

## **ABSTRACT**

This study focused on the role of Nigerian mass media in electioneering campaigns with a keen focus on the last general elections of 2015. The background of the study focused on the contributions of the mass media in the successful completion of the elections right from the time of campaigns till the days of election and how it carried people along up till the declaration of winners. The statement of problem is anchored on the wide spread negative image of the media in electioneering campaigns in Nigeria's political history. The objective of the study examined impacts of mass media in 2015 general election it also established the perception of broadcast media's coverage of electioneering campaigns during the 2015 General elections and established the prevalence of mass media in 2015 general election in Nigeria. Descriptive research design was employed and data were analysed with the use of SPSS.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Concerns about Nigeria's ability to hold a peaceful general election in 2015 have characterised the work of governance, peace and security sector practitioners and policymakers for sometime now. The prevailing discourse emanating from Nigerian and international actors alike predominantly focuses on the actions (and inaction) of major stakeholders, including Nigeria's ruling and opposition political parties, mass media and civil society, and the international community. Nigeria's upcoming polls are significant, with the potential to make or mar the country's democracy and threaten its peace and security and, by extension, the stability of the West African region and of the continent. The history of elections in Nigeria generally has afforded us the golden opportunity of assessment of the divergent roles of the media in Nigeria political process within the framework of our national political goal. The issue and question of education, information, mobilization and monitoring has become a very crucial factor in the realization of the national objectives in the context of the electoral process.

In a democratic society, the focus of the government would be to promote the fundamental

human rights of the people while providing leadership for the growth and development of the society. Thus, the media systems in democratic countries are able to report on any issue as long as they do not infringe upon the rights of the people and those of the state. The sovereign power of every country resides in the state. Therefore, in an authoritarian society, where the government seeks to preserve the political philosophy of the state even at expense of the rights and liberties of the citizens, the media would find it difficult to bluntly report on the issues where the interests of the government are at disagreement with the hopes and expectations of the people. African countries are among the emerging democratic societies of the world. Therefore, the media have a duty to ensure that African leaders entrench democratic principles and values in governance.

The 2015 Presidential Campaigns in Nigeria were heavily reported by all arms of the media but television towered above the rest on account of the presentation that yanked the emotions of Nigerians. By showing and telling the sensitive general public some of the campaign proceedings which took the forms of advertisements, public lectures, media briefings, campaign tours, courtesy visits to prominent citizens, musical concerts, etc., the medium justified to a great point, its value as one with the greatest potential to fulfil the core functions of the media. Its service to the nation in this direction was superb as the medium's ability to serve Nigerians with consistency the fresh menu of the engaging political warfare ensured to some extent an informed electorate.

But the 2015 electioneering campaign did not live up to the expected standard. The political campaigns were viewed as a misuse of the media by political parties and their candidates through the publication or broadcast of unwholesome information passed to the public as the truth. The broadcast media lent themselves to most of the negative factors in Nigerian politics and became partisan. Most broadcast media organizations aligned with one politician, political party or one region against another. They acted as the mouthpiece of some of the political parties they are aligned with. This posture did not give room for objectivity, fairness and justice in the discharge of their responsibilities to the public. Edogbo (1999) traced this act to media ownership structure and the owner's relationship with the political system. It is widely believed that most media owners with political interests prevent their media outfits from adhering to the fundamental principles of balance, fairness

and objectivity.

Though several political parties were in the fierce race for power, the real warfare had the ruling party (Peoples Democratic Party) and the main opposition (All Progressives Congress) in the box. Both employed indiscretions, casting decorum and decency out of the way. Use of hate language by the campaigners, rioting and violent clashes by their supporters were all reported. These and many more are regarded as features of Nigerian politics (Nwokocha 2007) but, the focus of this study was to determine how television reports, newspapers and billboards were used as campaign tools between President Goodluck Jonathan of People's Democratic Party and Muhammadu Buhari of All Progressives Congress.

This level of unprofessionalism is detrimental to the growth of a healthy political culture in the country. Agba (2007) is of the view that the broadcast media should internalize the concept of public interest in the discharge of their functions in any electoral process. In this regard, the media is expected to set the pace for a healthy electoral process and also ensure they are guided by public interest. This can be achieved by directing the goals of electioneering campaign to the desirable goal of responsible democratic principles that recognise the sovereignty of the people's votes. Nwaozuzu (1997) advises the media to seek out relevant truths in electioneering campaign for the people who cannot witness or comprehend the events that affect them. This means the media should interpret campaigns in the light of the electoral needs of the people. It is also incumbent on the media to channel the electoral process towards the desirable goal of national development. Buttressing this point, Kalu (1985) posits that "the ordinary expectation is that the mass media will focus on serious matters that portend serious consequences for the people and their political choices.

In conclusion, the media through their commentaries, editorials, articles, reviews, columns, broadcast discussion forums, must always try to raise and answer important questions that will help to throw light on confusing issues, particularly those relating to policies and leadership. This study therefore investigated the role of Nigerian mass media in electioneering campaigns using 2015 general elections as a case study.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The impacts of Nigerian media in the coverage of elections in Nigeria from the pre-independence era to the till today have received considerable attention from both social scientists and media scholars in Nigeria. The margin between the coverage and media type may be very high, however, the intent seem to be very similar. During the pre-independence era, newspaper and radio were the only source of media outlet and information dissemination. The politicians and their party affiliates dominate the news during the election campaigns. The newspapers front pages were very popular in reporting news pertaining to the candidates and where they stand on the polls. Their images and speeches became news worthy while their manifesto resonated with the party lines and the electorates few of whom were literate enough to read and write. It has become very pertinent to examine the extent to which these precepts of the fundamental rights of man have been observed in the context of Nigeria's politics and media practice more importantly in the area of democratic elections. It must be noted that talks of democracy without the right to receive information and impart knowledge is empty.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The following are some of the questions which this study intends to answer:

- i) what are the impacts of mass media in 2015 general election?
- ii) what is the perception of broadcast media's coverage of electioneering campaigns during the 2015 General elections?
- iii) what is the prevalence of mass media in 2015 general election in Nigeria?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study was to investigate the role of mass media in Nigerian mass media in electioneering campaigns. The specific objectives are:

- i) to determine what are the impacts of mass media in 2015 general election
- ii) to establish the perception of broadcast media's coverage of electioneering campaigns during the 2015 General elections
- iii) to establish the prevalence of mass media in 2015 general election in Nigeria

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study was designed to investigate the role of Nigerian mass media in electioneering campaigns using 2015 general elections as a case study. It was at determining the

impact the Nigerian mass media had in the last general election of 2015.

## 1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was to show the big impacts mass media have in the political matters of the country. It therefore covered the journalists, politicians, electorates, students, broadcast stations and the general public.

## 1.7 Limitation of the study

The only limitation to the study was the lack of access to many respondents like the politicians, journalists and broadcast stations as they were busy and therefore did not have enough time to attend to the interviewer.

## 1.8 Definitions of Terms

The following terms were used in the course of this study:

**Electioneering Campaigns:** This refers to the act or process of soliciting for support or votes for a given political party or candidate during election.

**Mass media:** a medium of communication (such as newspapers, radio, or television) that is designed to reach the mass of the people

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