ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Broadcast Media and Free and Fair Elections in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was on broadcast media and free and fair elections in Nigeria. The study was designed to examine the roles the broadcast media plays in ensuring free and fair elections in Nigeria, necessitated by the observed difficulties in conducting credible elections in Nigeria. Four research questions were raised. The study employed the survey design. The sample was 150 journalists in Nasarawa State who were selected using convenient sampling technique on the basis of their availability and willingness to partake in the study. A four point Likert-type of scale questionnaire was designed by the researcher and used for data collection. The questionnaire was validated by two experts from Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The test retest reliability estimate of the questionnaire was 0.81. Direct delivery method was adopted in data collection even as the mean was used in the data analysis with 2.50 as the bench mark mean point. Results showed that poverty and corruption are lead factors that predispose some citizens to electoral malpractices that lead to incredible elections. The roles of the broadcast media in ensuring free and fair election include educating the electorates about electoral malpractices and their consequences and reporting electoral irregularities. The study concluded that the broadcast media has a great role to play in ensuring free and fair elections in Nigeria. It recommended among other things that the government should promulgate sanctions on electoral malpractices to serve as a deterrent to others. Also the broadcast media need to be given some legal support to enjoy freedom of expression.

Key Words: broadcast media, citizens, election, electoral malpractices, and freedom

INTRODUCTION

Elections in Africa and indeed Nigeria have over the years been recognized as being notoriously characterized by unprofessional broadcast media reportage, hype, frenzy, abuse and in some cases mudslinging. Politicians often dominate the broadcast media space with little attention on the salient issues of ensuring free and fair elections.

Broadcast media coverage of political elections has progressively grown in relevance particularly in Nigeria's fourth republic (1992-1999 and 1999-2015), which witnessed the emergence of Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), Umaru Musa Yar'adua (2007) and Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (2007-2015). The scale and scope of the broadcast media usage in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria was however unprecedented. The role of the broadcast media in every society is often to educate, inform, enlighten and entertain. It is assumed that where those roles are effectively carried out, elections have a greater chance of being free and fair. The broadcast media has been a strategic instrument in the struggle for hegemony both within the nation and globally (Oso, 2012).

It is for this reason that the media generally is often referred to as the 'fourth estate' of the realm. The power of the broadcast media is reinforced by its ability to withhold or give publicity from its informative capacity. This freedom of the media generally (the broadcast media inclusive) became the generally accepted conventions of representative cum liberal democracy and development. All the revolutionary and reformist movements from the eighteenth century onwards advocated liberty of the media and made use of it to advance their causes (Hardt, 2003).

Pate and Ya'adus (2015) opine that due to the nature of the Nigerian population, diversity, political orientations, religions affiliations, social groupings and ethnicity, mass media generally and the broadcast media specifically in Nigeria serve as a major system of communication. The media mediates, and does not stand independent on a given social system but instead provides channels of

communication between elements within it. Put differently, the media acts as a platform through which people of diverse interests in the society express their views. Ekeanyanwu (2007, p.10) argues that

> The media exist as an organ of information sourcing and dissemination, educational promotion, surveillance, social enlightenment and mobilization. These functions set the media apart as an important link factor in the relations between the government and the governed and make them a pillar in societal growth and development.

There has been limited study on the effect and role of the broadcast media in electoral procedures especially free and fair elections, given the critical role the media plays in the electoral process. The Nigerian broadcast media, without doubt, is reputed for its vibrancy, diversity, boisterousness and freedom during electioneering periods in the country due to its inherent unique attributes. This assertion can be fully understood looking back at the history of Nigerian elections with the broadcast media as an integral part of Nigerian political system. The Nigerian political history is never complete without highlighting the important role played by the Nigerian media particularly the broadcast media because of its uniqueness in terms of appeal .Historically, according to Segun (1987), journalism which is a form of mass media was the first to gain acceptability due to the invention of the printing press.

Nigeria, just like most Sub-Saharan African nations, is in the cockpit of change in terms of changing media use, particularly the broadcast media and its ever changing platforms; For instance, in just over ten years, it has gone from being mostly unconnected to the Internet which is a form of broadcast media platform to having millions using it through different platforms and devices. Regarding the role of the broadcast media during elections, Pate and Ya'adus (2015) argue that the media had remained in the fore of the struggle to promote a credible electoral process. The traditional role of the broadcast media alongside other media platforms in the electoral process however is to act as a check on the abuse of governmental power, to propagate different political ideologies which enables the electorates to make informed decisions during voting. The various broadcast media also advertise candidates and political parties who want to sell themselves. They also scrutinize and criticize not just the electoral process but the stakeholders in the electoral process, and this helps to limit the arbitrariness some stakeholders may want to display. Whatever nature or circumstances the society in which the broadcast media operates, there are certain basic factors that determine the depth and spread of their influence; these factors are the broadcast media themselves, the society they operate in and the public they are able to reach, specifically their audience.

Over the years in Nigeria the broadcast media has excellently served as a channel of enlightenment to the public regarding the electoral procedures and the various party candidates vying for various positions. However, there is little or no literature evidence showing the role of broadcast media in ensuring that the elections they advertise to the members of the electorate are conducted without any hitch. Several cases of electoral fraud have been reported to trail elections in Nigeria (Dawam, 2018). Hardly has an election been conducted in Nigeria without cases of rigging, killing, confiscation of ballot papers and assault on opposition parties. These ugly scenarios do not make for effective democracy. Elections in Nigeria are gradually becoming death sentences. Could it be that the electorates are not aware of their roles or they are not properly educated on the attitudes to display during election to make it free and fair? These and other related questions form the basis of the present study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The broadcast media has always played a critical role in the electoral process. This role is the primary reason the media is regarded as the fourth estate of the realm. This role is considered a necessary

safeguard in any democratic society; Nigeria is not an exception. Never before has the Nigerian broadcast media been an important player in the political process as it is today. Its importance over the years has generally and widely been recognized as each election year renders these truths more self-evident. The use of emotional appeals plays a critical role in political campaigns to either increase support or decrease support for a particular candidate (*Bybee, 2010).*

Political campaign strategies most often seek to instill positive emotion or to raise fear and anxiety about the opposition, while the positive emotions seek to instill zeal about a candidate. Fear and anxiety distorts the voter's behavioral patterns (Marshall, 1963). The broadcast media has been educating the members of the electorate about election dates, the various parties approved by INEC and the various candidates vying for different positions. These are meant to create awareness to the electorates so as to make informed decisions. However, there is hardly any election in Nigeria that is not dented with incidences of violence, rigging, assaults and killing. Most elections in Nigeria are bloody; they do not end in peace. Free and fair elections are hard to be conducted in Nigeria. Many people are gradually losing faith in the outcomes of most elections in Nigeria due to the ugly scenarios and activities that occur prior, during and after the elections. The big question is, how can the broadcast media help in ensuring a free and fair election in Nigeria? What factors militate against broadcast media efforts to ensure a free and fair elections in Nigeria?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to:

1. Identify factors that predispose some citizens to incredible elections in Nigeria.
2. Examine how the broadcast media could effect free and fair elections in Nigeria.
3. Ascertain factors that militate against the efforts of broadcast media to ensure free and fair elections in Nigeria.
4. Find out media requirement for a free and fair election in Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What factors predispose some citizens to incredible elections in Nigeria?
2. How can broadcast media effect free and fair elections in Nigeria?
3. What factors militate against broadcast media efforts to ensure free and fair elections in Nigeria?
4. What are the media requirements for a free and fair election in Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Free and Fair Elections

Elections can be defined as a system where people select others for leadership. It is done through a voting process which may be direct or indirect depending on the rules of a particular country (Aliegba, 2017). A free and fair election involves political freedoms and fair practices leading to up to the vote, a fair count of eligible voters who cast a ballot and acceptance of election results by all parties both winners and losers (Robert, 2018). An election is tagged free and fair if there are no anomalies in the procedure, conduct and final results. Unfair electoral processes lead to incredible elections. In essence, a free and fair election is the type that is conducted where elected officials are chosen under a condition where coercion is comparatively uncommon. When members of the electorates are forced or persuaded against their will to vote an official under any guise, such election cannot be said to be free and fair. Vote buying is the most common electoral fraud (Dawam, 2018). The right to democratic governance is a fundamental right of every human to be exercised through free and fair elections. Transparency in political, economic and social affairs, accountability of political actors, and freedom of speech all constitute the measure of good governance just as free, fair and accurate media is essential to a healthy, functioning democracy.

Broadcast Media and Free and Fair Election

It is a truism to say that the media should play an indispensable role in the proper functioning of a democracy. This role is not limited to elections, but

should endure between them. The media serves as a link between the government and the electorates, hence the broadcast media plays great roles in ensuring that the elections are free and fair. Some of their roles are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

The media are expected to provide the public with the platform to enable them to make informed electoral choices and ensure that the rule of law is upheld. This could be through creation of awareness about the approved political parties and their candidates. In the views of Echezona (2019), the role of the media in free and fair elections include: educating voters on how to exercise their democratic rights, reporting on the development of an election campaign, educating the public about the various categories of electoral malpractices and their consequences and educating the electorates about the value of their franchise.

In a similar view, Berger (2012) summarizes the role of the broadcast media in free and fair election as to include: scrutinising candidates/parties; exposing irregularities, informing, educating and involving audiences in the interests of public participation in 'free and fair' elections; providing a platform for the political parties to communicate their message to the electorate, and vice versa; providing a forum for the parties to debate with each other and with the public; monitoring vote counting; reporting election results. With these roles effectively and uncompromisingly carried out, elections will be free from all vices and manipulations.

Factors that Predispose the Electorates to Electoral Misconducts in Nigeria

Having a free and fair election in Nigeria is becoming impossible. Despite the awareness created by the media about the consequences of electoral malpractices and misconduct, a lot of citizens are seen and caught consciously engaging in several electoral mishaps that are detrimental to peace and a democratic nation. The question that readily comes to mind is what are the underlying causes of such electoral malpractices?

In positing answers to this question, Tersoo (2019) identifies some factors to include:

a. High rate of Poverty
   Poverty is a national problem. Many families are living in abject poverty. It is becoming hard to feed three times a day in Nigeria. As a results many people are vulnerable to be used as thugs during or after election to effect electoral malpractices at some token.
b. Unemployment
   Nigeria's economy is very narrow. A lot of youths are roaming the streets without any good job. Year in year out, different higher institutions in Nigeria mass produce graduates in different fields and discipline, but unfortunately there are no job opportunities to engage these many graduates. At the end of the day very many of them are idle and jobless. In their jobless state they become ready instruments of electoral malpractices for some greedy politicians who may wish to win elections by all means.
c. History of Chequered Elections
   Nigeria has a history of poor elections over the years. Hence young politicians believe that election is a do or die affair. That is the reason why many contestants do not readily accept defeat. They do all that are in their powers to fight back or to discredit their opponents.
d. Compromised Security Network
   The security outlay of the nation is under some kind of influence. As a result, electoral processes are regulated based on the favoured party. In some electoral misconduct, security agents are the actors. They serve as protective catalysts used by thugs to perpetrate their dastardly act against their opponents at a token or for a promise of promotion or other forms of gratification.

Hindrances to Broadcast Media Effecting Free and Fair Elections in Nigeria

The media has been described as the eye of the nation. They see to it that citizens are not kept in the dark regarding electoral processes, results and outcomes. However their efforts have not yielded the desired results due to some challenges they face.

Some of these challenges are the reasons why the media seems not to be effecting free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria. A few of the factors are discussed hereunder as postulated by Odo (2015):

i. Aggressive Political Climate
The political weather has been very aggressive, annoyingly uncertain and unbalanced.

ii. Bribery and Corruption
Bribery is another factor underpinning the nascent democracy and it has entered into the electorate system. A lot of people are involved in corruption directly or indirectly by taking or giving unlawful gratification from the politicians thereby marketing their political right as well as their votes. Vote buying is now the order of the day in most elections in Nigeria.

Political Thugs: Political Thugs are on the increase every day among the youths. This is because of illiteracy, poverty and inadequate employment opportunities for the youth which was artificially created by the politicians. All the politicians have their political thugs that are hired to disrupt election by causing confusion during and after the election. These people hinder and most times disrupt the activities of broadcast media personnel during elections.

Media Requirements for Free and Fair Elections in Nigeria

Free, fair and credible elections are needed for good democracy and governance. Besides, the electorates might lose confidence in the nation's political system if credible elections are far cries. However for the broadcast media to be able to effect or be instrumental to free and fair elections, some conditions need to be met. Some of the media requirements are presented in the following paragraphs.

Berger (2012) identifies the following as media requirements for free and fair elections:

1. A legal dispensation that enables media freedom
Various international tribunals and organisations such as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression insist on media freedom as one of the cornerstones of a free and fair election. The key dimensions of media freedom in times of election include: Freedom from censorship, freedom from arbitrary attack or interference: journalists not to be intimidated or harassed, and Free access to necessary information: journalists should have freedom of movement, access to meetings and a right to public information held by the State. This emphasis on media freedom includes freedom from both the state and other forms of structural pressures such as owners, sources and advertisers.
2. De facto media freedom on the ground
Here the focus is on the real-politik use of state power to compromise freedom of expression during elections. The point is that the existence of a free legal regime needs to be complemented by freedom of expression in practice. A free and fair election in conditions where the media and individuals suffer ongoing informal sanction and repression is probably impossible.
3. Independent Media Regulation
Media funded by the taxpayers of a country, or set up in their name, have a special responsibility for fairness in an election. For countries with fairly tight state control over the media, ensuring pluralism within the public media sector is especially important. This is because often it is only public media that has the capacity in terms of reach, language mix and non-commercial responsibility to reach all sections of the electorate. A public broadcaster cannot fulfill its broader public interest duties in an election if it owes a narrow loyalty to the ruling party of the day.
4. General Pluralism of Media Voices
The importance of expression in the media being free *from* government interference should not direct attention away from "freedom" *for* such things as diversity and equality of access to a wide range of media content. Hence, pluralism in media ownership and public access is seen as another key characteristic of media's contribution to "free and fair" elections. The underlying principle is that the public need to be

exposed to the widest variety of sources of information during an election in order for electoral choices to be real. Media pluralism is often interpreted to mean that the media should be owned by a variety of different interests, resulting in a market place of ideas.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agenda-setting theory

The Agenda Setting theory describes the ability of the news media to influence the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda. With agenda setting being a social science theory, it also attempts to make predictions. That is, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important (McCombs & Funk, 2011). Agenda setting occurs through a cognitive process known as "accessibility". Accessibility implies that the more frequently and prominently the news media cover an issue, the more that issue becomes accessible in audience's memories (Lee & Riffe, 2016).

Core assumptions and statements of agenda-setting theory is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. As well, agenda-setting describes the way that media attempts to influence viewers, and establish a hierarchy of news prevalence. Two basic assumptions underlie most researches on agenda-setting:

i. The media do not reflect reality, they filter and shape it.
ii. Media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.

The agenda setting theory is adopted to anchor this study because of its direct link with the topic; one of the key themes of the theory is the ability of the media to influence the importance placed on topics of public agenda, in this case elections. Another key theme of the theory is its emphasis on the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by news media which in this case is politics; it must be noted in the super structure; in a developing state like Nigeria this superstructure called politics determines all other structures such as the economy and socio-cultural.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Obakhedo (2011) examined the imperative of political education in curbing Electoral Violence in Nigeria. He stressed that both domestic and international political sociologists based on empirical investigations argue that the greatest obstacle to democratic consolidation in Nigeria is electoral violence. This is a result of the rascal politics that the political elites engage in. Sometimes, the violence is intra-party, and most of the time, it is inter-party. This phenomenon affects the credibility of the electoral system, the democratic system, rule of law, the nature, extent and magnitude of violence and rigging associated with elections in Nigeria. This had assumed an alarming rate that necessitates intellectual excursion to the realm of possible solutions. He cited the Human Rights Watch (2007) which describes the nation's post-independence history as being overshadowed by the depredations of a series of corrupt, abusive and unaccountable governments. He maintained that this description is apt because it appeared that Nigerians seem to have acquired a culture of electoral violence as six of the seven general elections conducted since independence in 1960 have been violence ridden: 1964/65, 1979, 1983, 2003, and 2007 (Malu, 2009). He found education to be a major strategy and weapon for curbing this impediment.

Casimir, Omeh, and Ike (2013) evaluated the concept of electoral fraud in Nigeria. It explored the challenges of electoral fraud, its consequent crisis for new democracies and suggested ways of curtailing the phenomenon in its varied manifestations. The paper took a critical look at a disturbing national and international question: why is there so much electoral fraud in new and emerging democracies like Nigeria. The paper also seeks to establish the reasons and causes of electoral manipulation, its dynamics and corrupt tendencies, especially those electoral outcomes that are disputed as a result of electoral misconduct known as "electoral fraud". The researchers premised their

study on the 2011 general elections in Nigeria which the Independent National Election Commission (INEC), the electoral management body (EMB) organized, pulled what may pass as an electoral feat in achieving one of the most open, credible, peaceful and transparent elections within Nigeria's recent memory. They stated that before the 2011 elections, Nigeria had the 1999, 2003 and the 2007 elections considered by both national and international observers, the common wealth election monitoring groups, and the civil society, to be the most disorganized and fraudulent election during which people's votes were blatantly stolen, rigged and the mandate of the people hijacked by political elites belonging variously to different political parties.

Television as a medium of political advertising during elections in Anambra State, Nigeria is a study conducted by Edegoh, Ezebuenyi, and Asemah (2013). The study is an evaluation of the influence of television political advertising on electorates' attitude toward voting in Anambra State. The study aimed at finding out whether exposure to television advertising influences respondents' preference for advertised candidate. The study is anchored in the agenda setting and reinforcement theory. Survey research method was adopted and questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The findings show that exposure to television advertising influences voters' preference for advertised candidates, and that it generates quicker recall of advertised candidates in voters. Based on the findings, the paper concludes that the influence of television political advertising on electorates is such that it makes the voters to recall the advertised candidate and that it persuasively generates in voters preference for the advertised candidate. The researchers recommended, among others, that political parties in Nigeria be given due attention on the use of television for the dissemination of political activities. Data presentation and analysis of the study shows that the return rate was 93% while the mortality rate is 7%. The return rate is higher than the mortality rate and by implication mortality rate of 7% does not affect the study as it is insignificant compared to the return rate of 93%. Thus, the copies were representative enough (adequate) of the population which was based on 370. Regarding how exposure to TV political campaigns influences respondents, data shows that 292 respondents representing 79% agreed that they were influenced by exposure to political campaigns, 58 (16%) disagreed and 20 were neutral. On respondents view on the medium that stimulates quicker recall, data shows that television stimulates quicker recall in respondents (n=150 or 41%). However, billboard is second to television in stimulating quicker recall on voters (n=140 or 38%). Radio has 8% (n=30), and other media such as handbills have 8% (n=30). This shows that television stimulates quicker recall in audience. Regarding the persuasive power of television advertising, data shows that it persuades electorates to vote during elections. 200 (54%) said yes, 100 (27% ticked no, while the remaining 70 (19%) ticked don't know. The import of this is that television campaign is persuasive. The data on respondents' opinion on whether television advertising is the best shows that 41% (n=152) agreed, 40.5% (n=150) disagreed while 18.5% (n=68) were neutral. This means that the majority of the respondents believe that television advert is the best form of political advertising. Responses on combining television with other media shows that out of 370 respondents, 280 (76%) agreed while the remaining 90 (24%) disagreed. This means that television has to be combined with other communication media for the purpose of influencing the electorate during elections. On account of this, findings clearly revealed that exposure to political campaigns via television could influence respondents' preference for advertised candidates. The data generated in the study show that television is an important tool for carrying out political campaigns. The implication of the data in table two of this study is that the importance of television as a tool for carrying out political advertising cannot be overemphasized.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the survey design. The survey design allows the researcher to make generalisations on the whole target group based on data collected

from a representative portion of the population (Awotunde & Ugodulunwa, 2004). The study population was all registered journalists in Nasarawa State. The sample for the study was 180 respondents (journalists) who were conveniently selected on the grounds of being available and willing to partake in the study. The selection was done using the convenience sampling technique. A four point scale questionnaire was used for data collection via face to face or personal contact method. The scale has points as strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). To ensure validity of the questionnaire experts' scrutiny was used. Two senior lecturers from Nasarawa State University, Keffi validated the instrument while a pilot study was carried out to ensure reliability of the questionnaire was conducted. The procedure yielded a test-retest reliability of 0.81 indicative of high reliability. Data collected were analyzed using the mean facilitated by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0 and presented using tables. However, analysis of data was based on the 150 valid questionnaires out of the 180 used as sample. Decisions were taken using the bench mark mean of 2.50. Consequently, any item whose mean response was less than 2.50 was not regarded as influential though was recognized.

RESULTS

Table 1: Factors that Predispose Citizens to Incredible Elections in Nigeria

S/NO	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total N	Mean	Remark
1.	Poverty	100	40	8	2	150	3.59	Accepted
2.	Corruption	120	20	07	03	150	3.71	Accepted
3.	Unemployment	96	34	10	10	150	3.44	Accepted
4.	Intimidation by security agents	88	26	16	20	150	3.21	Accepted
5.	Bad history of previous elections	75	45	20	10	150	3.23	Accepted

Results in Table 1 showed that corruption (3.71) and poverty (3.59) are the lead factors that predispose some citizens to electoral malpractices that lead to incredible elections in the country.

Research Question 2: How can broadcast media affect free and fair election in Nigeria?

Table 2: Role of Broadcast Media in Ensuring Free and Fair Elections in Nigeria

S/NO	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total N	Mean	Remark
1.	Educating voters on how to exercise their franchise	110	30	06	04	150	3.64	Accepted
2.	Reporting development on election campaigns	95	45	09	01	150	3.56	Accepted
3.	Educating voters about electoral malpractices and their consequences	120	30	-	-	150	3.80	Accepted
4.	Exposing electoral irregularities	105	38	07	-	150	3.65	Accepted
5.	Scrutinizing candidates / parties	90	45	10	05	150	3.47	Accepted

Evidences in Table 2 show that the widely accepted roles of the media in enhancing free and fair election are educating voters on electoral malpractices and their consequences (3.80) and exposing electoral

irregularities (3.65) among others.

Research Question 3: What factors militate against broadcast media efforts to ensure a free and fair election in Nigeria?

Table 3: Factors Militating against Broadcast Media's Efforts in Ensuring Free and Fair Elections in Nigeria

S/NO	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total N	Mean	Remark
1.	Unfriendly political climate	115	30	3	2	150	3.72	Accepted
2.	Political thuggery	125	20	4	1	150	3.79	Accepted
3.	Bribery and corruption	140	10	-	-	150	3.93	Accepted
4.	Poor media freedom or independence	110	30	08	02	150	3.65	Accepted

Going by data in Table 3, one could see that bribery and corruption (3.93) and political thuggery are the major hindrances militating against media's effort in enhancing free and fair elections in Nigeria.

Research Question 4: What are the media requirements for a free and fair election in Nigeria?

Table 4: Media Requirements for Free and Fair Elections in Nigeria

S/NO	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total N	Mean	Remark
1.	Legal framework for media freedom	108	32	5	5	150	3.62	Accepted
2.	Independent media regulation	110	30	8	2	150	3.65	Accepted
3.	Pluralism of media voices	120	20	10	-	150	3.73	Accepted
4.	Practice of freedom of expression	115	25	7	3	150	3.68	Accepted

Data in Table 4 reveal that media requirements for free and fair elections include but not limited to legal framework for media freedom of expression (3.62) and pluralism of media voices (3.73)

DISCUSSION

The study was conducted to examine the roles of broadcast media in ensuring free and fair elections. The study was necessitated by the fact that free, fair and credible elections are becoming difficult in Nigeria. The result of research question one revealed that corruption and poverty are lead factors that predispose citizens to electoral malpractices during elections in Nigeria. Poverty is a state of lack of basic necessities of life especially of survival needs. Many families in Nigeria are poor. Some find it difficult to feed their families. These findings corroborate Tersoo (2019) who noted that most electoral misconducts are done to get money due to poverty. Similarly, research question two identified the roles of broadcast media in free and fair elections to include educating voters about electoral malpractices and their consequences in addition to exposing electoral irregularities among others. These two key roles are central to curbing electoral malpractices because, according to Berger (2019), a lot of electorate members are ignorant of electoral laws, procedures, processes and consequences; hence they allow themselves to be used (due to

ignorance) by unsuspecting greedy politicians to violate electoral rules. However, if they are well educated, they will gather the will power to say no to being used to discredit elections.

Some factors like unfriendly political climate in Nigeria, bribery and corruption were blacklisted as frustrating the efforts of broadcast media in ensuring free and fair elections in Nigeria. Odoh (2015) noted that in Nigeria elections are seen as do or die ventures. Contestants do not have open mind; they believe they must win at all cost. This kind of mindset is detrimental to fairness as nobody agrees to lose. In the long run, opponents see themselves as mortal enemies. Contesting parties fight each other; hence there is internal war during elections. These situations do not help the media achieve their aim. Sometimes, media experts are bribed (by some politicians) to be economical with the truth of election campaign results. All these hinder free, fair and credible elections. In order to achieve free, fair and credible elections, some media requirements were identified which include media freedom, and pluralism of media voices. In Nigeria, the media do not enjoy freedom of information despite the freedom of information Act. Sometimes, many active media experts are humiliated or assaulted for doing their jobs by some highly placed people. If media must live up to expectation in their duties, then some legal backings need to be given to them to operate on freedom (Mustapha, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The study dealt with broadcast media and free and fair elections in Nigeria. The study was designed to unravel the roles of broadcast media in ensuring credible elections in Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was gathered that poverty and corruption are some of the factors that predispose citizens to electoral malpractices. Also the role of the media in free and fair election include educating voters about electoral malpractices and their consequences as well as exposing electoral irregularities among others. Political thuggery and unfriendly political climates were also identified as hindrances to media efforts to ensuring free and fair election. However, to forestall free and fair elections, some media requirements needed included legal framework for media freedom and pluralism of media voices among others. Based on the findings of the study, the authors conclude that the broadcast media has a great role to play in ensuring free and fair elections in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sequel to the findings of the study the following are suggested:

1) Families need to be economically empowered by the government so as to reduce poverty.
2) The government should create jobs and employment opportunities to engage youths to avoid being used as political thugs during elections.
3) The Freedom of Information Act should be taken seriously and implemented in all the states.
4) The media needs to step up on their enlightenment campaigns and awareness creation about electoral process, procedures, malpractices and their consequences.
5) The federal government should enact policies to punish violators of electoral procedures to serve as a deterrent to others.
6) The broadcast media should be duly backed up by the legal system to enjoy freedom and independence of operation.

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