

**PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING AND THE MOBILIZATION OF YOUTHS
IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA FOR EFFECTIVE
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

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ABSTRACT

Effective involvement of citizens in the selection of leaders is critical to good governance and development of any society. Nigeria's political space is debilitated by a number of issues including the hijack of political and democratic machineries by a few rent-seeking and inept players. This has resulted in poor governance, lack of trust in the entire system and apathy on the part of citizens. With the mandate of the media to motivate and mobilize the masses for enlightened participation in the political process, bearing in mind that privately owned media pander to the whims of the highest bidders especially during political cycles, and based on public sphere theory, the need to examine the success level of public service broadcast media organizations in motivating and mobilizing the youths in the South-South region of Nigeria to be actively involved in the political process threw up itself as Nigeria inches into another election year. Using the survey method, three states in the region were randomly selected, from where 384 respondents evenly distributed were drawn through a multi-stage process to respond to the questionnaire items designed to answer the research questions. Three focus groups made up of 25 participants in total, were also set up in the three states for detailed discussion of the issues. At the end of the study, youths in the South-South region of Nigeria were not adequately mobilized for active involvement in politics, public service broadcast organizations were found not to mobilize the youths in the region for political participation and as a result, the broadcast stations were not seen to have succeeded in fulfilling their mandate in this regard. Recommendations made among others, include removing public service broadcast media and regulatory agencies from the financial and administrative control of government for effective service and supervision, mounting of pressure on the broadcast stations by civil society groups and non-governmental organizations to ensure that they deliver on their mandates and the establishment of partnership between promoters of democracy and the media stations towards the delivery of altruistic media service in line with the mandate of the organizations.

KEYWORDS: Politics, participation, youths, public, broadcasting, mandate.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely believed that the development and progress of any society depend on the quality of its leadership. Nigeria is a country that has faced many issues in governance. Leadership failure in the nation has resulted in poor governance and related socio-economic problems. The label of a failed state and the undesirable status of being the world's poverty capital are direct consequences of inadequate governance. Problems such as failure to provide security, healthcare, infrastructure, and education are all outcomes of poor leadership. Unemployment and the high levels of insecurity in every city and community are also results of ineffective leadership. Nigeria's political system has been taken over by a few individuals who have formed what could be called a political clique, unwilling to allow space for youth participation. The youthful, energetic population is often recruited into political thuggery and other negative activities to help the political elites maintain their hold on power and decision-making roles.

The media, as society's storytellers, perform political, economic, social, cultural and technological roles. Their power in society is inherent in the information, education, entertainment and mobilisation functions they perform (Akpan, 2009; Barney, 2009; Campbell, Jensen, Gomery, Fabos, Frechette, 2014; Kogah, 2008; Sambe, 2015). The power and role of the media as they concern politics have also been often emphasised (Ekeanyanwu, 2015; Ezeah & Geveer, 2015; Herman, 1990; Robinson, 1990; Enemaku, 2003). While the relationship between the media and politics dates back to the invention of technologies of mass communication and there exists mutual influence between them, the use to which the media are put in political communication, in recent history, is an indication that, really, political activities will be incomplete without the media of communication. But this is more so with the broadcast media because of the numerous advantages as outlined by scholars, especially in the manner they transcend time and space, communicate instantaneously in sound and/or sight and the ability to reach a large number of people simultaneously (Dunu, 2002; Ibbi and Furomfa, 2021; Ogwumike, 2014), which make the broadcast media the most powerful means of instant public communication (Dunu (2002)). Viewed against the backdrop of penetrative, propagative, persuasive and socializing nature of broadcasting (Ibbi and Furomfa, 2021); and bearing in mind that today, even the little time constraints inherent in the traditional broadcasting has disappeared because of the internet as a plethora of broadcast options are available on satellite, cable and online (Dave, 2011), thereby expanding people's social, economic and political commitments (Verhoeff, Cooley and Zwicker, 2016), broadcasting has firmly established itself as the most powerful instrument for political mobilization. This makes broadcast media a very useful tool in getting populations the world over to fully participate in the process of selecting their leaders and in getting the vibrant youth populations to make themselves available for effective governance.

But since the media, including broadcast media, are sometimes susceptible to manipulation and hijacked by the political class and are often swayed by profit considerations, necessitating the setting up of public service media, societies, with the specific objective of giving a voice to the voiceless and generally serving the interests of the masses, come up with broadcast systems for this purpose. How effective have the

public-oriented broadcast media been in serving the people for whom they were established?

In Nigeria's unstable democracy, the deficit in governance, the absence of inclusiveness as well as the absence of development blamed largely on leadership failure and the continued control of the government by a few incompetent politicians who lack ideas on how to govern with results have resulted in loss of hope and the resultant apathy among citizens (Enahoro, 2010; Usua, 2018). Getting the people, especially the youths to rediscover their country calls for enlightened involvement of the people in the political activities, particularly the election process. Public service broadcast media are expected to be the vanguard of mobilising the people for this to happen. This study, therefore, has a burden of gauging what has been the preoccupation of public service broadcast media in the South-South region of Nigeria, with particular attention on youths' involvement in political processes.

The problem

Nigeria's population is dominated by a vibrant and intelligent youth segment, but political leadership continues to be controlled by a few old, weak, self-serving and insensitive actors, some of whom have bestrode the political space for decades, doing the same things and getting the same unproductive results. Nigeria is said to be a failed state (Nwabueze in Usua, 2018) and the world's poverty capital with its high insecurity problems, absence of governance and lack of infrastructure, among other indices of failure. This, along with extremely flawed electoral processes, has resulted in political apathy and resentment among citizens. The process of reversing the trend can only begin with the active participation of the masses of people in all political activities and particularly in the election of credible leaders. The responsibility of the media in this regard towards ensuring a good society entails educating and mobilising the people to be involved in electing good leaders by mobilising them to participate effectively in the political process. This duty to the nation is expected to be carried out even more by publicly-owned mass media. If the public service broadcast media in Nigeria's South-South region have succeeded in doing this, they will be seen to have fulfilled their mandate to the people who provide funding for their existence and operations.

Objectives

The objectives that guided the study were to:

1. determine the extent of involvement of youths in active political activities in the South-South region of Nigeria;
2. establish the extent of mobilization of youths in Nigeria's South-South region towards involvement in active politics by public service broadcast media organizations in the region;
3. find out whether public service-oriented broadcast organisations have succeeded in fulfilling their mandates in mobilising the youths for political participation.

Theoretical framework

The study is supported by public sphere theory. The theory, as propounded in the 18th Century by the German scholar Jurgen Habermas, sees the mass media as agencies that should provide the space for public debate and discussion towards arriving at the best options for good governance. It is predicated on the relationship between democracy, communication, and citizenship (Goode, 2005; Usua, 2018) as the basis and guarantee for an informed citizenry that is aware of and can participate in social, economic and political issues in the society. The theory suggests that the only legitimate government is considered to be the one that listens to the public sphere (Oso, 2012). Public sphere theory has its origin in the Greek agora (Mahoney, 2001) and serves as the earliest effort in public opinion formation and legitimisation of democracy. It embodies the thinking that the public sphere is a good prism for exploring public service broadcasting and the political participation of youth.

In the public sphere, doctrine is the view that the media should provide the platform for public debate and discussion towards arriving at the best of options in the issues of governance (Usua, 2018). It conceives the public sphere as social life where public opinion can be formed as citizens discuss matters of general interest and how they can be addressed as opposed to private or individual interests. Specifically, the concept of the political public sphere captures public discussion of the state and political practices. Though the public and the private divide in its initial Aristotelian conception was between the state and the family, it metamorphosed into a dichotomy between the individual and the market in liberal democracies (Mahoney, 2001).

The Habermasian theory has been applied to various components of society. For instance, Mahoney (2001) notes the intersection of the public sphere with social movements, new information technology, democratic principles, and the changes that have taken place in modern public spaces. He concluded that Habermas's public sphere is necessary for participatory politics and emancipation. Since the media, according to Rodríguez-Castro, López-Cepeda and Campos-Freire (2020), should enhance the public sphere, the central argument applied to this study is that participatory democracy is grounded in the public sphere. As observed by Collins (1992), the "neoHabermasians" have argued that public service broadcasting is the institutional embodiment of the modern public sphere and theoretically, participatory democracy thrives through conversations like political discourses through public broadcasting. In this context, youths can be motivated for democratic participation since the central function of the public sphere is to serve as a social platform where public opinion is heard.

Literature

Communication, the media and development

Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Thus, one of the targets of that goal is to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (United Nations, n.d). The kind of inclusive society

envisioned by the goal can only be achieved when every segment of society is carried along through democratisation and reduction in inequality. In this regard, the youths as the most vibrant segment of society, are considered to be important to sustainable development.

Similarly, in Agenda 2065, the African Development Agenda, which is a pathway for achieving inclusive and sustainable development, has the promotion of democratic values, human rights, justice and the rule of law as some of its priorities (African Union, 2022). This aspiration takes cognisance of people-driven development that will harness the potential of youths, women and children in an inclusive way. In other words, this goal is against age, gender, ethnicity and ethnic affiliations as reasons for exclusion. In short, it promises not to leave anyone behind (African Union Commission, 2015). Besides, the purpose of prioritising the involvement and participation of youths in decision-making and other social life made the United Nations General Assembly adopt the World Programme for Youths in the Year 2000 (Olatunji, 2021)

A range of studies have shown the importance of communication and the media in the overall development of a society (Popoola, 2008; Campbel, Jensen, Gomery, Fabos and Frechette, 2014; Wada, 2021). Likewise, some have observed the need for the media to serve the interests of the entire public in a society (Wada,2021). Broadcast outlets are often said to transcend the barriers of literacy and have the capacity for timely dissemination of messages. Thus, some researchers have moved beyond a focus on media generally to broadcasting as an aspect of mass communication and have emphasised its role in political participation and democracies (Nwabueze, 2011a; Nwabueze, 2011b; Obot, 2009; Wada, 2021). For instance, Nwabueze (2011b) demonstrated how broadcast commentary as a genre can empower the marginalised by serving as a voice for venting out denials of democratic dividends. It is against this backdrop that this study examines public service broadcasting and the role it plays in the mobilisation of youths in South-South Nigeria towards political participation.

Public service broadcasting and unstable democracies

The relationship between communication and politics has been established, just as the role of the media in democratic processes of any nation is not in doubt. But how the media have carried out their functions and the extent to which they have supported democratic governance has been a concern to many observers. It is almost a consensus that in developing democracies of Africa, for example, the media have not been assertive in calling leaders to be accountable (Enahoro, 2010, Orhewere, 2013; Ihejirika,2014;). There are enough reasons not to doubt that the media in many circumstances and societies work in the interest of and do the bidding of the political and business elite (Jukwey in Usua, 2013). If the privately-owned media are incapable of presenting themselves as credible sources and willing to work in the interest of the down trodden, but are guilty of excessive commercialization of news and programming which makes only limited airtime for issues of concern to the vast majority of the people; issues such as education of children, empowerment of women and those around small town pastoralism are treated as afterthought, the media open themselves to criticism and throw up the need deliberate establishment of public-oriented outfits. The argument for public service communication or particularly, public service broadcasting, is to place a

check on the capability of commercial media to mislead, counter the dissemination of what Jukwey calls downright lies and sheer imagination and challenge media's pursuit of that which drives journalism into sensationalism and unrepentant loyalty to advertisers.

Public service broadcasting or public service communication is a social value and high-quality programming that is broadcast on television and radio to provide information, advice, or entertainment to the public without trying to make a profit (Bardoel and Lowe, 2007; Wardsforth, 1989). Thus, it is value broadcasting which transcends monetary gains and gives a premium to the public good and public interest.

Public service broadcasting thrives on the fact that commercial broadcasting does not meet the genuine needs of the public and their democratic requirements (Cox, 2003; ITC Consultation, 2000; Jacobovics, 2007; Okoye, 2003). Such needful programmes as multicultural programming, arts, education, investigative programmes, current affairs, natural history programmes and other programme needs beyond entertainment, are the preoccupation. In this regard, (Okoye (2003, p. 105) asserts that:

The justification of public service broadcasting is the realisation that a broadcasting system left entirely to the free market cannot adequately satisfy the objectives of broadcasting as a user of the public airwaves and a powerful instrument of public enlightenment.

Looking at the mandates of public service broadcast media as outlined by McQuail (2011) which include: universality of geographic coverage (reception and transmission); diversity in providing for all main tastes, interests, and needs as well as matching the full range of opinions and beliefs; providing for special minorities; having concern for the national culture, language and identity; serving the needs of the political system; being balanced and impartial on issues of conflict in essential respects and; having specific concern for quality as defined in different ways, what stands out is that public service broadcasting is all about inclusion, good governance and the resultant good of the society—something that is hardly separable from political inclusiveness and participation which is in short supply in unstable democracies.

Public service broadcasting and youths' participation in politics

Even though public service broadcasting as scholars long observed, is the least preferred among youths perhaps because its entertainment value is sometimes low (Jakubovic 2007 citing Wallace 2007; Kivikuru, 2006), and in Africa, public service broadcasting is thought by some to be a thing of the past (Kivikuru, 2006), it constitutes a vital component of the democratic tradition and polity of a nation (Barnett, 2007; David, 2011) Political leaders appear to understand the role of broadcasting generally and its ability to make or destroy. Little wonder that Robert Kennedy, during his presidential run in 1968, said he would rather have an evening broadcast programme than coverage in every newspaper in the world (Dave, xiii). With some hindsight from studies on the relationship between broadcasting and political participation, what could be achieved with public service broadcasting as regards political participation in Nigeria is hinted at, with the results of such studies being consistent in showing the positive

effects of broadcasting on political participation. In one study, Quitelier and Hooghe (2011) studied 6,330 Belgians to show the relationship between various dimensions of television viewing and political participation. The result showed a positive impact of a preference for information, public broadcasting and political participation. In the same vein, Eyong and John (2019) examined television programmes, political enlightenment, and youths' political participation in politics. Their main objective was to establish the level of youths' exposure to political enlightenment programmes by television stations in Calabar Municipality. Their findings showed that the selected TV programmes helped in enhancing youths' participation in politics. Hence, the researchers recommended that the active participation of the youths should be encouraged via CRBC and NTA political programmes, as it culminates in the election of a more robust government.

Although the above studies have provided a fruitful insight into the role of public service broadcasting in enhancing youth participation in politics, they are largely divorced from the realities of the contemporary media climate and context. In addition, the studies differ in their perceptions of how the availability of political programmes and the extent of exposure to broadcast content considered enough will contribute to engendering youths' political participation.

Some factors have been identified as the bane of public service broadcasting for the public interest. These include news commercialisation, the proliferation of broadcast stations, ownership influence and finance (Ibbi and Furomfate 2021; Sikorski, 2020; Wada 2021). News commercialisation, as the process in which a non-profit organisation changes into a profit-oriented one, connotes practices that the media engage in for financial adequacy and profit motives, which often deter the media or the journalist from maximising the public's interest in issues or events (Ibbi & Furomfate, 2021; Macmanus, 2009). Commercialisation, which focuses excessively on paid announcements and the sale of airtime to advertisers, impedes citizens' right of access to the media (Ibbi & Furomfate, 2021).

Method

The study adopted the survey research method, which involved the setting up of three focus groups for discussion and the administration of a questionnaire in three states of the Niger Delta Region, randomly selected. The states—Akwa Ibom, Rivers and Delta—contributed a total population of over 17 million people based on the 2006 NPC report and calculated based on the exponential growth rates of the affected states. Using the Morgan and Krecie (1970) sampling frame, 384 respondents were drawn for the study through accidental sampling. They were drawn from three randomly selected electoral wards from each of the three states, arrived at through a multi-stage process. The focus groups were made up of seven participants in one state and nine in each of the other two, adding up to twenty-five. The instruments for data collection were the questionnaire and the discussion guide. The data generated through the questionnaire are presented and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, with the four-point Likert scale showing the level of agreement of the respondents on the issues raised. Any value less than 2.5 indicates disagreement and any issue that yields a value of 2.5 and above is adjudged to be agreed to by respondents. The focus group discussion

results are presented and analysed using the explanation-building technique. The results from the two instruments are compared, from which conclusions are made.

Data/discussion

Participants in the focus group discussion at the three centres in the states selected were unanimous in the view that youths were not convinced that they could be active in political participation to the extent of venturing into contesting during election circles. They argued that even though youth were fully aware and often involved in other aspects of political activities such as being used as crowd members during campaigns and in drawing support for prominent political players, they were hardly motivated by circumstances to seek elective positions. A participant at the Uyo centres, for instance, insisted that “there is a subtle psychological manipulation of youths in the country not to go beyond being loyal to the established old political actors with the hope of being adopted and sponsored by the actors in future”. They submitted that most youths are financially incapacitated to seek elective positions in a country where electioneering activities are very expensive. They also observed that the level of poverty in the country does not allow for independence in selecting leaders; therefore, youths support and vote for politicians who pay for votes rather than those with competence in service delivery. The consensus from the three focus groups, therefore, was that youth participation in politics in the South-South region is peripheral and the quality of participation is poor.

The second objectives of the study which sought to find out the extent to which youths in the South-South region of Nigeria were mobilized by public service broadcast stations to effectively participate in politics was based on the assumption that public service broadcast organizations are expected to adequately mobilize the youths for that purpose; effective participation interpreted to mean the involvement of the youths in seeking elective positions, and having a voice in selecting credible leaders. The consensus was that broadcast media houses listed as public service organisations for the purpose of the study were not committed to mobilising the youth in this regard. Not minding that some of the participants thought otherwise, the majority opinion by the groups was that radio and television organisations listed, upon which participants based their arguments, were either concerned about orchestrating the views and wishes of those in government or were preoccupied with political stories and programmes that yielded financial or related rewards. Asked whether they were aware of programmes that tilted towards strong advocacy for youths’ involvement to the extent of selecting credible leaders and seeking elective positions, one of the participants insisted that “these government-owned stations go after rich politicians and companies that are ready to pay for services rendered. They only occasionally remind the youths to register for voters’ cards”. Another respondent argued that “the only difference between government radio or television stations and the private ones is in the names of their owners”.

In seeking to find out whether participants adjudged public service broadcast stations in the South-South region of Nigeria to have fulfilled their mandate of mobilising the youths for effective participation in politics, the consensus of the three focus groups was that the organisations were nowhere near such a mark. Comments like: “I don’t think there is anything like public oriented media organization in Nigeria”,

“there is no difference between government media and private media”, “they cannot even convince the people to change their perception about politics” among others, made by some of the participants painted the picture about what the discussants thought about the media stations under study. The general view was that government-owned broadcast stations were not particularly concerned about and hence did not deliberately seek to mobilise the youths to effectively participate in politics. To that extent, the participants submitted that they did not succeed in fulfilling their mandate in this regard.

Data generated using the instrument of a questionnaire indicated that out of 384 copies of the instrument distributed equally in the three states, 367 were retrieved and found useful for the study. Respondents were between the ages of 18 and 45 and both sexes were well represented but with the males slightly higher. While sex and age were not considered critical variables, educational qualification was considered to be. Even though in varying degrees, data indicated that both public service radio and television stations listed were well accessed by the respondents and reasonably patronised.

On the objective to determine the extent to which youths in the South-South region of Nigeria were involved in political activities, data generated showed that 78 and 81 respondents agreed to be involved to a *very large* and to a *large extent* respectively, while 97 and 111 were involved to a *little* and *very little extents* respectively. With more on this as displayed in the table below, and with the calculated WMS of 2.3, the decision was that youths were not effectively involved to a reasonable extent, in political activities in the South-South region of Nigeria.

Table 1: Extent of youths’ involvement in politics in South-South Region of Nigeria

Extent	Frequency	W(X)	FX	Percentage	Decision
Very large	78	4	321	21.3	Negative (2.36)
Large	81	3	242	22.1	
Little	97	2	194	26.4	
Very little	111	1	111	30.2	
Total	367	10	868	100	

The second objective was to determine the extent of mobilisation of youth by public service broadcast stations towards active participation in politics. Table two shows that 62 and 79 respondents respectively, were of the view that their mobilisation by the media organisations towards active participation in politics was to a *very large extent* and to a *large extent*, whereas 121 and 105 expressed the opinion that such mobilisation was to a *little* and to *very little* extent respectively.

Table 2: Extent of mobilisation of youths for active participation in politics by public service broadcast stations in South-South Nigeria

Extent	Frequency	W(X)	FX	Percentage	Decision
Very large	62	4	248	16.9	Negative (2.2)
Large	79	3	237	21.5	
Little	121	2	242	33.0	
Very little	105	1	105	28.6	
Total	367	10	832	100	

The calculated WMS on this was 2.2, implying a negative result.

The opinions of respondents were also sought on the extent of success of public broadcast media organisations in the region under study in fulfilling their mandate of mobilising them for active involvement in politics.

Table 3: Extent to which public service broadcast stations in the South-South region fulfil their mandate of political mobilisation.

Extent	Frequency	W(X)	FX	Percentage	Decision
Very large	59	4	236	16.1	Negative (1.7)
Large	76	3	228	20.7	
Little	130	2	260	35.4	
Very little	102	1	102	27.8	
Total	367	10	626	100	

Since the data displayed in the above table indicate that only 59 and 76 respondents respectively, believed that to a *very large* extent and to a *large* extent while, 130 and 102 were of the opinions that only to a *little* and to a *very little* extents did the broadcast stations fulfill their mandate as public service media stations, it is logical to conclude that the media stations have not carried out their obligation in this regard. This was even more so with 1.7 WMS calculated. This and the earlier outcome became even more interesting when they were cross-checked with the level of education of respondents.

Table 4: Extent of mobilisation of youths for political participation cross-tabulated with level of education

Extent	Frequency	Percentage	Decision	Education				
				Primary	Sec.sc h	OND/NC E	Degree	P. G
Very large	62	16.9	Negative (2.2)	18	20	12	9	3
Large	79	21.5		21	20	17	12	9
Little	121	33.0		19	30	24	22	26
Very little	105	28.6		17	17	27	23	21
Total	367	100		75	87	80	66	59

The cross-tabulation of the opinion of respondents about the extent of mobilisation of youths by public service broadcast media in the South-South region of Nigeria, with their levels of education, was based on the expectation that those who are educated will be more critical and knowledgeable about the role of the media organisations in service delivery. As table 4 shows, out of the 62 respondents that opined that the media stations effectively mobilized to a *very large* extent, less than half (24) of the number were in the categories of people with post-secondary education (e.g. 12 OND, 9 Degree and 3 PG) while majority (e.g. 18 primary school and 20 secondary school certificate holders) thought that the media stations mobilized to a *very large* and to a *large* extents, respectively.

The trend continues when we look at those whose opinion was that the media stations mobilise to a *very little* extent, with 71 of the respondents who had post-secondary education and above saying that mobilisation was to a *very little* extent, while those in the categories of primary and secondary education who believed the stations mobilize to a *very little* extent added up to only 34 respondents.

Related to the opinion on the extent of mobilisation of the youths was the issue of fulfilment of the mandate of the media organisations involved. And since the data earlier displayed (in table 3) demonstrated a decision that respondents did not believe the organizations, did fulfil their mandate as public-oriented media outlets, this outcome was also viewed against the level of education of respondents, a critical variable in such decision making.

Table 5: Extent of fulfilment of mandate by public service broadcast media in the South-South region, cross-tabulated with the level of education of respondents.

Extent	Frequency	Percentage	Decision	Education				
				Primary	Sec.sc h	OND/NC E	Degree	P. G
Very large	59	16.1	Negative (1.7)	20	17	12	8	2
Large	76	20.7		20	19	18	11	8
Little	130	35.4		21	33	26	23	27
Very little	102	27.8		14	18	24	24	23
Total	367	100		75	87	80	66	59

As education was assumed to influence people’s thinking, with the number of those considered to be well-educated (e.g. degree and post graduate qualifications) adding up to only 10 out of 59 that said the stations mobilize to a *very large* extent, and 19 out of 76 (e.g. 11 degree holders and 8 post graduates) insisting that the media stations mobilize to a *large extent*, it is logical to submit that based on critical minds among the respondents, the media stations indeed have failed in fulfilling their mandate as public oriented broadcast stations.

Again, out of 130 and 102 respondents for *little* and *very little* extents respectively, the well-educated respondents (degree and PG certificate holders) added up to 50 respondents (23+27) and 47 respondents (24+23) respectively, against the barely educated primary and secondary levels which added up to 54 (21+33) and 34 (14+18) representing a *little* extent and *very little* extent respectively. Of the 59 respondents with postgraduate education, a whopping 50 of them said the stations fulfil their mandate to a *little* and *very little* extent (27 and 23, respectively) while only 10 went for *very large* and *large* extents (2 and 8, respectively). More respondents in the graduates’ category also said the stations’ fulfilment of the mandate was to a *little* and *very little* extent (e.g. 23 and 24 respondents respectively), while fewer in that category were for *very large* and *large* extents (e.g. 8 and 11 respondents respectively). What is obvious in the end is that while it is generally agreed that the media stations are seen not to fulfil their public service mandate, being the opinion expressed by the majority, the well-educated ones among them hold even more strongly to this opinion.

The results that show that youth in the South-South region of Nigeria are not adequately involved in politics and are not well mobilized by public broadcast media in the region to do so are in congruent with the position of some scholars who believe that while privately owned media are pre-occupied with the pursuit of profit at the expense

of issues of interest to the masses, government-owned media, in this circumstance, public service broadcast organizations, do the biddings of those in governments (Jukwey, in Usua 2018; Bardoel & Lowe, 2007). There are also other observers who, in making the argument for the regulation of broadcasting, insist that, among other things, if the media are left without heavy regulation, there is a tendency for them to completely ignore the interests of the voiceless. Regulation to them is partly to ensure that the private media create ample space and airtime for public interests, while other stations, designated as public service stations, live up to that nomenclature by working strictly, in the interest of the weak, the voiceless and the minorities. Since the relationship between public service broadcasting and political participation has been established (e.g. Queitelier and Hooghe, 2011; Eyong and John, 2019) the failure of public service broadcast organisations to fulfil this mandate is a negation of the primary goal for their establishment, hence a failure in their duty to society.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the greatest plagues any society can face is bad governance. Irrespective of the universally acclaimed benefit of democracy as a form of and the most popular type of government, inactive, insensitive and corrupt players end up making it useless to society. That has been the experience in the case of Nigeria since its independence from British colonial rule. A few political players, having hijacked the Nigerian political system, have succeeded in shutting the door against other entrants. The active and intelligent young future leaders who should be active players in the political space have been totally excluded.

While the failed state status of Nigeria can be reversed through the active participation of the populace in electoral processes, the mass media have the responsibility of mobilizing them out of resentment and apathy, into active involvement in politics in a bid to enlisting a set of active and selfless leaders; people with fresh ideas that can move the Nigerian society towards sustainable democracy and development. But given that even the media may have been dragged along the ignoble path of sectionalism, bigotry and corruption by the political class, a reassessment of the services rendered by the media became necessary. Also, as they get distracted by commercial or profit pursuit to necessitate agitation for deliberate use of certain organizations and programmes to focus on the needs of the greater percentage of the population; and with the responsibility of the media in general and publicly-owned ones in particular, to mobilize the population for active involvement in politics to ensure the selection of selfless leaders, the need to find out the extent to which public service arm of the broadcast media have fulfilled this mandate became even more compelling. In the case of such organizations in the South-South region of Nigeria, as this study has shown, another failure of the media has been noted as both the opinions of respondents to questionnaire items and those of participants in focus group discussion in the survey carried out indicate that the youths in the region are not motivated and mobilized enough by public service media to be actively involved in electoral processes as voters and contestants seeking elective positions for the purpose of enthroning good leadership.

Based on this outcome, and as the respondents/discussants have agreed, the public service broadcast media have failed in carrying out their mandate of mobilising them for the election of vibrant and selfless leaders into political offices. This calls for a number of recommendations, including the need to make public service broadcast stations totally independent from government and ensuring that regulation of broadcasting is put in the hands of an equally independent agency, for both to be spared the encumbrances and distractions that arise from governmental influence and excessive profit pursuit. This is because on one hand, an independent media station will focus attention on pursuing the interest of the generality of the people and, by implication, the growth of the society through the election of credible and active leaders, and on the other, an equally independent regulator will be in a position to sanction those that stray from their core mandates. Sustained pressure by non-governmental agencies and agents of development, to ensure public service broadcast media live up to their social responsibility and agenda-setting functions, being the yardsticks and impetus for the media service that will protect the interests of the masses against unnecessary promotion and protection of political elites and excessive profit-seeking investors. Promoters of democracy should take public-oriented media organisations into partnership in their work. Media workers in public-oriented organisations who, in the first instance, should be properly remunerated, should see their work as a special kind of journalism, requiring altruistic stewardship, should be given proper orientation in this regard and regularly trained to pursue public spiritedness in their activities. Finally, members of the public, especially the youths, should demand as a matter of right, that public service media serve them in accordance with their name and established mandates which includes enlisting the youths to be fully involved in politics and in the enthronement of active, vibrant, intelligent and selfless political actors to guarantee democracy, good governance and development of the society.

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