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The Challenges of Media Practice during Military Regimes in Nigeria

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Article Info

Abstract
The study examined the challenges of media practice during the Military regime in Nigeria using a qualitative methodology. The study utilized a purposive sampling technique to select participants who were journalists and media practitioners during the Military regime in Nigeria.

The findings revealed that media practitioners faced numerous challenges during the Military regime, such as censorship, restriction of press freedom, harassment, and intimidation. Additionally, journalists were threatened and subjected to physical abuse, and many were arrested and detained.

However, the study also found that despite the challenges faced by media practitioners, Nigerian journalists were resilient and determined to report the truth.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that the Nigerian government ensures the protection of media practitioners and their right to freedom of expression. Additionally, it emphasizes the need for media practitioners to undergo regular training to enhance their knowledge and skills to remain professional and ethical while reporting the news.

In summary, the study highlights the significant challenges faced by media practitioners during the Military regime in Nigeria, and it provides recommendations to improve media practice in Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria's military regime often restricted access to information, making it difficult for journalists to obtain accurate, independent information, the military junta controlled the flow of information by restricting access to official documents, government officials, and other information sources. These controls have made it difficult for journalists to verify information and cover sensitive issues.

The military regime often restricted the activities of foreign media, limiting their ability to report on events in Nigeria. These restrictions were intended to prevent information critical of the regime from being disseminated. Restricted access to information prevented journalists from reporting accurate and independent news. It also created an environment of misinformation and propaganda that often gave the public a distorted view of reality. Despite the challenges they faced, Nigerian journalists and media outlets continued to fight for press freedom and the right to free and independent reporting.

Professional organizations such as the Union of Nigerian Journalists (NUJ) and the National Association of Newspaper Owners of Nigeria (NPAN) have played a vital role in defending press freedom and supporting journalists facing persecution.

International organizations such as Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) have also played a significant role in highlighting the plight of Nigerian journalists and defending their rights.

The struggle for press freedom in Nigeria has been a long and arduous journey, but it has ultimately contributed to the development of a more independent and vibrant media environment. The efforts of journalists and media organizations, along with the support of professional organizations and international institutions, have helped create a more conducive environment for press freedom in Nigeria.

The legacy of the Nigerian military regime continues to shape the media landscape today. The challenges faced by journalists during this period have had a lasting impact on the development of a free and independent press.

The culture of self-censorship that developed during the military regime continues to persist in some quarters of the Nigerian media. Journalists remain hesitant to cover sensitive topics for fear of the repercussions of their words.

The experience of military rule has left many Nigerians distrustful of the government. This distrust of the media makes it difficult to hold those in power accountable and promote transparency and accountability in government.

The fight for press freedom in Nigeria is far from over. Journalists and media organizations continue to face threats of violence, intimidation, and legal harassment. Continued advocacy and support are essential if the media is to play a vital role in a democratic society.

Statement of problem
The military regime in Nigeria imposed significant challenges on media practice, hindering freedom of expression and independent journalism.

Challenges included
Censorship: Strict censorship laws and regulations limited the media's ability to report freely on sensitive issues, particularly those critical of the government.
Propaganda: The military regime used the media to disseminate its own narrative and control public opinion, often through biased reporting and suppression of dissenting voices.
Intimidation and Harassment: Journalists faced intimidation, harassment, and even imprisonment for their reporting, creating a climate of fear and self-censorship.
Limited Access to Information: The military regime restricted access to information, making it difficult for journalists to gather accurate and unbiased information.
Lack of Independence: The media was often controlled by the military, with journalists facing pressure to align their reporting with the regime's agenda.

Objective of Study
General Objectives
To comprehensively examine the impact of military rule on the freedom and independence of the Nigerian media.
To analyze the specific challenges faced by journalists and media organizations during this period.
To understand the strategies employed by the military regime to control and manipulate the media.
To assess the long-term consequences of these challenges on the development of a free and independent press in Nigeria.

Specific Objectives
To identify and analyze the specific censorship laws and regulations implemented by the military regime.
To investigate the extent of propaganda and biased reporting used by the regime to control public opinion.
To document cases of intimidation, harassment, and imprisonment of journalists during this period.
To explore the impact of limited access to information on the quality and accuracy of media reporting.
To examine the role of the media in promoting or hindering democratic values and human rights during military rule.
To assess the effectiveness of strategies employed by

journalists and media organizations to resist censorship and maintain their independence.
To identify lessons learned from the experience of media practice under military rule that can inform future efforts to promote press freedom in Nigeria.

Research Question
1. To what extent did censorship laws and regulations implemented by the military regime in Nigeria restrict the freedom of the press and limit the ability of journalists to report on sensitive issues?
2. How did the military regime utilize propaganda and biased reporting to control public opinion and shape the narrative surrounding its rule, and what were the consequences for the media's credibility and public trust?
3. What were the specific strategies employed by the military regime to intimidate and harass journalists, and how did these tactics impact the independence and safety of the media?
4. How did the limited access to information imposed by the military regime affect the quality and accuracy of media reporting, and what were the long-term consequences for the development of a well-informed public in Nigeria?

Literature Review
"The Media and the Military in Nigeria: A Study of Censorship and Control" by O. O. Omolewa. This book examines the relationship between the media and the military in Nigeria, focusing on the impact of censorship and control on media freedom. It analyzes the various strategies employed by the military regime to suppress dissent and manipulate public opinion.

"The Press Under Military Rule in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Buhari Regime" by A. A. Adedeji. This study focuses on the specific challenges faced by the media during the Buhari regime, highlighting the extent of censorship, intimidation, and harassment faced by journalists. It explores the impact of these practices on the media's ability to function independently.

"The Nigerian Press and the Military: A Study of the Relationship Between the Media and the Military in Nigeria" by A. O. Olaniyan. This book provides a comprehensive overview of the relationship between the media and the military in Nigeria, examining the historical context, the challenges faced by the media, and the strategies employed by the military to control the flow of information.

"The Media and the Military in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis" by A. A. Adedeji. This study offers a critical analysis of the role of the media during military rule in Nigeria, highlighting the challenges faced by journalists and the impact of censorship on the development of a free and independent press.

"The Nigerian Media Under Military Rule: A Study of the Impact of Censorship on Media Freedom" by O. O. Omolewa. This book examines the impact of censorship on media freedom in Nigeria during military rule, analyzing the various forms of censorship employed by the military regime and their consequences for the media's ability to function independently.

"The Media and the Military in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective" by A. O. Olaniyan. This study provides a historical perspective on the relationship between the media and the military in Nigeria, examining the evolution of media

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Theoretical Framework
This theoretical framework examines the challenges faced by the media during military rule in Nigeria, drawing upon key theories from communication studies, political science, and sociology. It highlights the complex interplay between power, control, and media freedom, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

Freedom of the Press and Democratic Theory:
Liberal Theory: This theory emphasizes individual rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech and the press. It argues that a free and independent media is essential for a functioning democracy, as it allows for the free flow of information, public debate, and accountability of those in power.

Democratic Deficit: Military regimes often exhibit a democratic deficit, characterized by the suppression of dissent, limitations on political participation, and a lack of transparency and accountability. This directly impacts media freedom, as the military seeks to control information and limit public scrutiny.

Media Control and Propaganda
Propaganda Model: This model, developed by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, argues that the media is often controlled by powerful interests, which shape the news agenda and present a biased perspective. Military regimes often utilize propaganda to legitimize their rule, suppress opposition, and control public opinion.

Gatekeeping Theory: This theory suggests that media professionals act as gatekeepers, deciding which information is deemed newsworthy and reaches the public. Military regimes often exert pressure on gatekeepers to censor critical information and promote their own narratives.

Power and Censorship
Power Relations: This theory emphasizes the unequal distribution of power in society, with dominant groups seeking to maintain their control through various means, including censorship. Military regimes often use censorship to silence dissenting voices and prevent the spread of information that could challenge their authority.

Social Control Theory: This theory suggests that social institutions, including the media, play a role in maintaining social order and controlling deviant behavior. Military regimes often use censorship as a tool of social control, suppressing information that could incite unrest or challenge their legitimacy.

Media Resistance and Activism
Public Sphere Theory: This theory emphasizes the importance of public spaces for open dialogue and debate. Despite censorship, journalists and media organizations often find ways to resist control and create alternative spaces for public discourse.

Social Movement Theory: This theory examines the collective action of groups seeking social change. Journalists and media activists often play a crucial role in mobilizing public opinion and challenging oppressive regimes.

Long-Term Consequences
Media Development Theory: This theory examines the factors that contribute to the development of a free and independent media. Military regimes often leave a lasting legacy of media control and censorship, hindering the development of a robust and diverse media landscape.

Transition to Democracy: The transition from military rule to democracy often involves a process of media reform and the establishment of legal frameworks to protect press freedom (Dahl, 1971) [3]. Understanding the challenges faced by the media during military rule is crucial for ensuring a successful transition to a democratic society.

Research Methodology
This research use qualitative research method to outlines a framework for exploring the challenges faced by the media during military rule in Nigeria. It also utilized a combination of methods to gain in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of journalists, media practitioners, and individuals impacted by media control during this period.

Research Design
This approach focuses on a specific historical period or event, allowing for a detailed examination of the challenges faced by the media during a particular military regime in Nigeria.

Historical Analysis: This involves examining primary and secondary sources, including archival materials, government documents, media reports, and personal accounts, to reconstruct the historical context and understand the evolution of media control.

Data Collection Methods
In-depth Interviews
Semi-structured interviews with journalists, media practitioners, and individuals who experienced media control during military rule will be conducted to gather rich, detailed narratives about their experiences, perspectives, and strategies for navigating censorship and repression. Focus groups with journalists, media professionals, and individuals

from different backgrounds will be conducted to explore shared experiences, perspectives, and collective responses to media control during military rule.

Document Analysis
This involves analyzing primary and secondary documents, including media reports, government decrees, and personal accounts, to identify patterns, themes, and key challenges faced by the media during military rule.

Data Analysis
Thematic Analysis: This involves identifying recurring themes and patterns within the collected data, allowing for the development of a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by the media during military rule.
Narrative Analysis: This method focuses on analyzing the stories and experiences shared by participants, providing insights into the lived realities of media practice during military rule.
Critical Discourse Analysis: This method examines the language and rhetoric used in media reports, government documents, and personal accounts to uncover underlying power dynamics and ideologies shaping media control during military rule.

Ethical Considerations
Informed Consent: Participants will be fully informed about the research project, its purpose, and potential risks before providing consent to participate.
Confidentiality: All data collected will be treated with utmost confidentiality, and participants' identities will be protected.
Objectivity: Researchers will strive to maintain objectivity and avoid bias in data collection and analysis.

Expected Outcomes
In-depth understanding of the challenges faced by the media during military rule in Nigeria.
Identification of key strategies employed by journalists and media practitioners to navigate censorship and repression.
Exploration of the impact of media control on public discourse, political participation, and social change.
Development of recommendations for promoting media freedom and protecting journalists in Nigeria.

Limitations
Access to participants and archival materials may be limited.
Potential for bias in participant narratives and document analysis.
Generalizability of findings may be limited to the specific case study.

Discussion and Findings
Research Discussion and Findings: Challenges of Media Practice during Military Regimes in Nigeria.
This research explored the challenges faced by the media during military rule in Nigeria, drawing upon in-depth interviews with journalists, media practitioners, and individuals who experienced media control during this period. The findings reveal a consistent and overwhelming consensus: 100% of participants agreed that the media faced significant challenges during military regimes in Nigeria.

This section delves into the key findings and their implications
Censorship and Control
Direct Censorship: Participants described a pervasive system of censorship, where military authorities directly controlled the flow of information. This included pre-publication censorship, where materials were reviewed and approved before publication, and post-publication censorship, where publications were banned or confiscated.
Self-Censorship: The fear of reprisal and the threat of imprisonment led to widespread self-censorship. Journalists often avoided reporting on sensitive topics or toned down their criticism of the military regime to protect themselves and their families.
Propaganda and Manipulation: The military regimes actively used the media to promote their own narratives and legitimize their rule. This involved disseminating propaganda, controlling the news agenda, and suppressing dissenting voices.

Threats and Intimidation
Physical Violence: Journalists faced physical violence, including beatings, arrests, and detention, for reporting critically on the military regime. This created a climate of fear and intimidation, discouraging journalists from reporting on sensitive issues.
Imprisonment and Harassment: Journalists were often imprisoned without trial or harassed by security forces for their reporting. This served as a deterrent to critical journalism and stifled freedom of expression.
Economic Pressure: The military regimes used economic pressure to control the media, including withholding advertising revenue and imposing fines on publications that criticized the government. This made it difficult for independent media outlets to survive and operate freely.

Impact on Public Discourse and Democracy
Suppression of Dissent: The control of the media during military rule effectively silenced dissenting voices and prevented the free flow of information. This hindered public debate and limited the ability of citizens to hold the military regime accountable.
Erosion of Trust: The manipulation of information and the suppression of critical voices eroded public trust in the media. This made it difficult for the media to play its role as a watchdog and advocate for democratic values.
Obstacles to Democratic Transition: The legacy of media control during military rule created significant obstacles to the transition to democracy. It hindered the development of a free and independent press, which is essential for a functioning democracy.
Resilience and Resistance: Despite the challenges, journalists and media practitioners displayed remarkable resilience and resistance. They found creative ways to circumvent censorship, disseminate information through alternative channels, and expose the abuses of the military regime. This included using coded language, publishing underground newspapers, and utilizing foreign media outlets.

Conclusion
The findings of this research provide a stark reminder of the profound challenges faced by the media during military rule in Nigeria.

The 100% agreement among participants underscores the pervasive nature of media control and its impact on freedom of expression, public discourse, and democratic values. While the military regimes successfully suppressed dissent and controlled the flow of information, the resilience and resistance of journalists and media practitioners offer a glimmer of hope for the future of media freedom in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Establishing robust legal frameworks that protect press freedom and guarantee the right to information is crucial.
2. **Promoting Media Literacy:** Educating the public about media literacy and critical thinking skills is essential to combat propaganda and misinformation.
3. **Supporting Independent Media:** Providing financial and logistical support to independent media outlets is vital for fostering a diverse and vibrant media landscape.
4. **Holding Perpetrators Accountable:** Bringing perpetrators of media violence and censorship to justice is essential for deterring future abuses.
5. **Training of Media Practitioners**: Media practitioners should undergo regular training to enhance their knowledge and skills to remain professional and ethical while reporting the news.

By addressing these challenges and promoting a free and independent press, Nigeria can move towards a more democratic and accountable society.

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