

## **Comparative Analyses of Management of Government and Private Media in South East Nigeria**

**Nweze, Samuel, Ph.D**

Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria

**Ario ,Peace Udoka**

Research Fellow, Department of Mass Communication, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria

**Nwafor, Ezinne Comfort**

Department of Theatre Arts, Federal College of Education, Obudu, Cross River State, Nigeria

**Nwamba, Jane Irene**

Department of Mass Communication, Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria

**Aneke, Maurine Chika**

Department of Mass Communication, Institute of Management Technology, Enugu, Nigeria

**Ekuma, Celestina Amaka**

Research Fellow, Department of Mass Communication, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria

**Anyachonkeya , Chinwe Patience**

Chief Lecturer, Department of Languages, Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana, Afikpo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

**Chidi-Irem, Ogechukwu Rebecca**

Research Fellow, Department of Mass Communication, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study analysed the management of government and private media in South East Nigeria, using Unity FM Abakaliki Ebonyi State and Dream FM Enugu, Enugu State as focal point. The study was anchored on the gatekeeping theory of the mass media. The survey method of research was adopted with an interview guide containing 8 open ended questions for 12 respondents from both media houses. Data generated were presented and analyzed with the aid of simple percentages and frequency tables. Findings show that there are in-house policies that guide their day to activities in the media stations. The major theme in the policy of the government owned media is to relay the government activities to the people and present the government to the people in good light. Findings also indicate that the owners personally employ and educate the editors on the policies and follow them up to ensure that they edit reports and programmes content in line with the in-house policies of the management. The study further indicates that the privately owned media has the main objective of profit-making. In the both cases, gatekeeping affect the quality of their programme content. Professional bodies such as the Nigerian Union of journalists (NUJ), should ensure that journalists working in both public and privately managed media strictly adhere to the Code of ethics of their profession.*

**KEY WORDS:** public media, private media, government, management

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## INTRODUCTION

Many communication researchers have studied the role of media ownership on different aspects of the mass media because of the influence of mass media on the social life of society. The Mass media are a social medium that contributes to nation building, they play the role of an agent of the secondary socialization process and can contribute to successful socialization of individuals into existing social life.

The term media, according to Paulson (2019), is shortened to describe a means of communication that operates on a large scale, reaching and involving virtually everyone in a society to a greater or lesser degree. Media is plural of medium which means a channel or vehicle through which something is transmitted. In other words, mass media are channels of communication in a modern society, primarily the print and the electronic media. The primary function of the mass media system is to provide information to several millions of people. The mass media are extremely influential. Each of the media is presumed to affect perceptions and behaviour in a distinctive way. They can affect the society and vice versa.

It is the opinion of Lewis (2018:1) that corporate organizations (including the media) experience pressures from an increasing gamut of stakeholders, from consumers and employees to investors and legislators. This increasing interest, Lewis (2018) further notes, "is in the values and standards of the companies behind their products and brands". In order to engender public trust and confidence, Lewis (2018) explains that putting these values and standards at the heart of business, not an adjunct to commercial activity, should be taken more seriously and be integrated further into the business vision and brand management. Herein, lies the essence of good management pattern. But the question is, can effective management style be divorced from the control of the owner's vision and interest?

According to Owuamalam (2016) ownership deals with the right to possession of a tangible property. It means that the property in question can be specifically defined, to the exclusion of any other interest, apart from the legal possessor, as bestowed by law. It is the law that defines the nature of ownership and parties that may claim right of possession. Adeseye and Ibagere (2019) opine that "ownership connotes the right to possess something, either in concrete or abstract term". Relating this to media ownership it therefore means the right to own or possess, acquire, manage and control a medium of mass communication.

Ownership structure, as one of the factors on the organizational level, also affects the content of mass media messages. Research usually indicates three basic types of mass media ownership; government owned (or government party owned), privately owned, and owned both by government and private organizations or individuals (Press Freedom, 2017).

Government-owned media outlets are usually seen by social scientists as pursuing goal theof social welfare and harmony and also to a large extent, the mouth piece of the government. This ownership pattern according to Anyaegbudike (2012), is known to influence the minds of people and affect the climate of opinion over issues of public concern.

Privately owned media on the other hand are seen as pursuing interests that are determined by desire to make profit, although it is not always the case. The fact that media are (partly) owned by government does not mean that channels and content are totally controlled by government. Usually, if not subsidized, these channels have to make profit, which means independence to a certain extent from government ideological interests.

The ownership (of broadcast medium) is responsible for the day to day running and overall management of the medium. Ownership invest in the organization, spend on it, acquire license for its operations, renew the license annually as required. Ownership is also responsible for the payment of salaries and wages, buying of equipment and making operation of station operation possible. Importantly the ownership of a given media organization determines what media policy and ideology the station or media organization should represent, serve or promote. Research usually indicates three basic types of mass media ownership: government owned (or government party owned), privately owned, and owned both by government and private organizations or individuals (Press Freedom, 2017).

Herbert Altschull (1984) insisted that an independent press cannot exist and that “the news are agents of the people who exercise political and economic control” (cited in Lamidi and Adedowole 2018). No matter the benevolence of the government, no matter the democratic principles of the society and no matter the advancement of any society, the mass media are usually subjected to some form of control from those who hold and operate the apparatus of power, this is because he who plays the piper dictate the tune.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to compare the management of government and private media in south east of Nigeria. The specific objectives intended to achieve include:

- i.To identify the policies that exists in both the public and privately managed media on gatekeeping.
- ii.To determine the mechanism in place to ensure ownership control of media content and programme.
- iii.Find out the whether there is a significant difference between ethical practice of journalism between public and private media in South-East Nigeria

### **Research Questions**

- i.What policies exist in both the public and privately managed media on gatekeeping?
- ii.What mechanisms are in place to ensure ownership control of media content and programme?
- iii.Is there any significant difference between ethical practice of journalism between public and private media in South-East Nigeria?

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **The History of Media Ownership in Nigeria**

The birth of the Nigerian press dates back to 3 December 1859, with the appearance of the magazine *Iwe Irohin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba*(literally: Newspaper for the Egba and

Yoruba). This first publication in an African language, *Iwe Irohin*, was published by the Reverend Henry Townsend, who later added an English language edition.

The coming of BBC Empire service in 1932 marked the beginning of broadcasting in Nigeria. The Empire service which utilized radio signal Re-diffusion Service, RDS, was designed to enhance economic, political and cultural relationship between Britain and its colonies. The outfit became Nigeria Broadcasting service, NBS, in 1951. Furthermore, ordinance No. 39 of 1956 enabled the conversion of NBS to Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation NBC, in April 1, 1957. The same act provided for the external service of NBC, the Voice of Nigeria, which began operation in January 1, 1962. However, the three regions established TV stations as follows: West (WNTV: 1959); East (ENBS-TV: 1960); and North (RKTV: 1962). In 1979, all the regional radio stations came under one umbrella: Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (Betiang 2006, p.1). Prior to that time the regional TV stations were harmonized to become Nigerian Television Authority, NTA, in 1976 (Owuamalam, 2006, p.10). All along the ownership, control and operation of broadcasting in Nigeria were preserved exclusively for the various governments – Federal, Regional, and State (Media Rights Agenda, MRA, 2001, p.7).

There is also the emerging ownership of the electronic media by institutions known as community broadcasting. What is interesting however for some inexplicable reasons is that in some instances the ownership of some media outfits in Nigeria is shrouded in secrecy. Frankly speaking, media ownership in Nigeria is not diaphanous in most cases this is because most precise owners of some media organizations are not always known to the public and, in many cases, the professional journalists serving as directors of such media companies are seen as fronts for unknown investors. Under the National Broadcasting Commission Act, religious bodies and political parties are specifically precluded from owning broadcast media. Foreign ownership of broadcast media is also restricted, resulting in very little foreign investment in the Nigerian media.

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 (1989, 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 Unity FM Abakaliki Ebonyi state 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 Unity FM Abakaliki Ebonyi state. 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.

### **Media Ownership and Management**

It has been noted that ownership of any broadcast medium - radio or television- determine how it should operate, because “he who pays the piper dictates the tune”. One of the ways of determining the nature or system of operation by ownership apart from the formulation of in-house policies is by direct involvement in the appointment of key officers of the broadcast station, such as directors, managers, editors etc. these officer are generally regarded as gatekeepers due to the role they play in broadcast content production, development and presentation.

According to Umechukwu (2017:22) “gatekeeper as a concept in communication is attributed to kurt Lewin who was said to have coined the term to describe the process by which news item travelling through channel gain clearance at certain checkpoint along the way”. Lewin called these checkpoint ‘gates’ and the individuals or organization who give clearance he called “gatekeepers”. Umechukwu therefore defined gatekeepers “as agents for both the communicator and the audience who act as clearing house where the nature and flow of certain information are determined”.

Gatekeepers evaluate media content in order to determine its relevance and value to the audience as well determining what the audience should hear or see or both. Gatekeepers in broadcast media organizations includes the general managers or directors-generals, programme managers or directors, editors, producers, script writers, reporters, and presenters. Gatekeepers in broadcasting are very important officers who perform a variety of functions. Umechukwu (1987, p.23) summarizes their roles thus;

*Gatekeepers can stop a message by refusing to ‘open a gate’. All mass media institutions have a number of gatekeepers. They perform a variety of functions and play several roles in broadcasting house or television network, the broadcaster can refuse to read a proposed script out of his/her own personal reason or at the instruction of his/her boss. Local stations can delegate content or refuse to clear a network programme.*

Owners of any given broadcast house – privately, group or government owned- are the ultimate gatekeepers, because they affect the workings of managers, including programme managers, who are directly responsible for the acquisition of programme materials; and editorial board members who determine what the audience should hear or see. The importance of gatekeeper is so much that owners do not take their appointments for granted. Their roles and significance justify the reason why ownership is deeply involved in determining major management officers in the broadcasting organization. These top officers also delegate duties to the junior officers and they all perform their gatekeeping functions in alignment with their ownership policies and ideologies.

**Government ownership**

Here the government is in charge of the funding of the media organization or has greater control of the shares. The funding of the media could be direct funding, loans and overdrafts from banks. Where this is the situation, the editorial contents of such media are being influenced by the government. The effect is that government in one way or the other will make sure that it determines what may or may not be published and the medium will want to toe the line of government. According to Nwosu, (2015, p.73) “one characteristic of government ownership is that it is heavily biased, authoritative and laced with stories and propaganda. Its ownership is an antithesis of press freedom and it is the most recognizable type of ownership.

Government owned broadcast media (television) are not usually exciting enough and also not investigative enough. Nwosu (Op cit) stressed that this is because of the nature of ownership. When you are employed by the government you are bound to dance to the dictate of that government. A government employed journalist cannot go ahead and investigate a fraud or atrocity perpetuated by a government. He would surely be fired (Nwosu 2015, p.75).

**Private ownership**

This could also be chain or corporate ownership. The owner or body concerned has a larger share in the funding or it is fully owned by the person or body concerned. For the electronic media since 2012 the National Broadcasting Commission was set up under an Act of the National Assembly No. 38 of 2012 to give licenses to private individuals to own the electronic media. Private ownership has the merit of giving the media the opportunity or freedom to criticize the ills noticed in the government unlike the ones owned by the government. Nwosu, (2015, Pp. 68-69) wrote that this form of ownership has a number of advantage which include;

- Absolute control by the proprietor, which creates some stability of purpose
- The owners can make decision at any point in time
- Clear cut operational policy steady, hold on business
- Staff proximity.

**Ownership and Media Content**

The impact of media ownership on output has been a major subject of research over the past four decades. Golding and Murdock (1974; 1989; 2010) offer the seminal works in this area, and argue that media proprietors do determine the editorial line and cultural stance of the newspapers and broadcast stations they own (Golding & Murdock, 2010, p.74). They operate within structures that constrain as well as facilitate their said influence, imposing limits as well as offering opportunities for editorial control. Analysing the nature and sources of these limits is a key task for critical political economy of culture (Golding & Murdock, 2010, p74).

Golding and Murdock (2010:78) further argue that the steadily increasing amount of cultural production accounted for by large corporations has long been a source of concern to theorists of democracy. They argue that proprietors use their proprietary rights to restrict the flow of information and open debate on which the vitality of democracy depended. These concerns, they argue, are fuelled by the rise of the great press barons at the turn of the 20th century. Not only did proprietors like Pulitzer and Hearst in the United States and Northcliffe in England own chains of newspapers with large circulations, they clearly had no qualms about using them to promote their

pet political causes or to denigrate positions and people they disagreed with (Golding & Murdock, 2010, p.78).

Golding and Murdock (1989,p.215) argue that ownership patterns and control of media in Britain for example, indicates that there is ownership concentration with the five leading companies in each sector accounting for 69% or more of the market. Doyle (2012, p.13a) argues that concentration of ownership involves the owning of several media outlets and means of communication by few rather than many different owners. Doyle (2012, p13a) argues that in whatever form they take, media concentrations imply that the supply of media is dominated by a handful of people rather than various individuals.

### **Expected Roles of the Mass Media in a Democracy**

To speak of the mandate of the media in a democracy is to assign a constitutional role for it. It is indeed to proceed on the assumption that the media is a constitutional instrument or phenomenon. Yet, in all Nigerian constitutions, the media is hardly mentioned in the manner in which the executive, legislature and judiciary on the one hand and the federal, the state and the local governments on the other are documented with legal instruments. Be that as it may, the philosophy of modern governance and especially of modern democracy conceives the media as a monumental force and as an institution similar to the tiers of government in Nigerian federalism and to the arms of constitutional government.

In the Nigerian experience, and without having to go into constitutional history, the media was mentioned only in section 22 of the 1999 constitution as part of the fundamental objective and directive principles of the state policy. In this connection, the obligation of the media as indicated in section 22 of the 1999 constitution, equally endows it with the duty not only to discharge its normal watchdog role in all aspects of governance and in guarding and advancing the frontiers of the people's liberties and freedoms but also the obligation to regard itself as "the policing institution over the fundamental objectives and Direct principles of state policy as well as the citizen's Fundamental Rights". The fact that the constitution imposes a duty on the media to monitor governance implies that it should undertake vigilance over the relationship between the people and the government.

The point is that the media has a constitutional mandate in the advancement of the political and democratic process. It is equally true that the nature and character of the democratic process greatly impacts upon the performance of the media. It is in this sense that the nature and character of military regime can affect tremendously the performance of the media just as the nature and character of a democratic regime can do the same. The media may play several roles in the electoral process including the following:

#### **(1) Information Role**

The media have helped the Nigeria people to keep abreast of the developments in the political space of the country. The "Nigeria Decides" programme on NTA during the 2007 elections graphically illustrates a contemporaneous information giving role played by the media to make the electorate know the profiles of their potential leaders from the interviews and fact files about aspiring politicians. Stressing on the importance of the information role of the media, Opubor

(2002) asserts that: Many people in our urban areas will find it difficult to imagine life without the media. Just think how it would feel to wake up one morning, turn on your radio set and receive nothing but static noises. Many of us would not want to experience such a deprivation more than once in a lifetime. The scenario painted by Opubor imagines the deprivation we could suffer without the media in society.

### **(2) Leadership Role**

The efforts of the press in leading to credible government policy is seen in the instances of organizing press conferences and interviews, undertaking public campaigns on important national issues like the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the Green Revolution, Road Safety Campaign, MAMSER, Census and a host of other government programmes. Olanipekun (2003) buttresses the role of the media in political governance when he said that the press should take the lead in preaching and advocating sustenance of the rule of law which is a sine qua non to a successful democratic dispensation. The media's support for the fight against corruption by exposing the highly placed politicians and government officials in today's government are an indication of its leadership role.

### **(3) Watchdog Role**

The media being described as a watchdog is in recognition of its watchful and critical role against the bad practices of the government and private individuals. Ralph Akinfeleye (2000) describes journalists (media professionals) as corps of intrepid reporters who are always caught in the web several steps ahead of the goons. The political leaders and their cronies at one time or the other try to find ways to tailor the constitution to suit their selfish needs and aspirations. Ugulah and Erebi (2008) agree with Akinfeleye's position on the power of the media to avert such activities when they maintain that: Obasanjo's third term agenda would have succeeded but for the vibrant media and a coalition that ensured that Nigerians were properly informed to resist unconstitutionality. Olusegun Obasanjo in pursuit of third term in office, an attempt to remain in power for long motivated the law making organ of the government to circumvent the constitution. But the media in performing their watchdog role drummed publicity to this ignoble act and his ambition to perpetuate himself in office longer than necessary was truncated. Another example bordering on Obasanjo that the media called attention to and criticized was the donation of a huge sum in millions of naira to his party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) during the 1998 local government elections. The Tribune Editorial (24 Nov. 1998) called on Obasanjo to supply the public a full disclosure of the identities of those involved (in aiding him). Olutokun and Seteolu (2001) after criticizing this huge sum of N130 million given by Obasanjo made a notion that "the authorities must seriously consider setting a ceiling on the amount individual aspirants could spend in the course of seeking public office". Various newspapers and broadcast houses played watchdog roles in monitoring the 1999 elections. For example, Newswatch in its January 25, 1999 reported irregularities in the run-up to the state Assembly/ Governorship elections. These include under age voters in Katsina, multiple voting in Abia State as well as bribery stories in Edo, Delta and Ekiti States. The public was apprised of these irregularities when the media helped in trumpeting the issues with the aim of effecting a change.



#### **(4) Electioneering Role**

The mass media are very useful in the electoral process in any nation. The media in their agenda setting role helped the Nigerian electorate to have an insight into the personalities of the political office seekers and their manifestoes or their plans. During the transition from military rule to democratic rule from 1998-1999, the media lived up to its expectation of keeping the public abreast of happenings in the political space of Nigeria. This explains why Tell Magazine did a weekly countdown to the handover in every single issue of its publication between July 1998 and May 1999 to reflect on the transition programme (Olutokun and Seteolu 2003). Besides, the “Nigeria Decides” political debate programme on the 2007 general elections produced by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), “Focus Nigeria”, “Political Platform” produced by the African Independent Television (AIT) are some other programmes through which the media helped in influencing voting in the last general elections.

#### **(5) Accountability/Whistle Blowing Role**

The Media have been irrepressible in holding the citizenry, particularly the political leaders accountable in Nigeria. The media have unearthed high profile cases in an effort to expose brazen corruption which many public/political office holders have been enmeshed in. Some of these are: The Buhari-Gate Scandal A former speaker of the House of Representative, Alhaji Salisu Buhari was the first to occupy the office after the 1999 election. He stayed in office despite news of irregularities that trailed his election and biographical records. Backed by his mega political party, PDP he continued official duties. Sani Kabir, a Nigerian journalist and his counterparts in the United States of America (USA) were not comfortable with the state of affairs, and in the manner of the Watergate scandal dug out facts to support the claims that Buhari’s age declaration and educational qualifications declared in his pre-election data form were wide off the mark. The News, a newspaper in Nigeria published the news in its July 12, 1999 edition. The story entitled “The Crook” alleged that Buhari amplified his actual age and never attended the famous Toronto University in Canada. The embattled speaker reacted by slamming a suit against the paper but the media did not back down in their fight against this “falsehood”. In the end, he was disgraced out of office. Olutokun and Seteolu (2001) quote the Comet, another newspaper calling for the resignation of the speaker as: ...we reaffirm our position in an earlier comment.

The Honourable speaker should climb down from his high office until investigations are concluded. Olutokun and Seteolu (2001) conclude that: As a result of the media’s watchdog role, Buhari on July 22, 1999 dropped his bravado, pleaded guilty to the allegations and resigned his office, thus paving the way for his prosecution. Although Nigerians may not have been satisfied with the punishment meted out to the former speaker for his sharp corrupt practices, the truth remains that the media lived up to their responsibility of ensuring that the government is accountable to the people. This event, like many others, attaches credence to the fact that journalists in Nigeria go the whole hog to fight political corruption even at the risk of their lives. In fact, it was a defining moment in the political evolution of democratic experiments in Nigeria.

- Dr. Okadigbo’s Scandal

A former Senate President, now late Dr. Chuba Okadigbo was impeached from office after a vote of 81 to 11 against him on August 8, 2000 (Olutokun and Seteolu 2003). The impeachment was on the grounds of corruption in the management of public funds and abuse in contract awards. The

embezzled fund totalling N67 million was for the purchase of cars and office furniture among other misdeeds. The indictment came when Alhaji Ibrahim Salim, clerk of the house made the stunning revelations at the July 24, 2000. Kuta Panel, a panel set up to look at impropriety in the activities of the members of the house. The media which had been monitoring the panel started the publicity of misconducts. Many screaming headlines and stories circulated. Examples are: “PDP Abandons Okadigbo” (Tribune August 7, 2000), “Pressure Mounts on Okadigbo to Quit” (Comet August 1, 2000). This Day, August 3, 2000 back page reports Segun Adeniji, the editor as saying: Okadigbo allowed himself the indulgence of situating his power and responsibility within the number of contracts he could award to himself and his cronies – it was even more tragic that the man would lie so blatantly to the probe panel.... He should be told to clear his office that the matter is over. Indeed, the Media Rights Agenda (2003) affirms the accountability role of the media in relation to the above case by noting that “the media remain a cardinal institution for consolidating and extending Nigeria’s young democracy”.

In this regard, cases of mismanagement and corruption such as the Evan(s) Enwerem (a former Senate President in Nigeria), Patricia Etteh (a former speaker, House of Representatives), Prof Adenike Grange (a former Minister of Health) Iyabo Obasanjo (a senator caught up in shady deals in the health and power sectors), House of Representatives N2.3 million Car Scandal, the Halliburton corruption scandal, the Vaswani brothers’ scandal and many other improprieties in government circles at different times have been blown open by the media.

#### **(6) Agitation Role in Electoral Reforms**

Although elections are over and elected officers serving in different appointive capacities the credibility of the elections are still being questioned as evidenced in the ongoing election tribunals and appeal court cases in many parts of the country. The most recent of these being the appeal court’s upholding of an earlier tribunal’s judgement to the effect that Adams Oshiomole won the 2007 governorship election in Edo State as against the Independent National Electoral Commission’s (INEC’s) declaration of Prof Osarhiemen Osunbor as governor. A similar scenario played out in Ondo State where the court declared that Olusegun Mimiko is the duly elected governor, not Olusegun Agagu as declared by the INEC. Journalists kept and are still keeping tabs on these and many other electoral cases in the local, state and federal tiers of government, to ensure that justice is done. Besides, the media are at the forefront of the agitation for electoral reforms by reporting the irregularities and malpractice that characterize the 2003 and 2007 elections and calling for immediate action after the elections.

#### **Empirical Review**

Nguevese (2018) examine to influence of ownership in radio new coverage. Categories of media ownership in Nigeria are private owned and government owned but, the researcher concentrated more on government owned media since it is the researcher’s area of study. The point of the study is to determine the influence of ownership in radio news coverage to determine if, the news covered is owner’s interest or public’s interest oriented. A survey of the selected broadcasting stations news coverage for a period of two weeks was carried out with the use of questionnaires. The data obtained were used to obtain the frequency for the study. The data was analyzed using the simple percentage method and chi-square. This was used to obtain percentage prominence and degree of freedom of news coverage the study. The result of the analysis revealed that, radio news coverage

is highly influenced by the owner's (government) and the news that is covered is owner's interest oriented instead of public interest oriented. The research also shows that the government has influence on radio news coverage. Recommendations were made base on the studies that the government should interference less in the running of the station and focus on subvention and overall performance of the station as a tool national developments covering news that are people's interest oriented instead of owner's interest oriented.

Lawrence (2019) studied the influence of media ownership and control on media agenda settings using Nigeria as a case. The core method of data collection in this study was in-depth interview. The sampling methods employed include the cluster sampling and the purposive sampling since the data expected requires an in-depth knowledge of the Nigeria media landscape. The finding of this study review that different level of government in Nigeria which comprises of state and federal government serving and the retired high level public and private official, politicians, as well as influential businesses men and women, own most of the media organization in Nigeria. It was observed that this group of the people is the core newsmaker whose view and opinion populate most of the view, news opinion information disseminated in the media in Nigeria. The findings further shows that the current media ownership pattern and the level of media control in Nigeria actually hinder the media from independently setting society's agenda.

Apuke (2018) explores some of the issues in media ownership and control in Nigeria. The study made use of secondary sources of data collection i.e books, magazines, and journals. The study explicated four types of media ownership namely; government ownership, private ownership, mixed ownership and community ownership. The study reveals among other things that media managers are often faced with the dilemma of balancing the media owner's interest and public's interest without infringing on the laws of the land or the ethics of the profession. Whether media ownership is private or public, the interest of the owner plays a dominant role in determining what the media managers do or fail to do. Hardly can an owner tolerate a manager who operates contrary to his interest. Media ownership has remained a topical issue in media discourse. This is because a popular saying has it that "he who pays the piper dictates the tune. Again, type of media ownership determines the level of freedom and efficiency of the organization. In reversing these issues, the study recommends that both the private and government media should be allowed to practice freely without any internal or external forces. The media should not be let in the hands of the rich at the expense of the poor.

### **Theoretical framework**

This study was anchored on Gate Keeping Theory, Kurt Lewin was apparently the first one to use the term "gatekeeping," which he used to describe a wife or mother as the person who decides which foods end up on the family's dinner table. (Lewin, 1947). The gatekeeper is the person who decides what shall pass through each gate section, of which, in any process, there are several. Although he applied it originally to the food chain, he then added that the gating process can include a news item winding through communication channels in a group. This is the point from which most gatekeeper studies in communication are launched.

Bittner (1980) expanded Lewin's original definition and explained that a gatekeeper is 'any person or formally organized group (that is) directly involved in relaying or transferring information from

one individual to another through a mass medium.' This expanded interpretation allows for the inclusion of film producers, who cut scenes from original scripts, propaganda artists who prepare leaflets to be dropped from an airplane, engineers at the local control centres for cable television, and media owners who decide what and what will go out or not go out in television station. An effective communication gatekeeper can do one of three things in the process of keeping his/her gates: limit information by selective editing, increase the amount of information by expansive editing or reorganize the information through reinterpretation. The relevance of the theory to the study can be seen in the fact that ownership of the media most often than not engage in the practice of actively and directly deciding what news content or stories get into the media, and which ones don't.

### **Research Design:**

The study used the survey method for data collection: According to Wiseman and Aaron (1972) as quoted by Obaze and Onosu, (2019, p19) survey research is a method for collecting and analyzing social data via highly structured and often very detailed interview or questionnaire in order to obtain information from large number of respondent presumed to be a representative of a specific population. Folarin (2018) citing Babbie posits that survey research is very vital in describing a population too large to be observed directly. The fact that this research problem has to do with quantitative studies, this research method is the more appropriate.

### **Population of the Study**

This includes media practitioners (journalist) managers, producers in the media industry in this case Unity FM Abakaliki Ebonyi state and Dream FM Enugu, Enugu State these key informants form the population of this study.

### **Sample/Sample Size**

This consist of 12 respondent, 6 each from Dream FM Enugu, Enugu State and Unity FM Abakaliki Ebonyi state selected from among programme managers, producers in news and current affair, head of technical unit etc. these respondents were selected on the basis of their position.

### **Sampling Techniques**

Sampling in this context is the procedure for selecting of the required samples from the population in a given study or research (Egbule 2018, p.173). The purposive sampling technique of the non-probability method will be used. Purposive sampling implies that samples are selected on the basis of certain characteristic or qualities. A purposive or judgmental sample is one that is selected based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study.

According to Tejumaiye, Adepoju (2018, p68) purposive sample is deliberately chosen and it attempts to represent a specific position of the population and not all and sundry.

### **Research Instrument**

A structured interview guide will be used to interview the key informants. The questionnaire would be constructed with closed ended questions with options from where the respondents would be expected to choose from.

This instrument will be used because it would give room for greater uniformity of responses and it makes the responses easily quantifiable for analysis. In other words, close ended questions

enable respondents to understand the way in which responses are to be made. For easy quantification and analysis of findings

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The procedure for collecting data for this study will be based on faced to person-to-person interview with the targeted respondents. The respondents were asked an open ended question which they provided answers to. This exercise may be carried out at at the selected media organization.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

As a qualitative and descriptive study, answer from the respondents were tabulated based on the research questions.

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of data got from the interview section conducted between 6 respondents from Unity FM Abakaliki Ebonyi state and 6 respondents from Dream FM Enugu, Enugu State, both representing government-owned media and privately owned media respectively. It is pertinent to present the demographic variable of the respondents before proceeding to discuss the finding from the interview section.

### **Analysis of the Finding from the Interview**

#### **Do you have any in-house policy?**

When asked if the respondents have any in-house policy, 100% of the respondents affirmed that they all have an in-house policy that guides their day to activities in the media station.

#### **What does the policy says?**

When asked what does the policy says, majority of those in the government owned media said that the major theme in their policy is to relate the government activities to the people and to present the government to the people in good light. This was the opinion of 5 (83.3. %) of the respondent who belong to the government owned media. While on the hand, majority of the privately owned media respondents responded that the policy of their media house is to present the objective side of any given news situation while also maintaining the need to make profit. This was also the opinion of 4 (66.7%) out of the total of 6 respondents.

#### ***Is there any policies on gatekeeping between the owners?***

When the respondents were asked whether there was any policies on gatekeeping between the owners all (100%) said yes. But some salient point mentioned by the respondents includes

#### **How is this policy being carried out?**

When asked how the policies is being carried out, a significant number of the respondents which amounted to 9 (75%) of the respondent said the owners personally employ and educate the editor on the policies who then go out to edit reports and programme content in line with in -house polices of the management which is usually dictated by the owner. While 3 responses which accounted for 25% of the respondents said by directing the editors on the type of report or programme to air.

**Are there any specific programmes where the owners control the content?**

When asked if there were any specific programmes where owners are more interested to control the contents, 11 (91.7%) noted that owners of the media are mainly concerned with the control of and very careful about political and top political report.

**What pattern /procedure is followed during the gatekeeping process?**

When asked what pattern or procedure is followed by media house during gatekeeping 10 (83.3 %) said they are done by sending reporter to cover a particular story that may be of interest to the organization while deliberately killing a report that is not of interest to the media house policy or owner interest, it also could be done by reporting a particular story in as way or pattern of the media house policy.

**Can you identify any peculiar difference between the private and government owned media?**

When asked to identify any peculiar difference between private own media and government own media, majority of the respondent which amounted to (91.7%), noted that private owned media main objective is centered around money making, while the government owned media is directed with the principal aim of putting government in good light to the people.

Do you think gatekeeping affect the quality of your programme content?

Response	Frequency	percentage
Yes	9	75%
No	3	25 %
Total	12	100 %

Table above presents the opinion of the respondent on the effect of gatekeeping on the quality of programme content. It showed that 9 responses representing 75 % of the total respondents agreed that gatekeeping affect the quality of their programme content, while 3 responses of the respondent which also constituted 25% respondents does not think that gatekeeping affect the quality of their programme content.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDING**

In this section, the data collected from the interview on “influence of mass media ownership on programme content” were discussed and analyzed based on research questions.

**Research question 1:** What policies exist in both the public and privately managed media on gatekeeping? The answer to this research question is contain in the first question in the interview guide.

From the first question asked it was found out that the media house, Unity FM Abakaliki Ebonyi state and Dream FM Enugu, Enugu State privately own and government owned has an in-house policy that guides their day to activities in the media station. This was the summation of all (100%) of the respondents affirmed that they all have an in-house policy that. The conclusion here is that there is an in-house policy in media houses that guides their day to day activities.

**Research question 2:** What mechanisms are in place to ensure ownership control of media content and programme?

Data in the fourth (4) item of the guide help to shed light on the research question. Here it was found out that a significant number of the respondents which amounted to 9 responses that is 75% of the respondent said the owners personally employ and educate the editor on the policies who then go out to edit reports and programme content in line with the in-house policies of the management which is usually dictated by the owner. While 3 responses which accounted for 25% of the respondents said by directing the editors on the type of report or programme to air. From the large number who opined that owners personally employ and educate the editor on the policies who then go out to edit reports and programme content in line with the in-house policies of the management, it was concluded that the mechanism in place to ensure ownership control of media content and programme is by way of personally employing and educating editors on the policies who then go out to edit reports and programme content in line with this in-house policies of the management this agrees with the study of Golding and Murdock (1974; 1989; 2010) who argue that media proprietors do determine the editorial line and cultural stance of the newspapers and broadcast stations they own (Golding & Murdock, 2010, p.74). They operate within structures that constrain as well as facilitate their said influence, imposing limits as well as offering opportunities for editorial control.

**Research question 3:** In what programmatic and content areas is gatekeeping is more prominent? Finding from the fifth question in the interview guide bears the answer to the research question. Finding here revealed that 11 (91.7%) owners of the media are mainly concerned with the control of and very careful about political and top political report. Based on this is therefore logical to conclude that gatekeeping is more prominent in political and top political report or programme contents.

**Research question 4:** What is the procedure followed for ethical practice of journalism?

Question 6 in the interview guide bears the answer to this research question. Data here showed that When asked what pattern or procedure is followed by media house for ethical practice of journalism 10 (83.3 %) said they are done by sending reporter to cover a particular story that may be of interest to the organization while deliberately killing a report that is not of interest to the media house policy or owner interest, it also could be done by reporting a particular story in as way or pattern of the media house policy. this therefore means that the procedure followed in gatekeeping /or the ways is ethical practice of journalism carried out by sending reporter to cover a particular story that may be of interest to the organization while deliberately killing a report that is not of interest to the media house policy or owner interest.

**Research question 5:** What are the differences between the public and private media strategies in the ways gate keeping is carried out?

Finding from the sixth questions in the guide dues on the difference between private own media and government own media. It showed that majority of the respondent which amounted to (91.7%) of the respondents, noted that private owned media main objective is centered around money making, while the government owned media is directed with the principal aim of putting government in good light to the people. Based on this fact, it was concluded that while the government owned media is concerned with putting the government in good light to the people,

the private own media is concerned with profit making. Uche (1989:3) is in agreement with this when he states that government – owned media do not expose certain malpractice in high governmental establishment if a government- paid civil servant or public office-holder is involved.

**Research question 6:** What is the effect of gatekeeping on the quality of programe/content?

Table above presents the opinion of the respondent on the effect of gatekeeping on the quality of programme content. It showed that 9 responses representing 75 % of the total respondents agreed that gatekeeping affect the quality of their programme content, while 3 responses of the respondent which also constituted 25% respondents does not think that gatekeeping affect the quality of their programme content.

## SUMMARY

This study examined the comparative analyses of management of government and private media in south east of Nigeria, using Unity FM Abakaliki Ebonyi state and Dream FM Enugu, Enugu State as focal point.

The study was anchored on the gate keeping theory of the mass media, both which guided the study to relate the Influence of Media Ownership Pattern on Television Programme Content.

The assumption that “he who pays the pipers, dictate the tune” i.e ownership exact some level of influence on news content in media houses as it relate to the influence of television ownership on programme contents, was thus clarified from the finding from the six (6) major research questions put forward by the study. These included that:

- i. The policies that exist in both the public and privately managed media on gatekeeping but more prominently applied in the private media.
- ii. The mechanism in place to ensure ownership control of media content and programme is more with the public media.
- iii. There is a significant difference between ethical practice of journalism between public and private media in South-East Nigeria, with the public media been less ethical.

The data for the study were derived through the aid of structured interview which served as the primary source of data for the study and the internet, books, journal as the secondary sources of data for the study. The simple percentage method of data analysis was used to analysis the data from the interview section.

- There are in-house policy that guides their day to activities in the media station.
- The major theme in the policy of government owned media is to relate the government activities to the people and to present the government to the people in good light.
- owners personally employ and educate the editor on the policies who then go out to edit reports and programme content in line with this in -house polices of the management which is usually dictated by the owner.
- Owners of the media are mainly concerned with the control of and very careful about political and top political report.
- Said they are done by sending reporter to cover a particular story that may be of interest to the organization while deliberately killing a report that is not of interest to the media house policy or owner interest



- private owned media main objective is centered around money making, while the government owned media is directed with the principal aim of putting government in good light to the people
- That gatekeeping affect the quality of their programme content.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn

Every broadcast station has got its strength and its weaknesses wheather private or government owned. A broadcast station in one way or the other has to satisfy ownership interest, , ideologies and policies on the basis of which its existence is built. The government uses the public stations to extend their power and political ambition as well as propaganda, suppression and if possible, elimination of all forms of opposition. Garba (2014) was right when he wrote in theGuardian newspaper that “ the interest of the state are merged with that of the ruling regime or party and its leadership. The interest of the leadership in turn becomes the public interest”. The state media, is therefore, used and seen as a tool for promoting the interest of the state and the government in power. The private stations too, have their pitfalls. They are also used to promote the political ambition, personal interest and financial interest or gain of the proprietor. This is because they want to make more money, to stay alive as a station, pay staff, renew equipment, pay taxes, renew license and to be able to foot other overhead bills.

Finally, however, the station, broadcast organization must not forget to render their services in the good practice of true information. They are to provide genuine socio-economic information and harmless entertainment for the audience-the public as well as the wider society.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study;

- That journalist (media men and women) of both public and private owned media strive to be objective
- Broadcasters should place more priority on performing their social responsibilities than on dancing to the tune of their employers.
- Professional bodies of journalist such as the NUJ should ensure that journalists working in both public and privately managed media house strictly adhered to the Code of ethics of objectivity.

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