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Serial No.	
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Title:	CONSTRAINTS ON JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE IN GOVERNMENT-OWNED MEDIA ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTH-SOUTH GEO-POLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA
Keyword:	
Description:	A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATIN FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA
Category:	Mass Communication
Publisher:	UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA
Publication Date:	2009
Signature:	<p style="text-align: center;">Webmaster</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Digitally Signed by Webmaster's Name</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small;">DN : CN = Webmaster's name O= University of Nigeria, Nsukka</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small;">OU = Innovation Centre</p>

**CONSTRAINTS ON JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE IN
GOVERNMENT-OWNED MEDIA ORGANISATIONS
IN SOUTH-SOUTH GEO-POLITICAL ZONE OF
NIGERIA**

**NWANYANWU, NNAMDI CHINEDU
PG/MA/07/43316**

**DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
FACULTY OF ARTS,
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA**

APRIL 2009

CERTIFICATION

This project report is certified as having met the requirements of the Department of Mass Communication and the School of Post Graduate Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka for the award of a Master of Arts degree in Mass Communication.

BY

RAY A. UDEAJAH (PhD).
(RESEARCH PROJECT SUPERVISOR)

DATE

RAY A. UDEAJAH (Ph.D).
(Ag. HEAD OF DEPARTMENT)

DATE

EXTERNAL EXAMINER

Date

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to JEHOVAH God
for his guidance and provisions and also to my
parents,
Mr. and Mrs. Felix Nwala.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am eternally grateful more than I can adequately express to **JEHOVAH** God who has been my help and fortress and has again, granted me my heart desire.

Sincerely, I wish to express my humble gratitude to my Father, Mr. Felix Nwala and my mother, Mrs. Angelina Nwala. You have once again squeezed water out of stone to see me through this academic ladder. I say, you are the best amongst your equals!

I cannot forget the immeasurable efforts of my project supervisor and Ag. Head of Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Ray A. Udejah (PhD.). ‘They say you are tough but I say you are just you’. This project could not have been better without your constructive criticisms and inputs.

To my lecturers in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Church S. Akpan (PhD). Nnayelugo M. Okoro and Ohaja, E. U. To all of you, I say a big thank you for allowing me to drink from your cups of knowledge.

I’ll not forget to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the following persons. Mr. Austin, Mr. Wilfred O. Olley, Mr. Daniel Ekharefo, Mr. Felix Talabi, Mr. Paul, Mr. Ugwu, Mr. Elvis Otabor, Priscilla Gurumnaan, Jane Amaefule, Mr. Amadi Okechukwu, Mr. Chinedu Ugwonno, Joy Agbenyi, Mr. Frances, Precious, Obbey, Amaka, Miss Victoria Nyebuchi, Miss Amadi Tochi

I will forever remain indebted to my brothers, Mr. Kingdom Nwanyanwu, Mr. Felix Nwanyanwu (Junior) and Mr. Promise Nwanyanwu. And to my beloved sisters, Mrs. Grace, Miss Confidence Nwanyanwu, Miss Faith Nwanyanwu (Lolo) and to my little niece, Miss Treasure. I say thank you for being there for me.

And to my uncles, Mr. Paulinus Amadi, Mr. Jude Amadi, Mr. Boniface Nwala, Mr. Chima Uche.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my cousins, Mrs. Fineseed, Mr. Ikechukwu Amadi, and Miss Fortune

Lastly I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my special friend Okoro Ruth. My heart goes to mercy orewah, I promise to always be there for you.

Nwanyanwu Nnamdi. C.

Nsukka 2009.

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, a significant number of intellectuals, journalists, and businesspeople believe that government should not interfere with ownership and control of the mass media. The important point implicit in this viewpoint is the assumption that the pattern of ownership of the mass media is crucial in determining the strength or weakness of the press. This study surveys the constraints on journalistic practice in government-owned media in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. "Government-owned media," as used in this study, refers to newspapers in the six states that make up the geo-political zone which could be used to generalize to other government owned newspapers in Nigeria owing to the fact that they operate in the same economy. Discussion of background issues covers constitutional and legal provisions and government ownership of media. Strictly speaking, there are two main categories of the press in Nigeria: the government-owned press and the privately owned press. The establishment of daily newspapers by newly created states accounted for the relatively spectacular increase in government ownership since 1960. The decision to compete with private entrepreneurs is not a sound one, notwithstanding the argument for government ownership in Nigeria at this time. The lesson of history is that such ownership is incompatible with a democratic way of life in a society having a free enterprise economy. Also such ownership rarely if ever lasts unless the government intends to use methods which seriously detract from democratic principles to sustain its media outlets regardless of their performance and level of success or failure. It would be in the interest of the Nigerian press, governments, public and national development, for the governments to leave the field of daily and weekly newspaper publishing to private enterprise and concentrate their efforts in radio and television broadcasting.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study.

The history of the media in Nigeria is a very unique one. Pioneered by the efforts of private individuals, it enjoyed patronage and acceptance by many Nigerians, especially the educated ones. Right from the advent of *Iwe Irohin* in 1859, the Nigerian media emerged as a viable source which has often times stood as the voice of the voiceless Nigerians.

The importance of the Nigerian media in the development of the Nigerian state became more prominent in the struggle by the Founding Fathers of Nigerian nationalism against the continuous British colonial rule and imperialism, right from the emergence of political parties in Nigeria and up till about 1944. As the agitation gained momentum, the colonial government initiated a process of tactical pull over through negotiation with the emergent yet fragmented political class; the media took a front seat and status in the struggle as the mouthpiece of the anti-colonial struggle. In playing this role, the media and individual journalists were exposed to all forms of vicissitudes and punishment by the colonial authorities.

The Nigerian press has indeed established itself as a strong force in the information sphere and this was maintained during the oppression days of the military juntas in the country, and was also instrumental in the enthronement of democratic governance in the country in 1999.

Unlike the history of the press, the origin of the broadcast media in Nigeria took a different twist. According to Adeseye and Ibagere (1999:100) the establishment of a relay station in Nigeria by the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1932 was meant to serve different interest. Chief of which was to mobilize Africans and Nigerians to fight a common enemy-Germany and also to serve the interest of the British minorities in the country. This testimony is in sharp contrast to that of the press which though started by a non-Nigerian,

but was generally meant for the information, education and entertainment needs of Nigerians. Since the inception of the broadcast media in Nigeria, it remained exclusively with the government until the government of General Ibrahim Babangida deregulated the industry, thereby giving private individuals the opportunity to own and operate broadcast stations.

The Nigerian press right from its inception has been noted to exhibit a high level of vibrancy which has often pitched it against the governments of the day. The press could be said to have displayed its true stuff when it stood to fight the dictatorial tendencies of many Nigerian past leaders and politicians. The press was able to achieve these simply because it is mostly owned by private individuals. Though there were newspaper houses owned by the government; the likes of *Daily Times* and *New Nigeria*, they were unable to match the vibrancy associated with the private press as a result of their public or government status.

Media ownership will continue to be a major determinant in the affairs of the media in Nigeria. Adeseye and Ibagere (1999:22) identify three types of media ownership; Public, Private and Quasi-government ownership. They noted that the public ownership is a system whereby the government establishes and operates media houses. The private system is a system where private citizens own media houses and the quasi-government is a partnership between the government and private investors. The last is however not being practiced in Nigeria. There is no doubt that media ownership in Nigeria is largely in the hands of the government. In Nigeria today, there is virtually no state government that does not own a television or radio station and even newspaper publishing houses. This therefore implies that majority of media personnel in Nigeria are under the services of the government.

Unarguably, ownership is one of the major problems facing the media in Nigeria, be it State or Federal. In most cases, there is a stigma on journalists who work in these media houses as they are often seen as government's propagandists. Journalists are made to give

the activities of their government owner more prominence at the expense of other important issues. When they fail to do so, regardless of their role or importance to the media organization, the reporters risk being sacked or demoted unless they are lucky. The issue is not different in the broadcast media. According to Udejah (2004:300), everything points to the fact that ownership has had some significant effect on the operations of broadcast organizations in Nigeria. The policy of the persons who pay the broadcaster's salary determines the operation of the media station.

The public or government owned media houses in Nigeria have been known to suffer a myriad of problems which have left them redundant and reduced them to mere "government handouts". This is as a result of the overbearing influence of the government owners on the media houses.

Uche (1989:139) states that:

The influence of the government is seen in the unflinching support government media organizations give to the government of the day. Government officials do not hesitate to remove anyone in charge who fails to offer unquestionable support.

Obviously, this could be the reason why government owned stations have lost credibility in the eyes of the public.

Noting further, Uche stated that in a bid to save their job, media personnel in government media houses are ready to abide by the rules of their government owners or be shown the way out.

Nwachukwu (2008:9) puts it this way:

An erring official risks being sacked with 'immediate effect' or face other punishments for such 'heinous' acts. For instance, within one year of the elected civilian government assuming office in 1990, no less than ten chief executive officers of state owned broadcasting stations

were sacked. Those who kept their jobs got the message - toe the line.

This disenchantment in the government owned media has come to encourage sycophancy in the industry as the media houses are now known to provide less credible news/information as compared with the privately owned ones. Azegbeni (2006:11). The reasons for such low credibility are government interference in the editorial content, inadequate funding as well as poor and inadequate trained personnel. Another reason for their low patronage can be attributed to their perceived bias and pro-government stand on issues of national interest.

Obviously, the government owned media stations are also faced with the problem of political interference. Ordinarily, they have the widest reach but private companies still shy away from patronizing them with their adverts and this has left them at the mercy of their government proprietors who now release subvention to them whenever they feel that they are satisfied with their operations. This assertion is supported by Ezeah (2005:141) who, referring to a study conducted on government owned media stations by Chika Ndu (2000) states that the media houses are always receiving irregular subventions which has brought them to their epileptic state. He further states that the method of funding is faulty and inadequate and this has resulted in their poor performances.

Government's bid to make the press favourably disposed to it also led to the unholy act of censorship. This is a way of gagging media houses and personnel by their government proprietors to ensure that anything that is not approved about their activities is not published or aired in their media. This often makes news stories from the government media more of a government official announcement than the actual report of an event.

The nonchalant attitude towards government establishment in Nigeria has also been shifted to the media. Despite the transformation being witnessed in the media globally, most government media organizations in Nigeria still operate with analogue equipment.

According to Doghudje (2008:15):

for national coverage on radio/television, you have to rely on the federal-government-owned radio and television networks. And that is most unfortunate because they are poorly equipped and poorly maintained. Besides, they are inflexible and possess a huge dose of civil service mentality... it is for this reason that they depend on government subventions or subsidies for their survival instead of generating enough revenue for their survival and growth.

There is no gainsaying the fact that most government owned media organizations are still operating with the equipment which they acquired at their inception and this has remained so after many years of operation as their government owners show nonchalant attitude towards them. This was exactly the case, which led to the collapse of the *Daily Times* newspapers

In the same vein, it is an open fact that journalists in government owned media organizations are poorly paid or remunerated. They are treated as civil servants even though they are made to work round the clock and made to come to work even when other government staffs are off duties. Many state governments in the past often owe their media workers months of unpaid salaries and this made the media personnel to embark on industrial actions to demand for their salaries.

The problems of government owned media houses in Nigeria are enormous and will be discussed extensively in the review of related literatures.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The media is regarded as the fourth estate of the realm, this can be said to be the role, bestowed on the press by nature. The responsibility to inform and educate the public on the happening in the day to day activities of the government is vested on the media. In outlining the code of ethics for Nigeria journalists (in both private and government owned media),

Oloruntola (2007: 60) reveals that the social responsibility of the journalist include the promotion of universal principles of human rights, democracy, justice, equality, peace and international understanding.

All over the world, press freedom has always been a controversial issue, Africa is not an exception; In Namibia, Norah Appolus was removed from her post of news director of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation because of her report the government considered too independent. In the same vein, the administration of Group Captain Baba Adamu Iyam of Edo State unceremoniously removed from office, the Editor of the Observer Newspaper, Adekumbi Ero for the Editor's criticism of the government's retrenchment policy. Adeseye and Ibagere (1999: 116). On September 20th 1991, Tony Ikeakanam was removed as the editor of the Observer demoted to grade level 12 and posted to Ibadan as a reporter for allegedly using an unglamorous photograph of the then first lady, Mariam Babangida on the front page of the newspaper *African Concord* (28 October, p: 45, 1991).

In Rivers State, the military government of Col. Musa Shehu, sacked the general manager of the state - owned radio corporation, Radio Rivers, Mr. Morgan Omodu because the radio station carried a news report that the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP) senatorial primaries has been cancelled and one of the aspirants, one Dr Ombo Isokariari, disqualified. The interest of the state government in the affair has not been ascertained up till date. Although Radio Rivers is funded and controlled by the Rivers State government, the primaries are supposed to be private affairs of the political parties.

There is no doubt that as a result of the above mentioned unfortunate incidences, journalists in government owned media always slant the news to favour who ever is in power and they are also conspicuously silent about official corruption.

Oloruntola (2007: 61) further states that factual, accurate, balance and fair reporting is the ultimate objective of good journalism and journalists should refrain from publishing inaccurate and misleading information.

What could be responsible for lack of professional journalism in government owned media which has militated against its social responsibility? Could it be as the saying goes: he who pays the piper dictates the tune? The fundamental problem motivating the study is the constraints on journalistic practice in government owned media

1.3 Objectives of the study

This study sought to determine constraints on journalistic practice in government owned media in Nigeria with reference to government - owned print media in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria but succinctly,

- i. to find out, those constraints on journalistic practice in government owned media;
- ii. to determine how government influence affects media contents.
- iii. to determine the factors that provide the constraints on journalistic practice in government owned media.
- iv. to determine whether government ownership of the media wields any influence on the practice of journalism.
- v. to determine whether media practitioners in government owned media derive gratification from their job.

1.4 Significance of the study.

This study is significant in the following ways:-

- i. It will help the researcher understand how media practitioners in government owned media operate.

- ii. It would serve as a mirror for the media practitioners in government owned media to see clearly where they need to make adjustments so as to carry out their social responsibility functions better without compromise.
- iii. It would contribute to existing literatures on this topic as it would give researchers opportunity to read and make reference to when discussing issues concerning media ownership and its challenges in Nigeria.
- iv. It would point out positive direction for a vibrant and professionally efficient press, which will translate to a very high image for the media with unequivocal positive economic implications.
- v. It would propel further research on how constraints on journalistic practice in government owned media could be reduced to the barest minimum or better still eliminated.
- vi. It would also provoke further research on comparative study on the effectiveness of private owned media as contemporary to government owned media.

1.5 Research questions.

The following research questions were drawn to serve as guide in this study.

- i. What are those constraints on journalistic practice in government- owned media?
- ii. Does government-ownership of the media houses have any effect on their operation?
- iii. What are those ways in which the government seeks to control their media content?
- iv. Has government ownership of the media houses affected the credibility of those media organisations?
- v. In what ways can these constraints be better managed?

1.6 **Theoretical framework**

Theories can never be isolated from any empirical research. It is however a parameter for measuring the latitude and hypothesis testing in any phenomenon under study. Folarin (2005:6) note that theory and research are closely related through scientific method, he added that theory and research may be seen as two sides of the same coin; in an elucidatory way, Tejumaiye (2003:51) said; “every scientist assumes an approach or a particular orientation when dealing with a subject or issue, this approach determines the concepts, questions, perspective and also shapes the hypotheses which are tested and eventually the theory which is generated”. In total agreement Brooks (1970) cited by Ohaja (2003:64) asserts that in every discipline, there is a body of theories that provides the explanation for observing phenomena in that field. As assumptions are made and tested in the field through research, those that are validated become generalizations upon which theories are based. To verify the validity of such theoretical assumptions, the basis of such result or outcome can be replicated; it has been proven that given specified number of variables or circumstances a certain outcome can be expected

This study is therefore, hinged on the following theoretical postulations.

- Authoritarian theory and
- Benevolent-Authoritarian or Conservative Development Journalism

1.6.1 **Authoritarian Theory**

This study is best situated within the context of the authoritarian theory. This theory among other dominant theoretical perspectives or models is pertinent to this work.

According to Ogbiti (2002:7), this theory is applicable where the press is largely owned and controlled by mostly dictators as in some African, Latin American and Asian countries. The theory posits that the ruling class is given the right to use and control the press to promote the interest of the government in power.

As Kunczick (1988:46) cited in Folarin (2005:27) points out:

It is derived from the state philosophy of absolutism, which gave the government of the ruling class the right to use and control the press and thus, determine what the public should know or believe. Whether the ownership was public or private, authoritarian media existed to promote the interest of the government or its functionaries.

Defleur *et al* (1987) in Obaze *et al* (2004:17) assert that authoritarian governments operate their media for the purpose of controlling the flow of information, shaping public opinion and providing approved collective interpretations.

The instruments of control of the media are: direct state control of production, enforceable codes of conduct, heavy taxation and other kinds of economic sanctions, controlled import of foreign media, government right of appointment of editorial staff and suspension of publications. There is the lack of true independence to journalists who are subordinated to state authority. It justifies advance censorship and punishments for deviants.

1.6.2 **Benevolent-Authoritarian or Conservative Development Journalism**

According to Folarin (2005: 46) this type of development journalism is espoused by scholars, media practitioners, leaders and others who believe that selective handling of information is justified in developing countries, which are often ridden with crises. The important thing, they hold, is to ensure that public welfare is kept in mind at all times. Exponents of benevolent authoritarian journalism tend to view democracy as an unproductive luxury in developing countries. Holding on to the most authoritarian tenets of Development Media Theory, they are prepared to assign to the national news agencies the function of censorship in addition to their normal function of news distribution. The pervading freedom-inhibiting tradition of exaggerated respect for national leaders is best exemplified in benevolent-authoritarian or conservative media, which like erstwhile socialist media, are subject to democratic centralism and self-censorship. Running

throughout such media and the attendant scholarship is a common belief that economic development cannot take place in developing countries without the short-term sacrifice of political liberty and press freedom. But there are other views to the contrary.

The relevance of these theories to the study lies in the fact that the nature of control exacted on the operations of the media determines the level of performance based on the canons of journalism. Thus, government domineering influence can constrain the operations of the media, in this sense journalistic practice.

1.7 Scope of the study.

A research of this magnitude would have been better to encompass as many government media stations as possible, but doing that would not only be too cumbersome, but would make the research to be complicated. This therefore calls for a sample of the population to be chosen. Supporting this, Asika (1991:46) notes that sampling enables us to obtain quicker results instead of a complete survey of the entire population...enables us to be more systematic and affords us better opportunity to be focussed than with complete coverage of the entire population.

This study would therefore be limited to all the government-owned newspapers in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. The south-south states and the names of government-owned newspapers are;

1. The Pioneer..... Akwa Ibom State
2. Bayelsa Waves..... Bayelsa State
3. Nigeria Chronicle.....Cross River State
4. The Pointer..... Delta State
5. the ObserverEdo State
6. The Tide newspaper.....Rivers State

1.8 Limitation of the study

The study was designed to sample the constraints on journalistic practice in government - owned media stations in Nigeria. As a major constraint, there is the tendency of the media practitioners to be uncooperative in terms of giving out information due to the fact that many who dared to expose the government in the past were given one form of punishment or the other.

In the same vein, the bureaucracy associated with government establishments may also pose as a constraint to the study.

Time is certainly going to be another limitation in this study especially when viewed against the backdrop of the dynamism of man, which makes it difficult to carry out research of this nature.

Considering the prevailing economic situation in the country, funds are always a major problem in carrying out researches and this research would certainly not be an exception.

1.9 Definition of terms

The terms below are defined in the context that they are operationalized in the study:-

- **Constraints** – those factors militating against the practice of journalism.
- **Ethics** – rules or standard regulating activities of the press.
- **Government** – group of people who are responsible for controlling a country or state.
- **Government Media** – these refers to government-owned newspapers located in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria.
- **Media** – these refer to radio, television, newspapers and magazines that are used in the dissemination of information to a large and heterogonous audience.

- **Media Practitioners** – this refers to a professional journalist who has undergone training and is working with a media organization.
- **Ownership** – means to have control and management of something when it is legally yours.

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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The history of the media in Nigeria has always been characterized by two major forms of ownership. These are government (public) ownership and private ownership. Each of these forms of ownership has its peculiar hindrances. However, the focus of this study is not on these hindrances as a whole but those pertaining to the government-owned media of the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Several studies have been conducted on the constraints facing the practice of journalism in Nigeria. In this chapter, the researcher undertakes a review of some of these studies concerned with the stumbling blocks to the smooth-run of government-owned media in Nigeria.

2.1 Overview of Government Ownership of the Media

All forms of media ownership are driven by different agendas. Ownership is a principal determinant of independence. What then determines independence? According to World Development Report (2003), Ownership is a central factor of independence because it is the owners who control information flow and thus influence economic, political and social outcomes.

Ogbiti (2006:5) re-enforces this position when she asserts that:

the implication of government-owned newspapers are that governments fund, appoint board of directors, general managers and editors; thus they call the tune, as a result, each government-owned newspaper owes its allegiance to the ruling class and not to the tax payers whose money is the source of funding for the newspaper.

Government owned media depends solely on the government that owns them to provide support funds in addition to any other generated by the organization. Such support funds may include those for staff salaries and other operational costs such as procuring and maintaining broadcast and print media equipment. Most public owned broadcast organizations had over the years depended on this source since it was the responsibility of

the government to provide financial assistance to its media organization. Okenwa, (1998:19) asserts that government subvention cannot be guaranteed in Nigeria. The overdependence of government media on government subvention makes these media subject to manipulation by their owners. Nwosu (1990:iii) cited Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1963) as saying that the mass media should have the capacity of maintaining their financial self-sufficiency so as to be free from the pressures of special interest. Government ownership of the media enables it to exert a psychological and financial control over the media.

World Development Report (2003) is of the view that government control of the media could distort and manipulate information in the incumbent government's favour. In total agreement, Nwosu (1990:93) says most media in Nigeria are owned by government and so end up many a times serving as mere mouthpieces for communicating various government's activities at various levels. This, he continued, does not make for balanced, extensive and fair communication. Government-owned media have always been accused of not living up to their expectations. Onukaba (2005:2) opined that:

It is the duty of any media institution to keep the public aware of what is going on around them by providing accurate, factual and timely information at all times. It is also the duty of the media to warn or alert the public about impending danger, to interpret events or provide information needed by the public to make everyday decisions or that will help them participate actively in the political, economic and social activities of a community. They are also expected to use their products to educate, entertain, mould public opinions, reinforce attitude and set agenda for the society.

However, for any media institution especially the government-owned to play these roles effectively, they are expected to uphold these values of objectivity, fairness, justice, accuracy, balance, moderation and decency.

The reasons often given by government for their involvement in media ownership according to Onukaba (2005:3) are that the private ones cannot be trusted to faithfully

uphold these tenets of the profession. They accuse them of fostering unrealistic expectations among the populace, of heightening anxieties about conditions in the country and of hate-mongering, inaccuracies and misinformation, sensationalization and shallowness, over-commercialization, political bias and partisanship, elitism, deception, manipulation, violation of privacy, indecency and obscenity, the lack of fairness and balance. These of course are general criticisms against all media institutions, whether private or public (government-owned).

Ownership all over the world seems to tilt towards the Marxism adage of “He who pays the piper dictates the tune.” For example, in Pakistan, there is no formally enforced press censorship but journalists have been indirectly forced to curtail their reporting due to various external reasons. For instance, according to Ramanujan (2007),

When reporting the aftermath of an earthquake in Pakistani newspapers, government-owned newspapers refrained from explicitly condemning the ineffectiveness of the government’s response or highlight that the military was inept in handling the disaster. When President Musharraf admitted the inefficiency of the government’s response and the inability of the government to get aid, the press praised him for admitting the problem instead of criticizing him for not providing relief in the first place.

According to Akuta (2005) as cited by Ramanujan (2007), the media did not and has not questioned the government for its failures in aiding victims and getting relief assistance.

The *Somaliland Times* (2003) reports that:

Although it has been the norm for managers at government-owned media to suppress all information deemed by them as critical of, or embarrassing to the incumbent administration, the government has more recently embarked on a policy of complete censorship of all materials issued by the official media.

Sequel to the above, it becomes crystal clear that the editorial policy of these media organizations will not represent the interest of the public. Instead, the government of the day will always have their fill.

Max (2000) wrote that the media in Alabama have been manipulated almost as cynically as those in former Yugoslavia but under the guise of operating in a democratic environment. Governments have used laws and regulations to regulate the media in such a way as to ensure their compliance or drive disobedient ones out of job.

When the media falls under the control of the government, they could be used to propagate lies. George Bush, the former president of the United States of America was delighted to learn from a *Washington Post*-ABC News Poll that 56 percent of America still thinks Iraq had weapons of mass destruction before the start of the war while six in ten said they believe Iraq provided direct support to the Al-Qaeda terrorists' network. Amy and David (2005) argued that Americans believed these lies, not because they are stupid but because they are good media consumers. They added that their media had become an echo chamber for those in power. Therefore, instead of challenging the fraudulent claims of the Bush administration, they had their media acting as conveyor belts for the government lies.

Some may argue that working for a government-owned newspaper might seem like a good idea, free of harassment that independent journalists face. However, sometimes, this apparently privileged position acts to the contrary. For example, in August 2004, Mr. Ahmad Zia Seamak Herav, the editor of the government-run daily, *Anis* resigned citing extreme pressure on his professional independence, he added that his attempt to turn the newspaper in an independent professional media organization was considered unacceptable with constant efforts to undermine him.

The Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) announced that forty-nine journalists working for Gorkhapatra Corporation, a government-owned media group were sacked on 26th July 2007.

The FNJ president said management dismissed the journalists on the basis of its political interests. Meanwhile, the management promoted some employees who were active against the democratic movement of April 2006.

Dana (2005) in an editorial said government-owned media organization's goal is to steer readers and viewers toward ideologically driven outlets that will confirm their own views and protect them from disagreeable facts.

Obviously, these media are not serving a democratic society, where a diversity of views is vital to shaping informed opinions. This is well-oiled propaganda machine that is repackaging government spin and passing it off as journalism.

Fred (1999:30) lamented that:

The cessation of government ownership of the media is important because when the media are under government control. It uses the media essentially as an instrument of manufacturing political consent at the expense of the media providing the context for ideological fecundity of the real practicing journalists.

Although government-owned media are set up ostensibly to address these weaknesses of the private media as well as to bring government policies and programmes closer to the people and promote peaceful co-existence among different groups in the societies in which they operate, but they are usually limited by their methods of operation. For instance, government-owned media are required to avoid carrying information thought to be capable of portraying the government in a bad light; and to deliberately black-out all those opposed to the government. Thus, rather than serve as a credible alternative to the private media, government-owned media have ended up creating new set of problems.

Jakande (1976:110) opines that:

All government be they civilian or military preferred praise to criticism, hence they ensured, at all costs positive portrayal in government-owned mass media at the expense of accurate and balanced reporting.

With the pro-government stance, newspapers owned by governments are hardly credible and patronized. Thus, while privately owned newspapers have waxed stronger and performed creditably well, the same success story cannot be told of their government-owned counterparts.

Journalists according to Ogbiti (2006:5) in government-owned newspapers no matter how talented and resourceful, regret ever working there. Apart from being confronted with the problem of “he who pays the piper calls the tune,” they groan under poor remuneration and lately plagued with the enormous challenges of government self-sustenance policy.

Duyile (2007:113) opined that in the sixties, during the regime of the first Nigerian Prime Minister- Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the federal government sponsored two newspapers- *The Morning Post* and *Sunday Post*. The two newspapers were set up as priority project when the federal government realized that its internal publicity could not be put in care of the existing privately owned and politically sponsored newspapers of the time. Duyile added that the federal government weighed other alternatives and came to the conclusion that it would be better to reach the public directly with its own news, ideas and its own explanations on political, social, cultural and economic issues.

Duyile (2007: 114) adds that:

As a result (of the newly formed newspapers) many journalists who had spent years of practices in the civil service through the Federal Ministry of Information were posted to the editorial department of the press. Obviously, this brand of reporters, sub-editors and editors were already used to taking orders and instructions from government officials. So it was not difficult for them to fit into the scheme of work at the new government press.

Aliede (2003:26) classified the Second Republic (1976-1983) as a period when newspapers became state affairs manned by government ministries of information. In other words, government ownership intensified. He stressed that this was perhaps due to the fact

that during the first and second republics, the political papers which existed could not be objective in their reporting. They were only concerned about their patronage and earnings, and often engaged in press wars, bickering and often could not circulate in opponent's terrain like other states controlled by opposing parties. This was more serious and synonymous with government papers. According to Coker (1968) as cited in Aliede (2003:26) the government owned media failed to distinguish between the ruling party and the government and therefore became party organs financed by the public.

It is important to note that apart from government control of the media through laws, decrees and the courts, other means of control such as 'co-opting' (sic) exist (Uche, 1989: 139). 'Co-opting' according to Uche is a term that explains the reduction of journalists to mere stooges of the government. Besides that, Nwachukwu (2008) explains that the government uses preferential treatments to 'buy' the most influential journalists in the country. These influential critics are often appointed to top position in the government.

In most of the so-called third world countries, government takes active interest in the establishment and control of the media. Onyero (1991:55) points out that:

When the government becomes actively involved in the ownership and operation of the media, the public becomes the target of the political brainwashing...Because the media are supposed to check the excesses of the government, truth becomes hidden. As a result the media become more political tools used only to advance the wishes of the government.

Naturally, each government wants to tell its own story. As such, they do so by establishing their own media houses. Thus, some have argued that government establishment of its media house is a welcome development especially in the Third World countries but the problem remains that government owned media lack credibility and objectivity and as William Hachen puts it as cited by Chinedu (2004:21),

Even when they play the news straight, government owned media generally have credibility problems, readers are often suspicious of news from official organs and if they are given the chance, they will seek independent sources.

The above is not always the case with some government owned media in advanced countries of the world. For instance, in Britain, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is owned by the British government, but its activities are not often controlled by the British government. In Article 3 of its charter, one of the British Broadcasting Corporation's objectives is stated to be:

“To provide, as public services, sound and television broadcasting service and to provide sound and television programmes of information, education and entertainment for general reception”.

True to its charter, the day to day operations of the BBC are directed by media personnel who are responsible to a board of directors of the corporation. The corporation can disagree with the government on certain issues and hold its ground.

This is not the case in Nigeria where the government in power controls the press firmly especially the government media.

Living Guyana (2005) has it that For the state media to become a divisive factor, the people running it have to be insulated from political interference. There should be no directions by politicians or their representatives or discussions on policy.

The editorial went on to say that the major problem with state media has always been that if they fall under the control of party in power, even indirectly, that can lead to a contamination of the news process. That is not only unfortunate in itself, but it can also lead to a politicization of other privately owned media in response. It is therefore an obvious fact that the proprietor's interest informs the editorial policy of the media.

It is against this backdrop that Asada (2006:260) citing Dimkpa (1997:18-19) as quoting Agbese of *Newswatch* magazine thus:

That no publication, no matter how independent it may claim to be can escape serving certain vested interests maybe knowingly or unknowingly. These interests may be commercial, political, communal, tribal or even religious.

In other words, media owners dictate (through editorial policy) what reporters cover. No wonder government media are seen as praise singers about government programmes whether they are laudable or not. Udejah (2004:158) expressed this perspective when he said that government-owned media like NTA and FRCN were merely information houses for government activities and policies where news focus was to have government favourably mentioned.

A disturbing fact according to a study by Chika Ndu as cited by Ezeah (2005:141) is that despite how the government-owned media are used, they received irregular subvention and that led to their epileptic state. She further discussed the method of funding as faulty and inadequate, resulting in the media organization performing far below capacity with obsolete facilities and equipment.

2.2 Factors Militating Against the Efficient and Effective Performance of the Government Owned Media

The mass media play a vital role in nation-building. It is therefore necessary to identify the problems facing the mass media in Nigeria. The problems of government owned media house appear to be more complex because of the usual bureaucratic inertia and mismanagement that are characteristic of the developing countries. Hence the conservative attitude of government media out-fits; organizational problems and misappropriation of fund exert a paralyzing influence on the government owned media. Financial mismanagement, inability to provide enough funds for technical facilities as well as static administrative protocol coupled with the absence of practical knowledge of

audience management etcetera hamper the operations of the media out-fits owned by the government.

Nwosu (1990:117) asserts that the government has limited resources; hence most government media are suffering from chronic shortage of funds. This implies that government ownership of both the electronic and print media involves funding for capital investment and running costs. It is pertinent to mention here that the funding of government media depends on the state of the economy of the media.

The problem arising out of inadequate funding of the government owned media outfits, more often than not, compel the media organisations to seek other means of supplementing government subvention given to them such as resorting to limited commercial broadcasting, increasing the advertising rate and the withdrawal of subvention on newsprint.

Partisanship or ideological journalism and sectionalism pose a big problem to the government owned media. During the colonial era for instance, most newspaper privately owned by some nationalists and politicians, like the *west African pilot* owned by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of Africa, mounted newspaper crusade against the British colonial administrators by criticizing the government policies and inciting the people against colonial rule in Nigeria Hachten (1971:19).

Schranm (1964:26) states that poor funding is the bane of government owned newspaper in the developing world. Throughout the developing world, the mass media are under-financed and underdeveloped and therefore are not contributing what they might contribute if fully and adequately used.

Schranm believes that the financial starvation being suffered by some government owned media is preventing them from realizing the dream for which the founding fathers of the newspapers had established it. He however recommends that the basic requirement for

developing the mass media to the rate at which they can make the greatest contribution to national development require serious and substantial financial commitments.

He also said that the first requirement for accelerating the developing of mass communication is therefore that a nation be willing to make a serious investment in media growth, adding that substantial progress could be made in this regard for results. He insists that the essential point is that the responsibility for communication development should not be dropped when an inventory and plan have been made. Arguing that, the responsibility should be an active and a continuing one. Perhaps, the best bait for communication development is to develop a well thought-out plan that investigates the development of mass communication in the general pattern of social and economic development.

Nwosu, (1990:185) supports the idea of funding when he points out that “stringent budgets mean little or no investigative reporting or in depth writing. This affects salaries so that talented professionals will not come to that organization or if they do they will not stay”.

This is exactly the present cloud that envelopes some government owned newspapers. The few talented professionalizes who are presently working in this newspaper are however only there because they have not found any alternative. They are not committed because of the inadequate funding.

Furthermore, delayed monthly salaries have led to low morale, job insecurity and lack of commitment, pilfering and indiscipline.

The choice of suitable media technology is another militating factor against government owned media. The changing technological improvement prevalent in this modern age affects both the broadcast and the print media. Going by the present economic woes of the government, the procurement of modern technological equipment and facilities has become a problem to the government.

New technological transfer is difficult to be adapted to. Other problems associated with it include problem of spare parts, durability of the new technology, and staff training for operating the new system. Ethical problems still militate against government owned media. Amadi (1986:128) insists that bribery and corruption still exist in the practice of Nigeria journalism. Ebo (1998:14) says that this affects audience perception of media credibility.

One of the greatest ethical problems of government owned media is that of the media objectivity. Many of these media do not report balanced news. Also, inviting reporters for dinner, giving them Christmas gifts, 'brown envelops' and other forms of gratification remain an ethical problem against the government media outfits.

2.3 Legal Constraints on Journalistic Practice in Nigeria

Thomas Jefferson, the third American president said that he preferred a press without a government than a government without a press. Sad to say, experience has shown that the reverse is the case in Nigeria. The authorities (government) hate the investigative inclination, eagle and probing eyes of journalists thus they try to muzzle the press with legal and extra-legal instruments at their disposal.

Asadu (2007:261) identified one of the legal control mechanisms that weigh the media down in the discharge of their social responsibility to the people as law on sedition. Fred (1999:3) adds that the ruling class is suspicious that a free press could "lionize" the ordinary citizens to the extent of causing a shift in the base of power. This assumption, though erroneous has its grounds on the contributions which journalism made towards the decolonization of Nigeria.

The root of the ruling class's suspicion of the press is therefore traceable to the mistaken imagination according to Wilcox (1975) as cited by Fred (1999:4) since a fettered pre-independence press was able to remove the powerful colonial masters, then an

unfettered post-independent press would be too hot for less powerful African masters to contend with.

In recognition of the importance of press freedom, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10th December 1948) according to Emmanuel (2006:130) everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek and receive information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

What then is press freedom? Alabi (2003:53) as cited by Innocent (2007:47), defined press freedom to mean that the press should be allowed to publish without prior restraint. Onogoruwa (1985:15) on the other hand defines press freedom as the right of the press to publish without being subjected to intimidation, threat, molestation or blackmail.

Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria lends credence to the crucial role of the press; the extent to which the Nigerian mass media are able to discharge. This all-important role depends; to a very large extent, on the width and depth of the enabling environment that is created and sustained by the law of the land (Okoro and Okolie, 2004:65).

Press laws regulate the activities of the professional journalists, for according to Okunna (1995) cited in Okoro (2004:65) media laws are rules made by government for the regulation of the activities of mass media professionals so as to ensure correct conduct by them.

Media laws are necessary since there is no absolute freedom anywhere in the world but a closer look at laws governing the activities of journalism especially the print reveals that the laws have not been mild. Some of these laws are listed below:

1. *The Newspaper Act, 1917*
2. *Printing Presses Regulation Act, 1933*

3. *Criminal Code and Penal Code: (a.) Sedition, (b.) Injurious falsehood, (c.) Criminal defamation, (d.) Prohibition of imported Publications, (e.) Seditious publication against foreign Heads of State, (f.) Contempt of court.*
4. *Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications Act, 1961)*
5. *Defamation Act, 1961*
6. *Seditious Meeting Act, 1961*
7. *Obscene Publication Act, 1961*
8. *Official Secrets Act, 1962*
9. *Newspaper (Amendment) Act, 1964*
10. *Circulation of Newspaper Decree No. 2, 1966*
11. *The Defamatory and Offensive Publications Decree No. 44, 1966*
12. *Newspaper (Prohibition of Circulation) Decree No. 17, 1967*
13. *Public Officers (Protection Against False Accusation) Decree No. 11, 1976*
14. *Newspaper (Prohibition of Circulation) Validation Decree No. 12, 1978*
(Momoh, 2002: 10-33)

Nwachukwu (2008) notes that:

These pernicious laws and decrees against the media gave government officials legal backing to persecute, fine, detain and imprison journalists, and to proscribe media houses. For instance, the Offensive Publications (Proscription) Decree 35 1993, made it possible for the government to clamp down on six media houses across the nation. Even government-owned media were not spared. This kind of suppression also took place after the 22 April 1990 failed coup d'état when over seven media houses were closed down.

In the light of the above, how can a journalist perform his responsibilities effectively without being crushed by the slag hammer of the law?

Section 4 of the Independent Constitution, section 25 of the 1963 Constitution, section 36 of the 1976 Constitution and section 39 of the 1999 Constitution all contain almost the same words on freedom of the press (Ukonu, 2004:164).

Sadly though, journalists do not enjoy security or immunity that the constitution purportedly gives despite the hazards associated with their profession. Section 39 of the constitution states in part, that “every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression”. This guaranteed freedom is not just for the press but for “every person.” However, the same freedom is taken away by sub-section 3 of the same section 39 which states that “nothing in that section shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society”.

Ogbondah refer to this as “claw back measure”. The question is- Who determines what is reasonably justifiable?

2.4 Controversies on the Best Form of Media Ownership

Conscious of the crucial role which the press can and does play in the society, there have often been controversies among scholars over what form of ownership that would enable the media play its role effectively. These controversies are predicated upon the fact that the content of a mass medium has always turned upon the wishes of the controller of the medium.

There are those who think that the most congenial atmosphere under which the media can fulfill its role is best created through private ownership. Others argue that it is best achieved under government ownership, yet there are some who advocate for media ownership. The rationale for government ownership and control of the media according to Rodman (2006:22) is that the media exist to render service to the government. This school of thought adds that truth and public service are both determined by what government officials decide is good for society.

In the pre-independence era, government-owned newspapers was set up because of government policy to promote literacy (through the building of schools) and the establishment of the print media to enlighten the educated few on the development taking place around them. Meanwhile,

Most of the privately owned newspapers during the pre-independence era were established principally for creating political awareness towards the attainment of independence. Hence, the informative, educative and entertainment functions of the press remained salient amid political agitation for independence (Ndubisi 2003:34).

Asadu (2007:260) opined that whether government owned or privately owned, the media are highly affected by the interests, decisions and influence of the owner.

In his opinion, Igben (2006:52) agrees that ownership of mass media in Nigeria represent diverse colouration like the diverse ethnic groups. He maintains that in the representative years of military government, private mass media were relatively vocal while the government owned remained in the censorship hold of the successive government. In other words, while the private mass media tried to protect the freedom of the press, the public media either remain in lukewarm or gag prostration.

Government ownership and control of the broadcast media met with various criticisms. Balogun (1987:15) criticizes government media out-fits, of bureaucratic inertia and mismanagement. Ume-Nwagbo (1984:5) writes off government media for lack of organogram and poor administrative machinery. Therefore, 1992 decree no 38 of that same year established the National Broadcasting Commission through which the government surrendered its age-long monopoly over the ownership of the electronic broadcast media all along enjoyed by the government of the federation and the government of the states. This has given rise to competition and efficiency in the broadcast media through the emergence of private television stations like the Clapper Board Television (CBTV); Dague Broadcasting Network (DBN); Channel Television (CTV); MINAJ Television and so on Effiong (1999:19). Others are African Independent Television (AIT) and Independent Television/Radio (ITV/R).

Another important development in the anal of the government owned media in Nigeria according to Ndubisi (2003:52) is that materials for publication must pass through an editorial board or censorship board. The boards are the gatekeepers. She 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 unpopular view of the government is that such publication will incite the public against the government. Censorship helps to check legal pitfalls such as libel

cases. It also helps in the structural and grammatical rearrangement of the materials for publication. However, the deliberate denial of the people's right to information by discarding some news-worthy materials that do not support some government policies and programmes is against the fairness doctrine and the freedom of the press.

Government owned media deny the media practitioners some information on the presumption that they are classified information and for the sake of state security. Hence the public is denied access to certain information that may be of public interest.

2.5 The Impact of Editorial Policies on the Mass Media

Communication policies exist in every society and Nigeria is not an exception. Communication policies may be diffused through various institutions, they may also be centralized. Editorial policies are operational in most print media outfits especially newspaper organizations. Editorial policy spells out the operational system of any newspaper organization its aims and objectives, the name of the newspaper, its location and its house style. Editorial policy may be general in the nature of desirable goals and principles or they may be specific and regulatory Okenwa (1998:15).

Ebo (1998:87) says that editorial policy or house policy differs from one medium to the other, and that what attracts reporter in the electronic media may not attract those in the print media. She further points out that media policy takes into consideration a lot of things ranging from the aims and objectives of establishing the medium to the type of society in which the medium operates.

The editorial policy therefore spells out the rationale for the establishment of any medium and how it should operate. It will reveal whether the media was established for profitability or for public service. Although every medium has a duty to perform to its audience, the editorial policy or house style of every medium gives it a distinctive feature. This uniquely appeals to the newspapers or electronic media's audience.

Other contents of the editorial policy include page planning, slogan and column inch, level of language, beat, attribution headline among others. These inputs make the newspapers attractive and so promote their readership and advertisement opportunities.

Mudiaga Ofuoku in his article of August 23, 1999, "Way Out for Daily Times", reported that the utter neglect of the editorial policy of the *Daily Times* of the yesteryears adversely affected the circulation rate of the newspaper in recent times.

Poor formulation and loose adherence to editorial policy affects the circulation and readership rate of newspapers. The editorial policy on headlines, column-inch, design attribution, style and language of communication can help to promote the level of readership. It helps to maintain and manage the newspaper audience. Okenwa (1998) cited by Ndubisi (2003:48), asserts that "programmes (news and features) will never be appealing to the target audience if they lack the necessary coordinating and anchoring procedure". What this means is that the house style or policy or call it editorial policy makes programmes of the broadcasting service and newspaper page planning aesthetic and cohesive.

Audience apathy can therefore develop as a result of inconsistency of the editorial policy. Such an inconsistency shows that the newspaper has no organization objectives.

Ebo (1998:87) points out that house style or editorial policy creates a unique and appropriate mass communication and serves as the operational guideline of the print or electronic media. Hence any newspaper organization that neglects its editorial policy plans to fail; it is rather bound to fail.

Editorial policy provides for the course or plan of action, which any newspaper will take. It is designed to influence a uniform pattern of newspaper publication or the decisions and actions to be taken on controversial issues, choice of word, attribution, title, and the

general approach to the editorial entertainment, news or the general outlook of any newspaper.

Neglect or abandonment of the editorial policy, therefore, will raise a chaotic atmosphere for the internal audience of the media and leaves some bias in the minds of those who have developed interest in reading the newspaper- the target audience.

2.6 Nigerian Press and the Quest for Professionalism

The institutional position of the press as the watchdog of the society, has found expression in section 22 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which states explicitly “The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people”. The chapter referred to is chapter 11, which is entitled “Fundamental objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy”, covering sections 13-14 of the constitution, and outlining the fundamental obligations of the government and the people of Nigeria, as well as the political, economic, social, educational, environmental and cultural foreign policy thrust of the country.

To give impetus to the above, section 39 of the same 1999 Constitution, entitled “Right to freedom of expression and the press”, declares as follow:

1. Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference
2. Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) of this section; every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions, provided that no person, other than the government of the federation or of a state or any other person or body authorized by the president on the fulfillment of conditions laid down

by an Act of the National Assembly, shall own, establish or operate a television or wireless broadcasting station for any purpose whatsoever.

Following the above constitutional provision, it is quite glaring that the 1999 Constitution, is in support of Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states expressly that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The right includes freedom to hold opinion without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regard less of frontiers”. But the extent of the abuse of these constitutional provisions by a section of the Nigerian press has not only necessitated this research, but it has also made the society and others to call for the adherence to professionalism of journalism. In spite of the many laudable roles played by the media, and are still playing, there are still some dark sides to it. Agbese (2000:3), in carpeting the Nigerian press, notes as follow:

They do not correctly mirror the society. They exaggerate. They sensationalize. They are unpatriotic. They pander to ethnic, sectional and market forces. They ignore the wider national interest in pursuit of narrow and selfish interests that do not promote national unity and cohesion. They over emphasize the negative and ignore or at best down play the positive achievements in our national life.

Agbese goes further to assert that certain section of the press has shown a tendency towards the negative approach capable of wrecking this country; he laments the negative approach adopted by some Nigerian Journalists, who indulge in vicious, and sensational journalism, unmindful of that fact that by their actions, the prestige and stability of the country, is to that extent affected, possibly with unpredictable grave consequences for the country and the well being of the citizens. He argues further that Nigerian journalists are not to lose much credibility, and become a laughing stock in the eyes of others; they must change their unprofessional conduct and put an end to ruinous journalism in favour of something more constructive. This is exactly the state of the government owned press in Nigeria where

meaningful development issues are abandoned for frivolous issues simply because it concerns the chief executive of the state. This scenario became associated with the Ondo State Broadcasting Corporation (OSBC) Akure during the government of the ousted governor, Olusegun Agagu. During the illegal stay of Olusegun Agagu in government house Akure, the government owned radio and television stations were engaged in open air insult and the use of derogatory words against the opposition parties in the state.

Sambe (2005:185) corroborates the above by arguing that in most cases, absolute falsehood and half truths are reported as facts, a practice that has already degenerated to such a level that some readers take news stories from the Nigerian press, with a pinch of salt. This view is equally supported by Oso (1997:14), Yussuf (2000:46), Ekpu (1993:19) and Jibo (2000:8). But how did the Nigerian press come to this sorry pass that the laws and ethics of the profession seem to have been thrown overboard? The Nigerian press, especially the pre-independent press, was known to be virile, vibrant and alive to its responsibilities. Even with the average level of education which journalists had then, they were able to conduct themselves properly.

Ette (1997:17) takes a retrospective look at the Nigerian press then and notes as follows: “first generation journalism practitioners in the country were generally acknowledged to have contributed immensely to the liberation of the nation from British colonialism against stubborn odds. They were also credited with enviable patriotism and professionalism manifested in their useful suggestions on how best to manage the affairs of the young nation politically and economically”. They were not obsessed with the level of sensationalism and half-truths witnessed today, where trivialities, mediocrity and banalities have taken the centre-stage of a section of the Nigerian press reports, whose pastime is to indulge in the invasion of privacy of private individuals. The argument that some private individuals are newsworthy is a hard-sell, because if the exposure of the private individual

is about crime or a social misconduct in a public place, it would be a different matter, but not when an individual is having an affair with another private individual or is having marital problem, which has become a common issue in the world.

There is no gain saying the fact that the exposure of issues like these will not lead to the economic, social, political and technological education of the readers. These salacious news stories, invading the privacy of individuals, constitute the height of unprofessional conduct at its most sublime.

It is my belief that the Nigerian press whether government or privately owned, should rather not concentrate on individualities or be chasing shadows, while other issues like the environment, and other development-oriented issues are begging for media attention. So it is quite clear that the level of professionalism in the Nigerian press is low, because many of the practitioners are not only barely educated, but they are also incompetent. More so, the overbearing influence from politicians have also contributed in no small measure to the dwindling fortune of the Nigerian press and. Many of the journalists are not conversant with the laws and ethics guiding the profession and many also are bereaved of ideas and thereby resort to yellow journalism. This is exacerbated by the fact that the journalism in Nigeria, is a profession that has free entry and exit, hence the conduct of the practitioners are hardly-regulated despite the establishment of the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) which was established in 1992 by Decree No. 85 of 1992 which came into force in December 1992.

The aim of the NPC was to professionalize journalism by enforcing the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), code of conduct for journalists, stipulating and enforcing a minimum qualification for the practice of journalism, registration of journalists, A press council to adjudicate on complaints arising from journalism practice and conduct of journalists in Nigeria.

In fact, a special constitutional conference of the NUJ was convened in Dutse, Jigawa State in June 2000, to review the constitution of the union. The conference among others, set high academic standards for entry into the profession. It stipulated a degree in Mass Communication or Journalism, and a certain level of experience in the field, as entry qualification. It also stipulated a registration board to register and produce a compendium of journalists in Nigeria, besides a disciplinary committee to enforce the ethics of the profession, and with the power to sanction erring practitioners to the extent of barring them from practice.

2.7 Political Instability

Writing on the problem caused by the appointment of political stooges by the state government to head the media organizations, Ndubisi (2003:61) quotes Iyida (1998) who says that:

government paper may have the style sheet all right, the editor may be good, too good! He knows the job. He sees journalism even as a vocation, himself as a missionary; his job as a labour of love, but the problems still persists, why? It is because of a lot of encroachment. Sometimes government tends to regard its press as waste disposal unit for party loyalist of sorts. These adventures take time to adapt and easily roll out editors who become easy victims of their whims.

The political appointees noted here by Iyida (1998) are the sycophants' appointed by the state government as sole administrations or general managers to head their media.

He is of the opinion that these political appointees have one thing in mind, to come and satisfy their political aims, divert government grants and subvention into their private pockets instead of using them to uplift the standard of the organisation and welfare of its workers.

The ulterior motive behind this comes to light when the editor tenders a formal complaint on the mishandling and misappropriation of funds of the organization by the

general manager to the governor or the military administrator, the reaction of the governor is usually shocking, instead of reacting positively to these anomalies, he plays it down and takes a mute stand.

The nonchalant attitude of the governor according to Iyida (1998:86) points to the fact that he deliberately brought these chieftains to head the newspaper house so as to compensate them for their political support and loyalty. This had been the bane of the government owned newspaper in Nigeria. What is surprising is that even the authors of the anti-watchdog campaign in government do not patronize the praise singing press.

This government officials or functionaries who are the praise singers patronize the privately owned watch doggy newspaper in the country and they discard their own, which further leads to continuous fluctuation and poor readership of the paper.

The frequent dissolution of the board of directors as a result of the political instability in the country is another setback to government owned media organizations. Without a proper scrutiny of suitable credentials, a group of unpatriotic and unqualified members mainly party loyalists are appointed to kill an already dead company.

2.8 **Media Ownership and its Consequences on media practices**

The foundation for the perception of how ownership determines media contents, seems to have been laid by the cerebral German economist/philosopher, Karl Marx, when he states in his *German Ideology*, as cited by Murdock and Golding (1977:15), as follows: “The class that has the means of material production has control at the same time over the means of mental production so that, thereby, generally speaking the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.”

The market theory therefore, situates a direct link between economic ownership and the dissemination of messages which go to affirm the legitimacy and the values of a class society. Today, these views seem to be supported by evidence of tendencies to a great

concentration of media ownership by capital entrepreneurs, a position equally endorsed by McQuail (2005:79) that whoever owns and controls the media can choose, or set limit to what is to be done. The Marxist theory, moreover, tends to emphasize the ideological effects of media in the interests of a ruling class, and to legitimize the dominance of capitalism, and the subordination of the working class. Althusser, cited by Wilson (1997:10), calls the media “ideological state apparatuses”, that is, the way they enable those who hold the levers of power in the society to survive, without recourse to violence.

Djankov, *et al* (2002:141), argue that even though ownership may not be a significant determining factor of media content, it plays a substantial role in content. They argue on that government monopoly of the media for instance, would distort and manipulate information that would entrench the government in power more, preclude voters and consumers from making informed decisions, and ultimately undermine both “democracy and markets” Copps (www.hraunfoss.fec.gov), a commissioner with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), in the US, avers that the tremendous and powerful role of a few huge media conglomerates that increasingly control both the content and the distribution of the entertainment, information and news to the people, is raising the concern that this narrowing control is homogenizing entertainment, and dramatically diminishing democratic dialogue.

Another observation of the effects of media consolidation, finds expression in an editorial by the *Business Week* cited by Reinard and Otiz (2005:67), when the magazine states explicitly that the latest trend in the growing consolidation of the media industry and other cable companies in a bid to dominate the distribution of programming and content flowing all over the world, as well as the concentration of media ownership, threatens diversity in news and other programming.

There is no gainsaying the fact that media ownership and its effects on media contents is not only a truism, but has assumed a multi-national and international dimension. In spite of this, it would be necessary to look inward and analyse the views of some scholars on their position of media ownership, both for the government-owned and private media. Nwosu (1991b:212), says that state ownership and control of broadcast media especially, in Nigeria has led to unnecessary government bias, regulation and bureaucratic bottlenecks, which hamper the freedom of creativity, needed for true “development-oriented programming”.

Akpan (1987:29) laments the fact that there is a complete neglect of the rural areas by media owners in Nigeria. He contends that the present structure and organization of the mass media in Nigeria is an attempt to build from the top down, rather than from the bottom up. He argues further that this utter neglect of community interests by the urban-centred media, is further exacerbated by the fact the community mass media at the local government level in the country is almost non-existent; and that it is only the local media that are in the best position to understand the customs, traditions, beliefs, attitude, and ways of life of the community, where they operate.

In another of his analysis of media ownership, Akpan (1991a: 88), posits that the government-owned media especially, are always pandering to the whims or caprices of the ruling party and government officials. And by so doing these, government-owned media, remain low on credibility, because they shut-out contrasting view points. Akpan posits further that even the privately-owned media in the country are equally partisan, and most times, subject themselves to the dictates of the owner.

Sobowale (1991:222) argues that there are substantial pieces of evidence by way of studies to show that media ownership influences the type and quantity of information that the mass media make available to the consumers. He argues further that Africa is by no

means an exception to this view, and that news stories that are likely to be injurious to the proprietor of a media organization, may not be given coverage or publicity, no matter how important such stories are to the audience. He avers that for the government-owned media especially, any information that is not likely to advance government interest is not likely to be given coverage by the government-controlled media and that journalists working in such settings sometimes resort to self-censorship. By so doing, these journalists sacrifice such journalistic cardinals, like “objectivity” and “fairness”, on the altar of their means of livelihood.

Ezeah (2005: 141) supports the above by saying that media owners exert tremendous influence and control, whether the organization is managed by a board of directors, appointed by private owners or by a public corporation, established by the government; and that the media follow the policy laid down by the board. This policy, he continues defines, the short-term and long-term operations. Ezeah argues on that media ownership transcends the proprietor’s investments to include the appointment of staff and that a careful picking of a team that would dance to the tunes of the proprietor is often considered in the process.

Daramola (2003:32) encapsulates the views on media ownership thus “the ownership pattern of the media has effect on the performance of the media. The motivations for media ownership are usually two: political and economic.’”

2.9 Summary

There are many reasons for media ownership. The reasons are: profitability, power motive, knowledge motive, and public interest motive. The basic reason for government ownership of the media is to promote literacy through the print medium and to render public service to the people. Hence economic motive is not the underlying factor of government ownership of the media. Government ownership of the media however affords the state and federal governments the opportunity to use their media institutions as instruments of

propaganda and tools for the propagation of government policies and programmes. This has a far reaching effect on the credibility of government owned media. Many problems inhibit the efficient and effective performance of the government owned outfits such as management problems, funding problem and ethical problems as have been elucidated.

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CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

The study adopted the survey design. The reason for this is that whenever the major source of primary data for a study is the views of members of the public or any particular group, a survey is better called for. The aim of survey is to provide empirical data collected from a population of respondents on which valid conclusions can be made. Therefore, research designs simply imply a comprehensive plan or blue print showing how the research will be used to solve the already identified problems.

3.2. Description of the research population

The population for this study comprised of only journalists in government-owned media organizations in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. The south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria comprises of six states namely: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers State.

3.3. Sampling techniques

Since the geo-political zone covered is vast, the cluster sampling was used. Cluster sample is involved where more than one stage of selection is used. Sampling is the selection of some members or elements from the population for actual investigation or study. This selection is necessitated by the impracticability of studying the entire population in most cases. Therefore, Quota sampling method was further used. Based on estimation, 50 respondents were drawn from each of the six media organizations.

3.4 Sample size

Three hundred media practitioners were drawn from the six media organisations from the six states that made up the south-south geo-political zone. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2005:96), the size of a sample required for a study depends on at least one of the following seven factors: i. Project type, ii. Project purpose, iii. Project complexity, iv.

Amount of error tolerated, v. Time constraints, vi. Financial constraints and vii. Previous research in the area. Similarly Okoro (2005: 69) notes that the choice of a sample size should be sufficient to assure the investigator that the sample will be representative of the population from which it is drawn.

In the light of the project type and the research method, the researcher used three hundred (300) persons as sample size. Fifty (50) persons from each of the six media stations.

3.5. Instrument for data collection

Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. This is because questionnaire standardizes and organizes the collection and processing of information in a better and concise manner.

This study made use of two forms of data collection namely – primary and secondary data. The primary source are data gotten from respondents as answers to questionnaire administered to them while the secondary source are data generated from library materials, authoritative books, government publications, journals, news papers and magazine reports that are relevant to the study.

These secondary data were used in the review of related literature in this research in chapter two.

3.6. Validity of research instrument

Validity is defined as the degree to which an instrument actually measures what it sets out to measure. Wimmer and Dominick (2003:159).

To achieve this objective, Above all, suggestions and corrections effected by the supervisor, so as to tailor the questions to the objective of the study.

3.7. Reliability of the instrument

A study is reliable when repeated measurement of the same material results in similar decisions or conclusion; Wimmer and Dominick (2003:156). Pilot study or pretest technique was used in establishing the reliability of the instrument. In this way, the questionnaire was tested for coherence, ability to elicit responses, comprehensibility and consistency.

3.8. Procedure for data collection

The main data collection method or technique for this study is questionnaire. The questionnaire contained questions which helped the researcher to get the right opinion or view of the subjects or respondents. The questionnaire gave the respondents considerable choice of responses. The researcher personally administered these questionnaires and personally collected them immediately the respondents were through with the questions.

3.9. Method of analysis and presentation of data

Data collected were analysed using simple percentage and presented in a tabular form.

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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals mainly with the presentation of data. These data were gathered from the questionnaires duly answered by respondents.

4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis

Three hundred questionnaires were administered to different respondents who are journalists in the six state-owned newspaper organizations in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Out of the three hundred (300) questionnaires, two hundred and ninety six (296) were correctly answered by the respondents while four (4) could not be used because the improper answering by the respondents made them void.

Table 1: breakdown of total questionnaires administered and returned.

Stations and States	No of questionnaires administered	Percentage administered	No of quantity returned	Percentage returned
The Pioneer: Akwa Ibom State	50	16.7	49	16.5
Bayelsa Wave: Bayelsa state	50	16.7	50	16.9
Nigerian chronicle: Cross River State	50	16.7	48	16.2
The Pointer: Delta State	50	16.7	49	16.6
Observer: Edo State	50	16.7	50	16.9
The Tide: Rivers State.	50	16.7	50	16.9
Total	300	100%	296	100%

Sources: Field survey 2009.

The above table shows that three hundred questionnaires were distributed to six newspaper organisations in the South-South Geo-political zone of Nigeria. Fifty (50) questionnaires were distributed to each of the media organizations. Forty nine (49)

representing 16.5% were retrieved from *Pioneer* newspaper; fifty (50) questionnaires representing 16.9% given to *Bayelsa wave* were all retrieved. Forty eight (48) questionnaires representing 16.2% were retrieved from *Nigerian chronicle*. Forty nine (49) questionnaires were retrieved from *the Pointer Asaba*, this represents 16.6%. Fifty questionnaires which represent 16.9% were successfully retrieved from *Observer* and *Tide* respectively.

TABLE 2: Sex Distribution of respondents

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Male	172	58.1
Female	124	41.9
Total	296	100%

Sources: field survey 2009.

The above data show that one hundred and seventy-two (172) respondents were male; this represents 58.1% of the sample size. One hundred and twenty-four (124) respondents were female and this represents 41.9% of the sample size.

TABLE 3: Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age	No of Respondents	Percentage
20-30	41	13.8%
31-40	130	43.9%
41-50	81	27.4%
51-60	24	8.1%
61 and above	20	6.8%
Total	296	100%

Sources: field survey 2009

Forty-one (41) respondents were within the age of 20 – 30 years which represents 13.8% of the sample. One hundred and thirty (130) respondents fell under the age category of 31 – 40 years which is 43.9% of the sample size. Respondents whose age ranges were between 41 – 50 years was eighty-one (81), which also corresponds to 27.4% of the sample size. As for age bracket of 51 – 60, the numbers of respondent were twenty –four (24) or 8.1% of the population. Respondents between the age of 61 and above were twenty (20), representing 6.7% of total number of respondents.

TABLE 4: Marital Status

Status	No of Respondents	Percentage
Married	244	82.4
Single	43	14.5
Divorced	9	3.1
Total	296	100%

Source: field survey 2009

Two hundred and forty four (244) respondents representing 82.4% were married while forty three (43) which represents 14.5% were single. However, nine (9) or 3.1% of the respondents are divorced.

TABLE 5: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	No of Respondents	Percentage
FSCL	8	2.7
SSCE/WASC	22	7.4
Diploma	49	16.6
BSc/BA	161	54.4
Masters Degree	56	18.9
PhD	0	0
Total	296	100%

Source: field survey 2009

From the table above, respondents who have First School Leaving Certificate were eight (8) or 2.7% of the sample size. Twenty-two (22) respondents had WASC/SSCE representing 7.4%. Holders of diploma were forty-nine (49) representing 16.6% of the universe. B.Sc./BA holders were one hundred and sixty-one (161) respondents representing 54.4%, fifty-six (56) respondents were Masters' Degree holders and they correspond to 18.9% of the sample size. While none of the respondent is a PhD holder representing 0 percentage of the population.

TABLE 6: Respondents Years of Service

Years	No of Respondents	Percentage
1-5	82	27.7
6-10	112	37.8
11-15	43	14.5
16-20	34	11.5
21 and above	25	8.5
Total	296	100%

Sources: field survey 2009

The table above indicates that majority of the sampled respondents are young broadcasters as they fall within the age range of 6 - 10 years of service in the industry. This is closely followed by those in the age ranges of 1 - 5 years. Others are 11-15 years with 43 respondents or 14.5%, 16-20 years with 34 respondents or 11.5%, 25 respondents or 8.5% were in the age ranges of 21 and above have been in the industry for over 25 years

TABLE 7: Designation of Respondents

Designation	No of Response	Percentage
Editor	17	5.7
Proof reader	14	4.7
Reporter	176	59.5
Advertiser	14	4.7
Photographer	10	3.4
Graphic artist	9	3
Cartoonist	13	4.4
Admin officer	15	5.1
Accountant	6	2
Secretary	7	2.4
P.R.O	10	3.4
Driver	3	1
Production manager	2	0.7
Total	296	100%

Source: field survey 2009

The data on the above table show that editors were seventeen (17) in number which is equal to 5.7% of the sample size. Proof readers who responded to the questionnaire were fourteen (14) representing 4.7. Reporters were one hundred and seventy –six (176) respondents. This represents 59.5% of the population. Advertisers were fourteen (14) representing 4.7%. Photographers represent 3.4% as ten (10) responded to the questionnaire. Graphic artists were nine (9), representing 3% while cartoonists were thirteen (13) which represents 4.4%. Administration officers were fifteen (15). This represents 5.1%. Accountants were six (6), which is 2%. Secretaries were seven (7) respondents which are 2.4%, P.R.O were ten (10) and it represents 3.4%. Drivers were three (3) and this represents 1%. Finally production managers were two (2) this represents 0.7% of the entire populations.

4.3 Presentation & Analysis of Psychographic Data Collected

TABLE 8: Are there constraints in your media organization?

Nature of Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	296	100
No	0	0
Total	296	100

Source: field survey 2009

Two hundred and ninety six (296) respondents representing 100% of the population agreed that there are constraints in their station which infringes on journalistic practice in government-owned media.

TABLE 9: Which among these are the possible constraints on journalistic practice in your media organisation?

Nature of Response	No of Response	Percentage
Management not given free hand	17	5.7
Employment of non-professionals	31	10.5
misappropriation of fund	9	3
Shortage of staff	3	2
Inadequate funding	60	20.3
Poor salary	21	7.1
Lack of modern/adequate equipment.	18	6.1
All of the above	137	46.3
Total	296	100%

Source: field survey 2009

From the table above, 60 respondents, representing 20.3 percent assert that inadequate funding is the major constraint on journalistic practice. Similarly, 31 respondents, representing 10.5 of the respondents opine that the employment of non-professionals is one of the constraints on journalistic practice in government-owned media. Meanwhile 18 respondents (6.1) contend that lack of modern/adequate equipment is a constraint .17 respondents, representing 5.7 of the total respondents share the view that management not

given free hand is one of the constraints. In the same vein misappropriation of fund is one constraint noted by 9 respondents, representing 3 percent. Meanwhile 21 respondents representing 7.1 point to poor salary as other constraint. 3 respondents, representing 2 percent opine that shortage of staff is constraint. However, 137 respondents who constitute majority of the respondents with a percentage 46.3 percent assert that all the above constraints are the constraints on journalistic.

TABLE 10: Government owned media abide more to government policies

Nature of Response	No of Response	Percentage
Agree	2	0.7
Strongly agree	294	99.3
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Undecided	0	0
Total	296	100%

Source: field survey 2009

Two hundred and ninety-four (294) respondents representing 99.3% strongly agreed to the option while two (2) respondents representing 0.7 % agreed to the option. None disagreed nor strongly disagreed and none was undecided.

TABLE 11: Government policies are means of censoring their media

Nature of Response	No of Response	Percentage
Agree	0	0
Strongly agree	296	100
Undecided	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	296	100%

Source: field survey 2009

All the respondents agree with this option which represents 100%. They strongly agree that government policies are used to control their media and that it is a constraint.

TABLE 12: Government policies affect media content negatively

Nature of Response	No of Response	Percentage
Agree	0	0
Strongly agree	296	100
undecided	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	296	100%

Source: field survey 2009

The entire respondent strongly agrees with this option which represents 100%. This obviously may be the reason why most private individuals prefer private owned media organization to those owned by the government. Despite their wider reaches, advertisers still prefer the private owners as a result of certain government policies in these media organizations.

Table 13: Does government officials/agents interfere with your operations?

Nature of Response	No. of Response	Percentage
Yes	220	74.3%
No	68	23%
Undecided	8	2.7%
Total	296	100%

Source: Field Survey 2009

The above table shows that 200 respondents or 74.3% of the entire sampled respondents agreed that government official/agents interfere with their operations. 68 respondents or 23% of the entire respondents disagreed with the question that was asked.

However, 8 respondents or 2.7% of the sampled respondents were indifferent on the question as they were undecided.

Table 14: Does your news stories seek to protect government interest at all times?

Nature of Response	No. of Response	Percentage
Yes	109	36.8
No	90	30.4
Undecided	97	32.8
Total	296	100%

Source: Field Survey 2009

The table above indicates that majority of the respondents agree that their news stories seek to protect the interest of the government at all times. This is indicated by 109 respondents or 36.8% of the sampled respondents. The response from the table also indicates that 90 respondents or 30.4% of the respondents indicates that their news stories are fair as they do not seek to protect the interest of the government at all times. 97 respondents or 32.8% of the respondents were however indifferent as they were undecided in their responses.

Table 15: Which of these ways does the government seek to control your media organisation?

Nature of Response	No. of Response	Percentage
Funding	49	16.6
Setting up of Editorial Board	45	15.2
Prior Censorship	99	33.5
All of the above	103	34.8
Total	296	100%

Source: Field Survey 2009

From the responses on the above table, it is evident that majority of the respondents agree that government uses different means in seeking to control media organizations. Some of those means chosen by 103 or 34.8% of the total sampled respondents are Funding, Setting up of Editorial Board and Prior Censorship. Other responses chosen fell within the majority responses.

Table 16: Is the funding of your media house based on how effective you promote government activities?

Nature of Response	No. of Response	Percentage
Yes	47	15.9
No	234	79.1
Undecided	15	5
Total	296	100%

Source: Field Survey 2009

On the above question, the table above indicates that majority of the sampled respondents were emphatic in their no as they indicated that the funding of their media houses is not based on how effective they promote government activities. 47 respondents or 15.9% of the respondents indicated that the funding of their media houses is based on how effective they promote government activities in their station. The remaining 15 respondents or 5% of the respondents were undecided in their responses to the question.

Table 17: How are the decisions in the editorial board meeting taken?

Nature of Response	No. of Response	Percentage
Board Chairman's Say is final	132	44.6
Based on consensus	140	47.3
Undecided	24	8.1
Total	296	100%

Source: Field Survey 2009

On how decisions in the editorial board meeting are taken, the responses from the table above indicated that majority of the respondents saying that it is based on consensus.

This is noted by the responses or 47.3% or 140 of the respondents. This is closely followed by the responses of 132 respondents or 44.6% of the respondents who indicated that the Board Chairman's decision is final. The remaining 24 respondents or 8.1% of the total respondents were undecided.

Table 18: What makes your news medium credible?

Nature of Response	No. of Response	Percentage
Ability to present issues in a balanced way.	296	100
Giving one side to a story the opportunity to be heard	0	0
Praise-sing the dominant class	0	0
Total	296	100%

Source: Field Survey 2009

From the table above, 100% of the sample did not see giving one side to a story or praise singing the dominant class as what makes a news medium credible, instead, they unanimously agreed that what makes a news medium credible is the ability to present issues in a balanced way.

Table 19: Would you say your media organisation is credible?

Nature of Response	No of Response	Percentage
Yes	207	69.9
No	0	0
Undecided	89	30.1
Total	296	100

Source: Field Survey 2009

Two hundred and seven (207) or 69.9 % of the respondents agreed that their media organisation is credible. None said their media organisation is not credible. This could be a natural inclination to always be among the best. Nevertheless, eight-nine (89) were undecided. This could be as a result of conscience that made them not be here or there.

In a follow up open ended question “If yes” or “No” why do you think your media “is” or “not” credible? Surprisingly, twenty-two (22) respondents who never mentioned that their media is not credible gave the following as reasons for their media not being credible – censorship, unbalanced story and propaganda machine among others.

Table 20: In which of these ways can these constraints be overcome?

Nature of Response	No of Response	Percentage
Through boards independence	23	7.8
Recruitment and promotion of staff	13	4.4
Joint ownership	42	14.2
All of the above	218	73.6
Total	296	100

Source: Field Survey 2009

The table above shows that two hundred and eighteen (218) respondents believe that if the editorial board is given independence, qualified staff recruited and promotion given as at when due and the public media jointly owned by government and individuals, constraints could be overcome. Twenty-three (23) favoured editorial board’s independence, forty-two (42) advocated for joint ownership while thirteen (13) advocated for recruitment and promotion of staff.

Table 21: In which other ways do you think these constraints could be overcome?

Nature of Response	No of Response	Percentage
Press freedom	66	22.3
Abolition of legal/restriction	19	6.4
All of the above	211	71.3
Total	296	100

Source: Field Survey 2009.

The table shows that majority of the respondents – two hundred and eleven (211) advocates for press freedom and abolition of draconian/legal restriction.

Sixty-six (66) are of the opinion that the press should be given freedom while nineteen (19) respondent advocates for the abolition of draconian legal restrictions.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS/ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The constraints on journalistic practice in government owned media especially the print media are enormous and these have propelled this study. The research questions which to a larger extent guided this study are discussed as follow.

Research Question 1: What are those constraints on journalistic practice in government- owned media?

From the analysed data, table 8 shows that the respondents agreed that there are constraints. For instance out of 296 respondents, 60 respondents identified Inadequate funding as a constraint. The employment of non-professionals took second place as 31 respondents described it as a constraint. This according to a study by Chika Ndu, re-echoed the fact that government officials compensate or as it were settle their political loyalists by employing them to manage sensitive responsibility like information (news). The study also reveals that management is not given free hand, 17of the respondents responses points to the fact that government present are always felt in the day-to-day activities of its media organizations. Misappropriation of funds was also identified as a constraint. 9 respondents agreed to this option. Some respondents in a face-to-face interview acknowledged that top management officers misappropriate funds meant for the station and the government cannot do anything since they (the government) are the same people who appointed them in compensation for their political loyalty. Poor salary is yet another constraint, 21 respondents attested to the fact. Some respondents interviewed said that because of the meager salary, motivation is not encouraged, some lamented that even the meager salary is not regularly paid as

at when due. This according to some journalist interviewed has led to brown envelop syndrome.

18 respondents acknowledged lack of modern/adequate equipment as a constraint which has made it very difficult for government owned media to stand to the challenges of modern newspaper production. However, 13 respondents accepted all the options as constraint on journalistic practice.

Research Question 2: Does Government Ownership of media organisations have any effect on their operations?

The answer to this question is obvious. Tables 10, 11 and 12 respectively, indicate that government owned media abide more to their policies. This is fact is made clear form respondents response which indicate that 294 or 99.3% of the respondents affirm to it. Table 12 reveals that 220 or 74.3% of the respondents agree that government officials and agents interfere with their operations; at such, they are made to seek to protect government's interest at all times.

These facts, some journalist lamented are contrary to what it should be, owing to the fact that public media is saddled with the responsibility to hold the government responsible and accountable to the people instead of being government mouth piece.

Research Question 3: What are those ways in which the governments seek to control their media?

The analysis in tables 11 and 16 provides answers to the question. Table 15 shows that one hundred and three (103) respondents indicated that government use prior censorship, funding and setting up of editorial board to control their media.

However, table 16 shows that two hundred and thirty-four (234) or 97.05% believe that the funding of their media houses is not based on their promotion of government activities.

Research Question 4: Has government ownership of media house affected the credibility of those media organisations?

Table 18, posed a question “what makes a medium credible”. 100 % of the population admitted that the ability to present issues in a balanced way makes a media organisation credible. In table 19, two hundred and seven (207) respondents said their media organisations are credible while eighty-nine (89) were undecided.

However, in an open ended question, If “yes” or “No” why do you think it “is” or “not” credible? However, some who never mentioned that their media organisations are not credible gave the following as reasons for their media organisations not being credible – censorship by government, government media’s function as its mouth piece, propaganda machine and presentation of one sided stories among others.

Research Question 5: In what ways can these constraints better be managed?

Tables 20 and 21 provides answers to this question. In table 20 for example, twenty-three (23) respondents suggested that the editorial board should be independent, thirteen (13) has it that qualified staff should be employed; forty-two (42) advocated for joint ownership of the media instead government alone owing the public media.

However, two hundred and eighteen (218) respondents advocated for all the options as factors that can help overcome the constraints.

In addition, the respondents also advocated for press freedom, abolition of legal restrictions and the limiting of undue political interference in table 21.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Preamble

Literature materials available to the researcher on the topic lay credence to the fact that government owned-media (newspaper) are infested with myriads of constraints which has been the bane on the successful discharge of the journalist's social responsibility.

The six media organizations in the south-south geo-political zone under study had same features and synonymous constraints ranging from employment of non professional to the appointment of unqualified persons into the management cadre of the organizations. These according to this research affect the level of productivity thus most of the studied media organizations are not keeping to the standards of modern newspaper.

Another constraint is management not given free hand. Being the fourth estate of the realm, journalist, be it in government-owned or private media should be given free hand to carry out their social responsibility to the citizens, the research show that government-owned media are strictly under censorship. At times they were meant to subject their reports to government officials for scrutiny before publication. In this way, government media has been reduced to mere propaganda agents promoting only its activities without the views or opinions of the governed.

Other constraints on journalistic practice in government owned media include inadequate funding, poor salary, misappropriation of funds, and lack of modern equipment for printing among others.

This finding also made it clear that government make policies aimed at controlling their media and these policies are religiously adhered to by their media organizations at the expense of objectivity and balance which is the tenet of journalism. Most of the journalists working in government-owned media organizations are not satisfied with their jobs.

5.2 Summary of Findings

This study is predicated on the need to have a free viable and independent media in Nigeria. Therefore, it set to unearth the basic constraints of journalistic practice in government owned media organizations in the South-South Geo-political zone of Nigeria, with the Pioneer (Akwa Ibom State), Bayelsa Wave (Bayelsa State), Nigeria Chronicle (Cross River State), Pointer (Delta State) Observer (Edo State) and Tide (Rivers State) as samples areas.

The study revealed that there are so many constraints militating against the professional discharge of journalistic practice in government owned media. These constraints range from Management not being given free hand to operate their stations, Poor remuneration of staff, Lack of modern equipment, Employment of non-professionals, Inadequate funding, Censorship, Termination of appointments to intimidation amongst others.

These obviously accounts for the reasons many prefer to patronize private newspapers to the public owned ones which has degenerated to government propaganda machines.

5.3 Conclusion

The role of newspapers in the education and dissemination of information cannot be overemphasized, thus, the study after thorough research, critically came to the conclusion that government media needs to be looked into with a view to improving its present performance and credibility.

The findings reveal that government-owned media are currently in a very poor state economically, managerially, technologically and politically.

Government need to put in more effort to upgrade and improve the performance of the media by tackling the above stated problems.

Availability of fund is imperative as no development could be achieved with nothing, therefore, government should define clearly ways through which these constraints will be efficiently and effectively curbed and this can only be achieved if government make funds available and avoid politicising appointments into managerial cadre, dismissal of journalists for writing the truth and censoring the activities of the journalists who have been trained to carry out their responsibilities.

The researcher concludes that such constraints suffered by the six media (newspaper) organizations in the south-south geo-political zones of Nigeria are not peculiar to it. Most of other government owned media organizations in Nigeria have their does of such constraints because their media houses operate in the same political economy. No doubt, privatization of the media organization would surely be a panacea to the myriads of constraints faced by government-owned media organization in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria.

5.4 Recommendations

Arising from the research findings, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations.

- (1) Government should stop unnecessary and undue interference in the media.
- (2) Unnecessary Censorship should be discouraged by the government and when it is inevitable, it is should be left for the media professionals to determine.
- (3) Objectivity and fairness should be the watch word of the Nigerian press in order to retain readership and even improve on their market share.
- (4) Under-funding is inimical to the operation of any newspaper organization and should therefore be avoided.
- (5) Obsolete equipment should be replaced with modern printing equipment in order to stand the challenges of modern newspaper production.

- (6) Well articulated editorial policies capable of placing the Nigerian press in the same pedestal as their counterparts in other developed and developing nations should be adopted and maintained in order to give the Nigerian Press a sense of direction.
- (7) Professionally qualified persons should be recruited to man the affairs of the newspaper organizations to avoid sycophancy and yellow journalism.
- (8) Privatization of government-owned newspapers is a good option as this might ensure the continued financial and readership sustenance of the newspaper organizations.
- (9) Government-owned media should be encouraged to embark on more advertisements to enable them generate revenue they can rely on in difficult times and Diverse incentive measure should be introduced and those already in place should be strengthened to boost journalists' morale.
- (10) Training and re-training of media professionals in terms of modern media facilities should be done from time to time.

5.5 Suggestion for Further Research

Arising from the research findings and recommendations, the researcher wishes to make the following suggestions for further studies.

1. The researcher wishes to state that this research may not be free from unavoidable human errors and therefore suggests that further research be carried out on this topic but with a different sample size and a different geo-political zone.
2. Research should also be carried out on Media deregulation: private broadcasting stations and the changing landscape of broadcasting in Nigeria.

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APPENDIX

Department of Mass communication

University of Nigeria

Nsukka.

22nd November 2008.

Dear respondent,

I am a student of the above mentioned university carrying out research project on: **constraints on journalistic practice in government-owned media organisations in south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria.**

The research is in partial fulfillment of the award of Master of Arts in Mass Communication.

The responses to the questionnaire will be purely for academic purposes and will be treated confidentially.

Yours faithfully

Nwanyanwu Nnamdi.

Admin Officer []
 General Manger []
 Accountant []
 Production Manager []
 Photographer []
 Graphic Artist []
 Cartoonist []
 Secretary []
 others specify. [].

9. Are there constraints in your media organisation?
 Yes []
 No []
10. Which among these are possible constraints on journalistic practice in your media organisation?
 Misappropriation of fund []
 Shortage of staff []
 Lack of modern /adequate equipment []
 Management not given free hand []
 Poor salary []
 Inadequate funding []
 Employment of non-professionals []
 All of the above []
11. Government - owned media abide more to government policies?
 Agree []
 Strongly Agree []
 Disagree []
 Strongly Disagree []
12. Government policies are means of censoring their media.
 Agree []
 Strongly Agree []
 Disagree []
 Strongly Disagree []
13. Government policies affect media content negatively?
 Agree []
 Strongly Agree []
 Disagree []
 Strongly Disagree []
14. Do government officials/agents interfere with your operation?
 Yes []
 No []
 Undecided []
15. Do your news stories seek to protect government interest at all times?
 Yes []
 No []
 Undecided []

16. Which of these ways does the government control your media organisation?
- Funding []
 - Setting up of editorial board []
 - Prior censorship []
 - All of the above []
17. Is the funding of your media organisation based on how effective you promote government activities?
- Yes []
 - No []
 - Undecided []
18. How are the decisions in editorial board meetings taken?
- The chairman has the final say []
 - Based on Consensus []
 - Undecided []
19. What makes a news medium credible?
- Ability to present issues in a balanced way []
 - Giving one side to a story the opportunity to be heard []
 - Praise – sing the dominant class []
20. Will you say your media organisation is credible?
- Yes []
 - No []
 - Undecided []
21. If “yes” why do you think it is credible? -----

22. If “No” why do you think it is not credible? -----

23. In which of these ways can these constraints be overcome?
- Through board independence []
 - Recruitment and promotion of staff as at when due []
 - Joint ownership []
 - All of the above []
24. In which other ways do you think these constraints could be overcome?
- Press freedom []
 - Abolition of legal restrictions []

All of the above []

25. Do you depend on your media organization for news/information?

Yes []

No []

26 Are you satisfied with your job?

Yes []

No []

27. In your own words, what do you think should be done to correct these constraints?_____
