

**Federalism, politics and minorities in Nigeria
Essays in Honor of Prof. G.N Hembe**

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**A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA REPORTAGE OF SOCIO-
POLITICAL ISSUES IN NIGERIA'S MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETY**

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Introduction

In recent times, the issue of media reportage of socio-political issues that affect the various ethnic groups in Nigeria has become a thing of concern. This is because the country has many ethnic groups that clamour for recognition in the political environment ("polisphere") of the nation. Niweze (2012, para. 4) captured the nature of the country's ethnic diversity when he noted that:

Ethnic conflict is no small fry... in Nigeria, especially with over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups and five hundred living languages. The country .had high cacophony of

tongues, customs, and marriage rites, which inevitably have created some level of preferential treatment among ethnic groups. This particular situation is most certainly responsible for the miserable condition of the nation.

Duruji (2010: 2) observed that the

competition for ethnic domination has over the years, assumed varying forms in the politics of Nigeria. At one time or the other, the ethnic groups that are disadvantaged in this game have either attempted secession or had threatened to secede from the country. For instance, the attempt of the Igbo dominated former Eastern Region to transform into the Republic of Biafra between 1967 to 1970 was crushed by the Federal government/ thus consigning that ambition to history.

This civil war affected the Igbo's greatly.-Since the end of that war, "the Igbo who used to be part of the tripod on which the Nigerian state was established has been crying of marginalization and exclusion from full integration into the Nigerian society" (Nnoli, 2008 cited in Duruji, 2010: 2).

The issue of ethnic agitation did not end with the Igbos rather it has existed in bits and smidgen in the Niger Delta region, Yoruba enclave and other minority groups in the country. In the case of the Niger Delta region, the cry for recognition preceded the country's independence, but it was the Ogoni uprising of 1990s that gave impetus and fillip to the agitations in the region and from which other groups have taken cue. The same agitation could be found among the Yorubas where perception of injustice against

the group, stems from the annulment of the presidential election of June.1993, which was widely believed to have been won by a Yoruba man, Chief Moshood K.O. Abiola. The effect of all these developments is the emergence of groups portraying their activities as attempts to redress the marginalization of their particular ethnic group (Diiruji, 2010; 2). The current case of Boko Haram in the northern part of the country is a serious case of ethnic-cum-socio-political unrest and agitation in the country.

In the face of this clamour for recognition by different ethnic groups in the country, the mass media play a prominent role in reporting different activities of these groups, including their marginalization protest. The way these groups are reported by the media is instrumental to the kind of attention they might receive from the government or other, political structure on ground. This study therefore, examines media reportage of the socio-political issues of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, especially as it relates to minority and majority ethnic reporting.

Statement of the Problem

The inability of the minority ethnic group to gain prominence in media reporting of news or event in the country has made some tribes to feel alienated and frustrated from the national polity of-the country. This feeling prevent most minority tribes to compete favourably with their counterparts from the majority ethnic group in political affairs of the state. This negligence of the minority tribe by the media has created a form of social deficiency for most minority ethnic groups. Little or nothing is known about most of the social and non-governmental organisations that these minority tribes use to express their

view points in national issues. Rather, the organisations known are those of the majority ethnic tribes of the nation. Organisations like Ohaneze Idi Igbo (for the Igbo speaking community), Arewa Peoples Congress (for the Hausa speaking community), Oduduwa Peoples Congress! (for the Yoruba speaking community) and of recent the Niger Delta People's Congress are some of the ethnic groups that have gained, popularity over time as a result of media coverage and reports.

The popularity gained-by these groups through which they communicate their view point in national matters is a function of the media of communication. One wonders what becomes, of the remaining ethnic groups which consist of the over 250 ethnic groups that make up the country. The media have to be questioned in a case like this.

Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the media reportage of issues concerning the various ethnic groups in the country with the view to ascertaining .whether the media give more favourable coverage to the majority ethnic groups as against the minority ethnic groups in the country.

Other specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the extent to; which the Nigerian mass media report socio-political issues concerning the various ethnic groups of the country.
2. Ascertain whether the majority ethnic group has better media coverage in the country than the minority ethnic group.
3. Find out the factors which influenced media reportage of the ethnic groups in the country.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the Nigerian mass media report sociopolitical issues concerning the various ethnic groups of the country?
2. Does the majority ethnic group have better media coverage in the country than the minority ethnic groups?
3. What are the factors which influenced media reportage of the ethnic groups in the country?

Literature Review

The role of the media in reporting issues in the country is a pivotal one and studies have tried to bring out the nature of media reportage of socio-political issues in the country. One of the studies in this area was the one conducted by Ogah Erima Margaret in 2010 entitled "Corruption in Nigerian Press: The Issue of Bias News Reporting By Journalists", "which revealed that there are many factors that make journalists bias and helpless when it comes to news reportage and these factors include; the influx of non-professionals into journalism practice, ideology of the media owner, appointment and. job security of journalists, funding of the media. Ogah (2010) citing Iwokwagh (2005) noted that news manipulation (biasness) occurs when there is an abnormal control or undue influence of news which manifests through subtle, clever but unhealthy means, or might even entail the slanting, twisting, polishing, embellishing and killing of news stones for some salient motif. The study concluded that:

journalists have at several times been lambasted for not only insulting but also wounding, the, collective sensibilities of Nigerians' and that journalists should know that people are beginning to feel that the mass [media have little or no credibility; or have poor and negative audience perception (Ogah, 2010).

Another interesting study conducted in the area of media-reportage of socio-political issues in the country was the one carried out by Igomu Onoja (2005) entitled "the political economy of news reportage and presentation of news in Nigeria: A study of television news", which revealed that:

ownership plays a leading role' in the reportage and presentation of news, broadcast stations cover the ideas of the ruling class more than those of the lower class, private stations do cover stories that are not favourable to the government than the government owned ones, and that commercialization of news in television stations has further reduced the access of those who belong to the lower class from having their ideas heard because 'they lack the ability to pay (Onoja, 2005).

Similarly, Ekeanyanwu Nnamdi Tobechukwu in 2010 carried out a study entitled "The Nigerian Press Coverage of Political Conflicts in a Pluralistic Society", which evaluates Nigeria's press coverage of political crises and conflicts during the President Obasanjo (Second Term) regime of 2003-2007. The study revealed that:

the Nigerian press has not fared very well in reporting political conflicts and crises because of the advocacy

position adopted by most of them and that editorial influence on the part of publishers may not be unconnected with this -trend. The study also revealed that the Nigerian press has operated more as active players in political crises and conflicts than as an impartial judge of such crises and conflicts. This, has negatively affected the management of such crises and conflicts. The paper, therefore cautions against advocacy journalism in the Nigerian media industry and suggests more public participation in the media industry through "people" ownership" (Ekeanyanwu, 2010:64).

On the issue of conflict in! the country, Isaac Olawale Albert and G. N. Uzoigwe in 1999, in-their study entitled "Inter-Ethnic and Religious Conflict Resolution in Nigeria", argued that:

since 1982, Nigeria has experienced more than ten large scale ethnic or religious riots in its major cities. These violent clashes have wrecked economic, political, and social havoc; caused an enormous number of deaths and injuries; and posed serious obstacles to Nigeria's social political development as well as retarded efforts at nation-building (Albert & Uzoigwe, 1999).

Similarly, a study conducted by Duruji, Moses Metumara in 2010 entitled "Ethnic Militias and Sub-Nationalism in Nigeria: A Comparative Study of MASSOB and OPC", it was revealed .that:

OPC and MASSOB were manifestations of subnationalism that emanated from-the unattended issues surrounding Nigeria's' national question. These issues

include citizenship, representation, resource control and allocation as well as access to and use of power in Nigeria, These lingering issues stem from the character of the Nigerian state which promotes ethnic loyalty against civic loyalty. This tendency has reflected in Nigerian political life prior to independence and has been re-invented in forms including the-prevalent ethnic militia organizations that operate outside of the confines of the law, Both-OPC and MASSOB were founded on the theories of defending threatened interest of the Igbo and Yoruba respectively. The members see the Nigerian state as unjust and oppressive. This attitude makes it easier for the elite to instrumentalize ethnic publics for the advancement of-parochial interests" (239).

Theoretical Framework

This study was built on a theoretical construct or proposed theory as required by the-research method adopted. In line with this, the theory for this study is the theory¹ of media professional negligence,

Towards- a Theory of Media Professional Negligence

This theory argues that the media of mass communication professionally neglect the .reportage of certain issues concerning certain group of people within the society as a result of their placement in the society. This might involve the fact that the people in question do not form part of the opinion dominating group of the society or because they

do not matter in the; socio-political environment of the society. In most cases, the media perpetuate this act advertently or inadvertently.

The theory further proposed that these groups in the social system that are usually neglected; are only remembered by the media when something disastrous happens to them or threatens their existence. Outside situations like this, these communities do not exist in the report frame of the media.

The nature of the media is said to be a key factor gainfully necessary in this act of negligence of some groups in the society. The, media is said to be in love with bad news, which some scholars have said the "bad news is good news for the media". This means that the Dana plane crash on the 3 June 2012 is good news for the media; while on the other hand, it is bad news; for the society. The media look out for bad news to report on daily because when disaster happens/ the people want to know every single detail that surround the terrain of the event, examples of such include a Boko Haram bomb blast or militant explosion of oil well. The media see this as an ample opportunity to sell their papers, magazines or have more listenership or viewership; In the absence of disaster the media turn to the political environment for more information in order to keep their listeners, viewers or readers.

In most cases, the media feed on the groups in the society that can help it retain its listeners, viewers, or readers. The major ethnic groups become the centre of focus of the media as against the minority ethnic groups. It is in this situation that this theory is advanced by this study. The media neglected the minority groups in the society because it knows that reports on them might not give them the required result expected which is to

retain the listeners, viewers or readers of the people. The reportage of the majority ethnic groups helps the media to achieve its aim of retaining listeners, viewers or readers. This is because members of the majority ethnic groups want to know what the other major ethnic group is saying on a particular issue, so that they will know the stance to take. Another reason the major ethnic groups are centre of focus of the media is because they constitute the political force! of the society. Therefore, major focus on the majority ethnic groups will amount to a professional negligence of the minority group.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study is the systematic grounded theory design. First, it is appropriate to understand that a grounded theory design

is a systematic, qualitative procedure used to generate a theory that explains, at a broad; conceptual level, a process, an action, or interaction about a substantive topic. A central element of this definition is the generation of a theory. In grounded theory research, this theory is a 'process' theory - it explains... process of events, activities, actions and interaction that occur over time" (Creswell, 2002: 43?).

As for the systematic design in grounded theory, the emphases is on "the use of data analysis steps of open, axial, and selective coding, and the development of a .logic, paradigm or a visual picture of the theory generated" (Creswell, 2002: 441).

The major ingredients of the systematic design of the grounded theory are three; open coding, axial coding and selective coding, which Creswell (2002:439) opined that in open coding' "the grounded theorist forms initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied by segmenting information. These categories can be based on all data collected, such as interviews, observations and research memos or notes, while axial coding requires the selection of one open category, position it at the centre of the process being explored (as the core phenomenon), and then relate other categories to it. These other categories are the causal conditions (factors that influence the core phenomenon), strategies (actions taken in response to the core phenomenon), contextual and intervening conditions (specific and-general situational factors that influence the strategies), and consequences (outcome from using the strategies). In selecting coding, the grounded theorist writes a theory from the interrelationship of the categories in the axial coding model. At a basic level, this theory provides an abstract explanation for the process being studied in the research.

Population of the Study

The population of this study is the ensemble, of media, practitioners in the Enugu State. The figure of the eligible registered media professional as provided by the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) Enugu chapter is 176 people (NUJ, 2012 report). The choice of eligible registered journalists in the state is because they are the ones that can really tell how they treat issues that have national coverage, and also explain the disposition of the journalists and media houses when they want to report an issue. It is important to note that the opinions of media practitioners are used to represent that of the media houses.

Sampling Size

Considering the fact that this is a qualitative study, there is need to have a smaller number of people that can be interviewed. To this effect, Ohaja (2003: 74) agrees that "selecting a sample size is very important considering the impracticability of studying the entire population..." To determine the sample size of this study, therefore, the Taro Yamani's formula was used; Yamani (1967: 886) as cited in Eboh (2009: 94) provides a simplified formula for calculating sample sizes. Using an error limit of 0.15, the study arrived at a sample size of 35.5 which is approximately 36 persons. This means that a sample size of 36 respondents was used for this study.

Sampling Techniques

In selecting the sample size from the population for the purpose of generating qualitative data, the purposive sampling technique was used. The study made provision for 36 persons that were interviewed in line with the study under investigation. These persons were gotten by selecting 3 media practitioners (one editor-in-chief, a senior editor and a reporter) from the 12 media outfits in the state. In all, three persons were interviewed from each of the media outfits in the states, regardless of their size, this made the total number of people interviewed to be thirty-six (36).

Research Instrument

This study used, three instruments namely; interview, observation and memos. The interview, on the other hand, was framed into a 10 question interview schedule. It

comprised of open-ended questions squarely related to the study under investigation. The answers to the interview schedule were coded after qualitative data have been presented. The essence of the coding was to allow for the categorization of the themes emanating from the data collected.

Validity Reliability of Study

The validity of the instrument was done using face validity technique. First it was tested, if the questions in the interview schedule are related to the topic under consideration and whether they actually provide answer to the questions raised in the study. It was also tested for clarity and ambiguity. It was, however, not tested against any official record. Corrections were accepted and modification made to the instrument.

In checking for the reliability of the study instrument, a pre-test was .conducted to ascertain the reliability of the research instrument (interview). A total of 6 respondents were drawn from three media outfits in the state. The reason was to determine whether the responses would be in line with the required result expected from the instrument. The pilot study was done after the interview had been validated.

Coding categories from data analysis

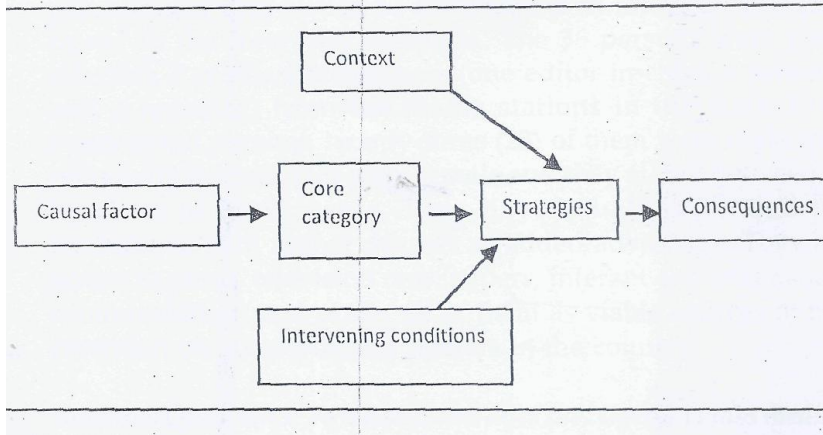
Coding categories in grounded theory with properties and dimensionalised properties

Broad category	Category	Properties	Dimensional properties
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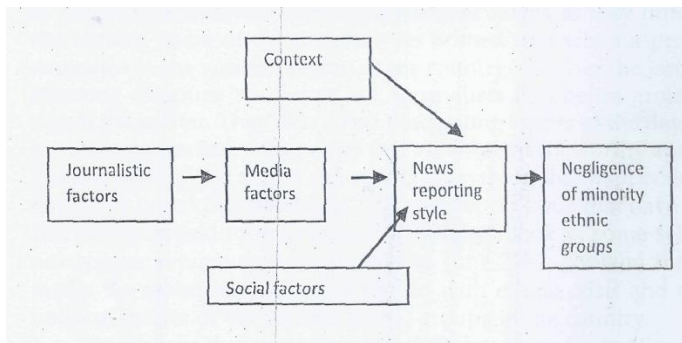
Media factor	Providers	Need for survival More prominence Unbranded name	Make, profit to remain in the market Go for wider coverage Organise better packages
	Cause	Sets deadlines Want hot stories Commercialize news	To meet press time To gain patronage To pay salaries/publish
Journalistic factor	Enabler	Nose for hot news Cover places with benefits Wants to beat deadline	To remain relevant in the media outfit To motivate oneself To still keep his/her job
	Channel	Report news Gate keep contents	To still keep his/her job To allow for good stories
Social factor	Collaborator	Pay for news Offer benefits Wants more socio-political benefits '	To get published/ prominence To get published/ prominence Capture government attention
	Encourager	Have organised bodies Create high agitations Uses press releases and statements Organises festivals Create social tension	To project one voice Capture government attention To use the media To attract publicity To capture attention

Source: Creswell (2002).

Axial coding from coding categories



Model of the theory of media professional, negligence



The data generated were analysed using qualitative approach. By this, data analysis was presented in textual forms. However, there was room for the presentation of the data in diagrammatic view. This is to respond to the dictate of the method used.

Data Analysis (Qualitative Approach)

Data was analysed using qualitative approach. By this, data were presented in textual forms. The study made provision for 36 media practitioners that would be

interviewed in line with the questions raised in the interview schedule. The 36 persons were gotten by selecting 3 media practitioners (one editor-in-chief, a senior editor and a reporter) from the media stations in the state. From the; interviewed persons, twenty-three (23) of them were male while the; remaining thirteen (13) were female and they all fall between the age brackets of 39-55 years. They have equally .attended tertiary, institutions with higher degrees as added advantage. They all have access to radio, television newspapers, internet and other sources of communication and prefer all of them as viable sources of message reception on socio-political matters in the country.

Research Question 1: To what extent does the Nigerian mass media report socio-political issues concerning the various ethnic groups of the country?

The interviews conducted in the cause of this study reveals that Nigerian journalists do report issues concerning the various ethnic groups in the country. They do this hot minding the tribal inclination of the groups involved. Rather they follow events as they unfold in the society. Some of the interviewees opined that when a problem emanates in the western region of the country, whether the issue are affecting the pure Yoruba or not, journalists will be on ground to report the matter. They also noted that among events of the day, they are more concerned with stories that are more news worthy and that there is no way the media can report everything that happened in" a day They noted that the media will only report issue that have more and wider appeal to the people. A thorough look at some selected newspaper reports .from June 2011; to June 2012, showed that the media do report issues that has to do with ethnic crisis and sociopolitical matter of the various ethnic groups in the country.

This means that to a large extent, the mass media in Nigeria do report issues concerning the various ethnic groups in the country, especially in places where the news have wider audience appeal and more human face. This assertion is inline with the data generated from the review of materials.

Research Question 2: Does the majority ethnic group have better media coverage in the country than the minority ethnic group?

From the interview, all the respondents agree that the majority ethnic groups have better media coverage than the minority group.

They opined that more issues tend to relate to the activities and actions of the majority ethnic group in the country as against the minority ethnic groups of the country, This means that more coverage is given to the majority ethnic group in the country than the minority ethnic group of the country.

Research Question 3: What are the factors which influenced media reportage of the ethnic groups in the country?

The interviews conducted in this area, reveals that there are several factors that influenced the media coverage of the majority ethnic group than the minority ethnic group of the country. Some of these factors according to the respondents include: the majority ethnic group make more political agitations than the minority ethnic group in the country and they have better organised groups that releases statements to the media on topical issues of national concern. They also opined that the majority ethnic group tend to occupy more political positions in the country than the minority ethnic group; hence issues concerning them have wider appeal. They observed also that the large size of the

majority ethnic group will generate more revenue for the media houses when issues about them are reported in the media.

This means that these are indications in the social system of the country that aid the more coverage enjoyed by the majority ethnic group as against the minority ethnic group in the country.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that to a large extent, the mass media in Nigeria do report issues concerning the various ethnic groups in the country, especially in places where the news have wider audience appeal and more human face. It was also revealed that more coverage is given to the (majority ethnic groups in the country than the minority ethnic groups of the country. It was also revealed that there are indications in the social system of the country that aid the more coverage enjoyed by the majority ethnic group as against the minority ethnic groups in the country. Some of these factors include: the majority ethnic group make more political agitations than the minority ethnic groups in the country and they have better organised groups and associations, that releases statements to the media on topical issues of national-concern. Another factor is that the majority ethnic group tend to occupy, more political positions in the country than the minority ethnic groups; hence issues concerning them have wider appeal. Finally, the large size of the majority ethnic groups helps generate more revenue for the media houses-when issues about them are reported in the media.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the media of mass communication professionally neglect the reportage of certain issues concerning certain group of people within the society as a result of their placement in the society. This might involve the fact that the people in question do not form part of the opinion dominating group of the society or because they do not matter in the socio-political environment of the society. In most cases, the media perpetuate this act advertently 61 inadvertently.

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