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**MULTICULTURALISM, INSECURITY AND THE MEDIA: ASSESSMENT OF NEWS
PLANNING BY RADIO BENUE CORPORATION, 95.0FM**

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Abstract

Multiculturalism within the Nigerian context is a serious concern especially drawing from the diverse ethnic groups, tribes, cultures and its influence on the people. The volatile state of affairs in Nigeria when it concerns insecurity is an area of concern which came to limelight with Boko Haram attacks and such news reports on insecurity did not abate as it is even an everyday occurrence ranging from kidnappings, herdsmen killings, maiming of properties and lots more. It is even worse presently with virtually every news bulletin containing insecurity. It then leads to the question- does the cultural background of news reporters determine the independence level of news reports towards insecurity news reports? This research hopes to find out if the ethnicity of a news reporter influences his/ her reports and if such determines the level of objectivity of the news story disseminated to the audience. To guide this study, the following objectives were raised: to ascertain the independence level of news reporters in Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM); to investigate if the cultural background of news reporters from Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM) influences their insecurity news reports and identify the major aspect of insecurity news reports by reporters in Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM). The methodology used for this study was qualitative with an interview conducted on a sample of 12 employees who are in the editorial and programmes department out of a total of 120 employees in the radio station while the theories used were Social Responsibility and Sociocultural theories. In conclusion, the study found that, the multicultural background of reporters from this radio station does not influence insecurity news reports. As a result, these researchers recommended that, using tones that can mar the editorial independence of their insecurity news reports should be avoided.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Insecurity, News reporters, Independence of reporters, Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM)

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Introduction

Media news determinants incorporate reports about insecurity as the bane of most problems in societies. Insecurity are outcome of social vices of kidnapping, stealing, raping and violence. The major causes of insecurity are traced but not limited to unemployment, terrorism, poverty, ethno- religious conflicts, weak security system, loss of social and communal value systems. (Gbolahan, 2022). Better still is when such news stories reported on national dailies and broadcast media houses where the power of the audio medium (radio) happens to travel farther than where pages of a newspaper cannot get to or where the terrain of the airwaves that will favour the

television cannot reach. With the radio, news stories can be accessed even while on the farm, driving a car, doing household chores at home and while walking on the streets making it more useable despite the schedule of the recipient of the news story

Due to the sensitive nature of news stories on insecurity, news reporters scramble to get a lead headline on such news items which receivers like to get to listen to first due to the insecure nature of the country and the North Central region of the country with Benue State in particular as one of the most prone States on insecurity issues (National Bureau of statistics, 2022). Another source of concern is the multicultural system that make up Nigeria as a country. Even Benue State alone cannot be said to be a State free from multi-cultures. The ethnic groups, tribes and diverse cultural belief systems all amount to diverse communal values that can influence or not influence a people's ideological system (Nnayelugo, 2005). When a news reporter finds his or herself in a terrain with diverse multicultural system, there may be influenced and such influence may result to the journalist diverting from the objective angle of a story in other to canvass for or protect the interest of his or her tribe or about the person that is reported about. This leads to the question whether- the cultural background of news reporters influences the level of objectivity of insecurity news reports? If such occurs or not, will be a major concern of this study.

Insecurity is very incessant in the North Central part of Nigeria so is the news reports about it too. This to a very large extent is influenced by the limelight given to insecurity news reports by the media.

Statement of Problem

Insecurity is on the high side on the Nigerian scene as there are countless news reports on a daily basis on it. Regard less, the news reporters who are culturally speaking origins of one tribe or the other are the major gate keepers to any news report on insecurity before the audience gets to know about the news or occurrence. These researchers on that note, have observed that, since the news reporters choose the angle on how to create and shape a news story, there can be independence and certain levels of influence while writing the news on insecurity in trying to save the face of the person who is the same culture or tribe with the reporter or when the story is so ugly that it can lead to a deface of the entire ethnic group or culture of the place especially with regards to Benue State that has multi- cultures and diverse ethnic groups with its volatile nature in terms of insecurity. Such leads to the question on whether the cultural backgrounds of news reporters on Radio Benue Corporation, 95.0 FM, can influence their reports. It is on this note that this research was based.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to ascertain if the cultural backgrounds of news reporters influences insecurity news reports with regards to independence of news reports by journalists in Radio Benue Corporation, 95.0FM.

The specific objectives that guided this research are to:

1. Ascertain the independence level of news reporters in Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM)
2. Investigate if the cultural background of reporters influence the angle of insecurity stories by Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM).
3. Identify the major aspect of insecurity news reports by reporters in Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM).

Research Questions

The research questions used were:

1. What has been the independence level of news reporters of Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM)?
2. Does the cultural background of reporters influence the insecurity news reports Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM)?
3. What is the major aspect of insecurity news reports by reporters in Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM)?

Scope of the Study

This study focused on the journalists in Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM) who are a total of 120 number of employees in the radio station (<https://nigerialists.com/2022>). Out of these numbers of staff which are compartmentalized in to: editorial, programmes, engineering, advertising, printing, administrative and Stores and IT departments, the study focused on the editorial and programmes department which are the power house that carries everything that concerns content creation in the radio station with regards to news reports and programmes scheduled on a daily basis.

The editorial and programmes departments are further divided according to the various functions performed by the staff in these two departments. They include: editor, managing editor, news reporter, chief copy editor, copy editor, graphics and photo editors while the programming department contains the program director, news director, producer, continuity announcer, music or Disc Jockey (DJ) and public affairs analyst or studio manager. Contextually speaking, the researchers made use of only news reporters and staff in the programmes department who are the major focus of this study.

Justification of the Study

Benue State is a State in the North Central zone which in recent times has been plagued with insecurity attacks of various degrees, hence the need for this study. This study hopes to educate news reporters with regards to their news reports to get sensitized that, as journalists, it is part of the function of social responsibility function of the press to report news stories from an independent angle and not to take sides with any person involved in the news story due to similarity in cultural background or allow cultural influences to reports.

This study will be useful to journalists, publishers and media practitioners in Benue State Radio station (95.0MHz FM) and Nigeria as a whole in helping to educate the mindset of journalists to practice objectivity news value in news reports and in other words shy away from biased reports when it comes to insecurity.

In the words of Temofeh (2017), the media which is supposed to champion the crusade against insecurity, ironically is used by bandits, insurgents and terrorists to disseminate their devious messages to the publics, this study will help to sensitize the members of the media world to only promote peaceful journalism and not to overemphasize on reports that will make people feel more insecure in their fatherland.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks used for this study were the Social responsibility and sociocultural theories.

Social responsibility theory

This theory was propounded under the book published with the code name- 'Four theories of the Press' with the social responsibility theory as one of the theories that guide the press in the United States by Theodore Siebert, Fred Peterson & Wilbur Schramm, 1956

(www.communicationtheory.org/2023; Rachel, Kristel & Gillian, 2020). The social responsibility theory came up as a result of the criticisms of the Press by Hutchins commission for the replacement of the Libertarianism practice directly linked to the libertarian theory by John Milton in 1644 that gave the press too much freedom on what to report or publish.

Founders of this social responsibility theory are of the opinion that, the media should be given total freedom but there should be some level of external control or regulation on what they report (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009). The theory supports that, reporting should not just be objective but interpreted based on facts and truthful information. Some critics are of the opinion that, the aspect of interpreting a report, does give room to reshape objectivity news value by a news reporter.

This theory is relevant to the study as it is able to emphasize on the need for media reporters to be guided while reporting and not to allow 'self' to influence a news report. In other words, this theory is of the opinion that reporters (media men and women) should be accountable for what they report as their sense of duty should be to serve the society at large.

Sociocultural theory

This theory emphasizes on the role that social interaction plays in psychological development of human beings in the society. This theory was postulated by a Russian psychologist by name, Lev Vygotsky in the late 1920s. Social cultural theory looks at the way a particular society influences the development and behavior of its citizens. The relevance of this theory relates to this study as it best explains how behaviours can be shaped after internalized knowledge have been stored enough to impact on the actions of an individual externally (Theodore, 2022) whether as a news reporter or programmer in a radio station or a non- media personality.

Critically speaking, this theory failed to state the extent the society can influence on an individual's behavior, in this case a journalist.

Literature Review

The literature review of this research comprised textbooks and online materials to understand the concepts used in the study.

Multiculturalism in the Nigerian Context

Multiculturalism according to Eagan (2020), cultures, races and ethnicities are diverse with majorities and minorities striving to be recognized in a political or social milieu. Nigeria is a multicultural state. This can be drawn from the fact that, Nigeria is a country in West Africa with 774 local government areas, over 250 ethnic groups that speak over 500 languages, diverse cultures, customs and six geo- political zones. The six geopolitical zones are: North East, North West, North Central, South South, South East and South West. Each of these geopolitical zones and LGAs were created so as to aid administration. In the zones or regions, six or seven states make up each and specifically speaking, the North Central which houses Benue State, has 23 LGAs and seven States (www.legit.ng/2018).

Benue State which is the area of study has diverse ethnic groups such as; Tiv, Idoma, Jukun, Igede and Etulo people. In every ethnic group, there is bound to be cultures that sets it apart from others. Part of every culture is the material and immaterial cultures. The culture of a people sets basically steps to how a people can organize their everyday living.

To some experts in cultural studies, culture plays a symbolic role in the development of an individual's behavior which can be a patriotic or non- patriotic behavior. According to the Nigerian Consulate in Frankfurt (2019), the culture of Nigeria is shaped by the multi- ethnic groups which is synonymous to multi-cultures (www.artsandculture.google.com/2019).

The culture in Nigeria is multi-ethnic and it goes a long way in influencing the make-up of an individual especially if the person grew up in a particular ethnic group (Sade, 2018). Along the line, the love for one's culture may be developed thereby helping to shape one's patriotic or fanatical moves through speech or written form (Gbolahan, 2022). If such an influence does occur is yet unknown, this study is out to find out if cultures can shape a news reporter's or a programmer's behaviour to influence news reports and analysis disseminated through Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM).

A Brief Profile of Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM)

The Benue Radio Corporation is a government-owned radio station that is located in old Otukpo road in Makurdi, Benue State in the North Central region of Nigeria. Its website is www.radiobenue.com/2023. It is one of the most popular radio in the State that also operates online version. It is a radio broadcasting media for news and entertainment programmes (www.radio.org.ng/2023). It has a total of 186 number of employees under different departments such as: programmes, administration, advertising, engineering, IT unit, news and current affairs departments (www.radiodirectory.or.ng/2023).

The Benue radio corporation was founded under Edict No. 14 of 1978 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and it began operations on the 1st of April, 1978. Been a government station, its aim is to keep the people of Benue State informed, enlightened and entertained.

Insecurity, News Reports and the Nigerian Media (Radio in perspective)

When discussing insecurity, it is wise to state it from the perspectives of sociologists since it is a social concern that affects the entire populace in a particular social milieu. Sociologists have defined social problems as those set of problems that concerns everybody, such is insecurity (Boma, 2021). Nigeria is one country in Africa that has faced incessant insecurity issues ranging from- Boko Haram, ISWAP, Bandits, Kidnappers and unidentified gunmen, all unleashing terror on innocent citizens in one part of the country or the other. The causes of insecurity is not far from the truth that poverty and unemployment triggers ills like armed robbery, prostitution, fraudster, frustration and anger, kidnapping amongst others in a bid to survive.

All these triggers have led Nigeria to the point where she unfortunately found herself. The idea of passing the blame on individuals have failed according to sociologists instead, the blame should be more on the leaders and the larger society that have failed to provide the basics to having a conducive life for its citizenry.

With this deterioration, comes the unending news stories of one insecurity issue to another that is reported on the mass media. To Vivian (2009), the media, which is simply the channels used for disseminating information, it is only playing its key role – which is to inform the populace (audience) about the occurrences in their society, both far and near.

Insecurity news reports tend to trend very well because, the people already live in fear. On this premise, the audience will like to be aware of every news item that occurs within their locality (Olarenwaju, 2022). The country has failed to quell the rate of insecurity despite the trillions of naira (N3.6trillion) it has spent so far (www.premiumtimes.org.ng/2022). The media has done its part too by trying to sensitize the people on the need to shun violence and all levels of insecurity but it is yet to stop. The broadcast media is very good at this especially with the radio that has the advantage of over other media channels of 'travelling' to the remote parts of the country easily, with relevant programmes that can help to keep the people informed and at the same time help to persuade them to shun insecurity (Agbanu & Nwanmmuo, 2012).

The Independence of News reporters and Programmers

It takes a news reporter to be independent and fair in news reports to ensure journalism is properly practiced. Independence revolves on when covering hard news, reporters do not convey their feelings, biases or prejudices in their stories and they are not influenced. Same goes to a programmer who tries to unfairly favour or promote one particular news story or event by focusing less on others that is not in his or her good interest. This gives room for unfairness and unbalanced programming in the daily schedule in a media house. With the multiple cultural backgrounds of or diverse ethnic groups prevalent in Benue State, Nigeria, can a reporter or programmer in Radio Benue Corporation, 95.0FM, be objective in journalistic practice, this remains unknown, hence this study.

It is therefore of great importance for reporters to not only know how to write report based on independence from any type of influence but to also conduct themselves properly in the public (Emmanuel, 2018). Insecurity news report is a very sensitive aspect of news. As a result, it behooves on news reporters to tell the truth without using quantifying adjectives like unjust, wicked, intrepid, kind, obnoxious amongst others while writing independent news reports, (Ayodele, 1988). Instead, the reporter should allow the listeners (radio medium) to form their opinions. They can also enhance professionalism by attributing information to a source of information, avoid making judgments and avoid doubts to ensure neutrality (Wikipedia, 2023).

Just like any other profession, there are factors that can dissuade or mar its members from upholding the codes and conducts of the profession. Some notable factors that can prevent the practice of objectivity include but not limited to; receiving brown envelopes (bribery), ethno- religious and political affiliations, fanatical moves or extreme loyalty for a way of life compared to another amongst others. To avoid these aforementioned factors, Emmanuel (2018) states that a news reporter or media person, should endeavour to avoid belonging heavily to a political view and not be afraid to question and highlight those issues that are important to an audience as this is part of his or her responsibility to the society as a whole (Ayodele, 1988).

Empirical Review

The following works relates with this study. Nanusch (2013) studied “Cultural forces in journalism” on the impact of cultural values on Māori journalists’ professional views saying that social system-level analyses of journalism have tended to focus on political and economic influences, at the expense of other factors, such as the role that culture and cultural values play in shaping journalists’ professional views and practices. This paper identified cultural values as a particularly fruitful area for providing a more nuanced analysis of journalism culture. It examined this issue in the context of in-depth interviews with 20 Māori journalists from Aotearoa New Zealand. The study finds that indigenous journalism in that country is strongly influenced by Māori cultural values, such as showing respect to others, following cultural protocols, and making use of culturally-specific language. Cultural limitations are also identified in the form of the social structures of Māori society, and journalists’ strategies in working around these are discussed. The paper highlights the implications a renewed focus on cultural values can have for the study of journalism culture more broadly.

Ejike (2014) studied Ethnicism and its influence on news reportage; a three dimensional analysis stated that ethnic interests must not be a walkover in news reportage. This is because it finds its way into the papers and airwaves for audience consumption. The study broached on the concept of ethnicism relating its effects on mass news reportage. Literature review revealed that ethnicism is closely related to the concepts of ethnicity and ethnocentrism. In the course of the study, these concepts were glaring: ethnicism, ethnocentrism and ethnicity. It was however found that ethnicism affects news reportage in negative ways. Using the reflective projective media theory, ethnicism’s influence on news reportage was analyzed in three levels: the individual level, the audience level and the media owners level, giving the three dimensional analysis.

This paper also came up with the term “counter influences paradigm” to analyze this trend. The economic implication of the interplay between ethnicism and news reportage was evident in these levels. Newsmakers were urged to be more professional in their approach to news reportage.

Methodology

Research Design and Instrument of Data Collection

This study employed the qualitative research survey design. The survey design was achievable through the use of face to face and telephone interview while the instrument used for recording was an android phone while conducting the interview.

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

This population 120 persons. The researchers were able to achieve this by purposively selecting only those who work in the editorial and programmes department of Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM) Staff handbook (2000). A sample of 12 persons was achieved using Akpan (2020) position of arithmetical 10 percent position in social and economic undertakings

The interviews were conducted within five days from 9th- 13th of February, 2023. The sample selectively chosen happens to fall under the following categories of ethnic groups which make up Benue State. They are:

Table 1: Ethnic groups of the respondents

Ethnic group	Idoma	Tiv	Jukun	Igede	Etulo
Total	3	3	2	2	2

Field work, 2023.

The total number of respondents used for the study were 12 as shown on Table 1. In addition, each of these ethnic groups were arranged in to the five days used for conducting the interviews. Idoma (day 1), Tiv (day 2), Jukun (day 3), Igede (day 4) and Etulo (day 5). This was done to enhance ease while conducting the interview and to aid clarity of purpose for the research.

Table 2: Sex of the respondents

Sex	Male	Female
Total	8	4

Field work, 2023.

The sex identified on Table 2 indicates that males are higher in number than females. This data corroborates with the research of Osazee- Odi & Nwokoro (2021) on the fact that, media houses employ more males than females.

Findings and Discussion

The interview questions were based on the three research questions set for the study. In addition, the five days used for the interviews were simply stratified based on the five ethnic groups used for the study.

Day 1 (9th of February, 2023)

Findings from the interview of Idoma ethnic group respondents

The views gathered from the Idoma ethnic group news reporters and programmers with regards to research question 1 indicates that, all the insecurity news reports from Radio Benue Corporation are independent. The interview also gathered from research question 2 that, insecurity news report is not influenced by the cultural background of news reporter. The programmes department also informed the researchers that, on their part, they do not analyze news or schedule programmes in favour of a particular tribe in the radio station but to the benefit of all tribes in Benue State. With regards to research question 3, the respondents mentioned factors like; poverty, low self- esteem and egoistic tendencies

as some of the factors that may lead a reporter in to reporting insecurity news stories without the independence of news reporters considered.

Discussion

These findings clearly stated that, the news and programmes department do not report or act out of the tenets that guide journalism with regards to insecurity news reports. This is in agreement with the social responsibility theory of the Press (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956) cited in www.communicationtheory.com/2023. In addition, the study further stated that, cultural background of a reporter does not influence his or her report, despite the multi- cultural nature of the Benue State.

Day 2 (10th of February, 2023)

Findings from the interview of Tiv ethnic group respondents

From the interview, it shows that, all the Tiv respondents affirmed that, Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM) news reporters are independent and based on truth. They went on further to add that, their insecurity news reports are also balanced especially with regards to the programmes department in scheduling programmes that ensures that the opinion of the audience are heard.

With regards to research question 2, the respondents made it known that, on no account do they allow cultural patterns or the love for one's culture influence their work as it is highly against their ethical codes of practice. The responses recorded for research question 3 shows that, there are no specific factors that can influence any reporter or programmer in any radio house with specific reference to Radio Benue Corporation (95.0 FM).

Discussion

The findings gathered from the interview revealed that, no reporter or programmer should act out of the codes of practice that guides journalism practice in Radio Benue Corporation. Hence, no factor should be considered as what can influence any news reporter or programme schedule.

Day 3 (11th of February, 2023)

Findings from the interview of Jukun ethnic group respondents

In order to answer research questions 1 and 2, the respondents were of the opinion that independence is a relative term which depends on the person. To them in Radio Benue Corporation, they cannot be found reporting without been despite the volatile terrain but if any reporter engages in the act of manipulating insecurity report, such could have resulted from external influences such as government control, trying to please an audience of a particular class or tribe, to promote the media house and personal gains. While answering research question 3, the respondents listed the aforementioned factors as what could influence a news reporter or programmer not to write or air programmes objectively with regards to insecurity news.

Discussion

The findings revealed that, objectivity is a relative term but they practice it in Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM). The research also found that, reasons that could make the culture of reporter or programmer get in the way while reporting the insecurity beat could be as a result of external or personal benefits. This is simply in agreement with the tenets of sociocultural theory as discussed earlier in the study.

Day 4 (12th of February, 2023)

Findings from the interview of Igede ethnic group respondents

The answer to research question 1, indicates that, the editorial independence is the norm in the station with regards to all their reports and not just the area of insecurity news alone. They boasted of their high level of independence which has made the station to be one of the best in reportage in the state. With regards to research question 2, the interview recorded that, cultural background is out of the question and should not guide a news reporter or programmer on what to report.

The findings for research question 3, shows that these respondents affirmed that, they do not see any factor that can influence any right minded media man to deviate from the core principles that guide the profession. This findings corroborates the research by Ayodele (1988)

Discussion

The interview conducted found that, reporting without a sense of independence is out of the question and should not be option when reporting or scheduling programs.

Day 5 (13th of February, 2023)

Findings from the interview of Etulo ethnic group

The respondents of Etulo ethnic group in response to research question 1 states that, the reporters and programmers at Radio Benue Corporation (95.0FM) are very hardworking people that derive pleasure in reporting facts and not half- truths. In that regard, reporting insecurity news stories without editorial independence is not a norm in the radio station.

The response to research question 2 adds more credence to what they earlier stated about the stand of the reporters towards insecurity news reports. The interview at this point gathered that, their cultural background does not influence these reports. Finally, research question 3 indicates that, the interviewees are of the view that, no journalists have a reason to deviate from the guiding principles that guide the profession, to them no factor is an ideal reason enough to manipulate any insecurity news report since to them Benue State is already too volatile to experience such.

Discussion

The findings gathered revealed that, no journalist has any right to write out of objective context for any insecurity news report.

Conclusion and recommendations

From the findings, the researchers concluded that, the multicultural background of reporters from this radio station does not influence insecurity news reports. As a result, the following recommendations were made;

1. News reporters should shy away from using tones that can mar the editorial independence level of their insecurity news reports.
2. High professionalism standard should be maintained from news reporters and programmers in the broadcast media and not allow cultural background influence their sense of judgment when handling insecurity news reports in radio stations in Nigeria.
3. The government and highly influential individuals should endeavour to assist news reporters in other for them not to fail in their line of duty due to factors as outlined in the study that can influence their news reports.

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