

Broadcast media and the conduct of 2015 and 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria: A comparative analysis

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Abstract

Media generally and broadcast media in particular are central to the survival and sustainability of any democratic dispensation like that of Nigeria. Democracy world over cannot function effectively without information sharing and this is done through the media. The Nigerian media is made up of print, electronic and the newly social media whose constitutional role is to inform, educate and entertain the general public fairly. Therefore, during any electioneering contest, the media is employed to canvass for votes by different parties against their opponents. This paper examines the role of the broadcast media during the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria, the study is a comparative one. Secondary source of data that included relevant books, articles, pamphlet etc. were utilized in the study. It was found that, the coverage by public stations during the 2015 presidential election was not fair to the opposition parties, since the outfit was dancing to the tune of the ruling party against other contenders. The private stations on the same elections covered the exercise more fairly and objectively by given a level playing ground for all parties to canvass for votes freely without any restriction. On the other hand, the coverage of the 2019 presidential election by both public and private stations was fairer and objective to both parties. It is therefore, recommended that, broadcast media should not serve as the mouthpiece of any political party. It should play its constitutional role of being the watch dog of the society by educating and informing the public especially during elections fairly to elect the candidate of their choice.

Keywords: Broadcast, election, media, Nigeria, presidential

Introduction

Nigeria as a country was a colonial creation that undergo different systems of administration ranging from parliamentary to military dictatorship and to presidential system of government. Throughout the history of the country, the broadcast media was in existence. It came into being before the birth of the country. The broadcast media was first a colonial establishment as captured by Abdullahi (2015). The British colonial government first established Radio Distribution Service (RDS) in the 1930's which was dictatorial in nature. The motive of the Radio Service was to transmit programmes coming from Britain to the local community of what is today referred to as Nigeria and principally for British audience. The programmes were not homegrown nor were they questioned,

all that was required was for the people to listen. The RDS was later transformed to National Broadcasting Service (NBS) in 1951. However, after some years of authoritarian operation, the people became tired with the way and manner programmes were initiated, broadcasted and transmitted to them without taking into cognizance their input, culture, religion among other factors, thereby generated a lot of criticisms. The colonial government only transmit what they wanted people to hear thereby resulted to the establishment of Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) in 1954, it continued operation as an arm of the government until 1957 when it became a Corporation (Udejah, 2004). NBS being an arm of the government mostly propelled government image at all cost. For instance, in 1959, the

Western Regional Government under the leadership of Chief Awolowo was denied a right to reply via the same outfit (NBS) to the challenging allegation levelled against him. Chief Awolowo reacted by establishing the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV), the following year (1960) the Eastern Region established its own while the Northern and the Federal Government completed the circle in 1962 (Udejah, 2004).

The Nigerian democratic history cannot be complete without a proper discussion of the role of the media. This is necessary, because there cannot be democracy without the presence and active participation of the media nor can it stand without free, fair and credible elections. Therefore, during the election of any representative democracy like that of Nigeria, the centrality of the media cannot be overemphasized. The media is saddled with the responsibility of educating, informing and entertaining the general public. During the election campaigns, the media is used to reach out to millions of people to seek for their support and discuss party manifestoes. Out of the classifications of media such as the print, electronic and the newly social media. Attention will be focused on the public broadcast media in the Nigerian electoral history with special focus to the nature and character of their reportage during the 2015 and 2019 Presidential elections. The study is a comparative one between the two elections. This is on account of the fact that, there are many studies that were conducted on the role of the media during elections generally, some limited their attention to 1999 General election (Jarikre, 2017; Olutokun & Seteolu, 2001; Opene, 2012) some 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015 and 2019 (Akinwalere, 2013; Iruonagbe & Imhonopi, 2013; Kur & Endwell, 2015; Nwangwu, 2015; Ochonogor, C & Omega, 2012; Okon, 2014; Opene, 2012; Pate, 2015; Santas & Ogoshi, 2016). However, comparing the role of the broadcast media during the 2015 and 2019 Presidential

election was not given sufficient attention. It is on this note, this paper set out to fill the gap created in the literature, which justify the direction of the paper.

Literature review

Broadcast media and the conduct of elections in Nigeria: A historical appraisal

Mass media generally and broadcast media specifically propel and strengthen the electoral processes (election circle) from pre-election activities such as political campaigns, voter education, sensitization among others, to the conduct of the elections proper and finally to post-election activities that included covering and reporting the election results, reporting of litigation cases arising from the outcome of the elections etc. This brings to the fore the central role of the broadcast media in the electoral democracy of Nigerian state. Udejah (2004) observed that the broadcast media (radio and Television) contributed greatly in the democratic history of Nigeria. He added that:

the fact that both radio and the television regularly present politically relevant information in modern politics, government everywhere in the world are keenly aware of the central role of the media. Practical experience indicates that broadcasting and politics are inseparable. It would be horrendous to have politics without the broadcast media... as effective broadcasting is vital to the rational management of political activities in our complex, fast-paced world (Udejah, 2004:7).

The media was at the center in the struggle for Nigeria's independence. Santas & Ogoshi (2016) maintained that, the media

was and is still very instrumental in promoting public interest from the colonial period to the present democratic dispensation, it has been educating the citizens about the evils of colonialism, military regimes as well as the need for democratization in the polity. Despite the undemocratic nature of colonialism and the military regime, the media stood its ground and champion the struggle against such regimes in the history of Nigeria (Ismail, 2011).

In a similar development, McQuail (1987) in relation to the politics of the First Republic in Nigeria, argued that, the regional and central media houses had no doubt contributed greatly in raising the political consciousness of the Nigerian people. However, the media houses in most cases served the interests of their proprietors and regions which further compounded the problem of regionalism in the country. During the period, the media could not be considered as the “watchdog of the society” since the people could not freely air out their views. Ojo (2003) further supported the above argument by noting that, the media is very vital in any democratic system across the globe. But the way and manner the Nigerian media conducts its activities is far from being the vanguard of the people. He further submits that, the Nigerian media should desist from being ethnic or regional in its reportage, it should however accommodate all shades of opinion without discrimination between and among different competing groups for peace and unity to be sustained in the country.

Egbon (2004), in relation to the conduct of 1983 general elections in Nigeria noted that, the government-owned broadcast media stations denied the opposition candidates and parties to appear and canvass for support during the electioneering campaign. He further maintained, even if allowed in most cases, the voice and the picture of the opposition candidate or party would be distorted by the engineers in charge. This is to frustrate

their effort in communicating with the public. Similarly, Alao (1992) added that, in 1983, some state-owned broadcast stations in the country employed the services of their media outfits to announced their re-election results before the final collation and announcement of result by the electoral commission. This is what Nam (2012) call the authoritarian nature of the political class under civilian administration.

In a related development, Kur & Endwell (2015) maintained that during the civilian administration of 1979, the broadcast media focused more on character assassination before, during and after elections and other forms of unethical practices in performing its constitutional role, this was against the provision of section 36 (1) of the 1979 Nigerian constitution which stated that every citizens shall be entitled to freedom of communication, including freedom to hold opinions, receive and impart ideas without any form of restraint. However, the constitutional provision (see 36(1) of the 1979 constitution dashed by some of the politicians before, during and after the election, as some journalists were detained as what obtained under the military regime. For example, it was reported that an auditor of the etalics was harassed and after beaten up by a legislator during the democratization process of 1979 in the country.

Therefore, the conduct of the broadcast media in any electoral processes, not only in the democratic set up of Nigeria but also across the globe as described by Aghamelu (2014) as all encompassing, including but not limited to information in relation to when and how elections would be held but the media also informs the citizenry about the pre-election matters, such as campaign activities by the political parties and candidates seeking to occupy various political offices; information on voters registration is also disseminated via the media to the people; voters education, arrival of election

materials, voting proper, announcement of election results and educating the citizens on the needs for peace to reign after the announcement of election results. Added to the above is the words of Arceneaux et al., (2016) that the broadcast media is the avenue through which the people/electorates receive truthful and objective information on the various political parties, their manifestoes, the voting processes, how to vote, when to vote and other educative information relating to the electoral processes.

Contrarily, the study of Ijere (2015) noted that, the Nigeria media is mostly pre-occupied with personality issues of contestants of various political offices rather than focusing on real political issues. He added that, the Nigerian media lacks objectivity in its reportage, in the sense that only few broadcasters report issues from the beginning to its logical conclusion, thereby leaving the story half reported for rumor mongers and political speculators to conclude. This has in most cases resulted to psychological tensions and unrest, and in most cases leading to post election violence.

Aghamelu (2014) in a similar vein substantiated that the media in the Nigerian electoral history are characterized by negative practices and reportage; particularly during election campaign in the political history of the country. However, it is recommended that, the media should be re-focused to work in line with its fundamental ethical best practices across the globe, by providing factual and truthful information for the populace to enable them make informed decision especially during elections.

In line with the above, the study of Ifedayo (2013), on the role of the media in electioneering process in Nigeria recognizes the central role of the media in the electoral politics of Nigerian state. He maintained that, there was abuse of the media by politicians for political gains, especially in the current dispensation,

starting from 1999 to 2011. However, the broadcast media has helped in shaping an individual's attitude towards selecting a candidate of his choice. The media has also been examined by Opene (2012), who lamented that in preparation for the 2011 general election in Nigeria, the broadcast media contributed greatly to the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as the president of the Federal republic of Nigeria. The study noted that, 74.4% of the respondents attested to the fact that Jonathan as the president elect was more exposed to the media compared to other aspirants, which gave him upper hand to seek for support and win the election. The author was not able to capture the influence of the incumbency factor of the president elect in manipulating and dominating the activities of most of the broadcast stations in the country and the entire electoral processes, which after the announcement of Jonathan as the president elect led to post-election violence across the major cities in Northern part of the country.

The study titled "Nigeria Post Election and the Media" by Bashir (2014) stressed that, the media has fueled the unfortunate post-election violence that erupted after the 2011 presidential election in Nigeria, which consumed many lives and properties. This occurred when the media failed to regulate the hate speeches and inciting comments before and after the election. He maintained that the media was always quoting directly some of the hate speeches and inciting comments from interviews and press statements of the various candidates together with their supporters, which resulted to the unfortunate incidence of post-election violence in the country.

However, despite the negative attitude displayed by the broadcast media, it has equally contributed immensely in raising the political consciousness of the Nigerian people. In view of this, it is captured that:

Political mobilization means the role played by the media in creating awareness, interpretation of issues, personalities, programs and educating the people purposely to ginger, encourage and motivate them to exercise their political rights and take informational political decisions during electoral contest (Okon, 2014:12).

Methodology

This is a qualitative study where documentary sources of data that included relevant textbooks, journals, periodicals, Nigerian media code of election coverage, the Nigerian broadcasting code, magazines, 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, internet materials and other documented sources that have direct bearing to the subject matter were utilized. In addition, thematic method of data analysis was employed in this study, simply because it entails analysis using themes and sub-themes of important component of the study, thereafter inferences were drawn from the documented sources to explain the issue under investigation, which translate that it is descriptive in nature.

Results and discussion

Broadcast media and the conduct of 2015 and 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria: A comparative analysis

Democracy anywhere in the world cannot be complete without free, fair and credible elections, as well, the centrality of the media in any democratic dispensation like that of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. This is necessary considering the pivotal role of the media of informing, educating and entertaining the citizenry. The media during any electoral democracy is expected to inform the populace with objective and truthful information, for people to make informed decisions

especially during elections. This is on account of the fact that, 'information is knowledge and knowledge is power'. Therefore, qualitative information is required in any electoral democracy. However, taking into cognizance the nature and character of the broadcast media during and after the 2011 general election, it was unfortunate, as the media was reported as being unethical, reporting inciting comments which fueled the post-election violence that erupted in the country.

Therefore, considering the unfortunate 2011 post-election violence in Nigeria, many people became apathetic as the 2015 general elections drew nearer. This was due to the fact that, during the post-election violence, many people lost their lives, others wounded and property worth billions of naira destroyed (Sheikh et al., 2015). Therefore, if the people decided not to participate in any of the election circle (pre, during and post-election activities) because of fear, then the very essence of democracy has been jettisoned (Baba, 2014). It was further supported that:

Following voter's apathy that has pervaded the entire nation, there is the need for the government at all levels to embark on a vigorous citizens' orientation programmes using the media and interpersonal communication media to enlighten the public on their civic responsibility. The people should know why they have to participate in the electoral process and what benefits would accrue to them for their involvement (Ochonogor and Omega, 2012: 337).

This brings to the fore the constitutional role of the media of educating and enlightening the people about their political rights as well as the need for a

peaceful atmosphere in any competitive democracy like that of Nigeria. Taking into account the role of the media during the 2015 general elections. During the election period, the broadcast media resorted to all sorts of blatant lying and attack on the personality of the opposition candidate (Gen. Muhammadu Buhari Rtd) of All Progressive Congress (APC) with the aim of supporting the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the incumbent President (Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan), which was against their professional code of ethics (Nuhu and Maikudi, 2015). They further maintained that, despite the unprofessional conduct of the media during the 2015 Presidential elections, the public were not misled to venture into violent conflict, simply because they were satisfied with the election result which brought APC candidate into power. They suggested that, there is the need for the media practitioners to operate within the ambit of the law for peace to reign between and among the different communities that made up of the country.

Contrarily, in 2019 presidential elections the broadcast media to a greater extent reported politically related issues more fairly between and among the Presidential aspirants particularly the candidates of the major political parties (APC & PDP). There was no much cases of personality attack compared to the 2015 Presidential coverage by the media. However, this is not unconnected with the personality of the APC President (Gen. Muhammadu Buhari Rtd) who was seeking for re-election during the 2019 election.

The study of Bashir; Sani & Zakuan, (2018) added that, democracy world over cannot thrive without the active participation of the media in informing and educating the citizenry. However, during the 2015 general elections, the Nigerian broadcast media was politicized in serving the interest of the ruling party (PDP) to the detriment of the opposition parties. They

further maintained that, Authoritarian theory of the press was utilized in their study, to showcase how the governing elites or ruling party (PDP) continue to dominate and dictate for the media houses in the country what, how and when to broadcast, all in the name of boosting the ruling party's image against the general will of the populace. This is against the general principles of equality and ethical code of conduct of the media industry across the globe.

In line with the above, Akubor (2015) provided that, the broadcast media on the eve of 2015 general elections in Nigeria, were under the direct control of the ruling party (PDP), especially during the electioneering campaigns. The broadcast media had severally reported news content of whatever nature so far as the client was ready to pay or had paid even against the corporate unity of the country as one indivisible unit. It was recommended that, only issue-based campaign should be encouraged for the smooth transition of power from one government to another after a peaceful election is concluded. He further captured the role of the media through Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the electoral politics in Nigeria of educating and communicating vital related information on election matters to the electorate. This will no doubt equipped the electorates with adequate information capable of directing them in making informed decision particularly during elections.

Comparatively, the 2019 Presidential elections also witnessed media coverage. The broadcast media during the election was equally under the direct control of the ruling party (APC), especially during the electioneering campaigns. However, the outfits did not resort to personality attack of the opposition candidate as what obtained during the 2015 election. This showcases that, there was relative fair coverage to

both ruling and the opposition parties between the periods under study.

Okon (2014) examined how the radio, as a medium of communication educated and informed the citizenry about their political rights in the democratic settings of Southern Nigeria. The study discovered that, the three radio stations selected (Radio Rivers II, Rhythm 93.7FM & Wazobia) did not pay much attention in their political programmes to educate and objectively inform the people about their central role in the democratic settings of Nigeria. It was added that, the stations did not give room for discourse analysis during the electoral processes, rather, the programmes were tilted more in supporting the ruling party against other interests in the study area. It was suggested that, the media houses should be encouraged to educate, inform and entertain the public fairly and objectively without fear or favour. This will raise the political consciousness of the people to participate actively in the democratic settings of the country as a whole.

In another development, taking into account the media environment in Nigeria, which is a mixture of both public and private media outfits. The study of Ojo (2013) confirm that, the Nigerian media during the two elections was a mixture of both government-owned and privately-owned media outlets, with government dominating the broadcast industry. He maintained that, both federal and state governments dominated and controlled 130 out of 144 terrestrial television stations in the country. In the case of radio as an arm of the broadcast industry, the government owned approximately 76% of the licensed radio stations throughout the country. Therefore, issue of sustainability of the private media outlets become a major challenge to the media industry in the country. The study further highlighted some of the challenges of the outlets to include among other things; geographical market clusters of the contemporary Nigerian media: which were concentrated

in urban-southern part of the country as against other parts of the country; high buyer concentration and collusion of political power with the market forces: in this case, the advertiser hold the bargaining power in the market while on the other hand government and other economic firms can withdraw their support of advertisement, thereby leading to the closure of the outfit; limited press freedom and poor remuneration contributed to the functioning and sustainability of the private media to critically investigate and report critical issues especially relating to the government and finally, culture of 'brown envelop' which was brought to the fore by lack of good remuneration. In this case journalist collect bribe to dance to tune of the giver especially during election campaigns. However, the study failed to take into cognizance the non-challant attitude of the political class in other parts of the country to invest heavenly in the ownership of the media industry.

The private broadcast stations during the 2015 and 2019 Presidential elections were said to be reporting more fairly and objectively compared to the government-owned stations. The study of Bashir (2019) titled "Broadcast media and elections in Nigeria: A study of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and Nagarta Radio in Kaduna 2015 gubernatorial election" provided that, the private broadcast stations generally and Nagarta radio in particular reported more balanced and objective information during the electoral contest. He further noted that:

The Nigerian 2015 Presidential election was the most contested in the history of the country. For the first time the incumbent loss to the opposition party (APC). However, this is not unconnected with the role of the broadcast stations that covered the election exercise from the beginning to logical conclusion. The broadcast

stations covered the election programmes as prepared by the electoral body (INEC) and the activities of the various political parties were also covered fairly by these stations so that majority of the prospective voters can participate during the election by voting the candidate of their choice. These resulted to the high turnout of voters after the conduct of the election. In addition, the private stations reported more balanced electoral information compared to the public owned stations (Bashir, 2019).

Moreover, it got to a point when some PDP stakeholders during the 2015 elections accused some private broadcast stations such as Nagarta radio, Africa Independent Television (AIT), Alheri radio, Liberty radio etc as being bought over by the then opposition party (APC). The opposition party used the private stations as a medium to counter-attack the ruling party as what obtained under the government-owned stations (Bashir, 2019b). It is therefore observed that, many private broadcast stations were expected to be on the side of the opposition, considering the Authoritarian nature of the ruling party (PDP) against the government-owned stations. It is maintained that you can only get fair coverage in private stations than in public stations during the 2015 electioneering contest (Nuhu & Maikudi 2015). The same scenario was not obtained from the media industry during the 2019 Presidential election in Nigeria. The is to showcase the extent of media operating during electioneering campaign within the ambit of the law in the said election, despite the fact that, the APC Government was directly or indirectly in-charge of the broadcast stations. There was relative fairness and balanced by different outfits

during the 2019 electoral processes. Other campaign activities of the contestants and parties were adequately and fairly covered by both public and private media. In addition, INEC uses various media platforms in educating the electorates in preparation, during and after the election, which lead to voter's turn out at the end of the exercise.

Olaoluwa (2016) in his study titled "Broadcast media: an instrument of change during the 2015 electioneering campaigns in Nigeria noted that:

Political office seekers are conscious of the power of the media to influence voters' decision. Therefore, candidates who want to make a good electoral campaign cannot do without the participation of the media. Ignoring the use of the media in any electioneering campaign will amount to political suicide and a waste of time, energy and resources. Similarly, political parties cannot offer a political platform to the electorate and expect acceptance without strategic media campaign. The amount of resources expended by political aspirants on advertisement in both print and electronic media bears sufficient testimony to the importance of the media in any democratic setting (Olaoluwa, 2016: 17).

On the other hand, the 2019 presidential election witnessed media coverage of both public and private outfits from the campaigns to announcement of election results. However, since the returned of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, Muhammadu Buhari of APC was the first opposition candidate to unseat the ruling party (PDP) during the 2015 general elections. In 2019, he stood for re-election

against the major contender Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of PDP (Former Vice-President) among other seventy-three (73) aspirants. The election was conducted under a heightened media campaign which generated serious interests both locally and internationally. At the end of the exercise, PDP as a party was not able to defeat President Buhari of APC. The election was held on 23rd Feb, 2019 after a last-minute week-long delay-winning 41.2% of the votes to Buhari's 55.6% (Stears, 2019).

Sule; Sani & Mat (2020) reported in relation to the media coverage during the 2019 Presidential elections that, many reports (Page & Tayo, 2018) included that of United States Institute of Peace; CLEEN Foundation etc captured that, the campaign process for the 2019 General election was violent, bedeviled with insecurity of different sorts such as banditry, intimidation, non-partisan security agencies and hate speeches as well as campaign of calumny. They further averred that, the campaign processes were equally mired with excessive use of money as against the provision of the extant rules of the game (Electoral Act, 2010; Section 225 and 226 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution as amended). It was further captured from their submission that:

...politicians declared abusive and insulting pronouncement, they demonstrated the politics of zero-sum game, they incite their supporters to exhibit and unleash violence against their opponents, religion was exploited to manipulate the followers and ethnic politics remains relevant in the politicians' aspiration for power. Militias clashed in various parts of the country especially in states like Rivers, Kano, Benue, Taraba and most parts of the country who are supported by politicians with weapons and

financial support for the evil act. In essence, the campaign process in the 2019 General election is a phenomenon that should be revisited immediately by the electoral body to avoid its occurrence in future even though, the Nigerian election is normally characterized with it since the First Republic...(Sule; Sani and Mat, 2018:3).

Put differently, the 2019 Presidential election witnessed live coverage and situation analysis from the thirty-six (36) states of the Federation including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Akinyele & Taiyese (2019) added that, the broadcast stations such as Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), other TV stations like Channels TV, TVC News, Arise TV, AIT, Galaxy TV, Silverbird TV, CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera, CNB Africa, DW News, Reuters, Bloomberg etc. used to host very rich and educative programmes for major parties and candidates that enlightened viewers on critical issues that are politically related. The Channels TV for instance featured an analytical programme called "The Verdict" where a guest will mostly be engaged by politicians as the audience on critical political issues before, during and after the elections. This shows that there was fair access to the media houses by the both the ruling and the opposition candidates. Similarly, Radio stations were not left behind in educating and informing the general public about the electoral happenings in the country during the 2019 Presidential elections. The radio stations were very instrumental in covering and relating election related issues during the exercise. They were central considering the pivotal role of the radio particularly in Northern Nigeria, where you can hardly find a single house without a radio (Abdulmumin, 2015).

The 2019 general elections was contested by Ninety-One (91) registered political parties and Seventy-three (73)

Presidential candidates with PDP and APC as the dominant parties as what obtained during the 2015 election. However, the major difference was that the 2015 election was the first time when the ruling party (PDP) got defeated by the strongest opposition party (APC). Both public and private broadcast stations were at the center of covering all the elections related matters (Daily Trust, 2019).

Prior to the 2015 elections, the media reported that, some major opposition parties that included Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and a faction of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) came together to form All Progressive Change (APC). While in preparation for the conduct of 2019 elections, a Coalition of United Political Parties (CUPP), comprising of thirty (30) opposition parties in 2018 adopted Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of PDP as its candidate for the election. In all the scenarios, the broadcast media lived to the expectation by covering and reporting the meetings and decisions of the allied parties.

In another development, during the party primaries of both elections, the broadcast media covered and reported same to the Nigerian people. However, the primary elections of APC across different states of the federation varies in the two elections. In 2015 for example, the broadcast media reported that there was serious competition and consensus in some states of the federation, all with the hope of forming strong formidable opposition that will be capable of unseating the ruling PDP at the central and state levels. At the end of the exercise, APC defeated the ruling party at the centre and in some states of the federation. Contrarily, the 2019 party primaries, particularly of the major parties (APC & PDP) was characterized by internal wrangling across various chapters of the parties in the country. In some states such as Zamfara and Cross River, party primaries were

challenged and annulled for lack of due process among other cases, thereby leading to court cases of more than 640 in number in the country (Thurston, 2015).

Competition was intense during the 2015 presidential elections compared to that of 2019, as the former was highly contested because the ruling PDP was done with their tenure and the APC was struggling and capitalizing on some of the challenges encountered by the PDP during their tenure in office as a result of which, the APC unseated the ruling PDP. On the other hand, the 2019 presidential election was also contested mostly between the two major parties in the country (APC & PDP). During the elections, the ruling APC was in control of all machineries of governance such as money, security personnel, Electoral Umpire (INEC) etc as against the opposition PDP. Therefore, by virtue of being the ruling party it has an upper hand in winning the election, which it succeeded.

It was also understood that, the 2019 presidential election was easier for the ruling APC to win because it was seeking for the second tenure as against what obtained during the 2015 elections, during this period, the media was directly or indirectly under the control of the ruling party during the latter election, the ruling PDP was done with their two tenures in presidency and as such the possibility of change of government was very high compared to the 2019 Presidential election in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Media anywhere in the world and broadcast media in particular are very central to the functioning of not only democracy but also societal development as a whole. No society can develop without proper communication and information sharing. This is on account of the fact that information is knowledge and knowledge is power. Therefore, qualitative information brings the needed informed decision by the people especially during

elections. The broadcast media in the Nigerian history has been very active in informing, educating and entertaining the general public. The broadcast media during the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria has covered the election exercise from the beginning to the logical conclusions. It was observed that, the public broadcast stations such as Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), National Television Authority (NTA) etc during the 2015 elections tilted more in support of the ruling party (PDP) and its candidate against the major opposition party (APC) and its candidate. This was done by given more space and time for the ruling party to actualize their political goal. This showcases the authoritarian nature of the ruling party (PDP) on public broadcast stations. On the contrary, during the same election, it was observed that, private stations such as Africa Independent Television (AIT) Nagarta Radio etc gave fair coverage to both parties. This shows that, both ruling and opposition parties were given adequate and fairer coverage by the private stations. Therefore, comparatively, the coverage of the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria was done by both public and private stations. However, the little difference with the coverage of 2015 was that, the 2019 coverage for both public and private stations was fairer, balanced and more objective to both the ruling party (APC) and the major opposition party (PDP). Therefore, it is recommended that, media being the watch dog of the society should not be manipulated to serve a particular interest, it should be allowed to operate freely without fear or favour. This is considering its pivotal role of educating, informing and entertaining the public fairly and objectively. Anything short of this is suicidal to the operation of Nigeria's democracy.

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