



Public Perceptions of Media Role in Electoral Reforms in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Published Online: January 07, 2023

The paper examined public perception of media role in electoral reforms in Nigeria. Electoral reform is a crucial step for a free and fair election. The research's main goal was to find out how people in Nigeria think the media should play a part in the country's continual efforts to modernize its voting system. The corresponding literature has been examined. The data was gathered by means of a questionnaire. There were a total of 384 questionnaires sent out to voters. The results of the findings showed that the public had high level of perception of media role in electoral reforms in Nigeria. This is because, the general belief is that media content on electoral reforms had not only engendered high interest in political matters among the general public, but had largely spurred calls for electoral reforms in Nigeria. The result also showed that the media give attention to issues of electoral reforms; this made the public have high level perception on the contributions of the media to electoral reforms in Nigeria. However, to preserve the present perception of media contents on electoral reforms by the populace, media practitioners and regulators must continuously ensure that media content and reportage must be done regularly, objectively and with high level of credibility.

Keywords:

Electoral; Electoral Reforms; Media; Public Perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Historically, elections in Nigeria have been characterized by conflicting situations. There was therefore need for electoral reforms to improve on the election systems. However, in every electoral reform in Nigeria, there are tendencies for unfavourable outcomes. Each time electoral reforms are to be carried out, politics, controversies, disagreements and suspicions trail the entire process (Shehu, Othman and Osman 2017). This is because Nigeria is heterogeneous in nature with varied and sometimes conflicting interests over political, economic and socio-cultural values, multi-party system which affect the electoral and democratic processes. There are many factors that can occasion the need for electoral reform. One of such is the electoral system. Electoral system is the extent to which election advances democratic order depends in largely on the existing electoral system, its nature and its acceptance by the stakeholders in the electoral process (Ebirim 2013). It has been argued that most controversy about election centred on the electoral system which

explains a faulty electoral system (Jibrin, 2010). Electoral system is a complex set of rules and regulations that govern the selection of officeholders in a democratic context. The electoral system a country adopts not only has far-reaching effects on its political life, but it also affects how political actors, such as parties and candidates, bear and reap the consequences of the electoral process. Electoral system encompasses procedures, rules and regulations for the electorate to exercise their right to vote and determines how elected political officers occupy their allocated seats in the legislature (Obah-Akpowoghaha 2013). Election laws and related provisions typically outline the processes that must be followed on Election Day.

The outcry for electoral reform made the late president Musa Yar'Adua's administration to set up the Electoral Reform Committee in 2007 that later became Electoral Acts in 2010 by presenting auspicious opportunity to the country to sincerely overhaul its electoral system (Eme 2008). After identifying the challenges facing the electoral processes and system, the committee recommended among other things the establishment of an electoral offences commission to prosecute electoral offenders and the increased funding of Independence Electoral Commission. The formation of the electoral committee indicates the necessity for changes to be made to the voting procedure and system. Electoral reforms are adjudged to be

Corresponding Author: ONOJEGHWO, Okeoghene Mavis

**Cite this Article: ONOJEGHWO, Okeoghene Mavis, IJEH, Nkemdilim Patrick, MAJORITY, Oji (2023). Public Perceptions of Media Role in Electoral Reforms in Nigeria. International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies, 3(1), 16-24*

meaningful if it improves the responsiveness of the electoral process to public desire and expectations and these applies to Nigeria.

Researchers in Nigeria and elsewhere have focused on studying how the media affects political participation, policymaking, and public opinion. In a study on mass media contributions to the political awareness and capacity to make political choices among Nigerians, Ibagere (2020) established that political awareness and capacity for political decisions among the study population were low. He also reports that the mass media have been unable to significantly improve these low areas among the populace. Adegbola and Greathart (2019) looked at the connection between media consumption and civic engagement and found that in all of the countries they looked at, those who used social media and other content distribution online platforms to source and share political news were more likely to be actively engaged in political matters. Olaniru, Olatunji, Ayandele and Popoola (2020) focused on how the media influence political knowledge among Nigerians and observe that awareness on politics and the activities of government was significantly increased by mass media's enlightenment and socialisation functions, especially radio, which turned out to be the most popular mass medium for political knowledge acquisition among the study population. They however stressed the need for media practitioners and politicians to take advantage of the benefits of social media to further increase public knowledge on politics and governance. In another study on the interplay among Nigerian mass media, elections and the concept of democracy in Africa, Oboh (2016) further established that although the mass media in Nigeria give adequate publicity to elections in the country, they appear not to be objective when they project such elections as credible to the disappointment of the wide-ranging public.

We have broadcasting stations in Delta States such as Delta Broadcasting Service, Asaba and Warri; Quest FM in Ughelli; Kpoko FM, Warri; Quest FM in Effurun; and many others where the public can know about government programmes and policies including political and electoral issues.

Previous studies on this subject have not indicated whether or not, a significant difference exists on the perception of members of the public on the role of the media in Nigerian electoral reforms. How much attention do the media give to issues of electoral reforms in Nigeria? How do the public perceive the nature of media content on the electoral reforms? These questions and the absence of ready answers indicate obvious gaps in knowledge that this study on public perception on the role of the media in electoral reforms in Nigeria seeks to fill.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The study's overarching goal is to investigate the impact of the media on efforts to improve Nigeria's electoral

system. However, specifically, the study among others seeks to:

1. Find out the level of attention the media give to issues of electoral reforms in Nigeria;
2. Examine how the public perceive media contents on electoral reforms in Nigeria;

HYPOTHESES

Drawn from the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were tested:

H_{A1}: The media give attention to issues of electoral reforms in South-South Nigeria

H_{O1}: The media do not give attention to issues of electoral reforms in South-South Nigeria

H_{A2}: The public has high level perception of media contents on electoral reforms in Nigeria

H_{O2}: The public do not have high level perception on media contents on electoral reforms in Nigeria

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of the media in electoral reforms in Nigeria was reviewed.

Nigeria has a very dynamic media landscape. All 36 states run at least one radio and one TV station operated by the state-controlled broadcaster, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), which broadcasts in English and in the three major languages at the regional level. NTA boasts the widest TV network in the nation, followed by the privately owned Channels TV, AIT and Silverbird TV in terms of viewership and coverage. The publicly funded Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) has a similar nationwide network and features a mixture of local and national content. Of the radio stations, Wazobia FM and Ray Power FM dominated the radio waves, rendering to the Report of common wealth observer group, Nigeria General Elections (2019).

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is the government agency in charge of issuing broadcasting licenses and enforcing the Nigeria Broadcast Code. The National Press Council of Nigeria is a self-regulating body guided by the Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists. Specific to the elections, Sections 99 to 101 of the Electoral Act outlines parameters for media coverage during elections. Media campaigning is prohibited 24 hours before polling day, and impartiality is required from all media. The state media must not favour or disadvantage any political party, and media time shall be allocated equally among the political parties or candidates at similar hours of the day. These provisions also apply to public electronic media, 'subject to the payment of appropriate fees'. Failure to comply with the Act constitutes an offence punishable by fines of up to a million naira (N). (*The Guardian*, 2019)

In July 2018, a revised Nigeria Media Code for Election Coverage was adopted by 80 media organisations. The Code covers – among other issues – equitable access, safety of journalists, INEC's role in informing the press, fairness, accuracy and balance in coverage, access to political debates, opinion polls, endorsement, the prevention of hate speech and conflict sensitivity. Monitoring and enforcement are, however, left to the media organisations

In order to fulfil their roles, the media need to maintain a high level of professionalism, accuracy and impartiality in their coverage. Establishing regulatory frameworks is one way to guarantee quality. Freedoms of speech, of the press, and of the people's participation are all vital to a healthy democracy, and each must be protected by law and regulation. At the same time, provisions like those mandating that publicly funded government media provide equal access and coverage to political parties in opposition help ensure proper media behaviour during elections. The media is commonly understood to include both the written press and broadcast media, such as radio and television. However, in recent years the definition has expanded to include online journalism and social media. Citizen journalism is gaining popularity worldwide, even in countries where traditional media are censored or heavily regulated. The media play an indispensable part in the proper functioning of a democracy. Discussion of the media's functions within electoral contexts often focuses on their "watchdog" role: by unfettered scrutiny and discussion of the strengths or weaknesses of candidates, governments, and electoral management bodies, the media can inform the public of how effectively they have performed and help to hold them to account. Yet the media also have other roles in enabling full public participation in elections:

- by educating voters in ways to exercise their democratic rights;
- by reporting on the expansion of an election campaign;
- by providing a platform for the political factions and candidates to communicate their message to the electorate;
- by providing a platform for the public to communicate their concerns, opinions, and needs, to the parties/candidates, the EMB, the government, and to other voters, and to interact on these issues;
- by facilitating discussions between political factions and potential voters;
- by announcing the outcome and keeping tabs on the tally;
- by looking into the electoral process and political management to assess their honesty, efficiency, and fairness.;
- by disseminating data that, to the extent possible, eschews inflammatory language, it

can aid in preventing election-related violence..

It's true that voters get some of their information elsewhere, but in today's globally connected and media-driven world, even in countries with a relatively low level of technological development, it's the media that sets the political agenda. The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies put it in their report like this: The media plays a crucial role in any society, both in informing its citizens and in bringing attention to important issues. It also has a tremendous effect on the general public's outlook and philosophy. When it comes to shaping and even manipulating public opinion, the media plays a pivotal role. If this is the media's role under normal circumstances, then it assumes even greater significance during extraordinary times, such as election campaigns. A fundamental test for the media's impartiality and objectivity occurs during elections.

The media, especially major news organizations on a national scale, should not and cannot be expected to act as a mouthpiece for any political party or official. Its primary function is to serve as a forum for open discussion of varying viewpoints and to increase people's knowledge and understanding of important issues. "(Michael, 2005)" As an example, media access and coverage of elections are frequently commented upon by election observation teams as a criterion for determining the legitimacy of elections. The media's impact on an election can be gauged through a combination of statistical analysis, methods from media studies, and discourse analysis, and this practice has become increasingly common during election seasons.

In general, the many ways in which the media protect democratic electoral processes can be broken down into the following groups:

- Media as a Watchdog/Transparency Mechanism
- The media's role as a stage for political discourse and advocacy
- Press as community teacher

In today's politics and society at large, media is essential to the safeguarding transparency of democratic processes. This is often called its 'watchdog' role. Transparency is required on many levels including for access to information; accountability and legitimacy of individuals, institutions and processes themselves; and for rightful participation and public debate.

Transparency as required for access to information means that an electorate is provided necessary and comprehensive information so as to make informed choices as well as be able to hold officials and institutions accountable. Information about government officials and institutions, as well as access to legal and operational proceedings falls under this category. In the context of elections, for instance, an EMB has a duty to keep the public apprised of its activities, decisions, and plans.

Members of an EMB are public figures and as such, they have a responsibility to serve the public interest. Thus, the public has a right to know about their political parties' affiliations, as well as their records and actions while in office.

The media can be used to help prevent wrongdoing and investigate incidents of alleged misconduct. This role of oversight encompasses not only the accountability of officials and their "in office" actions, but also the oversight of entire procedures. Given that all measures protecting freedom of speech are guaranteed and that the media are free to act independently and impartially, the presence of the media at voting and counting centres is crucial to preventing electoral fraud. (2011 Press Coverage of Legislative Elections)

In order for an election to be considered democratic, voter turnout must be high and barriers to voting must be minimal. Therefore, the media play a crucial role in providing a public, i.e. open, forum for debate and participation. All candidates have a responsibility to serve as the people's representatives. Transparency of an election helps ensure that this indeed is so. Furthermore, transparency of individual processes (such as voting, counting, registering, candidate nomination, campaigning and so forth) further protects and enables public participation in these processes (Report of Common Wealth Observer Grouping in Nigeria General Elections, 2019).

Study of this kind in analysing public perception on the role of the media in electoral reforms in Nigeria is best anchored on the theories of Rational Choice and Media Framing Theories. The rational choice theory relates to electoral reforms while media framing theory is associated with media imperatives.

RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY

Rational Choice Theory (RCT) originated in the 18th century with the work of Cesare Beccaria but the work was not popular. The theory was later developed by Anthony Downs in 1957 as an economic theory of democracy in explaining how individual decision-making or behaviour forms the basis for microeconomic models and analysis. Later, Gary Becker became the early proponent of applying this theory to political science and sociology. Per Hazan and Lenaar (2012), the foundational idea behind this theory is that collective social behaviour is the result of the actions of isolated actors. Furthermore, the theory analyzes what factors influence people's decision making. It describes how one settles on a course of action after considering all of their available options. In true sense, this is optimization-based approach.

This theory as described by Hazan and Lenaar (2012), who maintain that changes in electoral reforms are made as a result of the deliberately planned forecasts of elites to make and implement regulations and rules

concerning elections in order to secure future elections, consolidate power and optimise political and electoral benefits. Shehuet. al. (2017) posit that elites and politicians are fully aware of the electoral reforms and their outcomes whenever made, although individuals and parties who lose power control or are in opposition are more likely to promote reforms in elections (Hazan & Lenaar). The practice of democracy in most developing states is delicate for the fact that the institutions associated with it in such political systems are not very trustworthy (Marx & Suri, 2016). Since most of Nigeria's elections have been associated with violence, rigging or other related irregularities, it calls for review or changes to meet the best practices trends in electoral laws, elections and democracy. At the same time, state authorities, ruling party and those in power accept or propose the idea of electoral reforms mostly when they know that the outcomes of such reforms will favour or at least not jeopardise their future electoral victories. They give in when there is a call for reform from the public or the opposition to improve the effectiveness of the electoral system through legal changes. In places where the status quo's electoral chances would be hurt by electoral reforms, we might see stalling tactics, slow legislative approval, and sloppy law enforcement.

Dez (2001) argues that the issue of preference formation is largely ignored by rational choice because actors are assumed to be rational and to always act in a way that maximizes their own self-interest. Politicians are often viewed as being both rational and short-sighted in their thinking. In many cases in Nigeria, voters make decisions based on short-term electoral calculations without considering or understanding the likely long-term effects, such as when politicians will no longer keep to their promises. Promise and Performance Paradigm (PPP) or gap describes this situation. There has been a break or departure between campaign promises and actual government action.

Applying the promise and performance paradigm, rational choice theory encourages voters to make informed, strategic decisions. Different rational choice analyses will provide different explanatory arguments because they make different assumptions about the goals of political actors. The rational choice hypothesis empowers voters by proposing structural changes to government that maintain separate executive and legislative branches. The rational choice postulate has the potential to compel powerful people to adopt policy changes they would otherwise resist.

Rational choice theory's justification in this research implies that voters have preferences and make decisions based on those preferences. Promoting electoral reforms would allow voters to make more informed decisions about who to vote for in the next election, using the theory of rational choice. If incumbents fail to deliver as expected, voters have the authority, according to rational choice theory, to select the opposing party. In Nigeria's general election of 2015, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) was soundly

defeated by the main opposition, the All Progressives Congress (APC) (APC).

Voters' selection of candidates in an election is heavily weighted by the issues and policy design of the political parties in the rational choice approach. In this case, you can make a sensible decision. This is typical of the wealthy and powerful, who often vote for a particular party or candidate because of the personal financial or political gain they anticipate. People in Nigeria's democratic system rarely make well-informed decisions and instead vote based on emotions (Sule& Tai, 2018). Appointments and access to government resources in Nigeria have been facilitated by electoral reform. Since politicians have a hand in most electoral reforms, voters hold the real sway. As such, the rational choice postulate is crucial to improving our voting system. In this way, the rational choice theory of analyzing electoral reform maintains that voters are an integral part of the reform process, and that voters' decisions, rather than those of politicians, should ultimately determine which candidate is elected.

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research questions, this study uses a cross-sectional survey design. The researcher was able to get the thoughts and feelings of the people they were studying thanks to the research strategy they employed. Delta State residents are the subjects in this research. As of the 2019 General Elections, the intended audience consisted

of Delta State voters who were registered and eligible to vote. There were 2,845,274 people who were registered to vote. Check out (www.inec.gov.ng) and (www.pulse.ng) for more information. The study's design necessitates responses from only politically engaged and aware citizens, so we limited our sample to reflect that.

The Krejcie and Morgan formula was used to explain how the sample size was determined for the aforementioned study population. Only use this sample size if your study's target population is greater than 10,000.

Participants were chosen using a multi-stage sampling method for this study. Asaba and Ubiaruku were chosen to represent Delta State's urban areas, while Abraka and Ugbomro were chosen to represent Delta State's central senatorial district, and Warri and Ozoro were chosen to represent Delta State's semi-urban areas, respectively, using the purposive sampling technique.

The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The data that were gathered in the course of this study were analysed using relevant descriptive statistics which included frequency counts, simple percentages, mean, and standard deviation. To test the relevant hypotheses of the study, the F-Statistics was obtained from the simple regression estimation which was conducted alongside the descriptive statistics. The results from both the descriptive and inferential statistics were however presented by means of relevant tables.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Table 1: Responses To Items On Electoral Reforms

S/N	Questionnaire Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
ER.1	The electoral process in Nigeria has undergone reforms in recent times	345	4.28	0.573	Strongly Agree
ER.2	Electoral reforms ensures that electorates' desires are reflections of election results	345	4.48	0.518	Strongly Agree
ER.3	Electoral reforms ensures that election systems are put in the right perspectives	345	4.59	0.631	Strongly Agree
ER.4	Through electoral reforms, the voting systems and the rules guiding the activities of political parties are well addressed	345	4.44	0.573	Strongly Agree
ER.5	The electoral reform in Nigeria adequately addressed issues bordering on safety of voters, safety of election officials, and election monitoring by candidates and political parties.	345	4.30	0.597	Strongly Agree

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2022

Table 2: Perception Of The Level Of Attention That Media Gives To Issues Of Electoral Reforms

S/N	Questionnaire Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
AT.1	The media coverage on issues of electoral reforms is targeted at both urban and rural areas of Nigeria	345	4.37	0.518	Strongly Agree
AT.2	The media has a high frequency of reporting on electoral reforms in Nigeria	345	4.32	0.627	Strongly Agree
AT.3	The frequent reporting of issues of electoral reforms by the media has increase the clamour of the public call for electoral reforms in Nigeria	345	4.50	0.638	Strongly Agree
AT.4	The media contents on electoral reforms is simplified to the understanding of the general public in Nigeria	345	4.71	0.423	Strongly Agree
AT.5	The issues of electoral reform is given high attention by both the electronic and print media in Nigeria	345	4.17	0.389	Strongly Agree

Source: Researcher’s Computation, 2022

Table 3: Perception Of The Public On The Nature of Media Content On Electoral Reforms In Nigeria

S/N	Questionnaire Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
NA.1	They are sincere calls for the improvement of the electoral system in Nigeria	345	4.35	0.648	Strongly Agree
NA.2	They are necessary for strengthening democracy in Nigeria	345	4.75	0.455	Strongly Agree
NA.3	They sets agenda and frames for electoral reforms in Nigeria	345	4.49	0.896	Strongly Agree
NA.4	They expose electoral malpractices and irregularities in the electoral system in Nigeria	345	4.40	0.687	Strongly Agree
NA.5	They are projecting the expectation of majority of the public on electoral reforms in Nigeria	345	4.27	0.706	Strongly Agree

Source: Researcher’s Computation, 2022

Test of Hypotheses

H_{A1}: the media gives attention to issues of electoral reforms in South-South Nigeria

Table 4.: Model Summary for the Attention of Media to Electoral Reforms In Nigeria

Electoral Reform	Coeff.	Std. Err.	T	P > t	R ²	Decision
Attention	0.1311	0.0517	2.54	0.012	0.0184	Reject Null
_cons	3.8432	0.2286	16.81	0.000		
F(1, 343)	6.44					
Prob> F	0.0116					
Obs	345					

Source: Researcher’s Computation, 2022

H_{A2}: The public has high level perceptions of media contents on electoral reforms in Nigeria

Model Summary for the Perception of the Nature of Media Content on Electoral Reforms In Nigeria

Electoral Reform	Coeff.	Std. Err.	T	P > t	R ²	Decision
Nature of Media Content	0.4379	0.0333	13.16	0.000	0.3354	Reject Null
_cons	2.4732	0.1486	16.64	0.000		
F(1, 343)	173.09					
Prob> F	0.0000					
Obs	345					

Source: Researcher’s Computation, 2022

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Results from the demographic variables of the respondents showed that men made up 144 (or 41.74 percent of the total) while women made up 201 (or 58.26 percent of the total). According to this data, females comprised the vast majority of those who responded. Possible explanations include the uptick in media coverage and public discussion of issues like gender equality and women's emancipation in Nigeria. The fact that more women than men filled out the survey may also reflect their desire to take part in fair elections after electoral reforms have been implemented. In terms of the age distribution, we found that 3.07% of the respondents were younger than 20 years old, while 52.17%, or 180 people, were in their 20s and 30s. In addition, we found that the majority of respondents (110, or 31.88%) fell between the ages of 30 and 40, while the next largest group, comprising 14 percent of the total, was between the ages of 40 and 50. Two respondents were found to be over the age of 50, making up only 0.58 percent of the total.

Eighty-eight percent of respondents have completed post-secondary education, while 19.1 percent have only completed secondary school. Not one respondent had only a high school diploma or less than that. This suggests that the vast majority of respondents have at least some formal education and are familiar with the topic at hand.

The results indicated that 25 people (7.25% of the total) were unemployed and 10 people (2.90%) were engaged in petty trading, both of which were listed as occupations by the respondents. In addition, 88 (25.51%) were found to be government/public-sector employees, while 59 (17.10%) were found to be private-sector office employees. There were 4 (1.16 %) academic participants and 8 (2.3 %) non-academic participants. To wit, 19 (5.50%) media professionals and 5 (1.45) artisans participated in the study. According to the numbers, two doctors, or about 0.58 percent of the sample, also took part in the research. A total of 118 respondents (or 34.20%) were found to be involved in both the survey and the study. Concisely, no one who responded said they were a politician, election observer, transporter, farmer, mechanic, or tailor.

This study's respondents are all adults, and their knowledge of the topic at hand is all at an appropriate level, as suggested by the distribution of their demographic characteristics presented above.

The median score on questions designed to probe respondents' familiarity with proposed changes to Nigeria's voting system. All items averaged higher than the threshold of 3.00. For example, the majority of respondents (by a mean score of 4.28) agreed that electoral reforms had been implemented in Nigeria recently. In a similar vein, the mean score of 4.48 on questionnaire item ER.2 indicated that respondents believed election results would more accurately reflect the preferences of the majority of electorates following electoral reforms. The mean score of 4.59 on

questionnaire item ER.3 indicates that the vast majority of respondents strongly agree that the election systems of the country can be put in the right perspectives through electoral reforms. In addition, the median response of 4.44 on Questionnaire Item ER.4 suggests that most respondents agree that electoral reforms are necessary to address the voting systems and rules governing the activities of political parties. The average response to the question of whether electoral reforms adequately address concerns about voter and election official safety and election monitoring by candidates and political parties in Nigeria was 4.30, indicating a positive answer.

For the first measure of success, we gathered feedback on how people generally feel the media covers electoral reforms. It was shown what had happened in this regard. Responses to item AT.1 of the questionnaire averaged 4.37 out of 5 possible points, with a standard deviation of 0.518. The majority of respondents in both urban and rural areas of Nigeria strongly believed that media coverage on issues of electoral reforms was primarily targeted at those locations, as shown by the results.

In addition, the mean score of 4.32 on questionnaire item AT.2, which asks whether respondents believe that the media has a high frequency of reporting on electoral reforms in Nigeria, strongly suggests that respondents strongly affirm that the media has a high frequency of reporting on electoral reforms in Nigeria. Similarly, respondents were polled on whether or not they thought the increased volume of public calls for electoral reform was influenced by the frequency with which such reform was reported in the media. The average number of votes cast was 4.50, with a standard deviation of 0.638. This result demonstrated that a sizable proportion of respondents are convinced that media coverage of electoral reform issues has stoked public demand for change in Nigeria.

Additionally, respondents were asked for their thoughts on whether or not the media's coverage of electoral reform had been simplified for a broad audience (see AT.4 below). The median response was 4.7, suggesting that most people agreed that the coverage of electoral reforms in the media had been streamlined for the average Nigerian. The study also found that the average response to the question of whether the issues of electoral reform were given high attention by both the electronic and print media in Nigeria was 4.42, indicating that most participants strongly agreed with the claim that this was the case.

It's also noteworthy that the result shows that the standard deviation obtained for all items was between 0.389 (see item AT.4) and 0.638. (see item AT.3). This shows that the answers were distributed normally, which is what was expected.

The second goal of this research was to determine how people generally interpreted reports in the media about proposed changes to Nigeria's electoral system. Specifically, the results showed that the vast majority of respondents

strongly believe that media content was made calls for the improvement of the electoral systems in Nigeria.

The mean score of 4.75 on a question about whether respondents think media coverage of electoral reforms in Nigeria is necessary for strengthening democracy in the country is indicative of resounding agreement among respondents. Respondents were also questioned about whether or not they believe that media content inherently sets agendas and frames for electoral reforms in Nigeria. The average response was 4.49 and the standard deviation was 0.896 from that mean. This finding suggests that many Nigerians hold the view that the media plays a decisive role in shaping the agenda and framework for electoral reforms.

In addition, respondents were asked in item NA.4 of the questionnaire if they believed that media coverage had helped shed light on electoral malpractices and irregularities in Nigeria's electoral system. With an average score of 4.40 (standard deviation = 0.687), this suggests that the vast majority of respondents agree that media coverage has helped bring to light instances of electoral malpractice and irregularities in Nigeria. Moreover, it was found that the average response to questionnaire item NA.5 was 4.27, with a standard deviation of 0.706. This finding suggests that most respondents strongly agreed with the claim that media contents are capable of projecting the expectation of majority of the public on electoral reforms in Nigeria.

The first hypothesis of this research was confirmed by the data: there is a connection between media coverage and interest in electoral reform (0.1311). Since the distance between data points and fitted values of the regression model is usually small (indicating a high degree of accuracy), the obtained standard error of 0.0517 suggests that the model estimating the extent to which media content gives attention to matters concerning electoral reforms is approximately 99.95% accurate (0.0517). The t-statistic of 2.54 and the corresponding p-value of 0.012 indicate that the majority of respondents believed that the media in Nigeria covered issues related to electoral reforms. The 6.44 F-statistic (Prob> F = 0.0116) supports this interpretation. In conclusion, the F-Statistics indicate that the first alternative to the null hypothesis is not supported by the data. Thus, the null hypothesis that the media in Nigeria doesn't cover the issue of electoral reforms was accepted.

Specifically, the study's second hypothesis was tested, and the results were presented. There appears to be a statistically significant link between the public's view of the quality of the media and its reporting on electoral reform. There aren't many opportunities for mistakes to creep into the model for H2, as indicated by the small standard error of 0.4379. In addition, the t-statistic result of 13.16 with a significance level of 0.000 suggests that the public had a very positive impression of media coverage of electoral reforms in Nigeria. The 173.09 F-statistics (Prob> F = 0.0000) support this interpretation. In conclusion, the F-Statistics indicate that the second null hypothesis of this

study should be rejected. This finding supports the null hypothesis, suggesting that south have a positive view of media coverage of electoral reforms.

CONCLUSION

Researchers in and outside of Nigeria have examined how the media affects political decision-making and behaviour. While prior research into the media's influence on political processes, decisions, and actions has been invaluable, it has been pointed out that the public's perceptions of the media's contributions to political electoral reforms in Nigeria may have been overlooked. In addition, it is unclear from the available literature whether or not public opinion on the media's role in electoral changes in Nigeria varies significantly across states or geopolitical zones. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to shed light on a variety of topics, such as how people in the study area view the media's coverage of electoral reforms and how much of an impact the media has had on those reforms. Research questions and hypotheses were posed, and they were tested with the help of appropriate statistical methods. According to the data, the general public has a positive impression of the media's role in bringing about electoral reforms in Nigeria. According to the findings, Nigerians' political knowledge and decision-making skills have improved as a result of the widespread coverage of political issues in the media. Media practitioners and regulators have a responsibility to the public to maintain the public's current perceptions of media contents on electoral reforms by ensuring that media content and reportage is done regularly, objectively, and with a high level of credibility.

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