

JOURNALISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA

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Abstract

This study looks at the state of human rights in Africa and the function of journalists in highlighting violations of human rights. In the course of the study, the desktop research approach was used to analyze a variety of concepts, including human rights, journalism, human rights in Africa, the difficulties involved in reporting human rights in Africa and the function of journalism in promoting human rights, among others. The study's conclusion shows that human rights are violated in African countries. Among the causes of this human right violation include poor governance, a non-democratic culture, poverty and illiteracy. The study also reveals that despite the difficulties being encountered by the media in carrying out their duty of reporting human rights abuse, the media have contributed to the advancement of human rights.

Keywords: Journalism, Human rights, Africa

Declaration of conflicting interests: The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of International Human Rights Law, many African governments have signed many international treaties and conventions with strong commitments to uphold the rights of their citizens and to fight other crimes against humanity (Ibrahim, 2012). Nevertheless, these commitments are yet to move beyond rhetoric in most African countries. The abuse of human rights, that of the journalists inclusive, has been a major concern in most African countries. According to Frankel (2007), the distance between what African governments have pledged on human rights and what they actually do is a gasping chasm.

When a nation permits a free press and unrestricted reporting of violations of human rights, it is often regarded as respecting and protecting the rights of its residents. (Shaw, 2011). This cannot be said to be the case in Africa. The challenge is how twenty-first century journalism can narrow the divide by reporting cases of human right abuses and proffering ways to forestall such abuses and violation of human rights in Africa. And if this challenge of reporting human rights abuse in Africa must be overcome, then

press freedom is an issue that must be addressed because the press as at today is not still free.

The freedom of the press is a crucial idea to consider when thinking about how the media affects every aspect of the society. It is necessary for the media to perform their tasks in an efficient manner. The right to press freedom gives media outlets the flexibility to choose the format of their reportage and the best way to report on stories (Jacobsen, 2008). Article 19 protects press freedom, although Becker and Vlad (2009) contend that this idea is debatable because it is difficult to define what freedom of the press means in terms of freedom from and for whom. They assert that everyone has the right to free expression - the ability to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any medium and regardless of borders.

According to Merrill (2009), the concept of press freedom is not explicitly defined. Merrill held that the First Amendment to the United States constitution which stipulates that Congress will not pass any laws to restrict freedom of the press did not clearly define what the press is or is not. He observes that the American Model of press freedom has emerged as the global standard, which could be interpreted as freedom from

governmental intervention. Whitten-Wood (2009) provides a comprehensive list of free media characteristics, which she categorizes into four major indicators: political, economic, legal and professional settings. As a result, a free press is necessary for the exercise of human rights.

Given these criteria for establishing a free media, it is important to assess how African nations have performed in maintaining a free media that will be able to address violations of human rights in Africa. Examining human rights in Africa in light of journalism as a profession for highlighting and redressing social injustices of which human rights abuse is pervasive is vital. This topic of human rights abuse will be based on African countries, with a special focus on some of the continent's nations.

This study will therefore examine human rights abuse in Africa with emphasis on journalistic human rights, find out the role of journalism in human rights abuse and examines the challenges of human rights reporting.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Meaning of Journalism

Journalism can be understood as an impartial publication/production and sharing of news report on the latest or past events and happenings on the basis of facts and evidence. It is a profession wherein the journalists collect information on serious matters or matters of public interest so as to inform the readers and viewers. Journalism is a branch of mass communication in which the information gathered is refined, filtered and then presented in a specific format such as news, feature, opinion, blogs, discussions and so on.

The task of a journalist is to find, verify, write, edit and design the news in such a manner in which it can be easily understood by the people. The news can be reported through different media platforms such as newspaper, magazines, radio, television, website, social media network, YouTube channels, etc. The earliest known journalistic product, *ActaDiurna*, said to date from 59 BC was a news sheet circulated in ancient Rome. The *ActaDiurna* recorded important daily events such as public speeches. It was published daily and hung in prominent places. Journalism was further given a boost with the invention of Movable Type by Johannes Gutenberg in Europe by 1450.

In a broader sense, journalism, usually referred to as the press, encompasses reporting and commentary that is presented on television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the internet. Journalism includes both current events coverage and documentary filmmaking.

Journalism can be distinguished from other activities by certain identifiable characteristics and practices. These elements not only separate journalism from other forms of communication, they are what make it indispensable to democratic societies. The fundamental tenets and components of journalism, according to Bill and Tom (2021), are as follows:

1. Journalism's primary responsibility is to the truth.
2. The citizens are its primary loyalty.
3. It is fundamentally a verification discipline.
4. Its practitioners must remain impartial towards the people they are responsible for.
5. It must function as a separate power monitor.
6. It must give the general people a platform for criticism and compromise.
7. It must work to keep the important information attractive and current.
8. It must continue to provide accurate and balanced news.
9. Its practitioners must have the freedom to follow their own convictions.

Human Rights

Human rights, according to Donney (2003), are privileges that every person has by virtue of being a person. Every person is born with these rights and benefits. In terms of human rights, ethnicity, place of residence, gender, cultural background, skin colour and language do not matter. Human rights are typically moral rights that everyone claims and holds against everyone, especially those who control social institutions (Orend, 2002).

Human rights are the liberties and benefits that individuals have in the society in which they live. According to Bryan (2000), human rights are freedoms, immunities and benefits that all human beings should be able to claim as a matter of rights in the society in which they live. There are some things that should never be done and some liberties that should never be violated; these things are absolutely sacred.

According to the aforementioned, human rights are all the rights that every citizen of a state is entitled to without restriction. They are the inalienable rights of all people, young and old, rich and poor, male and female. They are not given to human beings as gifts. This explains why Arinze (2008) contends that

human rights are not gifts from men to women or other men that can be withdrawn or cancelled at the giver's whims and caprices. Human rights cannot be withdrawn, held at the pleasure of anyone, or granted when it suits the giver. According to Gasiokwu (2003), some human rights provisions, some of which are referred to as fundamental rights, have been enacted into various national constitutions around the world.

The concept of human rights has become one of the world's most pressing issues since the establishment of the United Nations (UN) and the subsequent adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The United Nations Charter, adopted in 1945, was the first international document to recognize the protection and promotion of human rights as an obligation owed by both individual and collective states (Langley, 1999). According to Smith (2007), the main reason for the charter's adoption was to prevent the recurrence of the horrible events caused by two devastating world wars, which were caused by humungous violations of human rights and unrestrained breach of territorial integrity.

Africa, for its part, has a body called the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, whose mission is to protect and promote human rights in Africa. The commission operates within the framework of the African Union's charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations and other African instruments dealing with human and people's rights.

Pate identified the following basic universal human rights in Oso and Pate (2011):

1. The right to life.
2. Human beings' right to dignity.
3. The right to privacy.
4. The right to an impartial hearing.
5. Right to compensation from property compulsorily acquired.
6. The right to privacy and family life.
7. The right to free expression, conscience and religion.
8. The right to assemble and associate peacefully.
9. The right to free movement.
10. The right to be free from torture.
11. The right to be free from discrimination based on ethnic group, place of origin, circumstances of birth, gender, religion, or political opinion.

12. The right to free expression.

In Oso and Pate (2011), Pate made the case that the rights listed above can be broadly divided into civil, social, political, economic, and cultural rights. Human rights, however, have limitations and can sometimes be curtailed. This occurs when one person's freedom infringes on another person's rights or the values of society as a whole. The state has the legal authority to prohibit or punish harmful expressions in circumstances like these. Examples of these include invasions of privacy, defamation, hate speech, obscenity, pornography, public indiscretions, threats to national security, use of confidential information, disclosure of trade secrets, or infringement of copyright.

Human Rights in Africa

Human rights violations continue to increase in Africa, with a report by a global rights watchdog, Human Right Watch, raising the red flag for most of the countries on the continent. The 2022 Human Rights Watch (HRW) [report](#) reveals that human rights violations continued in the 26 African countries that the watchdog monitored in 2021, with the situation worsening in most of them.

The report noted that rights violations not only continued in countries facing armed conflicts such as Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria and Sudan, but were also recorded in countries like Angola, Burundi, Eswatini, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe among others.

According to a statement made by CIVICUS (an international alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world) at the 71st session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights in 2022, many African governments continue to trample on people's rights by using unconstitutional and illegal means to limit and restrict rights to freedom of assembly, association, expression and information as guaranteed by African Charter on Human and People`s right. They noted that there is a growing trend of banning and closing down of media outlets as well as caging journalists through arrests, detention and court charges in order to limit access to information and the right to free speech.

CIVICUS observed that in Zambia on March 26th, 2022, a journalist, Chiyuka, was arrested and charged for doing his journalistic work while covering an event that involved police and community leaders in the northwest town of Mufumbwe. In [Malawi](#) on 5 April 2022, Vitus-Gregory Gondwe, a journalist and activist

based in Malawi was arrested and detained for his work which exposes corruption in the government of Malawi. While in [Cameroon](#) on 1 April 2022, the National Communications Council suspended journalists Severin Tchounkeu and Cedrick Noufele working with the privately-owned broadcaster Equinoxe TV for one month for hosting the teachers' union that was on strike for citing deteriorating conditions and unpaid salaries.

According to CIVICUS, activists Larry Emmanuel, Anene Victor Udoka, Samuel Gabriel, Henry Nwodo, and Ben Mannaseh were arbitrarily arrested and detained for 30 days by Nigeria's secret police, the Department of State Service (DSS) in July 2022. They were beaten by private security officers at an Abuja church for wearing t-shirts with the slogan #BuhariMustGo before being handed over to the DSS.

According to Conroy-Krutz (2020), on October 10, 2019, Liberian police broke down the station's gates with the intention of confiscating laptops and other equipment. Listeners to Henry Costa's talk show on Roots 102.7 FM in Monrovia could hear his live response to the situation. Costa has criticized President George Weah vocally. Costa's station was targeted by gunmen twice in January 2019, while Joy FM's transmission cables were severed one night in March 2019. As an excuse for the police raid in October, the solicitor general asserted that the station was spewing hate messages to peaceful Liberians, as well as engaging in other forms of extortion and blackmail. Two Africa FM radio stations in Guinea-Bissau were shut down by the government in the same month as the Costa raid. During the presidential campaign, the stations had become well-known platforms for Jose Mario Vaz, the incumbent, to be criticized.

Perhaps, no nation's private media has endured more hardship than Burundi's. In 2015, when President Pierre Nkurunziza faced a presidential election in July amidst violent protests and a failed coup attempt, security authorities shut down the private station Radio Publique Africaine (RPA) as well as a group of stations covering the campaign. Authorities asserted that those closures were authorized by law. It appears that supporters of the administration have used extra-legal force against independent media in past instances. RPA was one of four stations assaulted, some of which were by arson (Conroy-Krutz, 2020).

The complete or partial internet disruption is a newer tactic that has received significant domestic and international attention. African governments are aware of Facebook's pivotal role in the Arab Spring, which saw

long-serving rulers deposed in two North African countries. The Ugandan Communications Commission demanded that transmissions containing the terms Egypt, Tunisia, Mubarak, or "people power" be prohibited before Uganda's own national election in February 2011. (Biryaberema 2011).

Since 2015, authorities in 22 African countries have ordered online service disruptions, according to Conroy-Krutz (2020). Algeria, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Gabon, Sudan and Zimbabwe have all experienced shutdowns in 2019. Again, the campaign and voting periods, including the time after ballots were cast were ideal for such actions. Since 2017, the government of Cameroon has started cutting down Internet access to troublesome English-speaking regions. Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPEA) claims that the blocking of the internet in Chad from March 2018 to July 2019 is likely a record-breaking occurrence. The goal was probably to silence the public as President Idriss Deby, who has been in office since 1990, pursued constitutional amendments that would prolong his rule until 2033.

According to Amnesty International, the adoption of obnoxious laws restricting free expression in Tanzania has increased for a while now. The Statistics Act of 2015 criminalizes not only the publication of false statistics, but also the publication of any statistical information that has not been authorized for release by the National Bureau of Statistics. The Cyber-crimes Act was passed the same year, outlawing the dissemination of offensive or provocative speech as well as fake, deceptive, misleading, or erroneous material. The government revised the broadcasting services code in 2017 to mandate that television programs only contain material that it deems "interesting and useful," while avoiding content that is inflammatory, slanderous and divisive. Print journalists, however, are not permitted to disturb the order or offend anyone.

The government of Tanzania also decreed that newscasts could not discuss and evaluate referendum and election matters on Election Day or report election results in any constituency. This ban extended to the release of public polls result within 30 days of the election. Bloggers are required to register, pay a yearly fee of more than US\$900 and occasionally have content authorized in advance under the 2018 Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations. In the name of upholding public order and thwarting misinformation, Amnesty International has challenged these restrictions for

aiming to silence anti-government expression.

According to Hussein (2019), Ethiopia's Council of Ministers passed a draft bill by November 2019 that would make hateful speech and false information illegal, although opponents of the draft law raise the following recurring issues: Punishable language is difficult to pinpoint and such rules provide the government a ready weapon to employ against anybody it doesn't like. Hussein pointed out that Ethiopia's 2016 Computer Crime Proclamation outlaws sending spam as well as spreading libelous material, which carries a potential prison sentence of three years to ten years.

According to CIVICUS, major human rights violations in Africa include: wrongful and arbitrary killings by both governments and non-government actors; forced disappearances by governments, terrorist organizations and criminal gangs; torture and other instances of cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment by governments and terrorist organizations; harsh and potentially lethal prison conditions; arbitrary detention by governments and non-government actors; political repression; significant violations of the freedoms of association and peaceful assembly; harsh restrictions on religion; serious acts of corruption; human trafficking; little investigation and accountability; brutality against women and the worst types of child labour.

These incidents and many more only illustrate a general trend in many African countries of how human rights are violated, particularly press freedom and independent media as a foundation of democratic and accountable governance.

Causes of Human Rights Abuse in Africa

Magnarella (2000) asserts that the continent's unsatisfactory human rights record is primarily a result of racial prejudice, post-colonialism, economic hardship, gullibility, disease, religious hostility, internal strife, debt, poor resource management, corruption, the monopolization of power, a lack of press and judicial independence and border disputes. He provides the following explanations of why human rights are violated in Africa:

1. Poverty is unquestionably a widespread issue in Africa. Ten of the world's thirteen poorest nations are in Africa, where 700 million people, more than 75% of the continent, live under the poverty line.
2. Another reason for human rights abuse is underdeveloped economy with scarce resources and few job prospects for significant

portions of the population.

3. Rapid population increase, which puts more pressure on the environment and resources while escalating competition for them.
4. Regional factionalism or ethnic diversity that encourages local identifications while impeding the emergence of a national identity.
5. Ethnic and class politics, in which leaders of various languages, cultures, or regional communities engage in unhealthy competition for positions of state political and economic power, with the benefits of winning accruing to followers.
6. Lack of legitimacy of the government because the large portions of the populace who do not share the political or cultural affiliations of the ruling class and do not benefit from the riches will not accept the government as legitimate.
7. Use of police and military forces to repress political opponents and aggrieved civilians in order to keep control.
8. Under the guise of maintaining national security, the dictatorship has violated economic, civil and political rights.

How Colonialism Contributes to Human Rights Abuse in Africa

Magnarella (2000) claimed that the majority of African countries possess the aforementioned human rights violation characteristics and that colonialism harmed Africa's native ethno-political traditions as a result. The western liberal paradigm of individual-state connections does not readily apply to Africa since the process of state building in Africa was so radically different from the European experience. The state structure was imposed by European imperialists on groups of ethno-political communities that, historically, lacked inter-communal coherence. Communities that had previously operated separately from one another were coerced by the imperialists to coexist in the newly established colonial state. The majority of these new residents lacked any sense of patriotism for the colonial state.

Only few African governments today look like the political groups that existed before European colonization in terms of geography. There is now a problem of cultural, real social and political ideology as a result of the alienation now between Africans and the contemporary African state. According to African researcher, Mutua (2008), the post-colonial African

governments have mainly failed to become self-sufficient, independent and rich nations. The modern African states have mostly failed to create political elite with integrity and a sense of national interest, to teach the military, police, and security forces their right social duties, to forge a nation out of various linguistic and cultural groupings and to design economically sound policies. Many African governmental leaders have been negatively impacted by this historical psychological process because they lack a true sense of national responsibility and commitment and instead use state resources and authority to fortify their ethnic strength, increase personal privileges and hold onto their positions of authority. The human rights concerns of regular citizens are disregarded by such a plan.

The Role of Journalism in Human Rights Abuse in Africa

In advancing and defending human rights in Africa, journalists play a critical role as the watchdogs of the nation. The media is a powerful tool for teaching the public about human rights and for letting those who frequently violate such rights know that it is wrong to do so. The media in general could be quite helpful in this regard. It is impossible to overstate the importance of journalism in defending human rights. People can learn about their basic human rights and how their rights are protected by the constitution through the media. The media has contributed significantly to the public's increased understanding of the issue by maintaining constant watch for human rights violations and by publishing stories about abuse of those rights. In regions like Africa where breaches of human and civil rights are rampant, the media can be utilized to raise awareness of these issues on a national and international level. Only the media can currently play the watchdog function of advancement of fundamental rights (Pate, in Osoh and Pate, 2011).

Regarding its social duty in the society, Pate contends that the press's role in the defence and advancement of human rights includes:

1. Exposing instances of infractions and abuses of human rights.
2. To effectively draw attention to those who violate human rights in order to hold them accountable morally and legally.
3. To draw attention to or make evident the plight of victims in order to spur action and demand justice.
4. To stop human rights breaches.
5. To aid in securing victims' restitution or

compensation.

6. To raise public awareness of potential violations of human rights.
7. To aid in the investigation of human rights breaches by law enforcement officers and advocacy groups.
8. To teach the populace how to express their opinions and desires through suitable channels of communication.

The various media programmes through which the journalists can use to achieve the above and promote human rights in Africa are:

1. Editorials
2. Features
3. News commentaries
4. Discussion programmes.
5. Phone in programmes.

Challenges of Human Rights Reporting in Africa

Journalists have numerous challenges in reporting human rights abuse in Africa given the fact that most nations in the continent are either underdeveloped or developing. Several challenges come from the government of the countries where the journalists' functions and from their own organizational system in their efforts to promote human rights (Smith, 2007). Even within the media community, the media had difficulty playing the role of defending human rights in Africa. Today, the media's mission is to report, analyze and comment on all aspects of the society, including human rights. Self-regulation is necessary because there is a chance that this job will be misused. The journalists' primary goal should be to present the facts, not to stir up controversy or appeal to the emotions of the public. Language and projection should be polite and refined. Journalists shouldn't make an investigation worse. The media should avoid publishing inflammatory statements and images. Because the media is a reflection of the society, care should be made to ensure that the reflection is clear (Langley, 1999).

Journalists are often criticized to confuse issues on human rights because of inadequate understanding of the material they are covering. They have a superficial grasp of the institutional apparatus of human rights. In addition, as evidenced by what they write or present, many journalists would be hard pressed to explain the specific human rights let alone the difference between the diverse mechanisms that exist to monitor adherence to human right treaties or even distinguish between humanitarian and human

right law. Regrettably, especially in countries where the culture of democracy and human rights is young like African countries, only few journalists are able to identify with confidence even half a dozen of the basic rights supported by national, international and regional human rights instruments. Lack of awareness about human rights by journalists, is one of the major challenges in the effort to promote human rights (Committee to Protect Journalist, 2017).

The media is also thought to be less sensitive to particular human rights and, as a result, miss stories or story elements. Because the media still associates human rights with civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights which are less visible are often downplayed. The significance of social, economic and cultural rights is mostly overlooked, along with issues like the global economy, poverty, inequality and social and economic discrimination. This criticism is specifically directed at the media's reporting on matters that concern their own governments or other significant interests inside their own countries. Additionally, media is blamed for failing to adequately report on issues relating to human rights and for having no discernible effect on those issues (Freedom House, 2011).

In order to defend and advance human rights, it's important to consider both whether the general public is informed and what is done with that knowledge. Media professionals contend that their sole responsibility is to gather, validate and disseminate news and that it is not their place to take action based on the information they have disseminated (De Vos, 1996). Lack of retroactive reporting is the media's other major issue, particularly when it comes to exposing human rights violations. This is especially true when examining conduct during war.

Ovsiovitch (1993) contends that while human rights issues sometime make it to the news, the media pay little attention to them despite the fact that they are newsworthy stories. Even though some commonly used expressions indirectly connect to human rights, the notion of human rights is frequently overlooked as a topic in the titles of media reports. However, this is an issue because they do not contribute to a comprehensive knowledge of fundamental rights (ibid).

Journalists view human rights from the perspective of war because they are unable to understand what they are, as well as the provisions of human rights laws. Since they are ignorant of these human rights laws, they are reluctant to mention human rights issues for fear that they will be accused of being biased. Unknowingly to some journalists who

are ignorant of human rights issues, they actually deal with these difficulties on a daily basis. Journalists have an incorrect perception of the locations of human rights breaches, leading them to believe that such violations only take place abroad when in fact, identical problems are present everywhere around them. The media's ability to cover human rights concerns in-depth is constrained by space (ICHRP, 2002). Other restrictions include the lack of journalists covering human rights news and the danger caused by a conflict situation like in the case of Congo, which makes it difficult to cover human rights reporting (Schimmel, 2009).

According to Heinze and Freedman (2010), "pressure to attract reader interest and to respond to the most topical and controversial issues overpower any priority that might be placed on comprehensive human rights coverage". Henny (1997) observes that there is no information available regarding the continued existence of the culture and legacy of countless indigenous peoples who reside in isolated regions all over the world. Only since 1993, when the United Nations designated that year as the World's Indigenous People(s), has some information concerning the dangers that Indigenous People(s) face around the globe started to circulate in the media. This may be due to the idea that news organizations are not required by law to cover every aspect of human rights; instead, they are simply required to choose which aspects to cover. They are also not required to give human rights stories priority over other types of news. As long as the stories are interesting to readers, journalists say they are interested in covering human rights issues. Moreover, there is the idea that reader surveys indicate that human rights do not receive good marks (ICHRP, 2002:17-50).

Reporting human rights abuse in Africa is greatly hampered by multiple assaults on media freedom. Two dozen African journalists have reportedly been slain in reprisal for their work since 2014, with 10 of them slain just in Somalia and an additional five were killed in South Sudan, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). 2015 saw the shooting to death of radio producer, Daud Ali Omar together with his wife in the town of Baidoa in the southwest of Somalia. Early in 2019, the Ghanaian investigative journalist, Ahmed Hussein-Suale was slain just days after a lawmaker demanded that he should be attacked.

Additionally, governments selectively apply laws to intimidate or censor the media, stifling coverage of human rights. According to Conroy-Krutz (2020), starting from 2014, 165 journalists have been

imprisoned in Africa, with 54 of them being held in Egypt. About sixty people were still incarcerated as of the end of 2019, including twenty-five in Egypt. There may be outright criminal accusations of defamation or claims that news coverage has caused unrest or hurt "national interests." In other instances, journalists are accused of financial offences like money laundering. Africa's largest country is limiting media access more strictly while Ethiopia, the second-largest is making them easier. Authorities in Nigeria, a country of 201 million people, have recently detained a number of journalists. The Weekly Source's Jones Abiri, Cross River Watch's Agba Jalingo, the Authentic News Daily's Jacob Dickson and the Premium Times' Samuel Ogunipe are among them. Omoyele Sowore of the online media outlet, Sahara Reporters was forcibly and publicly picked up once more in December 2019 inside the Federal High Court of Abuja barely one day after his release from 125 days in prison on charges of money laundering, treason and cyber stalking. (Conroy-Krutz, 2020). Journalists are discouraged from covering violations of human rights by these actions.

Whole media organizations have been targeted by government authorities for reporting on human rights violations. Under the guise of maintaining public order or advancing national interests, destructive attacks on media or broadcasters have also been carried out. When the police conducted a raid in September 2019, one of Uganda's most well-known radio stations, CBS FM, has long been a sore spot for the administration. For more than a year, CBS was shut down (Brisset-Foucault, 2019).

Another challenge to human rights reporting is the refusal of victims of human rights abuse to speak out. In Africa, most victims of human rights abuse prefer to remain silent for fear of being victimized the more or just out of ignorance. Some learned ones may decide to remain mute because they will not want go through the long process and financial involvement of seeking redress. In all these, they may not like to open up to journalists about their abused rights and without adequate information, the journalist is handicapped in carrying out his role of safeguarding human rights.

3. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Researchers Iheonu, Agbutun, and Chiemela (2021) conducted a study to offer empirical support for the relationship between democratic governance and human rights in Africa, a continent with a high prevalence of human rights violations. In a panel data setting, the study used data from 33 regional countries from 2002 to 2018 to complete its analysis. The study used the IVFE model and the IV-QR with FE to take

simultaneity/reverse causality and country-specific variability into consideration. The IV-FE model's findings demonstrate that democracy and the suppression of corruption have a favourable effect on human rights. It also discovered that in nations with high levels of existing human rights, the impact of combating corruption on human rights is more pronounced. However, only the median reveals the significance. Additionally, it has been found that in nations with low levels of human rights today, political stability benefits those rights more.

On the link between the rule of law and human rights, similar conclusions can be drawn. Comparatively to nations where the original level of human rights was high, the influence of rule of law on the human rights score is more obvious in nations where the current level of human rights is low. Human rights in Africa are shown to be considerably increased by good governance. The quantile estimates demonstrate that in nations with lower levels of human rights, governance will generally reduce human rights breaches more.

Ttembo (2017) focused his research on Uganda in order to ascertain how the media contribute to the advancement of human rights within Africa. The three primary objectives of the study were to evaluate the need for advancing human rights in the continent of Africa, the function of the press in that aspect and the relationship between the media and the protection of human rights. NTV staff in Uganda were among the 76 respondents who participated in the study, which employed a case study methodology. Most of the data were collected through questionnaires.

The study found out that the media play a significant role towards human rights protection. It found out that the media has increased the voice and struggle to protect human rights of the people in the continent. The findings showed that media (NTV in this case) have provided a voice to the voiceless in African nations.

The study gave as example the case of Kasese in November 2016 that led to the killing of many people, leaving many children as orphans, women as widows and others homeless. It was also found out that the media particularly have come out to educate the public about their rights, including rights such as right to education, health services, security, food among others. It was, however, found out that the media is facing a lot of challenges that hinder the effective deliverance of their human rights protection role. The study recommended that legislative review is taken into consideration, especially the Mass Media and Access to Freedom of Information Proclamation and Anti-terrorism Proclamation which imposes excessive

fines and rigorous punishment on journalists and media institution owners for minor violations of the provisions. It also suggested that national organizations for human rights work to support the media's efforts to inform the public and promote human rights.

4. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The authoritarian theory of the press serves as the foundation for this study. One of the four normative theories presented by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm in 1956 is the authoritarian theory of the press. The authoritarian theory shows how the government actively controls the media outlets, according to Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956). In the authoritarian theory setting, the press, information and communication systems are directly and indirectly under the influence of the government.

Baran and Davis (2009, 118) define authoritarian theory as a "normative theory advocating the complete domination of media by a government for the purpose of forcing those media to serve the government". Under this theory, the government exerts strict control over the press, which serves to promote unity and national cohesion. The government in an authoritarian setting does not allow criticism, questioning, challenge and interference from the press. The press is actually intended to enhance the power and influence of the head of state or government.

The press cannot work independently. So, it publishes news and information that the government wants the public to know and those that are deemed not necessary by the government are not allowed to be published. The authority establishes the news agencies' code of conduct. As a result, the news publishing companies must go by the laws and guidelines established by the government. Additionally, the authority has the power to censor and grant licences for media content. Threats, intimidation, arrests, closures, and even death are used against any media outlet that criticizes the government. When faced with circumstances like this, media professionals are constrained to following official directives, particularly when it comes to exposing violations of human rights.

Oso (2013) asserts that, of the four normative theories of the press, the authoritarian thesis has been the most common practice in many countries over time and space. It is the hypothesis that most nations almost immediately adopted once society and technology had

advanced enough to create what is now referred to as the "mass media" of communication. It serves as the foundation for press systems in many contemporary cultures, and even in those instances where it has been abandoned, it has continued to have an impact on the policies of a number of governments that, in theory, uphold libertarian ideas.

This theory is relevant to this work because the government abuses the rights of the citizens and that of the press and try to make sure the abuses are not reported. The press is specifically targeted because the government does not want the press to scrutinize and bring before the public the human rights abuses that are being perpetuated. The government therefore tries by all means to whittle down the power of the press in order to have control over their coverage.

In most African states where human rights abuses are rampant, you discover that the situation is so because they operate their democracy like authoritarian system of government where there is zero tolerance to criticism. They detest a free press that will beam light on their dictatorial activities and therefore strive by all means to control the press. It is crystal clear that human right abuse is a form of authoritarian practice and further controlling the press to suppress journalistic work especially in reporting human rights abuse authenticate the relevance of the authoritarian theory to this study.

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