

**NEWS CONTENT AND JOURNALISTS'
SOCIALIZATION WITH POWER IN NIGERIA**

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**NEWS CONTENT AND JOURNALISTS'
SOCIALIZATION WITH POWER IN NIGERIA**

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Action Group
APC	All Progressives Congress
CMS	Church Missionary Society
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crime Commission
EOC	Emergency Operation Centre
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FOI	Freedom of Information
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IPC	International Press Centre
MEND	Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta
NCDC	Nigeria Centre for Disease Control
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons
NEPU	Northern Elements Progressive Union
NNPC	Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NSCDC	Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corp
NUJ	Nigeria Union of Journalists
OPC	Odua's People Congress
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
TSA	Treasury Single Account
WHO	World Health Organization

KANDUNGAN BERITA DAN SOSIALISASI WARTAWAN DENGAN KUASA DI NIGERIA

ABSTRAK

Kandungan berita sangat bergantung kepada subjek atau sumbernya. Oleh yang demikian, apa yang membentuk berita dan cara sumbernya diperoleh menjadi pokok persoalan dalam pengajian kewartawanan akhbar. Walau bagaimanapun, apa yang jarang dilakukan adalah penelitian terhadap kandungan berita, bagaimana ia dipengaruhi oleh sosialisasi di antara wartawan dengan kuasa elit yang membentuk subjek berita wartawan dan bagaimana sumbernya diperoleh. Oleh itu, berdasarkan jurang epistemologi ini, kajian ini meneliti saling tindakan pengaruh pemilikan, pilihan medium, hubungan wartawan-sumber berita, politik, hubungan sosial, dan struktur kuasa masyarakat dalam sumber kandungan dan reka bentuk akhbar Nigeria. Berdasarkan ekonomi politik akhbar dan hegemoni, kajian ini menggunakan kaedah campuran, terdiri daripada analisis kandungan kuantitatif 336 edisi dua akhbar di Nigeria (*Daily Trust* dan *The Punch*), merangkumi 8871 berita dan temubual mendalam bersama 20 orang editor dan wartawan kanan terpilih untuk pengumpulan data. Dalam analisis dan dapatan data, kajian ini menggunakan analisis naratif, lengkap dengan data perpustakaan. Hasil dapatan dan perbincangan dibahagikan kepada enam tema dalam enam bab. Dapatan kajian ditunjangi oleh lima lapisan pengaruh ke atas kandungan berita seperti yang diperoleh hasil daripada kajian, iaitu (a) pengaruh dalaman/organisasi; (b) pengaruh individu wartawan; (c) pengaruh wartawan/sumber berita; (d) pengaruh pemilikan; (e) pengaruh luaran/persekitaran. Dapatan utama dalam kajian ini menunjukkan akhbar di Nigeria memberi tumpuan kepada liputan berkenaan kerajaan dan orang berkuasa, serta terdapat beberapa

akhbar yang bertindak sebagai alat sebaran golongan elit berkuasa di dalam negara. Kajian juga mendapati bahawa 56% sumber berita di dalam akhbar dianggap untuk golongan elit yang berkuasa dan diiktiraf dalam masyarakat. Sosialisasi kumpulan dan nilai kemasyarakatan Nigeria memberikan tekanan besar kepada wartawan yang bersosialisasi untuk mengikuti dan mematuhi norma dan amalan kumpulan tertentu, yang membawa kepada sindiket berita, menjejaskan pelaporan dan penapisan-kendiri. Kajian seterusnya mendapati bahawa akhbar di Nigeria dipengaruhi oleh agama, etnik dan nepotisme dalam liputan berita dan kedudukan mereka dalam subjek berita tersebut. Pemilik dan pengiklan juga membentuk lapisan pengaruh dalam kandungan berita seperti yang didedahkan dalam kajian. Oleh yang demikian, berdasarkan dapatan kajian, dapat disimpulkan bahawa pada pandangan pengaruh subjektif dan partisan ke atas kandungan berita dalam kuasa bidang politik, ekonomi dan sosio-budaya, akhbar ini gagal memainkan peranan perlembagaannya sebagai pelopor demokrasi dan alat untuk urus tadbir kerajaan yang baik dan kesaksamaan sosial di Nigeria.

NEWS CONTENT AND JOURNALISTS' SOCIALIZATION WITH POWER IN NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

The news content has always been dependent on its subject or sources. Thus, what constitutes news and how it is sourced have been subject of enquiry in newspaper journalism studies. However, what is seldom done is the probe of the news content and how it is influenced by socialization between the journalist and the power elite that shape the journalist's news subject and how it is sourced. Therefore, based on this epistemological gap, this study examined the interplay of influence of ownership, medium's interest, journalist-news source relationship, politics, social relations, and power structures of the society in content sourcing and design by Nigerian newspapers. Premised on political economy of the newspaper and hegemony, the study adopted the mixed methods, comprising quantitative content analysis of 336 editions of two Nigerian newspapers (*Daily Trust* and *The Punch*) covering 8871 news stories and in-depth interviews with 20 purposely selected editors and senior journalists to generate its data. In its analysis and presentation of data, the study adopted narrative analysis, complemented with library data. The presentation of findings and discussions are spread across six themes in six chapters. The findings are anchored on the five layers of influence on news content as generated by the study, namely (a) Internal/organization influence (b) individual journalist influence (c) journalist/news source influence (d) ownership influence (e) external/environmental influence. Major findings in the study revealed that newspapers in Nigeria concentrate on coverage of the government and powerful people and that some newspapers in the country are mouthpieces of the power elites

in the country. The study also discovered that about 56% of news sources in the newspapers were attributed to accredited elites and powerful forces in the society. Beat and group socialization as well as Nigerian societal values exert enormous pressure on journalists who are socialized to follow and obey certain group norms and practices, which lead to news syndication, compromised reporting and self-censorship. The study further discovered that Nigerian newspapers are influenced by religion, ethnicity and nepotism in news coverage and the position they take on news subjects. Ownership and advertisers also constitute layers of influence on the news content as revealed in the study. Thus, based on the discovery in the study, it is concluded that in view of the subjective and partisan influence on news content by the political, economic and socio-cultural forces, the newspaper is handicapped in playing its constitutional role as democracy vanguard and vehicle for good governance and social equality in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In every human society, numerous activities go on every minute of the day, out of which only a minute percentage are allotted space in the news by the mass media. The challenge of making a choice between what is considered as newsworthy and what is left out makes the job of the news media and the journalists critical. Journalists and the news media have to make several value judgments in deciding what events are newsworthy and how the newsworthy events are presented to their audience. In making these judgments, they take a lot into consideration, one of which is the source by which the facts of the news are generated and established, and through whom the news stories earn credibility (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Stromback, Karlsson & Hopmann, 2012).

The pressing decision-making process involving news choice, newsworthiness, the influence of news sources on the news, editors' gate-keeping, and other related issues around the news, have led to constant scholarly enquiries into the nature of news itself and the factors that influence the choice of events as newsworthy, including those through whom news is generated. Lippmann (1922), for instance, pioneered enquiries into newsworthiness, and after him a lot of scholarship efforts have been vested into it, with Galtung and Ruge (1965) being the most visible in critical appraisals of the news values factors. Though the conclusion of Galtung and Ruge has been considered by many scholars as too simplistic, their suggestions of 'news factors' based on "common-sense perception psychology" (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p.66) had been referenced in many studies on the news. Other scholars

and researchers have built on their efforts, with Caple and Bednarek (2013) coming up with their own twelve factors of newsworthiness, of which the first eight factors are ‘culture-free’, while the remaining four factors are culture-bound.

Harcup and O’Neill (2001) did a review of Galtung and Ruge (1965), and came up with a list of factors of newsworthiness. Of the list suggested by Harcup and O’Neill, the locus of the power elite, celebrity, and newspaper agenda stories that conform to the news organisation’s own agenda suggest ideological linkage between the newsroom and the news content. That is why Hall (1973, p. 182) argues that “news values appear as a set of neutral, routine practices: but we need, also, to see formal news values as an ideological structure”. Caple and Bednareck (2013), in their own analysis, corroborate that the ideological perspectives on news values is premised on the notion of organisational needs as well as political and economic structures of society while “media coverage is seen as a socially determined construction of reality in which the “objectivity of news is based on a social consensus among journalists” (Staab, 1990, p. 428).

The argument of ideology fusion in the news has generated a lot of debates among scholars, with a lot of them advancing that the earlier simplistic explanations of the newsworthiness factors cannot always answer for the complex journalistic job of determining news value and newsworthiness of an event. For instance, Staab (1990) argues that news value study must take into account the intentions of journalists. Hall (1973), also echoing the Marxist school of thought, suggests that news values themselves are part of an ideologically constructed way of perceiving the world that favours and naturalises the perspectives of powerful elites. Also, Donsbach (2004) contends that news value necessarily involves subjective judgments

and can never be truly objective, a view that had been endorsed by Herman and Chomsky (1988) and McChesney (2000) in their propaganda model. A number of scholars also allude to the often-ignored fact that news is transactional; a news item being a commodity with which the media organization trades directly for subscription or indirectly for the attention of the general public for advertisers' fund (McManus, 1988). In essence, the newsworthiness of an event, by this definition, is determined by the capacity of the news item to generate profit for the corporations that sell the news for profit.

Bagdikian (cited in Gitlin, 2003), proposed three stages of news selection as follows: the editor decides that a certain site or event needs to be investigated for news; second a reporter decides what to look for at the site or event; and lastly the editors decide on how to put the story to the public. There is also the institutional structure of the media managers who set the corporate policy and then the budget. Furthermore, there are media owners who fall into the elite class and who want to respect the political economic system in order to gain their own political and economic advantages (Gitlin, 2003, p.258). Since legitimacy in media organizations is what attracts audience, the top media managers make sure that their news operations are carried out in the way that this is projected. Gitlin (2003) observes that in achieving this, "their forms of social control must be indirect, subtle, and not at all necessarily conscious" (p. 259).

However, for the Nigerian newspaper market, there has been paucity of research on news value system and layers of influence on news in the nation's newspapers. For instance, among the issues needing exploration in news routine and processes are what determines prominence in the news in the Nigerian newspapers;

what determines the choice of news sources; whether there is an observable trend or pattern with regards to news coverage and content sourcing in the newspapers; how can the pattern be defined and what are the implications of this on the public and the Nigerian democracy, good governance and social equality. These, among others, are the critical questions that propelled this study. Thus, this probe begins from an assumption that newsworthiness, newspaper content sourcing and content design in Nigerian newspapers follow an interplay of influence of politics and social relations of the journalists and the newspaper organizations with power structures of the society. There are yet other layers of influence on the news and pattern of coverage and content sourcing in Nigerian newspapers. For instance, media in Nigeria, especially the newspaper, face a lot of challenges, some of which include funding, disruption by digital innovations, poor human resources, decline in subscription, hence the considerations for content sourcing by journalists and the newspaper naturally go beyond the mere questions of objectivity, in view of the implications that news content portend to newspapers' survival. To maximize profit for their sustenance, newspapers in Nigeria naturally have to factor in the business and ideology aspects of content creation. That is, they pay attention not only to how content sourcing enhances readership but also how it supports survival mechanisms of the medium.

Thus, while the above mentioned 'news factors' have roles to play in news content sourcing in Nigerian newspapers, this study shows that Nigerian journalists' socialization with the powerful in the society takes pre-eminence in the judgment of newsworthiness of an event, and that news sourcing also follows this power law. The influence of power and politics in Nigerian newspaper newsroom follows a dynamic, though sometimes unobserved and taken for granted influence of the powerful,

which this study has unraveled and on which it draws its conclusions on implications for democracy, good governance, rule of law and social equality. Consequently, news contents are often sourced from places of power to which a measure of loyalty and favourable frames are ceded in the process of content creation. This interplay between the newsroom and the powerful elite produces a news ecology that leaves few elites at the top of the chain with regards to references to content in the newspapers. Thus, perpetual reinforcement of the elite power over time in the news leaves the situation unquestioned and the general populace has come to perceive this as normal.

1.2 Government and Media/Press Relations in Africa

There is a wide difference between the colonial and post-colonial indigenous press in Africa. For instance, during colonialism, the press sought to be independent and critical of the colonial governments, while the colonial government strove to control it through patronage, restrictions and policies. However, the pattern in press control during colonialism influenced government/press relation in Africa after independence. At independence, most African governments opted for colonial model of rigid state control of the media. Their argument then hinged on the need to manage scarce resources, ensure political stability and to promote national development in the nascent states. However, this argument was not sustained for long as the development goal which was their main alibi failed to be achieved in most of the African states, thus giving rise to a tide of agitations for the liberalization of the media system on the continent (Nyamnjoh, 2004).

As illustrated by Nyamnjoh (2004), research and literature on media and mass communication in Africa reveals that prior to the 1990s, there was tendency

towards a centralized broadcast system and a “highly repressive press” (p.121) in Africa. This development however, began to change from the 1990s, when waves of democratic agitations swept across the continent. Liberalization of the media sector which led to the collapse of the hitherto authoritarian state-controlled media system resulted into a mixed media system, which is a by-product of the capitalist economic system that accommodates “public, private, joint public-private, cooperatives” (Heuva, Tomaselli & Teer-Tomaselli, 2004), among others. The liberalized media system notwithstanding, it is argued that the media in Africa are effectively under the control of the government and capital, both of which are united in ensuring that the public are not fed with what is “subversive to their interests and power” (Nyamnjoh, 2004, p.128). This trend in partnership between the state and capital is played out in most African countries, and through this media content is ideologically-controlled to safeguard the hegemony of the power elite.

Generally, however, the wind of democracy that swept through the continent brought about the flourishing of multi-party system and media pluralism. As participatory democracy spread on the continent, it consequently led to opening more spaces for public discourse, and invariably to increase in the number of private newspapers. Democracy has enabled relatively free press, though not without occasional hiccups or government control. An appraisal of the situation of the press in some select African countries will help to exemplify the pattern of the operation of the press on the continent.

Media systems in African states share varied experiences that derive from their disparate political climates. Through civilian democracies, military autocracies, dictatorships, monarchies, etc., different African states have been ruled under

different political climates which have shaped their media system. Hence, if there is any argument to make based on literature, it is that the media experience on the continent varies from one country to another. However, it is generally agreed that African media generally have not done well, even under democracy. It is observed that the continent had always been the most difficult terrain for the media to operate in. Some of the obstacles to hindering media performance include political, economic, and climatic factors which have rendered media performance on the continent to be ineffective.

However, in terms of freedom, most African countries have press freedom enshrined in their constitution, but in practice, journalists are still restricted either directly through legislation, coercion or muzzling, or indirectly through patronage/clientele relationship. Sometimes, awareness of the political environment leads to the media operating on self-censorship. Alao, Uwom & Alao (2013), did an extensive work on profiling the state of media across West African states. The details, summarized below, show how political realities mostly determine media realities, and how the freedom or suppression enjoyed by the media/press depends on the type of government in place in these countries.

For instance, the media in Benin Republic, a West African country, are said to be one of the most vibrant and pluralistic in the West African sub region. The print media in that country, in particular, has a history of critical scrutiny and reporting of the government and the political parties. In addition, the “frequently-politicised press” oftentimes published articles considered highly critical of government (BBC Country profile, as cited in Alao, et al., 2013, p.105). However, sometimes it was not rosy for the media, for despite the country’s constitution guaranteeing freedom of the

press, the government sometimes invoked the libel laws to punish journalists for publishing offensive reports. And also, this critical posture of the press sometimes gets diluted when politicians employ the media to channel their political agenda.

In Burkina Faso, another West African country, but with history of political upheavals, the government was known to have shut down media organizations that flouted or breached the state's confidentiality. That country's constitution guarantees freedom of the press, and according to BBC Country Profile cited by Alao et al. (2013), the press in that country is "relatively free" and criticism is "tolerated" (p.108) by the government. But then, access to government information is difficult while libel laws are sometimes invoked against offensive publications. In Burkina Faso, most media organizations are owned by the government, though some of them are individually owned. Government-owned media, by virtue of their ownership, are not good critics of the government.

In Guinea, the media were suppressed, a situation which climaxed to what was called 'July media blackout' imposed by the government up till 2010. There were reports of abuses and repressive measures taken against journalists whose reports government found offensive, but political transition led to the promulgation of press freedom law in 2010. Following that, a more liberal press system was put in place which brought in a new wave of private interest in media ownership. In Senegal, the media market was liberalized, with government and private ownership of media organizations allowed. However, journalists in Senegal were known to suffer physical violence, prosecution and sometimes being jailed. Sometimes, also, government jammed radio signals. Some media houses were also banned from operation or their facilities vandalized. Although the country's constitution

guarantees press freedom, the provisions of the Penal Code of 1977 contains clauses on national security which led to the harassment, prosecution, fine and incarceration of journalists.

Meanwhile, in the Gambia, the long stretch of dictatorship by the ousted former president, Yaya Jammeh, led to the media being highly controlled by the government. Though there were private media organizations, which contributed to the ouster of the former president Jammeh, these private media were hardly patronized, and this left them vulnerable to corporate interests. In the days of the dictatorship, in order to continue perpetuating itself in power, government through its institutions harassed dissenting media houses. Throughout that regime, government was accused of using threats, arbitrary arrests and torture of journalists who published what was considered offensive against the government. Hane and Baglo (cited by Alao et al., 2013) reported that journalists who were uncooperative to the government could be executed, and as a result of this, journalists who felt threatened went into exile.

In Mauritania, freedom of the press was limited, though the country's constitution guarantees such rights. Libel laws were used to criminalize journalists who wrote what government considered offensive. Hence, journalism in Mauritania survived through self-censorship on coverage of issues relating to the military, foreign diplomatic missions, corruption and Sharia-Islamic law (Freedom House, cited by Alao, et al., 2013). According to the United Nations (cited by Alao, et al., 2013), being one of the poorest countries in Africa - ranking 136th of 169 poor nations in the world - the media in that country were largely government-owned. In

2010, government attempted to liberalize the broadcasting media market by making a law, which led to the emergence of private radio and television media organizations.

In Cote D'Ivoire, the media have struggled to maintain their independence. Campbell, (cited by Alao, et al. 2013) wrote that the media were greatly repressed, and were highly controlled and coerced by “tyrannical leaders to maintain power” (p.111). This undue interference by the political power limited the capacity of the media to effectively play their role independently, without fear of victimization. In Liberia, the press lived through and survived two civil wars. The civil conflicts made government and the rebels to control the media strictly to push their narratives. For instance, up until 2012, there was “insults and criminal laws against the Liberian press” (Alao, et al., 2013, p.119). Although the country was the first to pass the Freedom of Information Act in 2010, libel was still a criminal offence in Liberia and charges were usually leveled against media houses. Also, journalists suffered physical violence, and libel charges were often filed by angry politicians against them.

The Ghanaian media were described as vibrant. As obtainable in most countries in the sub-region, radio was the most popular medium in that country. Based on the fact that Ghana operated libertarian media system, the media were generally free to operate and both government and private ownership of the media were allowed. Ghana was also ranked first in Africa in terms of press freedom and 27th in the world in 2010 (Alao et al., 2013). However, although the country's constitution guarantees press freedom, there were provisions in the criminal code that contradicts press freedom. In Cape Verde, as at 2011, State of Press Freedom (cited by Alao et al., 2013), reported that the media in that country were free to operate

without vendetta from government. Cape Verde was applauded as one of the top 10 countries in the world in which journalists were granted freedom to work without hindrance. In Cape Verde, no official permission was required from government to establish newspapers and broadcast media, which gave media great leverage of freedom to operate in the country.

As at 2001, 33 African states had independent regulatory agencies for the media, while nine were in the process of establishing theirs. However, it was argued by Heuva, et al. (2004) that if checks and balances and transparency were not built into the regulatory agencies, there was the fear of them being hijacked by the state or capital or by both the state and capital, acting in alliance. Benin Republic, for instance, had media regulatory agency known as High Authority for Audio-Visual Media and Communication (HAAC) that sanctioned media houses believed to have “over-stepped” their boundaries (Alao, et al., 2013, p.106). The agency imposed different levels of sanctions, ranging from tendering public apology to indefinite suspension.

However, Nyamnjoh has argued that ownership of the media and their control is more relevant in Africa today in view of the several crises that had plagued the continent since the 1980s resulting in series of political and economic challenges. According to him, censorship of government information makes it impossible for journalists to get accurate information, noting that although some of the African governments proclaim democracy and freedom of information, this is only on face value as government officials do get sanctioned for releasing unauthorized information. Nyamnjoh further notes that the promulgation of laws that restrict journalists in their work has the tendency to create a regime of self-censorship that

tends to create a crisis of credibility for the press in many African countries. In addition to political control exercised by government through legislation and/or coercion, there is also the issue of economic, technical and professional control faced by journalists in the course of their work and as a result of rigid control, very few local investors have found the press in Africa attractive. The financial difficulties that the media face make news gathering and production not only herculean but news output less credible. Financial difficulties also result in lack of adequate background for news stories. As a result of this, politicians and opportunists hijack the media, cashing in on the hapless situation of the press to pursue their self-interests and ambitions, using the media as a tool (Nyamnjoh, 2004).

In view of this situation, the press between 1960 when most African states got independence and 1990 when many transitioned to democracy, lost “much of its dynamism, vibrancy and credibility of the colonial era” (Nyamnjoh, 2004, p.126). Nyamnjoh admits that even though the private and critical press has been able to sustain their criticisms of governments in Africa, they have not always been able to resist the pressure of groups and other interests in society. Thus, as argued by Nyamnjoh, based on the false assumption that what is anti-government must necessarily be pro-public, many media instead of leading the campaign against intolerance, fanaticism and extremism have been at the vanguard of divisive tendencies, promoting murder, destruction and hatred. Added to this, there has also been inadequate attention paid to the promotion of the type of democracy required in Africa. Much attention has been given to the role of the media in promotion of democracy without consideration for the sociology and cultures of African societies and the type of democracy desired by the people in the continent.

The situation with media content design in Nigeria - the focus of this enquiry - is more or less symptomatic of the picture presented by Nyamjoh (2004). Whereas the media is free to flourish, and free to scrutinize and criticize the government as stipulated in the nation's constitution, the feeling that this translates to its being pro-public is erroneous. There are other interests, aside from government, which the press also serves other than the public. This is the trend unravelled in this study.

1.3 The Nigerian Newspaper Industry: A Background

Newspaper publishing at the onset in Nigeria was a precarious business. This situation was a creation of several factors, ranging from the nature of ownership of the publications, funding, circulation/readership and the economic situation prevalent then. These factors also shaped the fortunes of newspapers in Nigeria in subsequent years. Thus, the air of uncertainties that characterized the early Nigerian press has continued to envelope the press sector even with improvement in funding and printing technology as experienced currently.

Some of the early newspaper owners in Nigeria were business refugees who found a sanctuary in the press, having been ruined in other businesses through bankruptcy, dismissal, resignation and other natural causes (Omu, 1978). Such a profile of the early newspaper owners showed the poor funding climate in which the pioneer newspapers operated. That prevalent situation was implicated in the poor production quality, limited circulation/readership and the high mortality rate of the newspapers then (Azikiwe, 1964). Newspaper business at inception in Nigeria was largely sole/family ownership and many of the newspaper owners, except the *Daily Times*, did not allow foreign involvement or injection of foreign capital into their businesses. In addition, because returns on investment were not guaranteed, most

businessmen of the period feared investing in the high - risk newspaper business (Coker, 1968). Also, the business orientation of the early newspaper barons was quite unrealistic. Most of them did not seem to be motivated by pecuniary interest (Coker 1968; Omu, 1978). This means that during that period, much was not realized or expected from sales and that revenue from sales was not likely to keep the newspapers afloat. In view of their poor financial standing therefore, the newspapers could not make much difference economic-wise. This was what made Coker (1968) to describe the newspaper business climate then as an unbroken chain of failures.

Many of the provincial newspapers also constituted a financial drain on the national ones. Most of them were only operated for prestige reason, and not because they were commercial success. Some of them appeared irregularly or went out of print for a long time (Coker 1968) and returning afterwards in epileptic form. With this situation, profits were meagre and the newspaper owners had little for reinvestment or for acquisition of equipment (Omu, 1978). Aside from revenue from sales which was meagre, there was also subsidy from the colonial government for only a few of the newspapers that were pro-colonialism. In view of the fact that most of the newspapers were engaged in the anti-colonial struggles of the period, and in the face of lack of advertisement support from colonial government and organisations, they could only rely on public support through sales and inadequate advertisement which could not sustain their businesses. Some newspapers approaching insolvency often sought donations from the reading public to keep their newspapers afloat (Azikiwe, 1994).

This was the kind of environment in which the early Nigerian newspapers operated. The funding climate was very poor and readership was not encouraging.

This resulted in poor production quality, inadequate revenues from sales, poor advertisement patronage, poor savings and re-investment, all of which adversely affected the sustenance of the newspapers. These factors also implicated in the premature extinction of many of the newspapers. This period of uncertainty marked the first phase in newspaper evolution in Nigeria.

With this unsavoury beginning, it would have been expected that future newspaper owners would seek a more solid capital base before taking off with their publications. Thus, as from the 1920s, a new pattern in newspaper ownership and funding emerged in Nigeria. From the sole proprietorship era, the newspaper ownership and funding history graduated into party/government ownership and local/foreign partnership form. This experiment began first in 1926, with the *Daily Times* and solidified in 1947 with the newspaper's partnership with the *Daily Mirror* Group of London which led to the injection of heavy capital into the local newspaper (Azikiwe, 1994). This experiment survived till the early independence period in 1960, after which the ownership and funding pattern changed.

The change in funding pattern as from the 1920s led to improvement in newspaper business and the mortality rate of the newspapers was drastically reduced. What is however, clear from the newspapers that operated from the 1920s up to the early period of Nigeria's independence in 1960 is that though the proprietors of newspapers tried to establish a solid capital base for their publications, these newspapers still suffered cash crunch. Efforts to establish newspaper chain also did not receive much success for both Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, two principal figures in newspaper business chain in the 1930s and 1940s. The kind of capital required for such venture was not readily available. While foreign

capital appeared to work for *Daily Times*, it was not met with much success for the *Nigerian Tribune* (Duyile, 1987; Coker, 1968; Nigerian Tribune Publication, 1999).

Also, government's dabbling into newspaper business was not too successful despite the huge resources at its disposal. Thus, failed newspapers of this era included the *Daily Mail* of the Northern region government (Oso, 2012) and *Morning Post* by Tafawa Balewa's federal government (Coker, 1968). The casualties from poor funding by political parties were the *Daily Service* (established 1933) by the Nigeria Youth Movement and the *Daily Comet* loaned for party propaganda purposes by the Northern Elements Progressive Union (Azikiwe, 1994). However, some of these newspapers survived into the period following the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970. These included the *West African Pilot*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Nigerian Citizen* which metamorphosed into *New Nigerian*, and *Morning Post*. *Tribune* and *Daily Times* existed for much longer time.

The end of the first republic saw the end of party ownership and funding of newspapers. Government-funded newspapers became the vogue. The oil boom era which saw the government introducing series of development plans and massive construction of structures and infrastructures also encouraged state governments to undertake newspaper ventures. Newspaper circulation strength peaked at nearly two million copies a day during this time (Aliagan, 2011). The old Mid-West State pioneered the state ownership of newspaper during the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 when it established the *Nigerian Observer* in 1968. The Central Eastern State's *Renaissance* was also established during the war while the Western State inherited the *Daily Sketch* from the old Western Region. Kwara State also launched the *Nigerian Herald* in 1973. Other newspapers in this category were the *Nigerian*

Chronicle in the South-Eastern State; *Daily Star* in the East Central State; *Nigerian Tide* in Rivers State; *Nigerian Standard* in Benue Plateau and *The Triumph* in Kano State (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2009).

The newspapers enjoyed a robust funding and were also able to make their marks economically for at least a decade before diminishing returns began to set in. Several factors were responsible for the eventual decline in the fortune of the newspapers as from the late 1980s. Among these were that the state-owned newspapers became excessively sycophantic by singing the praises of their owner-governments, rather than giving the readers valuable news for their money; bad management which resulted from government appointing inexperienced and incompetent persons as editors and managers of the newspapers; poor funding climate resulting from the inability of the governments to continue to pay for services rendered by the newspapers as revenues from sales and advertisements considerably dwindled due to limitation of patronage to only government agencies and cronies of government; insensitivity of the handlers of the newspapers to moving with the trend in newspaper packaging and production, thus continuing to rely on old technology and production style.

In view of this many of these newspapers were badly run, abused and poorly funded (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2009). Some of them have since collapsed while many are on the verge of extinction as government subvention to them has dwindled and they have continued to run skeletal services. Some of the newspapers produce as low as 2,000 copies for an edition (Aliagan, 2011). Newspapers that are currently in coma and surviving only on life support include the *Nigerian Observer* in Benin City; *Nigerian Standard* in Jos, *Nigerian Tide* in Port Harcourt; *Nigerian*

Statesman in Enugu; *The Herald* in Ilorin, among others. Analyzing the condition of state-owned newspapers, Gboyega (2014) observes that state-owned newspapers are faced with a myriad of problems, among which are poor funding, obsolete equipment, competition from private-owned newspapers, apathy and lack of interest from the public on their content, as well as conflict of interest between serving the government as mouthpieces and being run as businesses.

State-owned newspapers have continued to record dismal performance and the take-over of newspapers like the *Daily Times* (hitherto private-owned) and *New Nigerian* by the federal and later by the northern state governments appeared to have caused the eclipse of their fame and fortunes. The *New Nigerian*, after being in coma for several years, eventually became extinct while the *Daily Times* was sold in controversial circumstances to a private communication agency by the Obasanjo government after the return to civil rule in 1999. The sale of the newspaper was a matter for legal dispute. The *Daily Times* returned to production for a few weeks and ceased printing afterwards. It later became an online medium.

The end of the 1970s saw the termination of government investment in newspaper business as the 1980s brought in a new wave of private interest in newspaper businesses. That era marked the beginning of government's disinvestment in newspaper business (Adeyanju & Okwori, 2006; Oso, 2012). Government's disinvestment in newspaper business occurred at a time major government companies were being privatized as part of the measures pushed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which supervised the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), an economic measure meant to rejuvenate Nigeria's economy but ended up creating more economic havoc. The reform which the international economic and

financial organization promotes is seen by some analysts as often leading to stagnation in national industries, the media industries inclusive (Dorsten, 2007). However, the return of private ownership of newspaper business, the realm from which newspaper enterprise took off initially in the 1850s to early 1940s saw the newspapers enjoying a boom for only a few years before diminishing returns set in.

Thus, even though Nigerian journalism took off in the religious realm (Akinfeleye, 2011), the press eventually became a tool of politics. Of the twelve newspapers that existed between 1880 and 1900, only one could not be said to be politically-inclined (Omu 1978). Thus, journalism in Nigeria at the beginning was an adjunct of politics. The first generation of newspaper owners and editors were businessmen and professionals, but they were also conscious of politics and they used their media to champion political cause. However, those who succeeded them were more involved in politics. Most of them were journalists/politicians. Thus, up to the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war in 1967 and thereafter, most Nigerian journalists were either espousing political ideologies, having sympathies for individual politicians or political parties to being card carrying members and in the executive councils of political parties (Jose, 1987).

Today, however, it is no longer the vogue for newspapers to openly espouse political cause, but individual newspapers pay covert allegiance to ethnic/religious causes, and demonstrate covert sympathies for politicians and governments while pretending to be objective and championing national agenda. The meddlesomeness of the ownership and the advertisers constitutes hindrances to the flourishing of an objective press in Nigeria. The realities of ethnicity and religious cleavages influence news slanting and partisanship in the press. This is evident when issues on religion

and ethnicity or regional politics come to the fore in national discourse. These realities shape news gathering, processing and dissemination in Nigeria. This is the background on which the current newspaper business in Nigeria is built. It provides the prism on which the newspaper climate in the country can be gleaned, and on which its content can be examined as well as the platform on which the impact of its content on democracy, good governance and social equality can be appraised.

1.3.1 Early Nigerian Newspapers and Politics

The early newspapers had a positive impact on the evolution of the Nigerian state. They fought against the evil of slave trade till it was abolished. Here examples could be made of the *Iwe Irohin* and the *Anglo African*, the two earliest Nigerian newspapers. After the slave trade was abolished, the newspapers changed to campaign against the evils of the colonial era, seeking a desirable transformation in the interest of the emergent nation and the people. Thus, the period 1900 to 1925 focused on key issues affecting the lives of the Nigerian people. The newspapers devoted their pages to vibrant debates and advocacy, which landed some of the editors in jail (Coker 1968).

The *Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser* that came after *Anglo African* was more politically inclined. It set the pace for the clamour of independence for the British colony (Barton, 1979). It was also a strong advocate of the *Africanisation* of Christianity, a move that was politically inspired to empower the black clergies who were discriminated against in white-controlled churches. The *Lagos Observer* was also an important political newspaper of the era. The role of the *Observer* in politics was most distinguished as it represented a symbol of intellectual

aggression which characterized political developments in the last two decades of 19th century (Omu 1978).

The *Eagle and Lagos Critic* launched by Emeric Macaulay, a grandson of Bishop Ajayi Crowther, was different from the others. It was seen as largely a pro-government organ inspired by what Owen Macaulay described as the need “to balance opinions when they are in opposition” (Omu, 1978, p.31). This was a euphemism for being a colonial government mouthpiece. Macaulay got rewarded for his pro-government stance because his newspaper was supported by government advertisement approved by Lieutenant-Governor W.B. Griffith. The *Lagos Weekly Record* launched by John Payne Jackson, a Liberian-born businessman started as a pro-government newspaper following a disagreement with Richard Beale Blaize who earlier on supported him financially to establish the newspaper. The *Record* got government advertisement from 1892 till 1900 when it was discontinued. Jackson’s *Record* became an opposition organ from then on, while Jackson remained in opposition and continued to attack the colonial government till 1915 when he died. After Kitoyi Ajasa walked out of the partnership on the *Lagos Standard*, he established the *Nigerian Pioneer*, a largely pro-government newspaper, which appeared in 1914. In view of its conservative posture, the *Pioneer* was believed to be government-sponsored. Virtually all the contemporary newspapers attacked the *Pioneer* for not being a part of the militant journalism of the era (Coker 1968). Ajasa’s opponents described his newspaper as both official and unofficial organ of the Lord Lugard administration (Omu, 1978).

The first daily newspaper established by a journalist/politician came on stream in 1925. It was the *Lagos Daily News* founded by Herbert Macaulay (Coker

1968) who turned it into an organ of his political party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party that had been established in 1922. Before the daily, a weekly *African Messenger* founded by Ernest Ikoli, another journalist/politician who was involved in the formation of the Nigerian Youth Movement, was established on March 10, 1921. Duse Mohammed Ali, an Egyptian who arrived Lagos in 1930, was also a politically active journalist who advocated the change of the name of the Lagos Youth Movement to Nigerian Youth Movement in 1936 (Coleman 1986) so as to give it a national spread. He started as a contributor to the *Daily Times* and later served as Editor of the *Nigerian Daily Telegraph*. By 1933, he had established *The Comet* (Coker 1968). *The Comet* soon became an influential organ of international politics and a source of inspiration and challenge for the emerging new leaders of Nigeria. It attracted contributions from eminent statesmen like Obafemi Awolowo, Dennis Osadebay, Fred Anyiam, A. K. Ajisafe, among others. A major landmark was recorded in the history of Nigerian political press on 22 November 1937 when the *West African Pilot*, was launched in Lagos by Nnamdi Azikiwe. Azikiwe's foray into journalism was to make him Africa's greatest newspaperman and one of its most dynamic nationalists. Azikiwe was the next example of journalist/politician after Herbert Macaulay and Ernest Ikoli.

Thus, the era up to 1937 represented a period when the main issue of interest to the nation's emerging intellectual class was politics, particularly campaign against discrimination by the colonial government and the white supremacists and agitation for involvement of the natives in the administration of the colony. Thus, a newspaper had to take a stand. Some of the newspapers anti-colonial while some others were pro-colonialists. However, majority of the newspapers reflected the popular mood of

the era which was against colonialism. The newspaper owners were conscious of this and they were very much involved in the politics of the era.

The decades of 1940s and 1950s were also a period of intense political activities. This was the constitution making years that prepared the natives for the eventual take-over of power from the colonialists. At the centre of the intense political activities of the period was the press, which, over the years, had demonstrated its potency as a veritable tool of political agitation and mobilization. Both Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, two of the most vibrant politicians and nationalists of that era, seemed well positioned in utilizing the press for their political ends, ostensibly because of their journalistic background. Azikiwe had been Editor of *African Morning Post* (Coleman, 1986) in the Gold Coast before returning to Nigeria while Awolowo had an eight-month stint with the *Daily Times*, and had been the pioneer editor of the *Nigerian Worker*, a quarterly Bulletin of the Labour union. Though the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) and the political elites of that region had the *Nigerian Citizen* which had been published by the Northern Nigerian government since September 19, 1948 and the *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo* established since January 1, 1939, they did not seem to be able to muster sufficient strength to contain the avalanche of propaganda emanating from the Southern-based newspapers and the politicians. The first daily English newspaper on the Northern soil was the *Daily Comet*, first published in Kano in 1949. It had been printed and published, prior to this time, by Duse Mohamed Ali who ceded it to Azikiwe shortly before his death in 1945. Azikiwe turned the newspaper into a daily. *The Comet* was later converted to party organ to serve the interest of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) (Azikiwe, 1994).

The other regions, East and the West, had a robust newspaper culture and the press was a vital tool in the hands of the politicians of those regions. The emergence of the *West African Pilot* in 1937 marked a turning point in the history of protest journalism. Azikiwe pioneered the era of newspaper chain when he introduced five other titles to the *Pilot* family between 1940 and 1943. These were organs of propaganda for the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). The *Daily Service* which was established as a medium of political propaganda by the Nigerian Youth Movement in 1933 had experienced series of metamorphosis before becoming a megaphone of the Action Group (AG). Awolowo had been a contributor to the newspaper and had used it to launch campaigns against Azikiwe. Chief Samuel Akintola, a principal figure in AG and later Premier of Western Region, was appointed editor of the newspaper in 1944 (Coker, 1968). Thus, the various newspapers of the 1940s and 50s era, namely the *Daily Service*, *West African Pilot*, *Nigerian Citizen*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Times*, until 1947 under the chairmanship of Sir Adeyemo Alakija were actively involved in politics and so were their owners, financiers and handlers. There was really a thin line between journalism and politics during this period of Nigeria's history.

With the granting of independence to Nigeria in 1960, the press became so engrossed in politicking such that political organizations grew up around the press, rather than around organized membership (Coleman, 1986; Agbaje, 1992). The press, in the years after independence, became submerged in the political crises and controversies prevalent in that era such that it became part of the problem and a major instrument of political warfare (Agbaje, 1992). The press of the first republic was polarized along regional boundaries while a few newspapers like the *Daily Times*, then under foreign ownership, attempted a non-partisan posture. These