
**Perceived Influence of the Mass Media and Election Fraud: A Critical Analysis of the 2015
Governorship Election**

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ABSTRACT

The study is on “Perceived Influence of the Mass Media and Election Fraud: A Critical Analysis of the 2015 Governorship Election”. The study sought to examine the role of the media in election process. The survey method was employed. Out of total population of 202,285, a sample of 385 respondents was studied. Simple random technique was adopted. Chi-square was used to test the hypotheses. The study found out the mass media play a role in election process which is that of the watchdog. It was found that the mass media aid in election fraud. Delays in payment, poor salary package, lack of regulation by professional bodies are the causes of election fraud. The study concluded, therefore, that election fraud in most cases has negative effects because it results to the imposition of corrupt and illegitimate leaders who have no regard to the principles of democracy which are off shoots of good governance, rule of law, constitutionalism and fundamental human rights. It was recommended that the media should set for themselves the obligation of illuminating the political process and set agenda for the political class. Journalist must avoid any conduct in their relationship with political aspirants that would compromise their integrity and professional ethics. The press should also resist the temptation to be used to earn fan embers of ethno-religious crisis. While the clamor for free is understandable; it is advised that the press should not lose sight of their social responsibility. Good salary package to journalists should be encouraged so as to discourage them from demanding and receiving gratification.

Key Word: Mass Media, Election Fraud

Introduction

The mass media are one of the most powerful tools of communication in the developing countries, as well as developed countries. It can aid in promoting the right things at a right point of time, or can make use of any situation to create disturbance around the people in the society.

Mass media are channels of communication that is to a large group, or groups of people in a short time (Mass Media, 2013). This can be written, spoken or broadcast communication. Some

of the most popular forms of mass media are newspapers, radio, magazines, social media, television, and internet.

The mass media are the institutional vehicles which conduct mass communication. They are regarded as features of modern industrial societies which service the goals of society. Some of the major goals include supplying our information needs, providing explanation on key events in our political, economic and social life, supporting and complementing formal education, mobilization, cultural promotion and forging national unity (Kogah, 2007).

The mass media are marked by high investments and competitions. The modern media are also in competition with what Kogah (2007), calls “Machine-assisted” mass communication systems. The internet has facilitated online services particularly with regards to television, newspapers and cable television. Dominick (2009) states that the internet has facilitated the sharing of communication at a faster rate by people across the world. Apart from modern mass media, much of the Third World is marked by the highly credible indigenous media or what some scholars choose to call the traditional media (Kogah, 2007; Wilson, 2011). The indigenous media are features of the rural Third World. They are used to mobilize, entertain, inform, educate and engage in other activities.

Also, the mass media have become important elements in measuring the degree of development of any society. The major characteristics include: the utilization of expensive and complex technology which facilitates the mass production and reproduction of messages. Media messages are expensive to produce and distribute. Messages are addressed to specific segments of media audiences. The media are capital intensive investments which tend to restrict ownership to few big companies, corporations and individuals with enormous financial resources. The messages produced by the media are rapidly consumed by large relevant segments of the audience. These messages are carefully ordered and emphasized to meet the goals of society. For example, besides the functions of information, explanation, education and entertainment, the media in our society serve to foster unity, showcase our cultural heritage, call attention to our unique problems and support policies and programmes which aim at promoting our economy (Kogah, 2007).

There is absolutely no doubt about the power of the press in the modern world, particularly at the information level. The late twentieth century has been described as “the age of information” and the power of the mass media derives from the fact that we live in a mass-mediated world. Every single day, millions of people, widely scattered, in every part of the world, are reached simultaneously by the media with information on a wide variety of issues and topics.

The mass media are indeed powerful, Soola (1993) cited in The Communication Studies Group (2014) is right when he observes that “the mass reach and simultaneity of the mass media have remained unparalleled by any other medium”. He goes on to say that the media “therefore remains the most potent means of information transmission to a far-flung population”.

Politics cannot exist without the voice of the mass media, because only through it, the public get to know the plans, activities and agenda of the political parties (Siljanvoska & Ejupi, 2013).

An election is a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th century. Elections may fill offices in the legislature, sometimes in the executive and judiciary, and, for regional and local government. This process is

also used in many other private and business organizations, from club to voluntary associations and corporations.

The universal use of elections as a tool for selecting representatives in modern representative democracies is in contrast with the practice in the democratic archetype, ancient Athens, where the elections were considered an oligarchic institution and most political offices were filled using allotment, by which officeholders were chosen by lot.

As has been observed by some political analysts, Nigerians have for long aspired for democracy and they have been repeatedly frustrated. For nearly 30 years out of Nigeria's 57 years of independence from colonial rule, the frustration of Nigerians with shattered democratic aspirations were caused by authoritarian military regimes, which engineered transition to civil rule programmes to gain legitimacy but then systematically subverted these to continue to hold onto power by military fact.

Since return to civil rule in May 1999, the frustration of Nigerians with the subversion of their democratic aspirations has largely been occasioned by civilians in power, essentially reckless politicians or 'militicians' who, possessed by a 'do or die' mindset in politics, abused, misused and generally undermined the political and electoral process to hold on to power arbitrarily, but hiding under periodic, procedural, electoral 'victories' to 'legitimize' their actions. Indeed, in no sector has the frustration of Nigerians been as manifest as in the electoral process in the past decade (Jega, 2011).

Information is an accelerator for any meaningful development and it is adequate information that can propel or bring about sustainable democracy.

The role of the mass media in any democratic process cannot be downplayed. The mass media are figures in which the public trust and as well journalists are the trustees of the public in any sustainable democracy.

The critical question begging for answer however, remains do the mass media report events as it is or do they report according to what they are told to report by those who fuel their pockets?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out the perceived influence of the mass media and election fraud in election. Specifically, the study intends to

1. Examine the role of the media in election process.
2. Ascertain if the mass media has aided election fraud.
3. Find out the causes of election fraud.
4. Find out the best way in tackling the problem.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the role of the media in election process?
2. Do the mass media aid in election fraud?
3. What are the causes of election fraud?
4. What is the best way in tackling the problem?

Hypotheses

The study was based on the following research hypotheses;

H₁: The mass media are involved in election fraud.

H₀: The mass media are not involved in election fraud.

H₂: The mass media plays a role in election fraud.

H₀: The mass media does not play a role in election fraud.

Method

The study is a survey research design which seeks to examine the influence of the role of mass media and election fraud. The study was delimited to all 11 wards in Ngor Okpala Local Government Area. The population consisted of 202,285 in 2015 Imo State Governorship Election. A total of 385 participants were selected through simple random sampling technique. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection designed in a close ended format containing 15 items. Face to face method was adopted in administering the instrument. A pre-test of the study on 10 residents of Ngor Okpala Local Government after two weeks.

The scores collected from both tests were correlated using the Pearson's product moment correlation statistics which gave a reliability co-efficient of 0.7.

The data gotten from this research work was analyzed using simple percentage and chi-square method was used for testing the hypotheses.

Results

Out of 399 copies of questionnaires distributed, 385 copies were retrieved. Hence, the following analysis were made based on the retrieved copies of questionnaires to give answers to the research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1

Table 1: What role do the mass media play in election process?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Watchdog	175	45%
Campaign platform	100	26%
Public educator	110	29%
Total	385	100%

The table above shows that 45% of the respondents said that the mass media play watchdog role in election process, 26% of the respondents said that the role the mass media play in election is that of a public educator.

Research Question 2

Table 2: Do the Mass Media Aid in Election Fraud?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	285	74%
No	140	10%
No idea	60	16%
Total	385	100%

The table above shows that 74% of the respondents said that the mass media aid in election fraud, 10% of the respondents said that the mass media does not aid in election fraud while 16% of the respondents had no idea.

Research Question 3

Table 3.1: What are the causes of election fraud?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Delay in payment	100	26%
Poor salary package	205	53%
Lack of regulation by professional bodies	80	21%
Total	385	100%

The table above reveals that 26% of the respondents said delay in payment is the cause of election fraud, 53% of the respondents said poor salary package while 21% of the respondents said lack of regulation by professional bodies is the cause of election fraud.

Table 3.2: What method do the mass media adopt in carrying out election fraud?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Misinformation	205	53%
Manipulation of demography	100	26%
Electorate manipulation	80	21%
Total	385	100%

The above table reveals that 53% of the respondents said that misinformation is the method the mass media adopt in carrying out election fraud, 26% of the respondents said that manipulation of demography is a method the mass media adopt in carrying out election fraud while 21% of the

respondents said that electorate manipulation is also a method the mass media adopt in carrying out election fraud.

Research Question 4

Table 4: What is the best way in tackling the problem?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Timely payment of salary	100	26%
Creating awareness on the dangers of involving oneself in gratification and other unethical practices	5	1%
Good salary package	200	52%
Sanction by professional bodies	80	21%
Total	385	100%

Analysis from the table indicates that 26% of the respondents said timely payment of salary is the role of professional bodies in tackling the problem, 1% of the respondents said creating awareness on the dangers of involving oneself in gratification and other unethical practices is the role of professional bodies in tackling the problem, 52% of the respondents said good salary payment is the role of professional bodies in tackling the problem, while 21% of the respondents said sanction by professional bodies is the role of professional bodies in tackling the problem.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 2 and 3.2 were used to test the hypotheses formulated in chapter one.

H₁: The mass media are involved in election fraud.

H₀: The mass media are not involved in election fraud.

Table 2 answers the above

Responses	F _o	F _e	(F _o -F _e)	(F _o - F _e) ²	$\frac{(F_0 - F_e)^2}{fe}$
Yes	285	128.3	156.7	24554.9	191.4
No	40	128.3	-88.3	7796.9	60.8
No idea	60	128.3	-68.3	4664.9	36.3
Total	385	385			288.5

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(F_0 - F_e)^2}{fe}$$

Where Σ = Summation

Fo = Observed Frequency

Fe = Expected Frequency

$$Fe = 285 + 40 + 60 = 385$$

$$\frac{385}{3} = 128.3$$

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(285 - 128.3)^2}{128.3} = \frac{24554.9}{128.3} = 191.4$$

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(40 - 128.3)^2}{128.3} = \frac{7796.9}{128.3} = 60.8$$

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(60 - 128.3)^2}{128.3} = \frac{4664.9}{128.3} = 36.3$$

$$\Sigma = 191.4 + 60.8 + 36.3 = 288.5$$

Therefore, $X^2 \text{ cal} = 288.5$

$$df = k - 1$$

$$df = 3 - 1$$

$$df = 2$$

Using a level of significance 0.05

$$X^2 \text{ tab} = 5.991$$

Decision: The calculated value of chi-square 288.5 is more than the table value 5.991. We therefore reject the null and accept the alternative hypothesis that the mass media are involved in election fraud.

Table 3.2

H₂: The mass media play a role in election fraud.

H₀: The mass media does not play a role in election fraud.

Table 3.2 answers the above

Responses	Fo	Fe	(Fo-Fe)	(F0 - Fe) ²	$\frac{(F0 - Fe)^2}{fe}$
Misinformation	205	128.3	76.7	5882.9	15.3
Manipulation of demography	100	128.3	-28.3	800.9	6.2
Electorate manipulation	80	128.3	-48.3	2332.9	18.2
Total	385	385			39.7

Source: Field Survey, 2017

$$\sum \frac{(F0 - Fe)^2}{fe}$$

$$Fe = 205 + 100 + 80 = 385$$

$$\frac{385}{3} = 128.3$$

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(205 - 128.3)^2}{128.3} = \frac{5882.9}{128.3} = 45.85$$

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(100 - 128.3)^2}{128.3} = \frac{800.9}{128.3} = 6.24$$

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(80 - 128.3)^2}{128.3} = \frac{2332.9}{128.3} = 18.21$$

$$\Sigma = 45.85 + 6.24 + 18.21 = 70.3$$

Therefore, $X^2_{cal} = 70.3$

$$df = k - 1$$

$$df = 3 - 1$$

$$df = 2$$

Using a level of significance 0.05

$$X^2_{tab} = 5.991$$

Decision: The calculated value of chi-square 70.3 is more than the table value 5.991. We therefore reject the null and accept the alternative hypothesis that the mass media plays a role in election fraud.

Discussion

Answer to research question one revealed that majority of the respondents which represents 45% said that watchdog is the role of the mass media in election process, 26% of the respondents said campaign platform is the role of the mass media in election fraud while 29% of the respondents said the role the mass media play in election process is that of the public educator. This finding corroborates with that of Aghamelu (2010), where he asserted that the role of the mass media is to monitor, educate, inform and entertain in election process.

Answer to research question two revealed that majority of the respondents which represents 74% said yes that the mass media aid in election fraud, 10% of the respondents said that the mass media does not aid in election fraud while 16% of the respondents said they have no idea if the mass media aid in election fraud. This is in line with Okoro & Onuoha (2013), where they asserted that brown envelop practice influence journalism practice negatively because important issues are downplayed while unimportant issues are exaggerated because journalists will always dance to the tune of the giver.

Answer to research question three revealed that 26% of the respondents said delay in payment is the cause of election fraud, 53% of the respondents said poor salary package while 21% of the respondents said lack of regulation by professional bodies is the cause of election fraud. This finding is in line with Okoro and Ugwuanyi (2006), where they asserted that journalists in Nigeria accept brown envelopes because of poor conditions of service, lack of adherence to ethical standards. He also notes that such actions affect mass media objectivity negatively. Aghamelu (2010), also noted that workers are poorly paid compared to the work they do.

Answer to research question four revealed that 26% of the respondents said timely payment of salary is the best way in tackling the problem, 1% of the respondents said creating awareness on the dangers of involving oneself in gratification and other unethical practices is the best way in tackling the problem, 52% of the respondents said good salary payment is the best way in tackling the problem, while 21% of the respondents said sanction by professional bodies is the best way in tackling the problem. This is in line with Aghamelu (2010), where he asserted that workers should be paid well. Okoro and Ugwuanyi (2006) also noted that the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and other relevant agencies should ensure strict application and compliance to professional ethics and standards by practicing journalists.

Hypotheses Findings

The test of hypothesis one which is on the mass media are involved in election fraud tested positive, therefore, it will be accepted.

The test of hypothesis two which is, the mass media play a role in election fraud, was tested positive, therefore, it will be accepted.

Conclusion

The study have specifically examined the mass media and election fraud in Imo State. The study ascertained how the mass media has aided in election fraud and the role of the media in election process. In like manner, the paper identified the causes of election fraud and the best way in tackling the problem. Responses expressed in the study showed that the mass media aid in election fraud.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the researchers recommends the following:

1. The media should set for themselves the obligation of illuminating the political process and set agenda for the political class.
2. Journalist must avoid any conduct in their relationship with political aspirants that would compromise their integrity and professional ethics.
3. The press should also resist the temptation to be used to earn fan embers of ethno-religious crisis.

4. While the clamor for free is understandable; it is advised that the press should not lose sight of their social responsibility.
5. Good salary package to journalists should be encouraged so as to discourage them from demanding and receiving gratification.

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