

Opinion of Practicing Journalists in Port Harcourt on the Effects of Private Ownership of Media on News Reportage in Nigeria

Eric Ibifubara Banigo

Department of Mass Communication
ESUT Business School Enugu

Prof. Sunny E. Udeze

Department of Mass Communication,
Enugu State University of Science and Technology, ESUT Agbani

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Abstract: *This study evaluates the opinions of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media on news reportage in Nigeria. In conducting the study, four research questions and three hypotheses were raised to guide the research. Gramsci's theory of Hegemony and the Authoritarian theory provided theoretical support from the major variables in the study. A cross-sectional quantitative study design was adopted for this study. This design was deemed fit for the study because it allowed the researchers to collect data from multiple individuals at a single point in time. The population of this study was 204 journalists in private media outlets in Rivers State, from where a sample size 135 utilized. After the analysis, the results showed that bribery and corruption were seen to significantly affect the opinion of journalists in private owned media outfits because of their vulnerability to these vices due to irregularity and inconsistency in remuneration by their proprietors. More so, findings revealed that the overbearing influence and control of the owners dictates that the opinion of these journalists which are further influenced by the religious sentiments of the proprietor(s) and goes to show that there is a significant effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage. Finally, it was found that most of these privately owned media outfits are opened for the advancement of the political and economic interests of their owners which in turn influences the opinion of the journalists. Based on this findings, it was recommended that that private media entrepreneurs should endeavor to pay the salaries of their journalists regularly and provide other incentives and amenities always. Again, that media owners should limit their involvement and overbearing influence the newsroom and allow for the editorial board to perform its basic functions in line with the ethics and codes of the profession.*

Keywords: opinion, journalists, effects, private ownership, media news reportage

INTRODUCTION

Access to information is at the heart of transparency and public accountability. Information flow may facilitate public oversight of government and increase the accountability of politicians for bad conduct. In most countries citizens receive the information they need through the media, which serves as the intermediaries that collect information and make it available to the public. Without reliable access to information, the media are severely limited in their capacity to exercise their public accountability function. The media in every society continues to be critical and plays a very important role in informing and educating the populace. However; the level of objectivity and ethical reporting presented by the media portrays significantly the societal, ideological and ownership structures it is embedded in.

Journalists are professional media personnel who go out for field work to source for recent happenings and latest events either locally, nationally or internationally in order to feed the general public or their respective audience with the new update in the society, institutions and organizations. They gather their information either from public opinion by asking relevant questions on the recent happenings in Nigeria. Whatever the majority reports, from there, the journalist may draw his or her conclusions on the issue as the majority normally carries the day. Every journalist works either in a government or private established Radio/Television station, or in a Press or Newspaper/ Magazine and Journalist publication. Before any newspaper is published, it has to go through the editorial board for approval before it is published or announced to the public depending on the means of publication (Nguevese, 2014).

The Nigerian media industry just like many of its contemporary developing nations of the world, particularly in Africa – has over the years been limited by a combination of factors which are multi-dimensional, however can be grouped into individual and industry based. Print or Broadcast media are normally owned by individuals, government, group of individuals, etc. Ownership of the media is the paternity or possession of a medium of communication.

On the individual pedestal, one major factor that determines news gathering and reporting functions in a society like Nigeria is the ownership interests, which shapes the editorial policy and house style; that has enormous effect in the content of a journalist reporting and publication. This usually clearly defined policies and style dictates the kind of news and perspectives every journalist from that particular media outfit is expected to pursue as well as the eventually news and programs the editorial boards passes suitable for broadcast. All materials for publication must pass through an editorial board or censorship board. The boards are the gatekeepers. He added that the implication is that “any material that does not positively project the image of the newspaper and its publisher is thrown into the wastebasket irrespective of the importance of the news to the public”. This also means that there is news that has never been published for the public consumption due to some regulations and protocols binding the journalists or news reporters. This ownership interest further shapes remarkably the ideological perspectives and positions the media outfit aligns itself with in the course of its reportage and programming (Nguevese, 2014).

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On the other hand, certain industry related factors also plays an important role in determining news gathering and reporting within the Nigerian media space. One of such factors is the economic consideration of the media owners, as all business are not only cut out to ensure its continued survival but also aimed at profit maximization. Hence, contents that would appeal to a wider audience, which would in turn, count to its favour in terms of audience control and followership. This is also closely linked to building substantially its advertisers base/attraction; which in the long run goes to boost its revenue (Ndolo, 2005).

Further to these factors are the regulatory and professional codes of ethics instituted to check excesses and rascality in the industry. This posed a serious challenge to the practicing journalists who are regulated by the policies on what to write or what not to write to the public (Nguevese, 2014).

These factors are rather more evident in the private owned media outfits with firm control of the proprietors. This may evolve as a result of partial or total financing of a media either by an individual, an organization. The reasons for ownership may be to use the media to achieve political goals. It could also be to achieve economic goals. Many media outfits are owned by politicians, e.g. Tinubu and Orji Uzor Kalu owns The Nation and The Sun Newspapers respectively, also Godswill Akpabio owns Passion FM, while, Dokpesi owns Raypower/AIT. Essentially, the media thus become agents of propaganda that will not publish something against the owners (Ndolo, 2005).

This piece, therefore, seeks to investigate and evaluate the “opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media on news reportage in Nigeria.” The researchers shall compare the variables that exist in the private ownership and government ownership of media in Nigeria and its effects to news reporters and the way forward.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian broadcast media industry over the years has been regulated by the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation relying on certain extant codes which applies to all kinds of media operating in the country regardless of its ownership structure. Consequent upon the Ibrahim Babangida’s regime deregulation or liberalization of the industry, privately owned media outfits have sprung up; owned by an array of entrepreneurs with distinctive political and economic interests. The ownership and ideology notwithstanding, these media outfits are expected to adhere to certain industry based guidelines and factors that invariably determines its news gathering and reporting preferences. In determining news for reporting, broadcast media journalists are required to choose news stories they report based on factors like newsworthiness, timeliness, proximity, rarity, interests, and other primary determinants of news.,

It has been the practice in the profession that journalists go out on a daily basis to their respective newsbeats to gather news – which are of interest to them and considered, would be of equal interest to their viewers/ audience. These stories or potential news are determined based on certain news determinants which had been stated earlier and are expected to be promptly filled.-in. These reports when received back at the office from the various reporters

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and sources of news are then vetted and edited by the editorial team/editors of the station. Factors like the news determinants are further emphasized by the editors as well as ascertaining the conformity of the stories with the House-style/editorial policy been adopted, then the news would now be slotted in the next news bulletin. This basically represents how news stories are gathered, edited and reported by broadcast stations.

However, non professional considerations have been found to influence news determination lately, particularly amongst privately owned media organizations. Factors like news commercialization and advert revenues, kick-backs and bribery, religious and cultural sentiments, as well as political and economic affiliations have been seen to significantly influence news gathering and reportage. These rather non professional journalistic considerations, in the opinion of practicing journalists across Nigeria's broadcast media industry now plays significant roles in determining news reported with little or no regards for ethical and societal basis. Private media organizations are more susceptible to non ethical practices as they are very much at the mercy of the proprietor(s), who significantly asserts their seeming political, economic and religious inclinations on the journalist.

This trend has become prominent lately with dire consequences on the objectivity of the news gathered and reported. Sometimes the good news that should have added value to the public is swept under the carpet because it does not promote the programmes of the government, while the bad news is most celebrated. In fact, bad news flies faster than the good news in our country Nigeria. Overall, when news gathering and reporting are subjected to financial inducements and non-ethical codes and guidelines, truth and fairness which ordinarily should be seen as the bedrock of journalism becomes elusive. Also, reports are prepared in a skewed way in line with the religious and political sentiments canvassed by the owner(s). Media operations are significantly influenced by ownership. Mediated information is always filtered through a prism; that is shaped by actors at all levels of information gathering, packaging and dissemination from the importer/produced through the series of increasingly senior editions. Each brings his various biases to bear as the process the information. Owners are no exception. Content is created within a framework and media owners have their own framework that is shaped by ideological, political, commercial or other interest

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the research is to investigate the Opinion of Practicing Journalists in Port Harcourt on the Effects of Private Ownership of Media on News Reportage in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Explore the effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media outfits on news reportage in Nigeria.
2. Investigate effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media outfits on news reportage in Nigeria.
3. Examine effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media outfits on news reportage in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was poised to answer the following questions.

1. What is the effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media outfits on news reportage in Nigeria?
2. What is the effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media outfits on news reportage in Nigeria?
3. What is the effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media outfits on news reportage in Nigeria?

Statement of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

- H₀₁:** There is no significant effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media outfits on news reportage in Nigeria.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media outfits on news reportage in Nigeria.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media outfits on news reportage in Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

The study was delimited to opinions of the privately practicing broadcast media journalists in Port Harcourt on the effects of private ownership of media on news reportage in Nigeria. This research was carried out in the first quarter of the year 2022 to ascertain how much of an effect in the views of journalists private media ownership asserts of news reporting and objectivity.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Press Freedom

There is a general notion that press freedom is hard to define. While others look at it as the right to communicate ideas, opinions and information through the printed word without government restraint, the difficulty actually lies in defining the word “Press” itself. Is the word “press” made up of newspaper, magazine, journals or does it include broadcasting and other forms of communication yet dreamt of? Another dilemma in demystifying the concept of press freedom is in the degree of freedom sought or implied in the concept. Press freedom is practically the same thing with freedom of expression which many people believe is the mother of all freedom. Press freedom connotes a free flow of information and the rights to disseminate information. Censorship, harassment and imprisonment of journalists and political control of news outlets are some of the most often cited dangers to a free media.

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Though, there is no absolute press freedom anywhere in the world. However, Nigeria which professes to have one of the freest presses in Africa has a lot of limitations to press freedom. Sunday (2006) argued that press freedom is limited in the overall interest of the society by the constitution, the legislature, the courts and the government. It is contradictory to discover that the some constitution which guarantees press freedom takes away the same freedom it gives to media men. The 1999 constitution for instance, has given conditions for expression of freedom. According to this statute book, expression of freedom is subject to any law that is reasonably Justifiable in a democratic society.

Codes of Ethics for Journalist

In general terms, journalists enjoy protected rights and privileges that ensure the freedom to rights and privileges that ensure the freedom to establish diverse media outlets, to move to public to collect facts and views, to disseminate news and to demand accountability. In turn, journalist must be responsible. They must operate with a clear conscience and transparent objectives. However, there are times when journalists test the limit of their freedom in the name of defending the public good. The code of conduct observes that journalist must work according to agreed ethical standards of behaviour – based on accuracy, fairness, independence and accountability and as such they are less likely to fall foul of the law. Indeed, codes of ethics ensure that press freedom prevails. Good journalism is in the interest of the public.

It offers news that is accurate, fair and balanced, gives voices to the voiceless and contains the diversity of views that a specific story demands. While free to be partisan it must clearly distinguish between facts, comments and opinions – unlike “propaganda journalism” disguised “missionary journalism” or tabloid journalism, which serve specific causes or interest. All good journalists should pay continual attention to codes of ethics. For media owners and publishers, a code is protection against criticism and legal action for journalist, it serves as a standard against which their work can be judged“ for the public, it guarantees that the information they receive is fair, accurate and checked. It is written in clear language“ it is comprehensive and compact. It is constantly supervised and regularly revised. News outlets are aware of, and influenced by the variety of national, local and private codes. This also promotes good standards.

In addition, the question of privacy has become considerably more important in recent years, and codes requirement on privacy intrusions have been made more sever. Self – regulation protects both freedom of expression and citizens from abuse of this freedom and these two often come into conflict. A clear definition of what is the public interest is necessary. A code may define privacy and private places and the grounds on which people may complain about press intrusion into their private lives. Also, the perceptions of taste and decency vary from one news outlet to another, as from one country to another and are in a constant state of flux as societies change.

Media Freedom and the Broadcast Media

Although, the broadcast sector appears to be flourishing, a major challenge for broadcasting in Nigeria is the lack of independence of regulatory body overseeing the sector. Broadcast

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licenses are listed directly and renewed by president. Licences may also be suspended or revoked at will. Although the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has been established as the regulatory body for the sector, it is directly under the control of political authorities and lacks any form of independence.

Besides the regulatory issues, the broadcast media also face other challenges, particularly the problem of government controlled broadcasters. These broadcast entities which should ideally be public service broadcasters are often used as propaganda outlets for the president, at the Federal level, and for the Governors at the state level, with alternative voices being shut out. This may have undermined the freedom expected of professional journalist, a clause enshrined in the good working environment.

In the past, there are instances where government controlled broadcasters have been used to incite sections of the society against others, particularly those who are viewed as critics of the government, opposition candidates or political parties and even against the independent media thereby undermining the right of individual journalist to freedom of expression and good working conditions.

Also, during the regime of Olusegun Obasanjo, the opposition has been denied access to the government owned media. In the previous democratic dispensations, it was unheard of for the opposition to be denied all access to the government – owned media.

Effect of Bribery and Corruption on News Reportage

Money rules the world, and money controls the world including the media world. Money can open and silence the voices of many journalists from publishing the right information and sending out only what is not relevant to the public. One of the major aims of any established business, organization or company is to make good profit. With this profit, then the board and managing directors will be able to run the company successfully. Some of the private own individuals accept bribe to cover up some good and informative news that should have help the audience and close their mouth to say and publish only what they want. Some of the journalists' publishers and news reporters' also use their offices to take bribe in order to write and publish what they have been paid to write and speak on air.

To support this view, Nkechi and Okereke (2013) equally affirm that one of the problems facing journalist practice in the Nigerian media is what they called "brown envelop syndrome." They said "brown envelope syndrome," pressures from individuals, groups and organizations, etc. lead to the publication of rumors, speculations, falsehood (integrity stabbing) and varnished truth. Some journalists sometimes threaten their targets with the publication of unsavory stories if they fail to pay for stories to be killed. Today, journalists are feared for the harm they can do, but not respected for the roles they play in the society. Thus, Nnamani (2003) makes the bold statement: "indeed, it is not for nothing that the question has been extended to include how well, or how much, the Nigerian press is implicated in the civic malaise that permeates society today.'

Effect of Religious Sentiment on News Reportage

Nigeria exists as a multi-religious nation with Muslims, Christians and the traditionalist, with adherents of free thinkers who belong to one confraternity or the other. Some of these people owned their own media and press release companies where they will never allow what is against their faith, ethics and beliefs to be published or aired in their space Nkechi and Okereke (2013). That information which attacks a particular religious practice or group of people, who are adherents of such religions, may never be published. They sanction those who accept such information or the journalists if they want to maintain their jobs. This happen often in the movie and the entertainment industry. There are some movies that have been banned from being shown on the TV, and there are some songs that are never been promoted in some radio stations and TV, and there some journalist's publications and recommendations that have never been read or made available to the public. In fact, research has it that some of them need to rewrite, re-edit and republish and start the printing of a particular magazine and newspapers all over because some information that was not approved by the editorial board of the company was discovered. All of these among others have no doubt affected journalist practice in Port Harcourt and Nigeria in particular.

Effects of Political and Economic Structures on the Media Environment

According to Andrea Czepek, (2010) structural conditions of the media landscape need to be analyzed on a broader basis. Some scholars have argued that merely stating whether or not press freedom has guaranteed by the constitution and simply counting cases of censorship and harassment against journalists does not alone suffice to describe the state of press freedom in a country. In a complex society, the different groups within the society such as political, economic and other categories especially religion, education, interact with media systems and their competing objectives overlap and influence those of the media system. This often applies to the profession of journalism since the media have the function of enabling communication between different groups and are therefore strongly interconnect with them.

In the medic's environment, the factors that have become increasingly important for its operations are the economic structures in which they exist. Media organizations depend on market mechanism such as high return margins that may limit the freedom of journalist and their reporting. In many countries dependence on economic conditions have become main constraints to freedom of the press. Hence, freedom of the press and of the media in a broader context thus also includes relative independence from economic influences.

Theoretical Framework

The theories used to support this research work are: Gramsci's theory of hegemony and the authoritarian theory. Gramsci used the word hegemony to emphasize the ways in which ruling classes uses a dominant ideology to conceal their control of the masses. This is to say, that the ruling classes use their resources to kill the ideologies of the masses wherein their own ideologies of the masses wherein their own ideologies and values become dominant thereby becoming the norm in the society. In relation to this theory, we can see that Gramsci was right because the elites or the ruling class use their position and their resources to dominate the airwaves.

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The hegemonic theory says that once ownership of a media is established and demonstrated, there is no real need to examine the programmes and news content of a media house in detail, as all they would display would be minor varieties within the narrow limits dictated by their owners. The Authoritarian theory points to the fact that the government use the mass media to cover and disseminate the ideas and the world view of the ruling class and in the process deny or refuse alternative ideas. Gramsci's theory of hegemony sees the media as an ideological state apparatus largely concerned with the reproduction of dominant ideologies claiming relative autonomy for the mass media (Wolla Cott 1982:110). This is seen as true in the case of the Nigerian radio station, FRCN as it tends to reproduce interpretations which serve the interests of the ruling class. Their (FRCN) news performs the crucial role of defining events in favor of the government and other sponsors.

In summary, authoritarian and Gramsci's theory of the hegemony are of the opinion that ownership and economic control of the media is the key factor in determining the control of the media messages, after all "it is he who pays the piper that dictates the tune". So these two supports the research, as they explain that ownership of the press does not allow it to perform its duties i.e. it explains the effect private ownership on media or news coverage or reporting.

Empirical Review

Obateru (2017) studied "The Socio-cultural Dynamics and 'Survival Struggle' in Professional Journalism Practice in Nigeria". This study responds to the call for more empirical work to understand the journalism profession in non-Western countries. It critiques the current state of journalism practice in Nigeria to determine how journalists are responding to the numerous professional challenges they face. Journalists in Nigeria appear caught between global phenomena in journalism, such as the impact of new technologies, and those of the environment in which they work, which, some evidence from current literature suggests, is impacting the profession negatively. The literature also shows that factors such as diversity of access to information made possible by technological development, declining audience for news, increasing market pressures impacting news decisions, the declining reputation of the profession, and loss of identity by the journalism profession, though not necessarily peculiar to Nigeria, constitute serious challenges to the news media. With an absence of media conglomerates and a well-defined media system along the lines of those recognised in the developed world, journalism practice in Nigeria presents a case ripe for research. Some evidence in the literature suggests that the standard of journalism practice in Nigeria is deficient in a number of respects. However, little is known about how journalists in Nigeria do their work and the challenges they face, as well as their responses to those challenges. This thesis addresses this particular gap in knowledge. Using the Field Theory and the Social Theory of Journalism, as framework to interrogate the research problem, the research employs convergent parallel mixed methods allowing the use of quantitative and qualitative methods, side-by-side, to gather data in respect of attaining its objectives. Quantitative data were generated through a questionnaire-based survey, while qualitative data were gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews.

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The research finds that, and illustrates how, the operating environment they face, impacts journalists in their work. Challenges, such as poor or irregular salary, ownership influence, market and social forces were found to influence the way in which journalists perform. However, a key finding is that although journalists encounter similar challenges in the course of their duties, their response to them varies. Based on these findings, and drawing on explanatory insights from field theory and the social theory of journalism, the thesis develops its own explanatory framework coined, the survival struggle in journalism practice in Nigeria. This leads to the presentation of a series of recommendations, prominent among which is argument that the institutional and regulatory framework of journalism needs immediate strengthening in order to secure an appropriate standard of professional journalism practice in Nigeria.

Eyo (2012) studied “Analysis Comparative of the Performance of Journalists in Government and Private Owned Media Organisations” using Ray-power and FRCN Enugu as a focus, to achieve maximum and accurate findings. The researchers made use of survey design. To gather necessary information, copies of questionnaire were administered and retrieved from the respondents who were randomly selected and also personal interview was conducted, the findings show that the journalists in government owned media organizations are freer than those in privately owned media organizations. The researchers also made some recommendations based on the findings of the research. That more opportunities should be given to the journalists in private owned media i.e. they should be allowed to broadcast what they see or the information they get as long as it is proven to be true. Since it has been identified that source credibility is essential in broadcasting, as it affects the audience believe, so both government and private owned journalists should be given equal rights to broadcast what they see and how it was seen without limit and threats.

Nguevese (2014) studied “Influence of Ownership in Radio News Coverage (A Study of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, Enugu)”. This study was undertaken to examine to influence of ownership in radio new coverage. Categories of media ownership in Nigeria are private owned and government owned but, the researcher concentrated more on government owned media since it is the researcher’s area of study. The point of the study is to determine the influence of ownership in radio news coverage to determine if, the news covered is owner’s interest or public’s interest oriented. A survey of the selected broadcasting stations news coverage for a period of two weeks was carried out with the use of questionnaires. The data obtained were used to obtain the frequency for the study. The data was analyzed using the simple percentage method and chi-square. This was used to obtain percentage prominence and degree of freedom of news coverage the study. The result of the analysis revealed that, radio news coverage is highly influenced by the owner’s (government) and the news that is covered is owner’s interest oriented instead of public interest oriented. The research also shows that the government has influence on radio news coverage. Recommendations were made base on the studies that the government should interference less in the running of the station and focus on subvention and overall performance of the station as a tool national developments covering news that are people’s interest oriented instead of owner’s interest oriented.

Research Design

A cross-sectional quantitative study design was adopted for this study. This research design was deemed fit for the study because it allowed the researchers to collect data from multiple individuals at a single point in time. Hence, the researchers generated both statistical and numerical information large enough for generalization through the use of questionnaire.

Area of Study

The study was conducted in Port Harcourt; the capital city of Rivers State. Also known as Rivers, The state is in the Niger Delta region of southern Nigeria. Port Harcourt, is a metropolis that is considered to be the commercial center of the Nigerian oil industry.

Along with its large presence of oil producing and servicing companies; Port Harcourt also boasts of a plethora of print and broadcast media organizations owned by the federal and state governments as well as private media moguls.

Population of the study

The population of this study was 204 journalists in private media outlets in Rivers State.

Determination of sample size

In this study, the researchers adopted the convenient sampling method to determine the sample size. Therefore, the sample size used for this study was 135 journalists.

Sampling Techniques

Stratified random sampling technique was employed for selecting the respondents for the study with each of the media house serving as a stratum.

Method of Data collection

The instrument was personally administered by the researchers and two trained research assistants to the journalists in Media houses. 135 copies of the questionnaire were administered with the permission of the authorities in charge of each of the media house in the study area. Out of 135 copies administered all were retrieved but only 130 were properly completed and used for data analysis being 96.30% of the total copies administered.

Validity of the instrument

The instrument was face validated by three experts in the Department of Communication Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Uyo, Uyo.

Reliability of the instrument

To test the reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of the approved questionnaire were administered to selected media houses who were not part of the main study. Data generated were statistically treated using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Method. Reliability coefficients of .83 was realized, which proves that the instrument has a high reliability index and therefore fit for use in collecting data for the present study.

Methods of Data Analysis

Mean and standard deviation scores were used to answer research questions. In testing the hypotheses, one sample t-test statistic was used.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In this section, data for this study are analyzed and presented based on the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study. The data are presented in the following tables.

4.1 Data Presentation**Table 1: Demographic Data of the Respondents**

Educational Qualification	Numbers	Percentage (%)
OND/NCE	36	28
HND/BSc	84	64
MSc & above	10	8
Total	130	100

Educational Qualification

The analysis Table 1 and Fig 1A and 1B reveals the educational qualifications of the participants. From the analysis, OND/NCE were 36 (28%), HND/BSc were 84 (64%) and MSc and above were 10 (8%).

Data Analysis**Research Question One**

What is the effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria?

This question was raised to determine the effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria. To determine this, the mean score of each item was compared with the criterion mean. The result is as shown in Table 2.

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Table 2: Mean Score Response of the Effect of Bribery and Corruption on the Opinion of Practising Journalists in Port Harcourt on News Reportage In Nigeria

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Bribe can open journalist voice to publish lies	130	2	4	3.53	.531
Bribe can close journalist voice not to disclose the truth	130	2	4	3.43	.693
Bribe is seen as a fast means of making money in private media	130	1	4	3.20	.839
Bribe can cause good and informative news not to be published	130	2	4	3.30	.643
Bribe can lead to integrity stabbing	130	2	4	3.31	.692
Cluster Mean				3.35	

Criterion Mean = 2.5

The result presented in Table 1 reveals the summary of the sample mean score for items 1 – 5, which ranges from 3.20-3.53, were greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. The cluster mean of 3.35 was also greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. This implies that bribery and corruption has effect on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

Research Question Two

What is the effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria?

This question was raised to determine the effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria. To determine this, the mean score of each item was compared with the criterion mean. The result is as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean Score Response of the Effect of Religious Sentiments on the Opinion of Practising Journalists in Port Harcourt on News Reportage in Nigeria

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	S.D
Private media owners may not allow what is against their faith to be published	130	2	4	3.45	.611
Publishing information against private media owner's faith can lead to loss of job of a journalist	130	2	4	3.49	.600
Some religious reports are re-written, re-edited and re-published.	130	2	4	3.31	.633

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Some religious information are hoard to avoid sanction	130	2	4	3.59	.566
Journalists sometimes refuse to publish things about religious to avoid God's judgement	130	2	4	3.48	.650
Cluster Mean				3.46	

Criterion Mean = 2.5

The result presented in Table 3 reveals the summary of the sample mean score for items 6 – 10, which ranges from 3.31-3.59, were above the criterion mean of 2.5. The cluster mean of 1.85 was also greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. This implies that religious sentiments has effect on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

Research Question Three

What is the effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria?

This question was raised to determine the effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria. To determine this, the mean score of each item was compared with the criterion mean. The result is as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean Score Response of the Effect of Political and Economic Structures on the Opinion of Practising Journalists in Port Harcourt on News Reportage in Nigeria

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	S.D
Some journalists have been censored and harassed for reporting political ills	130	1	4	3.35	.851
Lack of economic viability can influence news reportage	130	2	4	3.48	.587
Press freedom are sometimes trampled upon by political gladiators	130	2	4	3.49	.673
Journalists are sometimes subjected to surveillance or force to report lies by political actors	130	2	4	3.65	.511
Propaganda is most prevalent in private media	130	2	4	3.58	.582
Cluster Mean				3.51	

Criterion Mean = 2.5

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The result presented in Table 4 reveals the summary of the sample mean score for items 11 – 15, which ranges from 3.35-3.65, were above the criterion mean of 2.5. The cluster mean of 3.51 was also greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. This implies that political and economic structures have effect on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses were tested using one sample t-test at .05 alpha level of significance.

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

The hypothesis was formulated to determine the significant effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria. To analyze the data, one sample t-test statistics was used. The result of the analysis is as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: One sample t-test analysis of the Effect of Bribery and Corruption on the Opinion of Practising Journalists in Port Harcourt on News Reportage on Nigeria

Variable	N	Sample Mean (X)	S.D	Reference	t-cal	P-value	Decision
				Mean μ			
Effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria	130	16.77	2.439	12.5	19.962	.000	Reject H ₀

p= .05, df = 129

The entries in Table 5 have shown the overall significant effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria as in the sample represented by mean value of 16.77. When this sample mean of 16.77 was compared with the reference mean (or hypothesized mean) of 12.5, it yielded a t-value of 19.962. The P-value of .000 at 129 degree of freedom is less than the alpha level of .05. With this result the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria is rejected. This means that there is a significant effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: There is no significant effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

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The hypothesis was formulated to determine the significant effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria. To analyze the data, one sample t-test statistics was used. The result of the analysis is as shown in Table 5.

Table 6: One sample t-test analysis of the Effect of Religious Sentiments on the Opinion of Practising Journalists in Port Harcourt on News Reportage in Nigeria

Variable	N	Sample Mean		Reference	t-cal	P-value	Decision
		(X)	S.D	Mean μ			
effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria	130	17.32	1.595	12.5	34.428	.000	Reject H0

p= .05, df = 129

The entries in Table 6 have shown the overall significant effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria as in the sample represented by mean value of 17.32. When this sample mean of 17.32 was compared with the reference mean (or hypothesized mean) of 12.5, it yielded a t-value of 34.428. The P-value of .000 at 129 degree of freedom is less than the alpha level of .05. With this result the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria is rejected. This means that there is a significant effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3

H03: There is no significant effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

The hypothesis was formulated to determine the significant effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria. To analyze the data, one sample t-test statistics was used. The result of the analysis is as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: One sample t-test Analysis of Effect of Political and Economic Structures on the Opinion of Practising Journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria

Variable	N	Sample Mean (X)	S.D	Reference	t-cal	P-value	Decision
				Mean μ			
Effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria	130	17.54	1.946	12.5	29.527	.000	Reject H ₀

p= .05, df = 129

The entries in Table 7 have shown the overall significant effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria as in the sample represented by mean value of 17.54. When this sample mean of 17.54 was compared with the reference mean (or hypothesized mean) of 12.5, it yielded a t-value of 29.527. The P-value of .000 at 129 degree of freedom is less than the alpha level of .05. With this result the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria is rejected. This means that there is a significant effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study have been organized and discussed according to the three research questions raised and the three hypotheses formulated to guide the study. The research questions were discussed first followed by the hypotheses as outlined below.

Effect of Bribery and Corruption on the Opinion of Practising Journalists

The result of hypothesis one reveals that there is a significant effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

This finding is supported by Nkechi and Okereke (2013) who affirmed that one of the problems facing journalist practice in the Nigerian media is what they called “brown envelop syndrome.” They said “brown envelope syndrome,” pressures from individuals, groups and organizations, etc. lead to the publication of rumours, speculations, falsehood (integrity stabbing) and varnished truth.

Effect of Religious Sentiments on the Opinion of Practising Journalists

The result of research hypothesis two reveals that there is a significant effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

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This finding is supported by Nkechi and Okereke (2013) who reported that some of these people owned their own media and press release companies will never allow what is against their faith, ethics and beliefs to be published or aired in their space.

Effect of Political and Economic Structures on the Opinion of Practising Journalists

The result of research hypothesis three reveals that there is no significant effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practising journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria. This finding is supported by Czepek, (2010) who posited that structural conditions of the media landscape need to be analyzed on a broader basis. Some scholars have argued that merely stating whether or not press freedom has guaranteed by the constitution and simply counting cases of censorship and harassment against journalists does not alone suffice to describe the state of press freedom in a country.

Summary of Findings

The study investigated the “Opinion of Practising Journalists in Port Harcourt on the Effects of Private Ownership of Media on News Reportage in Nigeria”. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. A cross-sectional quantitative study design was adopted for this study and three specific findings were arrived at.

Firstly, bribery and corruption was seen to significantly affect the opinion of journalists in private owned media outfits because of their vulnerability to these vices due to irregularity and inconsistency in remuneration by their proprietors, thus leaving them open to bribes. This finding revealed that there is a significant effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria. Secondly, the overbearing influence and control of the owners dictates that the opinion of these journalists are influenced by the religious sentiments of the proprietor(s) and goes to show that there is a significant effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria. Finally; most of these privately owned media outfits are opened for the advancement of the political and economic interests of their owners which in turn influences the opinion of the journalists buttressing the argument that there is a significant effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the test conducted in chapter four, the following conclusions were reached. There is a significant effect of bribery and corruption on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria; there is a significant effect of religious sentiments on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria and there is a significant effect of political and economic structures on the opinion of practicing journalists in Port Harcourt on news reportage in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings reached above, the researchers hereby recommend the following:

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1. That private media entrepreneur should endeavor to pay the salaries of their journalist regularly and provide other incentives and amenities always.
2. That media owner should limit its involvement and overbearing influence it asserts on the newsroom and allow for the editorial board to perform its basic functions in line with the ethics and codes of the profession.
3. That private media journalist should be adequately trained to effectively understand the broadcasting codes and ethical requirements in line with their assignment, so they can easily restrain themselves from falling prey to political affiliations.

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