

Impact of Press Freedom In 21st Century Changing Global Democracy: Study of Vanguard Media Limited

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The study examine the impact of press freedom in this rapidly changing global democracy in Vanguard Media Limited, Kirikiri, Apapa ,Lagos .The specific objective of this study is to establish the effect of press freedom in this changing global democracy. The study used primary data and purposive sampling was used to select the respondents with 100 population and 70 questionnaire were returned. Qualitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics analysis of STATA in line with the objectives. The study findings in the objectives mean results revealed that 4.15 ,4.02 and 4.19 respectively were followed that ,press freedom fulfilled the essential role free and open societies ,press freedom provides information to individual to make their own decisions and free press duly inform voters and strengthened democracy and this data shows that all objectives were accepted at 2.5 level of acceptance and the study recommends that ,media practitioners and journalists should adopt the use of new digital media and be equipped with media and information literacy skills ,more protections should be given journalists while practising ,governments should create an enabling and conducive environment for press freedom to thrive globally, ministries of information and communication should regulate information on the digital media to guide against fake news ,Collaborations and partnership by all press organizations and practitioners through conferences organized by international press institute and UNESCO should help in creating a transparent platforms for press freedom to thrive .

Keywords: Democracy, Media, Press Freedom, Information, Global

Introduction

Press freedom and democracy are complementary element in terms of press being the non-governmental professionals that acts as a watch dog to the activities of the democratic governments and the society at large, hence, they are referred to as a marketplace of ideas and the watch dog press.

Basically, the future of freedom of press lies on social .economic and technical changes in this 21st century information environment . It is opined that, the channel of information distribution are in the hands of few number of corporate entities and this results to question of how does control of information shift from public to the private ecosystems ?.Also ,what does it mean to understand press freedom when public influences press policy and behaviour through a democratic process.

Furthermore ,global democracy and press freedom changes must go along with the trends with 21st century ,otherwise ,it will results to non-validity ,credibility and trustworthiness of media and information in the globe .If press are not given freedom ,this results to abuses of unintended spread of misinformation ,disinformation campaigns by malicious actors and misuse of information will become rampant and citizens will be carried away by a complex new media landscape without a trusted sources and resources .Hence ,this requires urgent solution in preserving the freedoms of press that come with more access to information while minimizing threats that go along with them.

According to Graber,(2017) and Hallin ,(2020),democracy and press freedom are complementary as press freedom is s pre-requisite to healthy democracy globally.

In advanced countries like United States of America ,Greece and Norway ,press freedom is part of larger group rights in terms of right to freedom of speech and freedom of information as its shape the normative ideas of journalists as a critical element to re-establish democracy and fight for civil rights, Voltmer,(2014).

Press freedom is under attacks and threats from policy makers and democratic governments in form of media workers and journalists being killed ,harassed ,imprisoned ,torture and humiliated in several ways .

The study aim at examining the impact of press freedom in 21st century changing global democracy.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- (I) To analyse the relationship between between press freedom in 21st century and global democracy.
- (ii) To examine the impact of press freedom rebounding from lengthy repression when given the opportunity .
- (iii) To investigate the impact of global press freedom rights on the real democracy in the world .

Research Questions

The relevant questions are drafted for the study as follows :

- (1) Is there a significant relationship between press freedom in 21st century and global democracy?
- (2) Does press freedom have an impact in rebounding from lengthy repression when given the opportunity ?
- (3) Is there impact of global press freedom rights on real democracy in the world ?

Review of Relevant Related Literature

Concept of Press Freedom

According to Freedom House ,(2004),2014,2017, 2019),journalists globally have been harassed ,imprisoned and killed in their efforts to search for trustworthy information.

Olaide ,(2023),gave an instance of Al Jazeera journalist shot and killed named Shireen Abu Akleh while performing her duty as a journalist reporting on Israel's raid in the Jenin refugee camp on the 11th of May,2022.

Thus ,this calls for rapid changes in the political landscape and ecosystem of humanity struggling for democracy to take cognizance of press freedom as a crucial points to be consider in the society ,Van Belle,(2000).

According to RSF ,(2020a),press freedom is the ability of the journalists to gather and distribute information unimpeded by any form of physical ,psychological or legal attacks and harassment.

Freedom House ,(2004),explain press freedom to be a link to legal environment for media, political pressures that influences reporting and economic factors that affect access to the right and truthful information of cultural ,political and economic differences from one society to another.

Hence ,press freedom can be assessed through different media systems in western world. Basically , media systems since 2004 have done through lots of transformations in terms of many acknowledgment that media systems are not static rather rapidly changing based on internal and external factors .

According to Bruggermam et al,(2014),Portugal moved away from polarized pluralist to a liberal media system .Furthermore ,rapid development of digital and communication media in line with 21st century rapid changes ,Hallin and Mancini ,(2017).

Also, Waisbord, (2020),emphasized that ,digital environment have generated a series of limitation for press freedom and journalists around the world as there are many online harassment of journalists in terms of press censorship.

Waisbord, (2020),explain that ,mob censorship is a bottom up citizen vigilantism targeted at discipline journalists by threatening their press freedom .According to Maniou and Kettani, (2020),

different media systems in the world share a universal characteristics having vulnerabilities within the societies they operate.

Laws and Press Freedom

The European Centre for Press and Media Freedom according to study on investigative journalism by Ukrow and Lasino ,(2016),revealed that ,countries protect freedom of expression on their constitutional statutory and self regulatory level ,restrictive rules on the freedom of the press.

Countries like France ,Poland ,spain and Switzerland passed the surveillance law in 2016 to expand the enforcement agencies and laws in public service media to stop press freedom .Clark and Crech ,(2017),Maniou and Ketteni ,(2020),gave a scenario of public security law by Spanish parliament to sanction journalists for taking pictures of police forces in the exercise of their duties.

Dawes ,(2014),agreed to the fact that ,there has been a regulatory frameworks guiding journalists behaviour and balance between press freedom and the individual's right to privacy in the regulatory framework of the press.

Journalist Autonomy ,Harrassment And Self Censorship

Autonomy given and enjoyed by the journalists is crucial within the media system in a conducive countries they operate .Journalists are harassed in weaker democracy countries as they restrict their full professional autonomy as they experienced all forms of suppression ,Barrious and Millar, (2020).

According to Lofgren-Nilsson and Omebma, (2016) study of situation in Sweden shows that ,journalists are intimidated and harassed and this affects their professionalism and personality in terms of fear and self -censorship ,Maniou and Ketteni ,(2020).

Professionalization and Press Freedom

Journalists press freedom and professionalism are the key element for assessing different media systems. Professionalism constitutes a greater part of norms in terms of practical routine and public service orientations of journalists towards ethics of public service rather than personal interests of individuals.

For instance ,press freedom and professionalization are important in measuring different media systems in Mediterranean pluralist systems .The press are highly partisan and the level of professionalization was lower in Liberia and Democratic countries.

But in Southern Europe ,professionalization was hindered by the strong politicization of the press ,as actors outside journalism remain in control and thus make it difficult to achieve general consensus on professional norms, Hallin and Maniou, (2020).

Polarization of Press Freedom

The level of polarization within a society have a great impact on the level of media polarization.

polarization are of different forms in societies be it democratic and autocratic societies .According to Arbatli and Rosenberg ,(2021),the signs of political polarization were apparent from the early years of democracy in Hungary in terms of national unity with Hungarian society and among the elites .

Political Stability and Press Freedom

Society's polarization in terms of political stability significantly impacted on press freedom .According to Buress and Prat ,(2002),free press assists in overcoming the main problem that characterises the relationship between the citizens and the governments ,Leeson ,(2008).

In democratic countries of the world ,political stability is paramount .Hence ,the role of press freedom in the political stability of a country is important and significant.

Economic Growth and Press Freedom

Economic growth in a country determines press freedom as this determine the economic level of the state and its residents .Economic growth and development progression in a country makes media system to be different in terms of organization and ownership models.

Attacks on Press Freedom in Democracies

According to Freedom House ,(2019),most of the influential democratic countries are no longer receiving unbiased news and information as this is based on government ownership changes ,regulatory and financial pressure and public denunciations of honest. Journalists.

Governments also help in the areas of proactive support to friendly outlets through a lucrative state contracts ,favourable regulatory decisions and preferential access to state information purposively to let press serve those in power than the public.

Freedom House ,(2019),further emphasized in their world report ,that ,19 percent (16) countries have reduced their press freedom scores over the past five years ,hence ,press freedom are not taken for granted ,even when the democratic process has been in place for decades.

It is obvious that ,the fundamental rights of the press is under attack and part of the assaults has come from an unexpected source which might be from elected leaders in democratic countries as they have silent media voices that are favourable to their coverage .Hence ,this is erosion of press freedom as a symptom of breakdown of democratic institutions and principles in the societies.

According to Freedom House, media freedom has been deteriorating around the world over the past decades with new forms of repression in an open societies and authoritarian. States.

Basically, democratic powers cease to support media independence globally as this, pose consequences of having access to honest and fact based journalism information from the journalists.

United Nations Free Press and Democratic Societies Perspectives

According to United Nations secretary ,Guterres ,(2021),journalists and media workers assists in

bringing fast changes through landscape of information during crises such as climate change and corona virus pandemic as they combat misinformation and disinformation .

Guterres ,(2021),further said ,journalists and media workers are subjected to the risks of restrictions ,censorship ,abuse ,harassment ,detention and even death while carrying out their legal rightful jobs and this situation continues to be worsen.

Hence ,he advocated and seek for global supports in terms of power to support a free ,independent and diverse media in the societies.

Impacts of Free Press and Media in the Society

The impacts of press and media in the society can- not be over emphasized as follows:

- (1) CONTRIBUTING TO HUMANITY'S WELL BEING :United Nations emphasized that ,free and independent press is a cornerstone of democratic societies that saves life through information and ,improves public participation .
- (2) DISCHARGING INFORMATION TO THE SOCIETY AS A PUBLIC GOOD: This is through information and contents that is transparent thus empowering the societies about the happenings and trendy events in the societies .
- (3) HELPING PLATFORMS IN BECOMING MORE TRANSPARENT :Free press creates more transparency in online platforms in terms of content moderation with respect to human rights and freedom of expression rules .

21ST CENTURY APPROACHES TO ACHIEVE PRESS FREEDOM IN CHANGING GLOBAL DEMOCRACY

- (1) PROTECT PRESS FREEDOM GLOBALLY :Independence and freedom of the press must be sought from so that ,their reportage and information sharing can be quality ,trusted and truthful in a bid to improve the well- being of people
- (2) GUIDE AGAINST FORMULATING AUTHORITARIAN LAWS THAT RESTRICTS PRESS FREEDOM: Every laws made most especially on press freedom must be scrutinized in order to guide against any draconian law that will impedes press freedom and independent
- (3) CONTROL SOCIAL MEDIA IN LINE GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS: Social media must be free and open for independent news and voices but must be regulated in terms of information shared on the platforms in order to guide against fake news .
- (4) AVOID DISINFORMATION AND RESTRICTION OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION : Urgent attentions are required in guiding against misinformation as this disarray the pubic from the right and truthful information.
- (5) AVOID UNLAWFUL SURVEILAANCE OF JOURNALISTS :Democratic countries should adopt measures to protect the journalists from being monitored while carrying out their legal jobs in order to ensure quality reportage .
- (6) ENSURE ZERO TOLERANCE FOR ATTACKS ON THE PRESS :The United Nations and

governments must ensure zero tolerance for any attacks on the journalists and must be taken serious with severe for any violators

- (7) SUPPORT MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS PRESS FREEDOM : Regional and multilateral institutions must always be supported in defending and achieving press freedom in the whole world.
- (8) SUPPORT THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION IN DEFENDING PRESS FREEDOM: Civil society must adequately be supported in order to achieve one voice in defending press freedom worldwide .
- (9) ENSURE PROTECTION OF PRESS FREEDOM IN FOREIGN POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION :While formulating and executing foreign policy ,protection and promotion of press freedom must be taken into consideration for press to be independent .
- (10) CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR PRESS FREEDOM TO THRIVE : Favourable environment must be established by governments to enable press freedom to thrive for sustainable 21st century democracy.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The appropriate and relevant theory for this study is Media pluralism theory. This theory was established in 1948 by the universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 19UDHR 1948, on the notion that ,people have the right to express and give their opinion on issues without interference or distortion from any source or channels.

The pluralistic theory is multi-centred and diverse to informed and allows for discussion on any matters that is of public interest at all times.

Pluralistic of the media are like structure that is independent from external influence ,thus ,its communicate to all the society with a great variety of information and opinion from different sources. This theory belief that, no media is free from extra journalistic, political or economic control. in terms of domination of media by group of people to suppress information on what people should know, think, or say.

Thus ,the freedom of the media should be a top priority of the government without interfering ,but to assist them with law and policies that sustain multi-centred diversity of media.

In this current global democracy ,governments are to ensure honest journalism practices and with ,no part of the media is allowed to be dominated Thus ,pluralism of media guarantees freedom of speech in the democracy as democratic government back effective press freedom in this 21st century ,thus diverse and media enterprises and audiences should build its own diversity according to political ,cultural ,legal factors requirements of media.

Democracy has been given a new tools that is full of danger in public space in terms of information flow .By this ,old formula of pluralism is not sufficient resulting to the emergency of networking.

Networking is a link comprising social and journalistic media in terms of rights to free expression and free flow of information. Thus, right and protection given to media diversity must be made to be access by the global network.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study is survey design using a well -structured questionnaire to obtain information from the purposively selected respondents of Vanguard Media limited, Lagos, as they are relevant and thus, they seek for press freedom in this 21st century changing global democracy

The questionnaire was in two sections ,Section A represented personal information of the respondents and Section B addressed the main questions for the study .A total of 100 questionnaire was administered out of which 70 was retrieved .The obtained information from the respondents were coded using STATA with descriptive statistics used to analyze the coded data.

Also ,simple percentage and frequency table were used to analyze the data ,hence ,mean and standard deviation was used to address the objective of the study with a Likert scale of 2.5 acceptable level of significance .

RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1:Analysis of Respondent personal Information

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MALE	42	60
FEMALE	28	40
TOTAL	70	100

Source :Field Survey ,(2023)

Table 1 deals with the gender of respondents were male had 42 respondents at 60% while female were 28 respondents at 40%.This means male were well represented.

Table 2 :Analysis of Educational Status of Respondents

QUALIFICATIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
SSCE	20	29
HND/BSC	30	42
MSC/MBA/PHD	20	29
TOTAL	70	100

Source :Field Survey ,(2023)

Table 2 shows that 20 respondents at 29% were SSCE holders while 30 respondents were HND/BSC holders while 20 respondents at 29% were MB A/MSc/PHD holders. This shows that respondents with HND /BSC were well represented.

Table 3: Analysis of Respondents Marital Status

STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
SINGLE	25	36
MARRIED	35	50
DIVORCED	10	14
TOTAL	70	100

Source :Field Survey ,(2023)

Table 3 showed that 25 respondents at 36% were single ,35 respondents at 50% were married while 10 respondents at 14% were divorced. This shows that married respondents were well represented.

Table 4: Analysis of Respondents Age

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
25-40	20	29
41-50	35	50
ABOVE 50 YEARS	15	21
TOTAL	70	100

Source :Field Survey ,(2023)

Table 4 revealed that 20 respondents at 29% were within 25 -40 years ,41-50 years respondent were 35 at 50% while 15 respondents at 21 % were above 50 years .This shows that respondents falling within 41-50 years were well represented.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation and decision making on national population census data benefits

ITEMS	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	DECISION
Is there a significant relationship between press freedom in 21 st century and global democracy?	4.15	0.79	ACCEPTED
Does press freedom have an impact in rebounding from lengthy repression when given the opportunity?	4.02	0.73	ACCEPTED
Is there impact of global press freedom rights on real democracy in the world?	4.19	0.65	ACCEPTED
TOTAL	4.12	0.72	ACCEPTED

This table showed the result that, there is significant impact of press freedom in this 21st century changing global democracy. It revealed that all the items had 4.12 and above the acceptable level hence, they were above the 2.5 acceptance which made all the items to be accepted.

Hence, the respondents accepted mean of 4.15 that, there is a significant relationship between press freedom in this 21st century changing global democracy with acceptance of 0.79 standard deviation by the respondents. Also, with the mean of 4.02 that, press freedom has a significant impact in rebounding from lengthy stints of repression when given the opportunity while 4.19 mean revealed that, there is significant impact of global press freedom on real democracy in the world.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study findings revealed that, media freedom has been deteriorating around the world over the past decades and influential democracies and populist leaders have made strong efforts to throttle the independence of media sector and press freedom can rebound even from lengthy stints of repression when the opportunity.

CONCLUSION

This study re-emphasized the importance and relevance of independence of press and media workers in this 21st century changing global democracy, that journalists should free from attacks, threats, imprisonment, abuses and harassment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommended as follows:

- (i) Media practitioners and journalists should adopt the use of new digital media and be equipped with media and information literacy skills
- (ii) More protections should be given journalists while practising and governments should create an enabling and conducive environment for press freedom to thrive globally
- (iii) Ministries of information and communication should regulate information on the digital media to guide against fake news ,
- (iv) Collaborations and partnership by all press organizations and practitioners through conferences organized by international press institute and UNESCO should help in creating a transparent platforms for press freedom to thrive
- (v) Journalists should take an immediate actions against violation media freedom through press statement, meetings or phone calls .
- (vi) Governments should ensure journalists actions do not inspire violations of press freedom

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