

ASSESSMENT OF CHALLENGES MILITATING AGAINST EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE OF TELEVISION STATIONS IN NIGERIA: (Insights from Select TV Stations in Abuja and Viewers in North-Central States)

Kingdom Onyinyechi Dike, Andrew Ogah Ijwo,** Benjamin Ejuwa Ogbu,***

*Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic, Bida.

**Department of Mass Communication, Benue State University, Makurdi.

Abstract

This study is an assessment of the challenges militating against effective performance of TV stations in Nigeria, with insights from select TV stations in Abuja and viewers in North Central States. It aims to find out the possible challenges and their effects on the performance of the stations, with a view to proffering antidotes for proper enabling environment for TV stations in Nigeria. It is anchored on the Systems Theory and several literatures were reviewed to provide insight into the research objectives. The research design was survey and the population was 1,627,999. The sample size was determined using Gleen (1992) sample size determination table, reviewed in 2012, which states that when the population of a study is above 100,000; the sample size under the confidence level of 95% and the precision level of +5; should be 400. The select stations are TVC, NTA and Arise News television while the states under review are Plateau, Nasarawa and Benue. Both the stations and states were determined through simple random sampling while systematic sampling technique was used to distribute the questionnaire, on residents of the state capitals. A total of 391 copies of the questionnaire were proportionally distributed to residents while three management staff of each of the three stations participated in the focus group discussion. The recovery rate of the research instrument is 100% because a buffer margin of 10% was added to the scientifically determined sample size, to address issues of exigencies on loss of, or incomplete filling of instrument. Findings show myriads of challenges militating efficient and effective performances of the TV stations across the states. They include poor power supply (22.5%); overzealous security agents (16.9%); political pressures (16.1%); ownership influence (9.5%) and influence of new/social media contents (5.9%); among others. Several negative implications of the challenges on the performances of the stations were also highlighted; with suggestions on a critical balance between, and among the key stakeholders on the management of the TV stations; integration and synchronization of online and mainstream media contents; regular local and foreign training as well as institution of good insurances policies for journalists and improved power supply, salary and welfare packages; among others.

Key Words: Assessment, Challenges, Militating. Effective Performance, Select Stations.

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

Introduction

The television is obviously an important medium of mass communication across the globe because it transmits information to viewers on virtually all issues of life simultaneously. Its major advantage over, and above other media platforms is the ability to relay a

story through a blend of sound, sound effects, motion pictures, colour, music and animation. This uniqueness makes its contents more compelling, interesting and believable that it could be considered as “radio with pictures” and “magazines with motions.” The broadcasting of messages through this

medium (television broadcasting) serves several educative, informative, mobilization and entertainment functions. The contents also contribute significantly to socialization, democratic governance and development of the society.

It is unarguably one of the most frequently used media of communication in democracy, either for good or for bad. Former President De-Gaulle of France once asked his former counterpart, President John Kennedy of the United States that “how can you control your country if you do not control the television?” It is the centrality and transformative contents of TV stations that necessitated the above statement from the former presidents. It further means that TV stations are voices of advocacy and watchdogs for public interests for the collective good of the society. It is therefore answerable to various constituencies that depend on its programmes for meaningfully contributions to democratic governance and development.

To further buttress the importance of TV stations and their contents to the society, Kur & Nyekwere (2015) assert that the stations usually strengthen their educative and mediatory functions through increased interactions among the various parties and stakeholders in the democratization process, in line with public interest. Additional responsibilities include surveillance of contemporary events that are likely to affect citizens positively, transmission of major socio-political issues, provision of platforms for advocacy for causes, effects and interests. Others are transmission of diverse contents across various dimensions and factions of political discourse, scrutiny of government officials, institutions and agencies, provision of full information to facilitate participatory democracy, as well as safeguarding principles of journalism profession and national interest.

Essentially, TV stations achieve these giant strides in the society through their programmes. The programmes are the messages which the stations offer to the society to justify their existence and fulfill social responsibilities. They are largely responsible for stations' rating, advertising revenue, viewership and general perception, which translate to survival of the station. According to Pringle & Starr (2015), it is the quality of programmes that help stations to stem the tides of stiff opposition. It is the content, borne out of audience research and viewers interests that contribute to societal progress and development. Programmes are the major determinants in the management of a TV station, because they are capable of changing the fortunes and general perceptions of the stations globally. Asemah & Asogwa (2016) corroborate with the above submission that TV stations are in the business of programme productions. They design and transmit several quality contents to the viewers, with a view to

informing, educating, entertaining, persuading and mobilizing them for national discourse. In fact, Dike (2024), also says there is very strong relationship between, and among quality utility contents, high viewership, advertisers' interest and station's revenue generation which translates to survival of the TV station and democratic governance.

Since the TV stations occupy this central position in the society, there is need to ensure proper enabling environment for its optimum performances. This is because the digital age has considerably created many challenges for every profession and sustainability can only be achieved through creation of enabling digital environment. Thus, this study is to examine possible challenges that hinder excellent professional performance of TV stations in Nigeria, with insights from select TV stations in Abuja and viewers in North Central States, in other to provide strategies to facilitate virile press environment for sustainable democratic governance.

Statement of Problem

Television broadcasting is a profession that thrives on public interest. The Nigeria Broadcasting Code (2019, P 11-12) specifies that it will “serve the interest of the public, exercise their professional responsibilities as agents of the society, not for any personal rights, privileges, friends or ownership interests ... provide an efficient, professional and comprehensive service to the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, based on national objectives and aspirations. In other words, the cardinal responsibility of broadcasting to inform fully, educate meaningfully and entertain adequately shall not be at the expense of national interest, unity and cohesion of Nigeria's diverse social, cultural, economic, political and religious configurations.”

These provisions imply that the TV stations shall, through their various programmes provide accurate, comprehensive and intelligent account of daily events in a context that gives them meaning. They shall also create forum for exchange of comments, constructive criticisms, and project a representative picture of the constituents of the society. Besides, there should be fair presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society, to ensure informed participatory governance and development of the society. The attainment of the above provisions requires editorial independence to facilitate production of balanced viewer oriented high utility contents.

However, the findings of several scholars, (Nguevese, 2018; Nkechi & Nkeiru, 2016; Pepple & Onah, 2022) reveal that the media, including TV stations function to regurgitate the imposed agenda of its owners, their friends and associates. They stated

that due to self-serving interests, arising from political and economic considerations in Nigeria, the concept of editorial independence, balance, full information and objectivity has been sacrificed for primordial interests, at the expense of virile press for democratic governance. Besides, Okocha & Agaku (2023) explain that the introduction of information technology has greatly altered the performance and operations of every profession, including broadcasting. Again, the absence of empirical studies on the assessment of these perceived challenges in TV stations in Nigeria, with insights from select TV stations in Abuja, and viewers in North Central States necessitates this study, with a view to providing solutions for robust TV stations to champion the social responsibilities of Nigerian society.

Research Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to assess the challenges hindering effective performance of television stations in Nigeria, with particular reference to select TV stations in Abuja and viewers in North Central States. The specific objectives are:

- I. To ascertain the challenges militating against effective performance of TV stations in Nigeria, with a focus on select TV stations in Abuja and viewers in North Central States.
- ii. To find out the effects of the identified challenges on the performances of TV stations in Nigeria, with a focus on select TV stations in Abuja and viewers in North Central States.
- iii. To find out possible ways to manage the identified challenges militating against effective performance of TV stations in Nigeria, with a view to proffering solutions for proper enabling environment for television broadcasting in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- I. What are the challenges militating against effective performance of television stations in Nigeria, with particular reference to select TV stations in Abuja and viewers in North Central States?
- ii. What are the effects of these identified challenges on the performances of TV stations in Nigeria, with reference to select TV stations in Abuja and viewers in North Central States?
- iii. How can the identified challenges militating

against effective performance of TV stations in Nigeria be managed, with a view to proffering solutions for proper enabling environment for television broadcasting in Nigeria?

Scope of Study

The TV stations covered by this study are the NTA, the TVC and the Arise News, with head/major offices in Abuja, while the states in North Central States are Plateau, Nasarawa and Benue States. Specifically, the areas of study are Jos North, Lafia and Makurdi. Meanwhile, the choice of North Central Nigeria, among other geopolitical zones in Nigeria and the choice of the three states (Plateau, Nasarawa and Benue), as well as choice of the three select TV stations, among several TV stations in Nigeria were determined through simple random sampling.

Review of Literature

There are some studies that reveal significant relationships between ownership of TV stations and other variables, in relation to challenges militating against effective performances of TV stations in Nigeria. For instance, Okwuchukwu (2014) carried a study on "the Influence of Media Ownership and Control on Media Agenda Setting", using Nigeria for case analysis. It was a survey, and the core method of data collection was in-depth interview. The sampling methods were the cluster and purposive sampling techniques because the needed data required an in-depth knowledge of the Nigeria media landscape. A total of 23 in-depth interviews were conducted across the six political zones in Nigeria. The breakdown of interviewees were as follows: 15 journalists representing privately owned newspapers, public newspapers, privately owned radio/TV stations, public radio/TV stations as well as privately owned magazines. Eight (8) media Chief Executives of both privately and publicly owned news organisations.

The researcher finds that Nigeria's current media ownership structure has several restrictions on the media's ability to play a pivotal role in determining the direction of public discourse. This is seen in the support which media outlets provide to the current administration, irrespective of its policies and accomplishments. The participants agreed that ownership and proprietary power pose an additional challenge to the Nigerian mass media's endeavor to function as the public watchdog. People with sufficient wealth to establish media companies, typically have numerous political, social, commercial, and/or financial interests that they need to safeguard. They occasionally influence how their media organizations

operate on a daily basis with these interests.

It is obvious that proprietors have severally directed their editors to self-censor the contents. They also expect their employees to understand the importance of safeguarding the diverse range of interests held by the owners. According to the respondents, the mass media's domination by the ruling class is one way that it shapes people's views and thoughts, which helps to spread personal agenda as media agenda. This claim is supported by both public and private conversation in Nigeria. Besides being significant capitalists in their own right, Nigeria's media proprietors have close ties to the ruling classes across the globe.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the existing media ownership structure in Nigeria has a detrimental impact on the media's ability to operate without interference. The circumstance where media professionals in both public and private media organizations ensure that their reports are not viewed as "unfavorable" by the current government serves as an example of this. The truth is that the media, which are run by public officials refrain from criticizing government policies or decisions out of concern for repercussions. It has been reported that numerous public media executives have lost their jobs as a result of their disagreements with government authorities. Some private media organizations founded by public officials' cronies have an indirect say over how other private media organizations operate. Data evidence show that respondents from the study concur that the existing pattern of media ownership makes it difficult for Nigerian media outlets to operate effectively and efficiently for the benefit of society as a whole.

The respondents also agreed that ownership is very critical to media objectivity. According to them, "you risk losing your job if you give out unfavorable information about government activities in public own news organizations." They added that there are institutional problem with media operation and ownership in Nigeria. Privately owned media houses owe government no apology but government of the day can still use their law to order the closure of the privately owned news organization. You remember that the government closed AIT for airing lurid details of a plane clash. Again the Channels Television was closed down during President Yaradua's administration for its reports on the president health challenges. It means that even the private media trade with caution on public issue on their programme contents.

Naturally public owned news organization receive subvention from government including payment of salaries and as the saying goes he who pays the pipers detect the tune. Otherwise, he will withdraw his subvention and salaries and the news organization

will collapse. Added to the above, AIT is an independent news organisation. It means no government is supposed to influence its activities but the independence is not total. Essentially, most government appointees are also close friends with the proprietors of the private media outlet, government officials occasionally have impact on the private media content. "I am telling you, some of them even commit their money there. They work hand in hand, so the independence is not even total. Government officials can also interfere with the operations of some media outfits in Nigeria by deciding whose announcements or paid adverts are aired in government sponsored radio and Television stations or whose face appears on the pages of government control newspapers".

These are not all. Nweze, Ario, Nwafor, Nwamba, Aneke, Ekunna, Anyachonkeya & Chidi-Iren, (2019) carried out study on Comparative Analyses of Management of Government and Private Radio Stations in South East Nigeria, using the Unity FM Abakiliki, Ebonyi State and Dream FM Enugu, Enugu State. The study was anchored on Gate Keeping Theory. The research design was survey and the instrument was in-depth interview. A sample size of 12 respondents (six from each radio station) was purposively chosen through non probability sampling technique. It was a survey of principal officers and producers from selected radio stations in the South East Nigeria.

The study revealed that every broadcast station has its strengths and weaknesses whether private or government owned. A broadcast station in one way or the other, has to satisfy ownership interest, ideologies and policies on the basis of which its existence is built. The government uses the public stations to extend their power and political ambition as well as propaganda, suppression and if possible, elimination of all forms of opposition. Garba (2014) was right when he wrote in the Guardian newspaper that the interest of the state are merged with that of the ruling regime or party and its leadership. The interest of the leadership in turn becomes the public interest. The state media is therefore, used and seen as a tool for promoting the interest of the state and the government in power. The private stations too, have their pitfalls. They are also used to promote the political ambition, personal and financial interests or the gains of the proprietor. This is because they want to make more money, to stay alive as a station, pay staff, renew equipment, pay taxes, renew license and to be able to foot other overhead bills.

Nguevese (2018) also examined the influence of ownership in radio new coverage. There are two major categories of media ownership in Nigeria, namely the private owned and government owned but, the researcher concentrated on government owned media

because it was the researcher's area of study. The point of the study was to determine the influence of ownership in radio news coverage. It sought to determine if the news reported by the stations were in the owner's interest or public's interest. A survey of the selected broadcasting stations news coverage for a period of two weeks was carried out with the use of questionnaire. The data obtained were used to obtain the frequency for the study. The analysis was on simple percentage and chi-square. This was used to obtain percentage prominence and degree of freedom of news coverage the study.

The findings of the study showed that owners (the government) had a significant influence on radio news coverage, and owners' interests rather than the interests of the public were the focus of the news reports. According to the investigation, radio news coverage was influenced by the government. Based on the research, suggestions were made that the government should focus on subvention and the station's overall effectiveness as a vehicle for national advancements, rather than meddling too much in its day-to-day operations. News that is focused on the interests of the public should be covered by the media rather than those of business owners.

In view of the widely reported influence of ownership on media contents, Nkechi, Nkiru & Nkechi (2016), carried out a study on "Audience Perceptive of NTA's Coverage of the 2015 Presidential Election Campaign in Nigeria." It was also a survey, hinged on two theories namely, the Agenda Setting and the Cultivation theories. A sample size of 400 respondents, purposively drawn from a population of five hundred thousand, three hundred and twelve (500,312) persons from Onitsha and Asaba, in South East and South-South Nigeria were used for the study. They were studied through questionnaire. The findings of the study show that government exerts enormous influence on the programme contents of public owned television stations. Besides, such government owned broadcast stations were reportedly notorious for unprofessional conduct in support of a government in power in their coverage of national issue.

In addition, Uche (1989) notes that government influence is evident in the unwavering support that official media outlets offer to the ruling administration. Government representatives will take swift action to remove any news organization's leader if they don't provide unwavering support. Any news organization managers or employees that err, run the possible risk of being fired with "immediate effect" or receiving other sanctions for such "heinous" actions. He noted that no fewer than ten CEOs of state-owned broadcasting stations were fired in the first year following the elected civilian administration's takeover in 1990.

He went on to say that owners of private media companies also have a great deal of control over their media companies. Owners have been known to demand that their editors practice self-censorship. The owners anticipate that employees in their media companies will be aware of and guard their interests. Owners' political and/or economic interests frequently have a big say in how their broadcast stations or newspapers interact with the current administration. The media community has consistently opposed these limitations, with the exception of "co-opted" journalists. There have been cases where the government has been sued. The military administration of 1975 ordered the arrest, flogging, and shaving of a reporter's hair and beard because they considered his stories to be insulting. The reporter instituted a court action, won and the government was asked to pay damages (Uche, 1989).

These submissions are clear indications that there are strong relationship between ownership of news organization and contents of the stations. These could also be part of the challenges which the select stations encounter in processing their contents. It is obvious therefore that independence or press freedom to process information to reflect public or viewers interest is subjective, and is majorly determined by proprietors of each station. The law itself, which should have ensured public interest in media content, is an Ass.

We also have hazards of harassments, intimidations, brutal attacks and even death by Security Agents. This life threatening challenge is as old as journalism practice in Nigeria. Even during the recent 2024 "#EndbadGovernance" in Nigeria, several journalists who were on duty, covering the protests, suffered brutally at the hands of security agents. The molestations were so inhuman that the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) gave a 10-day ultimatum to the Inspector General of Police (Kayode Egbetokun) to investigate the ordeals of Nigerian journalists at the hands of Police men at Eagle Square, Abuja for prosecution. Some of the molested journalists include Jide Oyekunle (Chairman, FCT Correspondence Chapel), working with the Daily Independent Newspaper, Yakubu Mohammed of Premium Times, Mary Adeboye of News Central Television and Kayode Jaiyeila of Punch Newspapers. The NHRC said the actions of the Police undermine the principles of democracy and rule of law (Obinna, 2024). For Ojukwu, (2024), the actions of the security agents are clear violations of the fundamental human rights and deliberate attempts to suppress freedom of the press.

There are several empirical studies to show that many journalists are working through tight ropes

while others have paid supreme prizes in the field of journalism. For example, Chile, Ogbu and Chile (2023) did a study on "Public Assessment of Media Performance in Reporting Corruption in Nigeria." The research design was survey and a sample size of 205 respondents was drawn from Benue, Kogi and Taraba states. Their findings show varying degrees of attacks, threats of prosecution and dangers in carrying out their professional duties. Specifically, "the dangers which journalists experience range from personal to facility attacks, as attested by 39% of the respondents. Murder, proscription and intimidations had 1% each, of the respondents. Besides, 57% of the respondents said that all the listed factors are part of the challenges of the media in performing their responsibilities.

It should be noted that Ogbu (2013 p.370), had earlier discovered through his study on the mass media and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria that "there are lot of encumbrances which the media are facing; that serve as impediments in their professional duties." According to him, "the media are constantly pressured by the public, political parties, interests groups and government respectively. These pressures usually result in a situation where the media are forced to take sides on national issues in order to promote certain identifiable interest the." He described the Nigeria media over the decades as a combination of successes and failures, due to increasing proven cases official and unofficial attacks and influences on the journalists.

Added to the above is the issue of irregular power supply. No serious TV station functions with public power supply, and the cost of alternative power supply is usually prohibitive. Owuamalam (2012) agrees with this ugly scenario when he observed that journalism practice in Nigeria cannot grapple with the dictates of new technology, when power supply is epileptic and erratic in Nigeria. The issue of programme disruptions, occasioned by equipment malfunctioning, erratic power supply and avoidable apologies by presenters must be addressed to ensure optimal performance, high viewership, public and advertisers' patronage. Television viewers on different platforms need electricity supply to watch preferred programmes. For example, "residents of Auta Balefi, Mararaba and Nyanya rarely enjoy steady power supply for a period of six hours a day" (Okocha & Agaku, 2023 p.174). Other challenges include poor welfare packages, poor network systems, influence of unregulated social and new media contents as well as poor training, among others.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Systems Theory. It is a theory of interacting processes and the way which they influence one another to permit the continuity of

the entire system overtime. It is based on the principle that the component parts of a system can best be understood in the context of the relationships with each other and other members of the system, rather than in isolation. As an interdisciplinary framework, it examines the interrelationship among component parts and emphasizes that the whole of a system is greater than the sum of its parts. Essentially, a system is an interdependent and interdependent component parts, implying that every part of the system functions to maintain life of the entire system. The theory was developed in 1940s by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, through series of lectures on new approaches to life.

This theory is related to the study because it sees the Nigerian society as a system, with inter-related and interdependent component parts, wherein every component functions for the success and survival of the system. The failure or success of any unit greatly affects the existence of the entire system. It means that the political, economic, educational, environmental, health, mass media, and social-cultural aspects of the society are inter-related in the functioning of the society and the failure or success of each part, is directly proportional to the life of the Nigerian society. Specifically, the success stories or challenges of the television stations in Nigeria, with insights from select TV stations in Abuja, greatly affects the functioning of other parts of the Nigerian system (society), sustenance of democratic governance and development. It is therefore expedient to ascertain these possible factors militating against optimal performance and contributions of the TV stations in Nigeria's development project, with a view to providing conducive environment for distinctive performance.

Methodology

This study adopts the survey research design to generate data from viewers in select states and staff of select TV stations in North Central Nigeria. Okoro, (2001) says surveys are useful in the measurement of public opinion, attitudes and orientations which are dominant among a large population at a particular period. It is the collection of information from a sample of, or the entire population, by administering questions and eliciting responses, on the subject under investigation. To ensure quantitative and qualitative data generation, the researcher applied questionnaire and focus group discussion guide to viewers and staff of the select TV stations, within the area of study.

The projected populations of the Makurdi Benue State, Lafia Nasarawa State and Jos North, Plateau State as at December 2023, according to National Population Commission (2024), are 442,050; 520,436 and 655,513 respectively. Summarily, the population of the study is 1,627,999 persons. From the above figure, the

researcher applied the Gleen (1992) sample size determination table, reviewed in 2012, which states that when the population of a study is above 100,000, the sample size under the confidence level of 95% and the precision level of +5, should be 400 respondents. From this sample size, the researchers purposively selected three management staff from each of the three TV stations for focus group discussion. Thus, the remaining 391 sample was proportionally distributed among the three state capitals using the Bowley (1926) proportional sample allocation formula, cited in Tarnaha (2023). The breakdown of the distribution is as follows: Makurdi = 106 respondents; Lafia = 125 respondents and Jos North = 160 respondents, (9 + 391 = 400).

Meanwhile, the decision to systematically sample viewers in the capital of the selected states was purposive, because of their metropolitan nature. Besides, the state capitals house several federal ministries and parastatals including universities and other tertiary institutions, with staff from several states in Nigeria, due to federal character principle. This implies that responses from the viewers are indirect reflections of views of Nigerians from different states that reside in the state capitals. The questionnaire was distributed evenly in the political wards of the select states while three staff of the TV stations participated in the focus group discussions.

Again, a buffer margin of 10% was added to the sample size to address incidences and exigencies associated with loss of, or incomplete/wrong filling of the questionnaire. This principle according to Fink (2017), Agbaje, et al (2021), and Dewua, et al (2023); permits “over sampling” by 10%, to mitigate exigencies on recovery of instrument, especially when the sample size was scientifically determined. Nevertheless, the findings, discussions and conclusions are based on the predetermined sample size. The researchers also employed two research assistants in each of the three cities for distribution and recovery of the instruments.

Findings and Discussions

This discussion is based on 100% recovery rate due to application of buffer margin on the sample, in line with the prescriptions of several scholars and diligent administration and recovery of the instruments. Essentially, the responses on demographic and psychographic characteristics of the respondents show that different age brackets, gender, educational background, occupation, religion and marital status were equitably represented, implying balanced responses for informed discussions. The respondents also resided in the respective state capitals and were regularly exposed to watching different programmes of

select TV stations. Their responses on the challenges militating effective performances of TV stations in Nigeria, are detailed on table one below.

Table 1: Challenges Militating Against Effective Performances of TV Stations in Nigeria, with a focus on select TV stations in Abuja and viewers in North Central States

Options/Variables	Frequency/Percentage of Respondents according to States			
	Makurdi	Lafia	Jos North	Total
The staff do not receive regular salaries, as and when due; and this causes low morale	3	4	4	11 (2.8%)
Poor enabling environment for robust journalism practice.	2	2	3	7 (1.8%)
Ownership influences due to continuous censorship and interests.	11	10	16	37 (9.5%)
Poor professional training and retraining	4	5	4	13 (3.3%)
Political pressures	14	18	31	63 (16.1%)
Insufficient or analogue broadcast equipment.	5	4	4	13 (3.3%)
Poor power supply	23	28	37	88 (22.5%)
Maintenance of alternative power supply is very expensive	4	3	4	11 (2.8%)
Influence of the internet and unregulated new media contents	8	9	6	23 (5.9%)
Overzealous Security agents	15	21	30	66 (16.9%)
Advertisers' Influences	5	5	7	17 (4.3%)
Regulatory Agencies, especially National Broadcasting Commission	4	5	4	13 (3.3%)
All of the Above	8	11	10	29 (7.4%)
Total	106	125	160	391 (100%)

The data on table one above show that the issue of power supply was considered the most outstanding challenge by the respondents across the states with 22.5% affirmation; followed by activities and harassments of overzealous security agents with 16.9%. Other challenges are political pressure (16.1%); ownership influence (9.5%), “all of the above” option (7.4%) while influence of unregulated social and new media contents scored 5.9% of the sample size. The issue of obsolete equipment polled 3.3%; influences of advertisers (4.3%); regulatory agencies, especially the National Broadcasting had 3.3% of the sample size, among others.

The data generated through the focus group discussions corroborate the above findings. For example, all the participants collectively agreed in their respective stations that they “depend on either solar or other alternative sources of power supply for daily broadcasting. No serious TV station goes on air, using public power supply, because of regular fluctuations and irregular supply. Otherwise, the station's equipment are at very great risk. Here, at the NTA headquarter in Abuja, you must remain on air for 24 hours, and as the national TV station, the world is watching us and we cannot fail the nation. Many thanks for the support from the federal government for sustenance of alternative sources of power. Most of our out stations in some states and local governments find it very difficult to cope with 24 hour daily transmission because of power outages and increasing cost of maintenance. Broadcasting is very expensive, especially in Nigeria where power supply is epileptic and we sympathize with our sister private TV stations.”

While the issue of power supply seems to apply to all the stations, the problem of political pressure, influences from regulatory bodies and activities of overzealous security agents weigh more on the private TV stations. “The NBC comes here regularly with threats of revocation or withdrawal of license, even when our story is accurate, fair and balanced. In such instances, they cite national interest, as defined by them, or that your story is capable of embarrassing the government. You may wish to know that when unknown gunmen ambushed some military personnel in a community in Delta State, the military high command and some high profile political appointees were mad at us, for interviewing and airing the views of community leaders in the affected areas. Actually, no right-thinking person was happy with what happened to the military personnel, but Nigerians deserve full and accurate information for informed discussion and analysis on necessary steps to manage the situation.

“Even the State Governor and Commissioner of Police were barred from accessing the affected areas. It was our balanced report that made Nigerians to know what was happening in the communities. Yet, the government frowned at us, and the military authorities were very annoyed. In fact, some of their officers came here, but we don't care again, provided our report is accurate, fair, balanced and objective.” The works of several scholars, (Okocha & Agaku, 2023; Chile, Ogbu & Chile 2023; Ogbu 2013, Owuamalam 2012, Uche 2009) among others, attest to the validity of these findings.

The responses from the focus group discussions also validate data across the states that ownership influence exerts great impact on performance of TV stations in North Central Nigeria. According to them, “you may be required to knock off or step down a

scheduled programme due to ownership or advertisers' interest. It's a shoe which every editor is wearing, and each person is expected to know and address wherever it pinches him.” They also agreed to the concept that whoever pays the piper either dictates the tune or moderates the lyrics. Every owner of a news organization, regardless of ownership pattern choses his editorial and allied staff, to reflect his editorial philosophy and functions. Every station, in one way or the other, has to satisfy the interests, ideologies and policies of the proprietor; at the expense of principles of Systems theory, which expects the media to contribute significantly in the sustenance of Nigeria's democratic governance and development.

These findings, as well findings by other scholars stated in this work provide answers to the first research question and objective of this study which sought to ascertain the challenges militating effective performances of select TV stations in North Central Nigeria. The next table is on the effects of the identified challenges on the performances of the select TV stations in North Central Nigeria.

Table 2: Effects of the identified challenges on the effective performances of select TV stations in Abuja and viewers in North Central States

Options/Variables	Frequency/Percentage of Respondents according to State Capitals			
	Makurdi	Lafia	Jos North	Total
The challenges affect optimum performances of staff	8	12	15	35 (9%)
They lead to production poor programme content because human and material resources are negatively affected.	12	11	20	43 (11%)
The challenges lead to low viewership and poor advertisers' patronage, which eventually leads to the closure of the station	14	14	20	48 (14.9%)
They can instill fear on the journalists, imprisonment cause eventual death	21	26	32	79 (20.2%)
The masses will not be fully informed, educated, entertained for their information contributions on daily life and democracy is affected	13	14	14	41 (10.5%)
The challenges will retard development because mass media are sidelined	8	10	13	31 (7.9%)
All of the above	30	38	46	114 (29.2%)
Total	106	125	160	391 (100%)

From the responses on table two above, a total of 114 respondents, representing 29.2% of the sample across all the states favoured “all of the above” option, implying full and equitable combination of the entire options as effects of the challenges on effective

performances of the select TV stations. Another 79(20.2%) said they can instill fear on the journalists, lead to their imprisonment and possible death. A total of 35(11%) and 48(14.9%) opted for production of poor programme contents due to its adverse effects on human and material resources as well as low viewership,, poor advertisers' patronage and eventual death of the station respectively. The idea that the masses will not be fully informed, properly educated and entertained for informed contribution on democratic governance was preferred by 41(10.5%) while 35(9%) persons said it will negatively affect optimal performances of the staff. It is only 31(7.9%) that said development would be retarded because the mass media, and in this context, the select TV stations will not actively play their complimentary roles in development initiatives.

The responses from focus group discussions agree with the above data. "When the military high command and the federal government came heavily on our station, due to our interviews and exposures of some atrocities by security agents in a community in Delta state, some of our sister stations chickened out due to fear and ownership influence. We resisted the pressure, and that was why and how many Nigerians knew what was happening. Our colleagues could not put in their best, to avoid the anger of their boss. If all of us had back-pedaled, you can guess its effect on the polity." The participants from NTA were bold to say that "this is a national station and our priority is furtherance of national interest by supporting the government, through all our programmes. We present all the policies, activities and programmes of the government to people, and if you want to hear the voice of the opponents, so as to cause crises or achieve other predetermined objectives, you know where to go.

"It is true that the activities of some security agencies affect performances of journalists, but everybody is trying to protect his job. Even here, they do come at times, including the regulatory agencies, but we do our best to play the game according to the rule. It is also obvious that there are several risks in this profession. Even during the recent 'endbadgovernment' protest in Nigeria, some journalists were reportedly handled unfairly by some security agents. Such experiences can instill fear in the practitioners and make them to bow to pressure or slant programmes to suit some interests. You should not expect someone with poor salary and near absence of other welfare packages to stick his neck for nothing."

Ogbu (2013) agrees that these pressures usually result to a situation wherein the media are forced to take sides in reporting national events in order to protect predetermined interest. This invariably affects projection of development oriented issues and

democratic governance. It also reduces freedom of expression and cross fertilization of ideas on national issues to a zero level. He described the Nigerian media over the decades as a combination of successes and failures, due to increasing proven cases of official and unofficial brutal attacks and influences on journalists, which are capable of derailing the fourth estate of the realm. Whenever the morale or objectivity of the journalist is compromised, the resultant effect is sycophancy and subjective reporting at the expense of democratic ideals and development. From these findings across all the sampled states, it is safe to say that the second research objective and question have been adequately addressed. It means that the continued existence of the challenges portends great danger to the systemic existence of the Nigerian society, democracy and development. In view of these, further effort was made to ascertain possible ways to manage the challenges for optimum performances.

Table 3: Possible Ways to Manage Identified Challenges, with a View to Providing Proper Enabling Environment for Robust Television Production in Nigeria

Options/Variables	Frequency/Percentage of Respondents according to State			
	Makurdi	Lafia	Jos North	Total
Improved Power Supply	15	23	26	64 (16.4%)
Critical balance between amongkey stakeholders in ownership, press freedom, viewers' interest, advertising and national interest	18	15	28	61 (15.6%)
Integration synchronization of new/social media contents with mainstream media, especially the Television programme with a view to address surging migration of several Nigerians to online platforms	11	14	16	41 (10.5%)
Regulatory and training and retraining staff of TV stations, skill and efficiency, especially on ICT and digital broadcasting	10	10	14	34 (8.7%)
Improved welfare and regular payment salaries to staff	12	12	12	36 (9.2%)
Establishment of insurance policies for journalists view of the threats and hazards of their profession	08	07	10	25 (6.4%)
All of the above.	32	44	54	130 (33.2%)
Total	106	125	160	391 (100%)

The data presented on table three show an overwhelming preference for equitable combination of "all of the above" options as antidote for identified challenges of the stations. Specifically, 130(33.2%) respondents opted for this very significant preference while 64 (16.4%) said power supply should be improved upon, to secure 24 hour daily transmission. Still,

61(15.6%) insisted on a critical balance between and among key stakeholders such as ownership, advertisers, independent press, viewership, national and political interests. To them, this option is necessary to maintain the systemic interest that will guarantee sustenance of the entire system. We also have integration and synchronization of new/social media contents with the mainstream media, especially the TV, with a view to addressing surging migration of several viewers and advertisers to online platforms with 41(10.5%) respondents and 36(9.2%) for improved welfare packages and regular payment of salaries. Others are regular local and foreign training and retraining of staff (8.7%) and establishment of insurance policies for journalists, in view of threats to life and harassments by entrenched political interest with 25(6.4%) affirmations.

The data generated from focus group discussions corroborate above submissions. For instance, the participants from Arise News said “we transmit from Nicon Hilton Abuja, to beat issue of power outages and related issues. In broadcasting, standard power supply must be 24 hours because digital broadcast equipment are very sensitive. You must have efficient alternative power supply to function in broadcasting. The issue of critical balance among all key stakeholders is also necessary but all the options listed in your questionnaire should be combined to achieve efficiency and delivery.” The attacks and intimidations from governments and security agents are as old as the profession. It is left for the journalist to know and apply the rules of the game, particularly on issues of national and ownership interests. Once, they know that your station does not compromise professionalism, they will respect your professional principles of balance, accuracy, fairness, accuracy, objectivity and right of reply.”

These views are not significantly different from the submissions of their counterparts from TVC and NTA. “For us, we don't have issue of power supply because our proprietors have provided alternative sources of power, but without steady and standard power supply, there is no broadcasting. We have the TV College in Jos, as well as other local and foreign training opportunities. Regular training programmes are indispensable to update your staff on current developments in this profession. Otherwise, you will surely lose viewership and advertisers.” The participants from the all three stations were unanimous on managing challenges of new/social media contents. “The online media is a movement, comparably to the shift from black and white television to colour television. Any TV station that neglects the movement, does so, at its own risk.” They attested that their respective stations are alive on YouTube and other

social media platforms

For TVC, “we have 'New Digital Initiative' that enables every reporter to file stories, both online, and to our main studio from the scene of the event. This 'live U device' makes every reporter to be a field anchor. Our challenge is that social media content is not regulated while the NBC regulates our contents. So some of our viewers rush to the platforms that allow them to see whatever they want to see. We suggest that social media content should be regulated.” The NTA admitted bracing up to the challenges through their digital department that ensures their contents are uploaded on the cloud. Similarly the Arise News participants said “we have online content producers for all the platforms, namely facebook, twitter, skype, etc. We strive to integrate and synchronize online and mainstream media contents, to remain ahead of our contemporaries. If any station toys with the online movement, such station will cease to exist soon.

From all the quantitative and qualitative data presented above, viz-a-viz the predominance and overwhelming consensus across the states, on combining all the identified strategies and insights from select TV stations in Abuja and viewers in North Central States, it is safe to say that the antidotes for addressing the identified challenges have been provided. Besides, the third research objective and question have been addressed by this study.

Conclusion

The television stations in Nigeria have central responsibilities in nurturing and sustaining democratic governance and development in Nigeria, through accurate, balanced and objective information to the citizenry. They are constitutionally required to inform fully, educate meaningfully and entertain adequately through their various programmes. Such contents should reflect viewers' communication needs and aspirations, to enable them contribute constructively on national issues, teach new creative skills to youth to alleviate poverty, reduce infant and maternity rates, diseases, illiteracy and encourage prudence and accountability in governance.

However, the stations are acutely bedeviled by several political, technical, professional, economic and social challenges that are militating against their effective performances towards achieving predetermined objectives in the nation's systemic environment. From the data presented and discussed, including insights from focus group discussions with some management staff of select TV stations, the future of the stations and their corresponding abilities to perform optimally, in line with principles of the System's theory are hanging on a balance, unless suggested strategies are comprehensively applied to

address the anomalies.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings, discussions and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made.

1. There should be critical balance between, and among key stakeholders such as ownership, independent press, political, viewers, advertisers and national interests for the survival and sustenance of the stations
2. There should be integration and synchronization of new/social media contents, with the mainstream media contents, with a view to improving on the later, and addressing surging migrations of viewers and advertisers to online platforms, which have been at the expense of the stations viewership and advertisers' patronage.
3. There should be improved power supply, welfare packages, regular and timely payment of salaries to staff as well as institution of functional insurances policies for journalists, in view of threats to life and hazards of the profession.
4. Regular local and foreign training and retraining, especially on digital broadcasting and ICTs should be encouraged. This is because technological innovations have greatly affected performance of every profession, including television broadcasting.
5. The employment of staff should be on "technical know what," instead of "technical know who." This simply means that adequate considerations should be given to merit and proficiency.

References

1. Agbaje, O. S., Arua, C. K., Umeifekwem, J. E., Umoke, P. C. I., Igbokwe, C. C., Iwuagwu, T. E. & Obande-Ogbuinya, E. N. (2021). Workplace Gender-based Violence and Associated Factors Among University Women in Enugu, South-East Nigeria: An Institutional-based Cross-sectional Study. *BMC Women's Health*, 21, 1-20.
2. Asemah, E. & Asogwa, C. (2016) Broadcast

Production Techniques: A Comprehensive Guide. Jos: Markol Press.

3. Chile, D. N., Ogbu, B. E. & Chile, M. M. (2023). Public Assessment of Media erformance in Reporting Corruption in Nigeria. *Jos Journal of Media & Communication Studies*, 4(6), 102 - 122.
4. Dike, K.O. (2024), Assessment of Select Television Stations Programmes and Viewers Interests In North Central Nigeria. A PhD Thesis, Makurdi: Mass Communication Department, Benue State University
5. Dewua, P., Paul, A., Damsa, J. T., Abakpa, N. A., & Terngu, A. M. (2023). Employee Commitment and the Growth of Selected Secondary Schools in Makurdi Metropolis. *Journal of Management Research and Development*, 8(1), 76-91.
6. Fink, J. K. (2017). *Reactive Polymers: Fundamentals and Applications: A Concise Guide to Industrial Polymers*.
7. Gleen, D.I, (1992), "Determining Sample Size," University of Florida, IFAS Extension
8. Kur, J.T., & Nyekwere, E. O. (2015). Television Broadcasting and the Democratization Process in Nigeria: The Successful and Unsuccessful Story. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.29333/ojcm/2529>
9. National Population Commission (2024), Provision of Projected Population Data for Selected States /Cities. Census Department, 15/04/2004
10. Nigeria Broadcasting Code, (2019) National Broadcasting Commission, 6th ed.
11. Nkechi A.; Nkiru, C. & Umuze (2015). Audience Perception of NTA's Coverage of the 2015 Presidential Election Campaign.
12. Nweze, S; Ario , P; Nwafor, E; Nwamba, J; Aneke, M; Ekuma, C; Anyachonkeya , C & Chidi-Irem, O (2019), "Comparative Analyses of Management of Government and Private Media in South East Nigeria". *International Journal of Business Management Review* 7(6) pp.100-118
13. Ogbu, I. E. (2013). Mass Media and the

- Sustenance of Democracy in Nigeria. *Mkar Journal of Media and Culture*. 1(1), 257 - 274.
14. Okocha D. O. & Agbaku T. (2023) Newspaper Journalism in Nigeria in the Digital Age: Challenges and Prospects. *Jos Journal of Media and Communication Studies*. 4(6). Pp 160-177
 15. Okwuchukwu, G (2014) "The Influence of Media Ownership and Control on Media Agenda Setting in Nigeria". *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*(7) pp.36-45.
 16. Owuamalam, E. (2012). *Data Analysis and Research Project Writing*, Owerri: Top Class Agencies Ltd
 17. Pepple, I & Onah, G (2022) "Television Programme Production and Aesthetics: A Study of Rivers State Television and Nigeria Television Authority, Port Harcourt, Programme Content" *LWATI: A Journal of Research 2022, 19 (2): Pp 229-247 Contemporary*
 18. Pringle, P. & Starr, M. (2015) *Electronic Media Management* (5th ed) Revised, USA: Freal Press.
 19. Tarnaha, A. (2023), "Social Media Based Advertisements by Telecommunications Companies and Relative Patronage in North-Central Nigeria. A Ph.D Thesis: Makurdi: Benue State University.
 20. Uche, L. U. (1989). *Mass Media People and Politics in Nigeria*. New Delph: Concept Publisher Company.