their next government.

Meaning and History of the Media/Press in Nigeria

Technology aimed towards a large audience is referred to as mass media. The great majority of the general populace may be reached using it as their main communication tool. Newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet are the platforms for mass media that are used the most frequently. Typically, the general public looks to the media for information on political concerns, social issues, entertainment, and pop culture news.

Mass media is communication that reaches a big group of people quickly. This can be spoken, written, or televised communication. Some of the most popular mass media mediums are newspapers, periodicals, radio, ads, social media, television, the Internet, and movies/movies. Mass communication is the practice of quickly communicating with large numbers of people using technology (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2004, p. 22).



The use of mass media to reach both large and specialized audiences allows for the dissemination of information, concepts, and ideas. They are essential resources for achieving political goals.

The idea was initially raised in the 1920s, during the Progressive Era, in response to elites' newfound ability to reach vast audiences through the mass media of the day, including newspapers, radio, and movies (Hirst, 2018). However, in the 1920s, the term "mass media" related more to the uniform consumption and anonymity of the listeners than to the sheer number of individuals that such communication reached. It is no longer possible to find uniformity and anonymity in the way people seek out, consume, and use information in their daily lives. The term "alternative media" or "mass self-communication" is used to describe these new media.

Johann Gutenberg, a German scientist, is credited with developing modern printing when he published the first edition of the Bible in 1450. There were no differences made between the newspaper and magazine in their early years. They remained connected to one another (Eze, 2006). However, according to Baran (1999, p.9), the printing press had already started to play a major role in the industrial revolution by the middle of the 18th century. Print was instrumental in creating and transmitting bodies of information that facilitated the advancement of science and technology.

The early press, most notably *Iwe Irohin fun awon ati Egba Yoruba*, the first Nigerian newspaper published by Reverend Henry Townsend, was utilized as a political propaganda tool to oppose the Lagos colonial government throughout the fight for independence. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) in England felt it important to warn Townsend about his "excesses" in 1963 since *Iwe Irohin* was so successful.

The Nigerian Pioneer (1914), The African Messenger (1921), The West African Pilot (1937), Gaskiya Tafi Kwobo, and other publications are just a few of the newspapers that were established in the nation. Gaskiya Tafi Kwobo was first published in Kaduna State, and further publications in the Fulani, Tiv, Kanuri, and other regional languages followed, according to Ani (2008). According to Nwosu (2014), African Messenger marked a turning point for the Nigerian newspaper sector.

The Nigerian Press kept up its practice of selling meaning at the dawn of independence in 1960, but this time along strongly political lines. Similar to how the Action Group chain of newspapers was used to advance the political interests of western Nigeria, the Zik's chain of newspapers was used to grease the political wheel of his political apparatus. The West African Pilot established the media as a vehicle for political conflict.

In 1933, the Department of Post and Telegraphs of the British colonial government launched the Radio Distribution in Lagos, which marked the beginning of radio in Nigeria (P&T). The British Broadcasting Corporation used the Radio Distribution System (RDS) as a relay station and reception base. It used wire systems with loudspeakers at the listening end. The Radio Distribution System was renamed the Radio Diffusion System in 1935 in order to propagate the Second World War efforts of Britain and her allies via the BBC.

Like the radio, the television cannot be attributed to a single person as its predecessor. Instead, it was the outcome of numerous efforts made by various inquisitive minds. A notion was devised and experiments were started on a gadget that would produce sight beyond what the human eye could see as early as 1873. Television was the name of the gadget.

The development of television as a mass media may be traced back to the 1920s, although its earliest manifestations can be seen in the eighteenth century. Radio, theater, and film all had an influence on television. Television was not intentionally made by humans. The introduction of television in Nigeria happened in a similar way to how radio did. It might be interesting to note that while the federal government launched the country's first radio broadcast, the country's first television program was actually initiated by regional governments. Nigeria's introduction to television transmission began on October 31, 1959.

According to Obeagu (2018), the missionary element, colonial factor, freed slave movement, religious factor, socioeconomic factor, and political factor are some of the aspects that contributed to the development of the press in Nigeria. Additionally, the media has aided in the growth of the nation. It promotes cultural awareness and aids in nation building. The media contributed to the spread of civilization among the populace.

Interface between the Press and Politics



Following Nwosu's (2013) description of it, the interaction between politics and the media has come to be known as polimedia. Political and communication specialists concur that there is a significant connection between politics and the media (Okoye and Oparaugo, 2019). There can be no politics without the press or media. Nwosu continued by mentioning the intersection of politics and mass media, saying that the two ideas are so intertwined in contemporary culture that it is difficult to study or practice one without having a solid understanding of the other.

Newspapers have been used for political purposes in America since the 1730s, but it was the American Revolution that gave the press its reputation for outstanding political effectiveness. Mutual dependency is a defining characteristic of the relationship between politicians and media. Politicians depend on journalists to promote themselves to voters and citizens, whereas journalists depend on politicians to gather (the most interesting) news.

Nevertheless, some academics, such as Ciboh (2016), have argued that the relationship between journalists and political sources has been characterized by a tug of war between reporters and officials, wherein powerful politicians have the upper hand in the coproduction of news due to their capacity to provide crucial information subsidies that most news media rely on. However, stable high-income democracies have mostly been the focus of analysis of the journalist-source relationship's dynamics.

It is possible to think of the relationship between politicians and journalists as symbiotic. According to some academics, this relationship is a "marriage de raison" (Van Aelst and Aalberg, 2011) or a "tango of give and take," which is marked by "trust and distrust, love and hate" (Van Aelst and Aalberg, 2011). Without a question, both sides are dependent on one another. Journalists function as the public's "watchdog," keeping an eye on the ruling class while educating and entertaining the general public. Contrarily, politicians respond to the demands of the voters by outlining their plans and strategies with the aid of the news media (Matthes, Maurer and Arendt, 2019).

According to Berkowitz (2009), this reliance between political players and reporters is institutionalized in political journalism as part of a "uneasy exchange and reliance" between them (Davis, 2009). Journalists need politicians for information, and politicians need journalists for publicity. As a result, news has been said to have been "co-produced" (Cook, 1998). Relationship dynamics have been described as a "tug of war" (Gans, 1979). Sources attempt to control journalists and the news they produce, while journalists attempt to control their sources in order to obtain the information they need (Ciboh, 2016).

Politicians and political actors frequently communicate with the public through a variety of media venues during and after electioneering campaigns and elections. They also use media outlets to promote socioeconomic policies and programs for good governance (Okoye and Oparaugo, 2019).

Influence of Politics on the Press

By enabling citizens to participate in political processes and gain an understanding of how governments work, for example, the media is believed to increase the "transparency" of the political system. Unfortunately, in reality—especially in developing nations—the media only pretends to be transparent while undermining the political ideals that underpin it. The media has frequently been accused of keeping crucial information from the public, and political transparency seems unachievable without widespread media coverage. Politicians, even governments, can influence the news cycle to further their political and economic objectives by deflecting the public's attention.

Many political communications in the fight for governmental and political media influence are not presented directly to the public by elected officials, candidates, or their supporters, but rather are filtered through the communications media—newspapers, magazines, broadcasters—in the form of news and analysis that may reflect the media's biases. A variety of random behaviors are chosen, emphasized, downplayed, or dramatized by journalism in newsprint or on the air, with both intended and unexpected political consequences. Some of these actions are purposefully carried out by political actors for their personal gain, and they are disseminated to the uninformed public as unbiased news or analysis.

By filling up the gaps left by the party system, the press serves an institutional function. One of the reasons for this is that party politics necessitates connection with the electorate, and the most major technological methods available at the time were newspapers and other printing press goods.



As public and commercial systems of ownership mix, blend, and interact in an increasing diversity of ways, it becomes harder and harder to establish a connection between ownership of news organizations and the nature of news coverage (Noam, 1991). Journalists must adhere to certain rules in order to write "accurately" about events that are objectively true, regardless of who planned them or how they got to the attention of the media. If the powerful treat the "out there" world badly, their methods of creating reality will eventually fail (Schudson, 2002). The most important government sources are the usual ones. In other words, the majority of news is distributed to the media through regularly planned, government-initiated activities like press conferences, statements in public, public parliamentary hearings or discussions, press releases, and background briefings for the media (Schudson, 2002).

Politicians, not only in Nigeria, but all over the world have a degree on the content of the news media. Ownership influence is a big factor here, hence the saying 'he who pays the piper dictates the tune'. In Nigeria for instance, when a chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Bola Ahmed Tinubu was accused of money laundering and images on social media showed bullion vans entering his house in Bourdilon, Ikoyi, Lagos, his newspaper The Nation, avoided the news. Other newspapers in Nigeria reported the news. Also, when Orji Uzor Kalu was jailed and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) moved to confiscate his properties, the Sun newspaper which is owned by Orji Uzor Kalu, avoided the news of his jail only to come out by disassociating themselves from his case.

Media Influence on Politics and Democracy

In a democracy, voters' primary source of political knowledge has been the media. It affects people's beliefs and voting behavior during elections, according to researchers. The media can be employed to de-market a good product as well as to advertise a subpar one. Politicians and political parties that are thought to be corrupt utilize the media to promote their candidates during election campaigns, while the media is also used to discredit political parties and candidates who are thought to have integrity.

The degree to which the media has an impact on politics is a topic of intense discussion. According to some theories, the British media encourage democracy by allowing a wide range of viewpoints to be aired. Because of their ability to influence how people think about politics, some people believe that the media is anti-democratic. Others try to decipher the purpose of media content. They accomplish this by examining the interactions between media messages and certain audiences' cultural norms. Media skeptics have charged that the mainstream media trivializes politics. Because there is competition among newspapers and television networks for readers and viewers, news is frequently presented as entertainment rather than as a serious matter.

The mass media has continued to actively contribute to the development of the nation's newly reestablished democracy since the return of democratic governance. The Greek word for "democracy" is *demokratia*, which means "ruling by the people" and is derived from the words "demo" and "kratia" (both from the root "kartos"). This gives the idea that it is a system of governance in which the people directly make choices without representation, as we already do in the majority of governments around the world (Ezonbi & Jonah, 2013).

Media seemed to be the most powerful tool ever employed for defending and advancing democracy in Nigeria, based on the notion of media (Okoye, 2018). In any political community, the media are a crucial and fundamental element of the democratic process. Throughout Nigeria's history, the media has consistently been at the forefront of the fight for democracy in the nation. Obilade (1999, p. 235) expressed the opinion that the "press in Africa constitutes an active force in the accomplishment of the goal of the evolution of sustainable democracy in the continent of Africa," lending support to this claim. In Nigeria's difficult years of military rule, the media undoubtedly evolved into the common man's last chance (Okoye, 2018, p.38).

Role of the Media in the Society

When it comes to politics, the media should ideally "disseminate the complete range of political viewpoints, enabling the public to make political decisions and participate in national life." Governments and political parties do not directly exert pressure on the media in democratic countries, for example, where the media serves as a communication medium that ensures the interchange of viewpoints between those in authority and the general



population (depending on the country). It serves as a watchdog of the government and informs the populace in liberal democratic nations.

In democracies, a politician's job is to represent the people who elected them into office and make sure that the problems that they were elected to address are resolved, whereas a journalist's job is to inform the public debate so that the audience may make informed decisions. In such a political system, the journalist works to guarantee that politicians carry out their duties on behalf of the electorate. The journalist investigates and writes about the topics that readers and listeners are most interested in. They should do this to provide the richest and most comprehensive coverage possible, and they should do it by include a variety of voices and political viewpoints.

The press's main responsibility is to accurately inform the public on the actions of the government as prominently displayed by its officials and agencies. In other words, by bringing the government closer to the people, educating them about government policies and programs, and advocating for their needs to the government, the press should give the people the chance to participate in government (Aniugbo, 2016). To describe government operations in a way that will interest the public, the reporter needs to be aware of the aspirations and objectives of individuals in positions of power. For instance, the reporter must familiarize himself with the politics and history of civil service in order to write on it as a function of the government.

METHODOLOGY

The use of Library research method was employed to elicit data as the paper relied solely on secondary sources which provided valuable literature on the subject of discussion. Scholarly works on the key concepts were reviewed to provide direction for the paper. These literatures were the results of empirical studies in media and politics. This is because the subject of the study is theoretical based.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

A significant relationship exists between the press and politics. Nwosu (2013) avers that the interaction between politics and the media has come to be known as polimedia. Political and communication specialists concur that there is a significant connection between politics and the media (Okoye and Oparaugo, 2019). There can be no politics without the press or media. Nwosu continued by mentioning the intersection of politics and mass media, saying that the two ideas are so intertwined in contemporary culture that it is difficult to study or practice one without having a solid understanding of the other. Newspapers have been used for political purposes in America since the 1730s, but it was the American Revolution that gave the press its reputation for outstanding political effectiveness. Mutual dependency is a defining characteristic of the relationship between politicians and media. Politicians depend on journalists to promote themselves to voters and citizens, whereas journalists depend on politicians to gather (the most interesting) news.

Politics exerts a great influence on the press. Politicians, not only in Nigeria, but all over the world have a degree on the content of the news media. Ownership influence is a big factor here, hence the saying 'he who pays the piper dictates the tune'. In Nigeria for instance, when a chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Bola Ahmed Tinubu was accused of money laundering and images on social media showed bullion vans entering his house in Bourdilon, Ikoyi, Lagos, his newspaper The Nation, avoided the news. Other newspapers in Nigeria reported the news. Also, when Orji Uzor Kalu was jailed and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) moved to confiscate his properties, the Sun newspaper which is owned by Orji Uzor Kalu, avoided the news of his jail only to come out by disassociating themselves from his case.

The press has enormous influence on politics. The media are voters' primary source of political knowledge. The media affects people's beliefs and voting behavior during elections. Politicians and political parties that are thought to be corrupt utilize the media to promote their candidates during election campaigns, while the media is also used to discredit political parties and candidates who are thought to have integrity. Because of their ability to influence how people think about politics, some people believe that the media is anti-democratic. The mass media has continued to actively contribute to the development of the nation's newly reestablished democracy since the return of democratic governance.



CONCLUSION

Politics and the media do not make odd bedfellows. In actuality, they resemble a married couple who frequently disagree but who are unable to live apart from one another, get a divorce, or split from one another. The researcher came to the conclusion that there is a substantial relationship between the press and politics after reviewing a variety of literature on the topic. The researcher also discovered that the press and politics are both influenced by one another. In the same way that politics needs the press, the media also depends on politics. Similar to the adage "he who pays the piper calls the song," media ownership rhetoric significantly affects the news media's editorial output. Because politicians in positions of power are always eager to punish media outlets for publishing information critical of the current administration, it appears that the press and media are not entirely free in developing countries, even in democratic settings. Additionally, news media content plays a role in influencing a country's or people's political culture. Therefore, depending on how political news is covered or framed, the media may enhance or diminish public impressions of politicians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having concluded the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

- The press needs to be totally free from all forms of political control to help consolidate democracy both in the western world and in developing world like Africa, Asia and South America.
- The press should also endeavour to give an unbiased report about politics no matter which politician or political actor is involved.
- Journalists should adhere to strict journalistic principles while covering elections and politics in Nigeria.

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