

**AN APPRAISAL OF PRESS FREEDOM UNDER PRESIDENT BUHARI'S
ADMINISTRATION**

BY

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DECLARATION

The work is based on a study undertaken by me, in the department of mass communication, faculty of arts, University of Benin, under the supervision of Dr Mrs. Comfort Ene Obaje. All findings and analysis in the study are product of my personal research and were the views of my personal research and where the views of others have been used and expressed, they have been duly acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION

This document confirms that Unuafe Sonia Ochuko conducted this research in the Mass Communication department, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, as part of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communication.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to the all-powerful God for His grace and mercy in my life, as well as to my parents, ever-supportive siblings, and friends.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to God for giving me the knowledge, inspiration and determination to complete this project.

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ABSTRACT

The study is focused on examining the state of press freedom in Nigeria during President Muhammadu Buhari's administration.. It aimed at finding out the attitude of media practitioners toward policies that affect press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari tenure, finding out the limitations to press freedom during the tenure of President Muhammadu Buhari, investigating the impact of government control on press freedom during the tenure of President Muhammadu Buhari. For its theoretical framework, the study adopted the libertarian theory of the press theory to further buttress the point of the study. While the survey research method was used to gather the data used for the study. Findings of the study revealed that President Muhammadu Buhari administration implemented policies that negatively affected the operations of media organization and that positive steps have not been taken to protect press freedom and journalists. The findings also revealed that the manner in which events in the society are reported is determined by existing policies and bills put in place by the PMB administration. The researcher therefore concluded that it is necessary to have special freedom for the press guaranteed by the constitution. The researcher recommended that any existing legislations which tends to unduly strangle the freedom of the press should be reviewed The researcher also recommended that freedom of the press should be clearly enshrined in the constitution. This includes the right to receive and disseminate information and protect the source of information.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Most modern societies recognize the importance of freedom of expression thereby guaranteeing the freedom of speech, of the press and freedom of association of their citizens. They acknowledge that human beings can only participate actively and intelligently in the body politics and governance of the system if their basic rights of expression and speech are present in the system. Developed countries acknowledge that freedom of expression, ideas and of the press are pre-requisite for the democratic process, (Okunna, 2005).

Obaze (2006) states that men are unhappy unless they can freely communicate. Free expression is part of the pursuit of happiness; its absence stifles creativity, scientific research and philosophical search for truth. Section 39 of the Nigerian 1999 constitution provides for free expression by stating that:

“Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference”.

Section 22 of the same constitution provided the press, radio, television and other mass media the freedom to uphold the objectives and directive principles of state policy and to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people of the country. These provisions are further qualified by Subsection 3 of Section 45 of the constitution which provided that nothing in this sections 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41 shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society in the interest of defense, public order, morality or public health or for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedom of other citizens.

With these provisions, the rights of the press are curtailed. They are limited by the phrase, “reasonably justifiable in a democratic society”. The provisions clipped Section 39 (1) of all its effectiveness. When we consider the power of the executive and legislature to make laws that could affect the freedom of the press and expression in the society and when we consider the provision “reasonably justifiable in a democratic society”, vital questions arise. For instance: who determines what is reasonable? How is the degree of freedom compatible with democracy determined? And how democratic is the system? Undoubtedly, the constraints against press

freedom in Nigeria multiply daily as a result of the reasonable phrase. Apart from ownership and control, laws emanating from the country in the last 20 years portend the worse for the Nigerian press (Nwabueze, 2015).

According to Agba (2012) freedom of the press, or the ability for media outlets to communicate ideas, opinions, and information without interference, is a major issue in the field of journalism. Many journalists and media practitioners have faced obstacles and limitations in their work, leading some to exit the industry. Press freedom is not a fixed concept and can take on different meanings. It has been defined as the right to criticize political, economic, and social institutions, as well as the freedom to publish news or information without censorship or intimidation. However, despite the importance of press freedom, it is often not upheld in practice.

Asemah (2016) explains that Press freedom is the ability for journalists to write and publish information for the public without restriction or censorship. Different authors have different definitions of press freedom, but it is generally understood to be the liberty for journalists to report freely without fear or bias. The role of the media in society is to inform and hold those in power accountable by

observing and analyzing current events. A society without a free press would be difficult to imagine.

Nwabueze (2015) posits that press freedom is the unrestricted right of the press to receive and disseminate information without interference, is upheld in many parts of the world, particularly in democratic societies. However, the degree of freedom varies between countries and over time. Developed nations, such as the U.S.A, have shown a strong commitment to freedom of expression, which is closely connected to press freedom. Many societies have laws and policies in place to support press freedom and any society that restricts the press is subject to criticism from the international community. Press freedom is crucial for communication and is essential for collective survival in both military and democratic governance. Press freedom enables journalists and media organizations to share information of public importance without interference.

In this regard, Ewelukwa (1999, p. 74) brings to light the Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold

opinion without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers. By the above declaration, a foundation is provided for the freedom of expression, and by extension, press freedom. At the international level, more theoretical foundations for press freedom includes, the Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 16 December 1966, which took effect on 23 March 1976. It has these provisions:

- i. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinion without interference.
- ii. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression:

This right shall include freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice. In the same vein, article 13 of the American Convention of Human Rights adopted 22 November 1969 but came into operation on the 18 July 1978 states that, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression”. In all these foundations backing up the freedom of expression and Press Freedom, the underlying thought is the unrestricted right to seek, receive, and impart ideas of all kinds without interference. Other international

bases for freedom of speech and Press Freedom are the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of 1981, which clearly outlines the rights of individuals and those of the people while Article 8 of this charter categorically states that individuals have the right to receive information and to express and disseminate opinions.

Lending more framework to freedom of expression and Press Freedom, the Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights of 14 November 1950, which took effect on the 3 September 1953 notes that "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression. This right includes freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers. These articles shall not prevent states from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises."

In Nigeria, the provision for freedom of expression and Press Freedom have been strongly backed up by these international provisions for freedom of expression and Press Freedom. Fundamentally, the Universal Declaration of Human rights has become binding on Nigeria as it became the 99th member of the United Nations

Organization. By this membership, Nigeria has automatically accepted an obligation to do its best to realize the principles encapsulated in the declaration. As emphasized by Obaze (2006) Nigeria membership in the UN and the constitutional provisions of the Nigerian 1999 constitution made explicit the role of the press and expressed its freedom in carrying out its legitimate duties. By these provisions and their specificity, the press is entitled to uphold political, economic, social, constitutional, and environmental objectives, among others.

Although constitutional provisions exist to back freedom of expression and of the press, media scholars like Asemah (2016) have argued that the mass media in Nigeria suffers from several legal constraints. Asemah explains that constitutional interpretations are subjective and that the provisions of the constitution are tilted in favor of those in power, limiting the functions and role of the press. Thus, it is important to investigate the state of press freedom, attitude of media practitioners towards governmental policies and the factors responsible for limiting the freedom of the press. It is therefore, against this background that this study seeks to examine

the state of press freedom in Nigeria from 2015 to 2022 during the civilian rule of President Muhammadu Buhari, using selected media houses in Benin, Edo state.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Right put more succinctly when it stated:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion, of expression. This includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any medium and regardless of frontier.

Despite all this provision, the Nigerian constitution drafting committee in 1979 and 1999 did not see any reason the Nigerian press should be given special provisions guaranteeing their freedom. Even though some members of the committee pressed for such a provision of press freedom, it concluded that there were no grounds for giving any Nigerian citizen a greater right to the freedom of expression than any other citizen who happens to be a newspaper editor or reporter. Thus, the drafting committee equated the freedom of the press in Nigeria with that of the individual. This assertion is faulty, (Obaze, 2006).

As noted by Ani (2020) the difference between the freedom of the press in theory and in reality is still evident, especially in developing countries like Nigeria and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa where the ruling class uses both overt and covert methods to prevent the press from investigating poor governance. Ani pinpoints that in Nigeria, media coverage is heavily influenced and controlled by the government, in an effort to maintain their hold on power. Agba (2012) argues that a free press should not be a privilege in a society. It is a pre-requisite for all other rights within the society. Hence, to effectively carry out its functions without fear or favor, the press must exercise some level of freedom.

Notably, the Nigeria press has survived the hurdles of colonial and military rule. In recent time it has faced different constraints such as ownership and control, censorship, sanctions, licensing as well as other legal challenges while carrying out its social responsibility role to the populace. As it is expected, press freedom should be stronger during civilian rule. Thus, this study aims to analyze press freedom in Nigeria from 2015 to 2022 under President Muhammadu Buhari's tenure using a select of media houses in Benin, Edo state.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Analyze the attitude of media practitioners toward policies that affect press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari tenure.
2. Find out the limitations to press freedom during the tenure of President Muhammadu Buhari
3. Investigate the impact of government control on press freedom during the tenure of President Muhammadu Buhari

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the statement of the problem and the objectives of the study, the study formulated the following research question.

1. What is the attitude of media practitioners toward policies that affect press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari civilian rule?

2. What are the limitations to press freedom during the civilian rule of President Muhammadu Buhari?
3. What is the impact of government control on press freedom during the civilian the civilian rule of President Muhammadu Buhari?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The function of the press is ubiquitous as the society can hardly survive without them. Thus, this study will be significant to the international community, government officials, political class, media professionals, the academia and the general public. It would enable the government and other relevant stakeholders to understand that the key to actively participate in the decision making process in a society is by guaranteeing the freedom of the press.

The finding of the study would provide empirical evidence on the association between Civilian rule and press freedom In Nigeria.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to a few selected media houses in Benin City, Edo state. Thus, in order to obtain viable data, the researcher chooses the

Nigerian Television Authority, Benin (NTA), Independent Television (ITV) and the Nigerian Observer Newspaper. These media houses were selected on the basis of hierarchy and prominence. NTA, ITV and the Nigerian Observer are the largest and oldest government and private media houses in Benin, Edo state.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

In the course of conducting this research, the skepticism of the respondents proved to be a challenge as they were unsure of the purpose of the researcher. However, upon due explanation that it is an academic exercise, the study participants responded to the questionnaire.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

i. Civilian Rule

This refers to the exercise of Power or Authority over a given Society or Country which does not have its root or foundation from armed forces. It is the liberty of the press to publish or distribute information without any form of constraints.

ii. Press

Also known as the fourth estate of the realm, the press is responsible for collecting, disseminating and promoting ideas, news, and information, mobilizing opinions and enlightening the populace on the rights duties, obligations.

iii. Press Freedom

This is the fundamental rights of every Person to have free access to the fact in all matters that directly or indirectly concern him and equal right to express and publish his opinion and to hear and read the opinion of others

iv. President Muhammadu Buhari

Formerly known as Major General Muhammad Buhari ousted the second republic in 1983 led by President Shehu Shagari through a coup. General Buhari was later elected as the President of Nigeria in 2015.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualization

According to Ogogo (2009) Civil rule refers to the governance of a country by non-military individuals or organizations, as opposed to military or authoritarian rule. It involves the participation of citizens in the decision-making process and the protection of individual rights and freedoms. Civil rule is a system of government where the ultimate authority to make decisions and enforce laws rests with civilian officials rather than with military or other non-civilian actors. In such a system, the military is subject to civilian authority and oversight, and civilian leaders are responsible for governing the country and protecting the rights and freedoms of its citizens, (Ogbemi and Atake, 2014).

Agba (2012) states that civil rule is often contrasted with military rule or dictatorship, where the military or a single leader holds absolute power and controls the government. In a civilian rule system, power is typically distributed among multiple branches of government, such as the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and the civilian leaders are held accountable by the people through free

and fair elections, public scrutiny, and the rule of law. The concept of Civilian rule is closely associated with democracy and is a form of government that carries the mass along and is quite representative of the masses. It is a free society characterized by freedom of speech participation of the people in governance and equality.

The 1999 transition of Nigeria from military to civilian, democratic government, is a defining moment in Nigerian history, representing the beginning of the longest, uninterrupted government since independence in 1960. Nigeria has had a complex history of civilian and military rule since gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1960. Nigeria's first republic was established in 1963 under a parliamentary system of government, with Nnamdi Azikiwe as its first president. However, the republic was short-lived, as a military coup in 1966 led to a series of military governments that ruled the country until 1979.

In 1979, Nigeria transitioned to civilian rule under the leadership of Shehu Shagari, who won the presidential election that year. However, his administration

was plagued by corruption and economic mismanagement, and in 1983, he was overthrown in a military coup led by General Muhammadu Buhari. Buhari's government was also marked by authoritarianism and human rights abuses, and he was ousted in another military coup in 1985, which brought General Ibrahim Babangida to power. Babangida promised to transition Nigeria back to civilian rule, but his efforts were marred by allegations of election rigging and corruption.

After years of political turmoil and economic hardship, Babangida finally held elections in 1993, which were widely considered to be free and fair. However, when it became clear that the winner, Moshood Abiola, would not be allowed to take office, Nigeria was plunged into another period of military rule. It was not until 1999 that Nigeria finally returned to civilian rule, with the election of Olusegun Obasanjo as president. Obasanjo's administration was marked by some progress in economic reform and anti-corruption efforts, but also faced criticism for human rights abuses and failures in addressing the country's many challenges, including ethnic and religious conflict, poverty, and insecurity. Since then, Nigeria has

continued to struggle with political instability but has managed to maintain a mostly civilian-led government, with periodic transitions of power through elections.

2.2 Concept of Press Freedom

For Malemi (2009), the press is an opinion molder and a setter of agenda. It is an examiner of the actions of government and Society, and it expresses Opinion through news and editorials with a view to promoting Change with this pointer of what the Press is, what it stands for and what it does, press freedom becomes not only a desire but an Imperative In the life of any Society. Press freedom is the liberty of the Press to gather, Process, package and disseminate Information or opinion without undue Interference, hindrance or legal restriction (Senam 2014).

Press freedom is the premise that individual or collective expressions through mass media such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines should be considered a right to be exercised freely by citizens without any form of intimidation or restriction. Such freedom implies that absence of interference from overreaching state; its preservation may be sought through constitutional or other

legal protections. Press freedom is a fundamental issue contained in the Constitutions of most countries all over the world. For instance, the first amendment in the Constitution of the United States of America provides that: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances" (The Constitution of the United State of America). This provision suggests that even in the developed democracy, press freedom is a fundamental issue which is being taken very seriously.

Britain has a long tradition of a free, inquisitive press. However, unlike what is obtained in the United States, Britain does not have constitutional provision for press freedom. Historically, press freedom was established in Great Britain in 1696, with Alan Rusbridger, the former editor of The Guardian who says: "when people talk about licensing journalists or newspapers the instinct should be to refer them to history. Read about how licensing of the press in Britain was abolished in 1695 Remember how the freedom won here became a model for much of the rest of the

world, and be conscious how the world still watches us to see how we protect those freedoms” (New York Times,2013).

In Nigeria, being the most populous country in Africa, the plural and diverse pattern of media ownership is the basis for its vibrancy and relative independence. The plurality of channels ensures that Nigerians have access to multiple sources of information. The mix between ownership and constitutionally guaranteed rights of the private sector to own and operate media channels ensures that Nigerians are provided with alternative sources of information. Legally, Section 36 (1) of the country's 1999 Constitution guarantees freedom of the press in Nigeria. It stipulates that: "(1) every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference." Section 39 (2) guarantees that: "...Every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions." In Section 22, the responsibility of the media to hold the government accountable to the people is defined. It provides thus: "the press, radio, television and other agencies of mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the

fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people."

Section 16 gives the media the right and freedom to ensure that governments uphold good governance and "control the national economy in such a manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity." With a view to give press freedom a universal acceptance, the United Nations* 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers" (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations).

The implication for this section of the Nigerian Constitution is that the media has been empowered to investigate and criticise poor and corrupt leadership and promote political stability, economic prosperity and social justice. In May 2011, the country enacted a Freedom of Information Act that compels agencies to provide

information on demand from the citizens and the media. The law was welcomed by the media as "as a significant development for widening the space for free flow of information, transparency and accountability in governance and energise the fight against public corruption" (Media Review, August, 2011). However, there are many laws that are capable of undermining the above provisions about the freedom of the media. A number of laws (such as the Official Secrets Act, 1962; Press Registration Act, 1933; Newspaper Act, 1917, etc.) including the unlimited powers of the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and the Nigerian Press Council (PC), both of which are Federal Government agencies can, if inappropriately exercised, undermine the establishment and unrestricted operations of the independent media. Equally, the commercialization regime in the industry tends to restrict the participation of the majority of the people that are economically weak, and by extension undercut the freedom for access to the media space.

The first ten countries where press was the freest were: Norway, Siveden, Netherlands, Finland, Switzerland and Jamaica. Others are Belgium, New Zealand, Denmark and Costa Rica. However, the last ten countries with the least degree of

press freedom were: Equatorial Guinea, Cuba, Djibout, Sudan, Vietnam and China.

Others include: Syria. Turkmenistan, Eritrea and North Korea.

2.3.1 An Overview of the Relationship between the Nigerian Press and the Government in Nigeria

The government and the press are important institutions in the society that are mutually indispensable to each other. As noted by Obaze (2006) the press is the fourth estate of the realm. They act as watch dogs to the government and the people. Obaze explains that when it comes to the government and press relations, the government enact laws through an appropriate making body and the law regulates all sets of human conduct, including mass media practices.

Ogbemi and Atake (2014) contends that the issue of press freedom has for long been a very controversial issue in the country. Although it is occasionally stated that the Nigerian press is one of the freest in Africa, many journalist and other sympathizers of the press appear not to be impressed by the government. In 1976,

the constitution drafting committee decided not to make any special provision for the press freedom in its draft constitution. The reason for the committee decision was stated as follows: Majority of the members, while recognizing the need to protect the freedom of the press, feel that there are no grounds for giving any Nigerian citizen a lesser right to freedom of expression than any other person who happens to be a reporter or editor.

The provision has been severally criticized, especially by media practitioners. In the opinion of such critics, it is necessary to have special freedom for the press guaranteed by the constitution. The press it has been argued, should have the right to write, inform and educate the public without of fear of censorship, intimidation, molestation or restraint to personal liberty of the writer, subject to existing laws of sedition. Ogbemi and Atake (2014) emphasizes that the government relates with the press at their convenience and obstructs the activities' of the press, especially, in a bid to create the link between the government and the governed. The greatest means of this obstacle is through official secrecy, obnoxious law or policy, as well witch hunting their publications.

Asemah (2016) states that from the existing relationship between the press and the government, one thing is very clear; government does not like to be criticized by the press no matter the good intent of the press. What the press and government should seek from each other is a mutual ground where they can co-exist without conflict. As explained by Daramola (2005) the press can either be a useful slave or master. And although the Press and the government are not allies to each other, how each perform is crucial to the workings of a system that is both free and open but fallible and fragile. It is the nature of a democracy to thrive open conflict between press and government without undue under assumptions.

It should be noted that in the course of performing their duties, many members of the press have suffered various abuses civil liberties. The law of sedition, libel and the official secret act put journalists in some difficulties in the course of their assignments. It is often difficult for them to obtain information from government and its agents and this occasionally forces them to produce half-baked and slanted stories. Therefore, while members of the press cannot be placed above the law, it is essential for them to have adequate freedom to pursue their duties.

2.3.2 Limitations to Freedom of the Press in Nigeria

Freedom of the press is an essential component of any democratic society as it allows the dissemination of information to the public without undue restrictions. However, in Nigeria, the freedom of the press is restricted in several ways. As explained by Akpoveta (2012) the following are the limitations of press freedom in Nigeria

i. Censorship:

One of the limitations to freedom of the press in Nigeria is government censorship. The Nigerian government has been known to censor the media, mainly during times of national crisis or conflict. For example, during the military rule in Nigeria, the government controlled the media, and journalists who wrote against the government or military leaders were either jailed or killed.

ii. Intimidation and Harassment:

Another limitation to freedom of the press in Nigeria is the intimidation and harassment of journalists. Journalists who report on sensitive issues such as corruption, human rights violations, or political scandals are often harassed or

threatened by government officials, security agencies, or even criminal gangs. This intimidation and harassment can lead to increased self-censorship, where journalists do not report on sensitive issues to avoid risking their safety.

iii. Laws and Legal limitation

Furthermore, the laws and regulations governing media operations in Nigeria also limit the freedom of the press. The laws governing defamation, sedition, and national security restrict the media's ability to report on sensitive issues without facing legal repercussions. The Public Officers Protection Act or the Official Secrets Act, for example, limits access to information and makes it difficult for journalists to obtain information on sensitive issues.

iv. Media Ownership

In addition to these limitations, the media ownership structure in Nigeria also poses a challenge to the freedom of the press. Most of the media organizations in Nigeria are owned by politicians, businessmen, or individuals with close ties to

the government, and this fundamental ownership structure that limits the freedom of the press.

In summary, the limitations to freedom of the press in Nigeria are multifaceted and complex. Government censorship, intimidation, laws and regulations, and media ownership structures all contribute to a reduced level of press freedom in Nigeria. It is essential for the Nigerian government to address and address these limitations to ensure a free, vibrant, and independent media that adequately serves the needs of the public.

2.4. Rationale for a Specific Provision for Press Freedom in Nigeria

The popular slogan “publish and be damned” describes best the kind of conviction which members of the press ought to have. What is therefore most important is for the press and the society as a whole to understand what kind of freedom the press should have and the purpose of such freedom, (Ogbemi, and Atake, 2014).

As noted by Obaze (2006), there are several reasons freedom of the press must be guaranteed in the Nigerian constitution. Firstly, it is agreed in the world all over that the individual has a right to information. In the modern space, the

individual must be informed to understand and participate in the political press. Individuals do not have the money to acquire and time to consume all the mass media or the means to collect all the information necessary for their existence. Even with the time, money and knowledge, information is so vast and complex to be understood and interpreted by an individual. It requires professional knowledge that mass media practices can produce. Thus, equating individual with that of the press is a farce. The press is equipped to collect, analyze and disseminate information that serves as guidelines to public activities. An individual can collect information from a source, showing trends. It could be for his personal consumption or his principal, the mass media on the other hand, will go further to disseminate the information to the public after analysis and interpretation in a language they understand.

Secondly, the functions of the press which include the gathering, collating and interpreting information and fulfilling the people's right to know, can only be handled by professional practitioners. To produce Radio Nigeria's 30 – minute network news requires the efforts and ancillary professionals which an individual cannot hope to achieve. Thirdly, information is central to human activities.

Government and their institutions need to pass information into the system through mass media. The constitutional drafting committee recognized the potentials of the mass media, hence, it spelt out the obligations of the press in section 21 of the 1979 constitution which gave the Nigerian mass media the watch dog function to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people. Furthermore, government in developing countries use the mass media to present and promote their development projects through the media which are more convenient to reach the majority of the people simultaneously.

The press achieves a far wider reach in audience than individuals.

2.5 Press Freedom in Nigeria from 2015 to 2022 during the Civilian Rule of President Muhammadu Buhari

Freedom of the press simply means a situation where the press is given absolute freedom to publish whatever they want without interference by government or her agents. In Nigeria, infringements on the freedom of the press are very glaring especially during the President Muhammadu administration from 2015- 2022.

According to Uwakwe (2020) the press has always been in constant criticism of President Muhammadu administration because it has performed below expectation. Although these journalists apportion blames on the presidency with a view for change in areas where they are not doing well, the presidency do not want journalists or the media to criticize them. Press men as well as the media they represent who attempt to criticize them are usually hampered by heavy sanctions. Legal actions have been instituted against media stations like Arise and AIT for daring to criticize the President and executive members of government.

Asemah (2021) pinpoints that most media houses usually refrain from criticizing the President Muhammadu Buhari administration, most especially those owned by the government. They do not have the courage to criticize the executives because the journalist who work in such media houses believe wholeheartedly that he who plays the piper dictates the tune. These set of journalists who work in these media houses praise the President. These attitude creates an unhealthy environment because the people are denied what they ought to hear, read and view. Ofor (2019) states that press freedom is an essential tool in any democratic society, allowing for

the free and open exchange of information and ideas among citizens. He notes that under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari in Nigeria, there have been concerns about the government's approach to press freedom, with many journalists and media outlets facing harassment and intimidation.

Since Buhari came to power in 2015, there have been a number of incidents that have raised alarm bells among press freedom advocates. One of the most high-profile cases involved the arrest and detention of journalist Jones Abiri. Abiri, who worked for the Weekly Source newspaper in Bayelsa State, was arrested in 2016 and charged with terrorism, sabotage, and other offenses. He was held for two years without trial before finally being released in 2018. In addition to the case of Jones Abiri, there have been several other instances of harassment and intimidation of journalists and media outlets under the Buhari administration. In 2017, for example, the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) threatened to shut down several radio stations for allegedly promoting hate speech and inciting violence. Critics of the move argued that it was an attempt to silence dissenting voices and curtail press freedom.

Another concern is the government's use of the Cybercrime Act, which was passed in 2015 and has been criticized by some for its broad wording and potential for abuse. Under the act, anyone found guilty of publishing false information or online harassment can face lengthy prison terms and heavy fines. Some have argued that the act could be used to target journalists and media outlets that are critical of the government, stifling free speech and press freedom in the process. Despite these concerns, there have been some positive developments in the area of press freedom under the Buhari administration. In 2019, for example, the government passed the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) Amendment Bill, which aims to strengthen the self-regulatory mechanisms of the Nigerian press and protect the rights of journalists. Additionally, there have been efforts by some state governments to enact laws that protect press freedom and ensure that journalists are able to do their jobs without fear of harassment or intimidation.

Overall, however, the situation of press freedom under the Buhari administration remains a concern for many. While there have been some positive steps taken to strengthen press freedom in Nigeria, there is still a long way to go

before journalists can operate without undue interference from the government. As such, it is crucial that civil society and advocacy groups continue to monitor the situation, and hold government officials accountable for any actions that could undermine press freedom and democratic values in Nigeria.

2.6 Empirical Review/ Studies

In a historical look at the state of press freedom in Nigeria, Ben U, Nwanne (2004) in his paper titled “Another look at press freedom in Nigeria” published in the European Journal of research in social sciences opined that since independence infractions on press freedom were mostly experienced during the military era with the enactment of many press gag laws. The paper noted that they have been improvements. In the level or tolerance by post 1999 civilian administration. It however, also noted that much has to be done to attain a reasonable level of press freedom. Freedom of the press is expected to thrive unequalled in a democratic government than in a military regime. It has been observed that the press under the

military was characterized by arbitrary and detaining arrest of media persons, tortured of journalists, and other forms of brutality. There are several judicial and extrajudicial measures used by the government to gag the press in both military and democratic governance; court, fines, denial of licensing assassination, beating of Journalists, seizing of working equipment, demolition and proscription of media house and mysterious disappearance of media persons, among other judicial and extrajudicial measures.

In his studied titled “repression of press freedom in Nigeria Democratic Dispensation “Akeem Ayofe Akinwale (2010) examined the repression of press freedom in Nigeria democratic dispensations. Using questionnaire and in-depth interviews, data were drawn from 440 members of staff of selected print and electronic press organization in Lagos and Oyo states of Nigeria. The result showed that although the press facilitated the development of democracy, challenges to press freedom were frequent. The respondents largely confirmed that the press kept the public informed, entertained and enlightened, and it set standards and established values for public conduct. The findings showed that the proposed

freedom of information bill (FIB) would empower the press and promote democracy in Nigeria if passed into law and implemented.

Advocate of a free press in Nigeria have seriously accused the Buhari government of black listing a leading national newspaper for criticizing his government. On this note, the said (punch) newspaper has observed that the Buhari government engages in illegal detentions and attacks of civil society groups and Journalists through the instruments of the Nigeria state security services (S.S.S) The paper stated that until Buhari and his oppressive regime purge themselves of their marital tendency, punch will not be a party to falsely atoning it with a democratic role but label it for what it is, an autocratic military-style regime run by major General Muhammadu Buhari (ret'd)

Aliede E, Jonathan (2020) in an attempt to identify the relationship between the Nigeria political class and the nation's mass media used qualitative research method to source relevant data from earlier studies in the area His study revealed that the relationship between the Nigeria political class and the mass media is actually adversary and not cordial, hence affirming the notion of strange – bed

fellow in their relation, rather than partners in progress partnership between them so as to facilitate their collective roles towards Nigeria's socio economic and political development. Editor –in-chief of daily Nigeria Jaafar, Jaafar once expressed fears and worry for press freedom in Nigeria, nothing that president Buhari first term was quite hostile to a free press. In his words, “my fear is that this administration in the next four years may not condone some publications. Anything that does not like they may descend on”

Oberiri Destiny Akpe (2016) in his titled “exploring the factors affecting press freedom in Nigeria” reported that the Nigeria press freedom is paradox and only exist on paper i.e in the constitution but not in practice. His study employed the qualitative method of research; using secondary data comprising of books and journals and was based on the social responsibility theory. He went on to recommend that since press freedom is granted in the constitution of Nigeria, there should be statutory backup and in order not to hinder press freedom, journalists should be allowed to have access to government sources and record as long s it will not bring chaos to the society at large. However, the findings of Almaisur Ado

Sani's (2004) study titled "press freedom: Analyzing the portrayal of Nigeria state and National dailies cover -page headlines" which employ the use of content analysis on cover page news stone's of two privately owned Nigeria newspaper to analyze the extent to which the press in Nigeria practices in a free environment suggest that the press in Nigeria is considerably free since the press repeatedly covers issues that are considered critical to the government by giving such stories prominence to appear on the cover page.

While conducting an assessment of media coverage of anti-corruption campaigns by the Buhari administration in 2016 using the Nation and Daily Trust Newspaper as a case study, Lemdi Edmond and Fredrick Wilson in their study titled " mass media coverage of Anti-corruption in Nigeria: A study of Muhammadu Buhari Civilian Administration (2015-2019)" found that the issue of corruption were reported frequently by the selected newspaper and they recommend that mass media should engage in in-depth coverage and investigative Journalism to uncover and expose corruption and not just rely on reporting happening only.

Also in a bid to highlight the interconnectedness of press freedom and democracy in Nigeria, Sunday E. N Ebaye and Ese Joy John (2017), conducted a study using president Obasanjo's administration as a point of reference, Data for the study was collected through the simple random technique and analyzed using Yaro Yamini formula and the scientific chi-square methodology. Their result reveal that, there is a positive link between the press freedom, democracy and development. They recommended that the government should advance the cause of press freedom, by granting the press a free hand to its duty, and that there should be continuous intensive training and retraining for Journalist to make them more professionally competent and globally competitive. Their work also recommends that those in authority should be tolerant of the press, and that the press on the other hand should observe the ethics of its profession.

In a study that explored the role that the new media plays in the consolidation of democracy in the country, with keen attention on the communication channels of the 2015 general elections, where new media championed the spread of information about the election, and the aftermath of the

election period, that paved the way for the Muhammadu Buhari tenure, Dauda Ishaya Sauntai and Tordue Simon Targema (2017) argued that the new media presents a useful tool in the hands of activists and concerned citizens to participate in the government of the day and effectively play the watch-dog role, a privilege which, hitherto, was far from reality. They however, noted that several abuses exist that are threatening to rubbish the opportunities of the platform such as the prevalence of hate and dangerous speech, increased intensity of lies, mischief, falsehood and negative propaganda, and the use of comment sections to attack, verbally assault, bully and demonize co-discussants of political matters raised in the news via the numerous online platforms. They want on to recommend a “cautious “incorporation of the new media in the democratic process to pave the way for more participation.

From the review that has been done so far, it is pertinent to note that there are key areas that were not touched. This includes the state of press freedom, attitude of media practitioners towards governmental policies, the limitations to freedom of the press and its impact on the mass media. Thus, this study seeks to

cover these loops and bridge the gap in knowledge not covered by this previous studies.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The study is rooted on the tenets of the libertarian theory of the press which is one of the normative theories of the media

The libertarian theory of the press is a media theory that emphasizes the freedom of the press from governmental control and limiting legislation. The theory is grounded on the principle of individual liberty and the idea that free expression and free press are a fundamental aspect of a democratic society

According to this theory, the press should be free from government intervention and censorship so that it can perform its role as a watchdog of the government, holding those in power accountable for their actions. Libertarian theorists believe that the market should regulate the media, and that government interference distorts the natural operation of the media, leading to bias and misinformation. In this view, the best way to ensure that the press is free and independent is to allow it to operate with minimal government intervention, and

with competition in the market ensuring that different viewpoints and information are available to the public. The libertarians believe that excessive state control over the media threatens democracy and that the freedom of the press is crucial for the proper functioning of a democratic society.

Notably, the libertarian theory of the press was adopted in this study as it explains that media freedom in Nigeria during the civilian rule of President Muhammadu Buhari from 2015 to 2022 has been problematic, due to government interference and attempts to restrict press freedom. The theory holds that there have been numerous incidents during this time; with issues such as government crackdowns on journalists and media outlets, journalists facing harassment and arrest for reporting on sensitive topics or criticizing the government. The government has also been accused of using legal and economic means to restrict press freedom, such as passing restrictive legislation or withdrawing advertising from media outlets critical of the government.

The libertarian theory is relevant in this study as it holds that the actions of the Nigerian government have been seen as a threat to media independence and

journalistic integrity, as they undermine the ability of the press to act as a watchdog of those in power. The theory pinpoints that these restrictions on press freedom undermine the basic principles of democracy, as a free and independent press is crucial for holding those in power accountable and ensuring that citizens have access to accurate and diverse information.

Overall, the libertarian theory of the press argues that media freedom in Nigeria has been hampered under the civilian rule of President Muhammadu Buhari due to excessive state control and interference in the media industry.

2.8 Summary of the Review

Having reviewed existing literature that are relevant to the focus of the study, the researcher conceptualized the variables of the study to ensure convenient and accurate assessment while investigating the state of press freedom during the civilian rule of president Muhammadu Buhari between 2015 and 2023. The variables and their relevance to study were discussed in this chapter. Some of the studies reviewed suggest that the press under the President Muhammadu Buhari's administration is not free while some others suggest that is relatively free. The

social responsibility theory was adopted in the appraisal of the state of press freedom during the civilian rule of President Muhammadu Buhari and it is expected that the study will provide empirical evidence and add to the existing body of knowledge which will be useful to other researchers.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The researcher used the survey research method to gather viable data from respondents involved in the study. The survey research design was used in this study because it allows the researcher to analyze and evaluate the opinion, attitude and perception of the individuals involved in the study, by taking a part of the population to represent the entire population. The researchers' intention in this study was to collect detailed information and the researcher was also concerned with assessing the experiences of individuals involved in the study.

Hence, the survey research design is appropriate for this study as it allowed the researcher to clearly define the subject matter. The researcher therefore used questionnaire to collect data from the targeted population.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study is limited to staff and media practitioners in NTA, Benin, ITV and the Nigerian Observer. According to data obtained upon contacting management of the various media houses, the estimate of the study population is 250.

3.3 Sample Size

On the basis of the small size of the study population, 40 percent (40%) of individuals who make up the study population was drawn to arrive at the sample size. Hence, 100 respondents would serve as the sample of this study.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The researcher adopted the stratified sampling technique to select respondents to participate in the study.

S/N	Media	Population	Sample Size
1	NTA	95	38
2	ITV	70	28

3	National Observer	85	34
4	Total	250	100

$$\text{NTA} = \frac{95 \times 100}{250} = 38$$

$$\text{ITV} = \frac{70 \times 100}{250} = 28$$

$$\text{Observer} = \frac{85 \times 100}{250} = 34$$

3.5 Research Instrument

The instrument for collecting data in this study was the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two parts A and B. Part A focused on the demographic characteristic of the respondent, such as name, sex, age etc while part B bothers on substantive issues of the research work in which the respondents will provide response using the five likert scale. The questionnaire was made up of 16 items and the respondents have to strongly agree, agree, remain neutral, disagree or strongly disagree to statements and questions. This instrument was especially beneficial because it guaranteed the researcher with an opportunity to explain the purpose and meaning of the study and meaning of questions that were not clear to the respondents.

3.6 Validity of the Instrument

For a test to be valid, it should measure what is supposed to measure. The researcher used content validity to test the validity of the instrument. This was through ensuring that all items in the instrument were related to the study and they cover all the important areas of the study by relating them to research questions. The supervisor also went through the data collection instrument and made necessary corrections of its validity.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument

Instruments should give the same results when administered again on the sample. The researcher used the test-retest method to ascertain the reliability of the research instrument items .To test the reliability of the instrument, the researcher distributed 10 copies of the questionnaire at random to staff of NTA ITV and the Nigerian Observer. Their ability to fill in all items twice and comparison of findings done made the instrument reliable.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

The researcher first went personally to the sampled areas and sought permission first from the authorities before coming back on the appointed date to collect data. Copies of questionnaire were distributed personally by the researcher and she took her time for the respondents to fill as the questions were straight forward and summarized. This saved the researcher time as she did not need to return again to pick the questionnaire. Furthermore, the researcher obtained data for this study from online sources, internet, articles, journals and textbooks.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

In order to sort, edit, code, enter, process and clean data the researcher used frequency method and sort percentages. This involves deducing the data collected and interpreting the data strictly within the frame of the research problem. The answered questionnaires were edited for accuracy, completeness and uniformity and frequency table were used to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Preamble

This chapter presents and analyses the data collated through the questionnaire. The data collected are analyzed using the simple percentage method. A total of 100 copies of questionnaire were distributed and returned, which accounts for 100%. The 100 respondents therefore represent 100% of the sample size being studied. The details of the questionnaire are analyzed below using frequencies, percentages and tables for the presentation of data.

4.2 Data Presentation

SECTION A

Table 1: Sex distribution of respondents

Sex	Number of respondents	Percentage
Male	78	78%
Female	22	22%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 1 indicates that the study comprised of both males and females respondents. However, male respondents were more available to participate in the study.

Table 2: Distribution of respondent by marital status

Marital Status	No of Respondents	Percentage
Single	54	54%
Married	46	46%
Divorced	0	32%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 2 shows that the study is more composed of respondents who are single, than married. This implies that respondents who are not married made themselves more available to participate in the study.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by educational qualification

Educational Qualification	No of respondents	Percentage
WASSCE/OND	7	7%
HND/B.sc	68	68%
M.sc	25	25%
Ph.D.	0	0%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 3 indicates that a large percentage of the respondents involved in this study are HND/B.sc holders. This shows that the respondents are educated, well

groomed with the issue under investigation and are very suitable to participate in this study.

4: Table Distribution of respondents by Media Outfit they work with

Age	No of respondents	Percentage
NTA	34	34%
ITV	36	36%
Nigerian Observer	30	30%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 4 shows that the study is composed of respondents from various media outfits, however staff of ITV participated more in this study.

Table 5: How long the respondents have been working with the organization

Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 – year	8	8%
Less than 1 - 3 years	19	19%
4 - 6 years	42	42%
7 - 9 years	21	21%
10 years and above	10	10%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 5 posits that a majority of the respondents involved in the study have worked with their organizations for 4 - 6 years and 7 - 9 years. This implies a great proportion of the study participants have worked with the media for a long time and would be in a good position to provide viable data for the study.

SECTION B:

This section covers questions that provided psychographic data concerning the study from the respondents.

Table 6: Effect of governmental policies that limits press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari administration on organizations

Questions	Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage
Has your organization been affected negatively by governmental policies that limit freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari Administration?	Yes	100	100%
	No	0	0
Total		100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 6 shows that all the respondent agreed that their organization have been affected negatively by governmental policies that limited press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari administration. This implies that PMB administration had implemented policies that limited the freedom of the press.

Table 7: Respondents attitude towards policies that affect press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari administration

Questions	Variables	Number of Respondents	Percentage
What is your attitude towards policies that affect press freedom	Positive	0	100%
	Negative	100	0
Total		100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 7 indicates that all the respondent agreed that they have a negative attitude towards policies that affect press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari civilian rule. This shows that the perception and attitude of the respondents towards PMB policies that affect press freedom is negative.

Table 8: steps that have been taken to protect press freedom and ensure that journalist are able to do their jobs without fear of harassment or intimidation

Questions	Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage
Has positive steps that have been taken to protect press freedom and ensure that journalists are able to do their jobs without fear of harassment or intimidation under?	Strongly Agree	0	0%
	Agree	10	10%
	Undecided	18	18%
	Disagree	27	27%
	Strongly Disagree	45	45%
Total		100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 8 reveals that a greater percentage (45%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that positive steps have been taken to protect press freedom and journalists. This implies that the PMB administration have failed in implementing policies that would encourage journalists do their jobs without fear of harassment or intimidation.

Table 9: Ways through which press freedom is curtailed in organizations

Questions	Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage
Replacing editors and staff members is one of the ways through which press freedom is curtailed in my organization?	Strongly Agree	0	0%
	Agree	12	12%
	Undecided	18	18%
	Disagree	31	31%
	Strongly Disagree	39	39%
Total		100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 9 indicates that a majority of the respondents strongly disagreed that replacing editors and staff members is one of the ways through which press freedom is curtailed in their organization. This shows that replacing editors and staff is not a way through the press freedom is limited.

Table 10: Factors responsible for the limitation of press freedom of the press during President Muhammadu Buhari administration

Questions	Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage
Which amongst these factors is a major limitation to freedom of the press during PMB civilian rule?	Government ownership	21	21%
	Intimidation	19	19%
	Laws and regulation	51	51%
	Media ownership	10	27%
	Total		100

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 10 reveals that 51 respondents representing 51% of the sample size agreed that laws and regulations are factors that limits freedom of the press during PMB administration. This shows laws and regulations are major factors which limited the power and freedom of the press during PMB civilian rule.

Table 11: Effect of existing policies and bills put in place by the PMB administration on the manner in which events are reported in the society.

Questions	Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage
The manner in which events in the society are reported is determined by existing policies and bills put in place by the PMB administration?	Strongly Agree	34	34%
	Agree	66	66%
Total		100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 11 indicates that the respondents 100% of the respondents affirmed that the manner in which events in the society are reported is determined by existing policies and bills put in place by the PMB administration. This is revealed in the percentage of the study participants who strongly agreed (34%) and agreed (66%).

Table 12: Respondents rate on the performance of their organization as regards area of coverage and reports during PMB administration

Questions	Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage
How will you rate the performance of your organization as regards area of coverage and reports during PMB civilian rule?	Very effective	72	72%
	Effective	28	28%
Total		100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 12 shows that a greater proportion of the respondents believe that their organization performed very effectively in reporting and covering societal events during PMB civilian rule. This implies that the various media organizations played very important roles in reporting during the PMB civilian rule.

Table 13: Effect of Government direct control of the press during the civilian rule of President Muhammadu Buhari

Questions	Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage
Do you agree that government direct control of the press during the civilian rule of PMB has been favorable?	Disagree	56	56%
	Strongly Disagree	44	44%
Total		100	100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 13 indicates that a majority of the respondents disagreed that government direct control of the press during the civilian rule of PMB has been favorable. This implies that government direct control was not favorable to the press during the PMB administration.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the attitude of media practitioners toward policies that affect press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari civilian rule?

Based on the data collected and analyzed, the findings show that the President Muhammadu Buhari administration implemented policies that negatively affected the operations of media organization. The findings also show that journalists in NTA, ITV and the Nigerian Observer have a negative attitude towards policies that affected press freedom during PMB civilian rule and they believe that positive steps have not been taken to protect press freedom and journalists. The findings are further shown in table 6 where all the respondents agreed that their organization have been affected negatively by governmental policies that limited press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari administration. Furthermore, table 7 indicates that all the respondent agreed that they have a negative attitude towards policies that affect press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari civilian rule. Table 8 reveals that a 10 (10%) respondents agreed that positive steps have been taken to protect press freedom and journalists, 18 (18%) respondents were undecided, while 27 (27%) disagreed. The remaining 45 (45%) respondents

strongly disagreed that positive steps have been taken to protect press freedom and journalists and ensure that they do their jobs without fear of harassment or intimidation. The findings agree with the study conducted by Aliede (2020) which stated that fears and worries have been expressed for press freedom in Nigeria, because President Buhari first term was hostile to a free press.

In trying to ascertain the attitude of media practitioners toward policies that affect press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari civilian rule, table 6, 7 and 8 were used.

Research Question 2: What are the limitations to press freedom during the civilian rule of President Muhammadu Buhari?

Findings of the study reveal that while there are several limitations to press freedom, replacing of editors and staff is not a way through press freedom is limited. The findings also reveal that laws and regulations, government ownership and intimidation of journalists are major factors used to limit freedom of the press during PMB administration.

The findings are reflected in table 9 which posits that 12 (12%) respondents agreed that replacing editors and staff members is one of the ways through which

press freedom is curtailed in their organization. 18 (18%) respondents were undecided on the limiting factor, 31 (31%) disagreed, while the remaining 39 (39%) strongly disagreed that replacing editors and staff members is one of the ways through which press freedom is curtailed in their organization. Table 10 reveals that 51 respondents representing 51% of the sample size agreed that laws and regulations are factors that limit freedom of the press during PMB administration, 10 (10%) says it is media ownership, 19 (19%) respondents agreed that it is intimidation, while 21 (21%) agreed that a major factor is government ownership.

The findings agree with the study conducted by Nwanne (2004) where he noted that court fines, denial of licensing assassination, beating of Journalists, seizing of working equipment, demolition and proscription of media house and mysterious disappearance of media persons, among other judicial and extrajudicial measures are limiting factors to press freedom.

On the basis of investigating the limitations to press freedom during the civilian rule of PMB table 9 and 10 were used to answer this question.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of government control on press freedom during the civilian rule of President Muhammadu Buhari?

Findings of the study revealed that journalists in the selected print and broadcast media organizations in this study agreed that, the manner in which events in the society are reported is determined by existing policies and bills put in place by the PMB administration. However, they believe that their organization performed very effectively in reporting and covering societal events during PMB civilian rule. The findings also show that the respondents disagreed that government direct control of the press during PMB administration has been favourable.

The findings are well orchestrated in table 11 where 34 (34%) respondents strongly agreed that the manner in which events in the society are reported is determined by existing policies and bills put in place by the PMB administration, while 66 (66%) respondents agreed. Furthermore, table 12 shows that a 72 (72%) respondents believe that their organization performed very effectively in reporting and covering societal events during PMB civilian rule, while 28 (28%) agreed that it is effective. Table 13 indicates that 56 (56%) respondents disagreed that government

direct control of the press during the civilian rule of PMB has been favourable, while 44 (44%) strongly disagreed

The findings agree with the study conducted by Almaisur Ado Sani's (2004) where he noted that the press in Nigeria is not totally free, but considerably free since they repeatedly covers issues that are critical to the government by giving such stories prominence. The findings also agree with the study conducted by Sunday E. N Ebaye and Ese Joy John (2017), where they pointed out that there is a positive link between press freedom, democracy and development. They contend that the government must advance the cause of press freedom, by granting the press a free hand to its duty and not limit their activities with cogent laws and policies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study was aimed at giving an Appraisal on the state of press freedom during the civilian rule of President Muhammadu Buhari between 2015 and 2023". The study was carried out using the survey research method. The survey research method for gathering data for the study made use of questionnaire as the research instrument to gather data from the respondents which provided the following:

- i. One Hundred Percent (100%) of the respondents agreed that President Muhammadu Buhari administration implemented policies that negatively affected the operations of media organization.
- ii. Journalists in NTA, ITV and the Nigerian Observer (100%) have a negative attitude towards policies that affected press freedom during PMB civilian rule. The respondents (45%) believe that positive steps have not been taken to protect press freedom and journalists.

- iii. Thirty nine percent (39%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that replacing of editors and staff is not a way through which press freedom is limited.
- iv. Laws and regulations, government ownership and intimidation of journalists are major factors used to limit freedom of the press during PMB administration.
- v. Journalists (66%) in the selected print and broadcast media organizations in agreed that the manner in which events in the society are reported is determined by existing policies and bills put in place by the PMB administration.
- vi. Seventy two percent (72%) of the respondents believe that their organization performed very effectively in reporting and covering societal events during PMB civilian rule.
- vii. The findings also show that the respondents (56%) disagreed that government direct control of the press during PMB administration was favorable.

5.2 Conclusion

The issue of press freedom has for long been a very controversial one in this country. Although it is occasionally stated the Nigerian press is one of the freest in Africa, many journalists and other sympathizers of the press appear not to be impressed because journalists and media workers have often been ridiculed, abused and subject to laws that limit their ability to report news without fear or favour.

On that basis, this study therefore concludes that President Muhammadu Buhari administration implemented policies that negatively affected the operations of NTA, the Nigerian Observer and ITV. In addition, positive steps that would protect press freedom and journalists during the PMB administration were not taken. Hence, it is necessary to have special freedom for the press guaranteed by the constitution, which would allow them to write to inform the public without fear of censorship, intimidation, molestation or restraint to personal liberty.

5.3 Recommendations

A study of this nature cannot be without some recommendations. Hence, arising from the findings, the researcher recommends the following:

- i. Freedom of the press should be clearly enshrined in the constitution. This freedom should adequately guarantee the press, the right to receive and disseminate information and protect the source of information.
- ii. Any existing legislations which tends to unduly strangle the freedom of the press should be reviewed
- iii. Necessary guidelines for ensuring that the media serves the interest of the public should be provided.
- iv. The mass media plays a crucial role in the new social order, hence, the government must desist from controlling the media using stringent laws and regulations.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Mass Communication
Faculty of Arts
University of Benin,
Benin City,
Nigeria.
11th of March 2023

Dear respondent,

REQUEST FOR COMPLETION OF ITEMS IN QUESTIONNAIRE

I am Sonia, a Final year student of the above named department/ institution. I am conducting a research on, " **AN APPRAISAL ON THE STATE OF PRESS FREEDOM DURING THE CIVILIAN RULE OF PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI BETWEEN 2015 AND 2023.**". This research is in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass communication.

You have been carefully selected for this study to provide reliable data. This study is strictly guided by research ethics which protects the anonymity of its respondents. All information you provide would be use for only academic purpose.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Sonia Unuafe
(Researcher)

QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: Please kindly tick (✓) the appropriate option below

SECTION A: Demographic information

1. **Sex** (a) Male (b) Female
2. **Marital status:** Single () Married ()
3. **Educational qualification :** Wasce () HND/B.sc () M.sc () Ph. D ()
4. **Which of the media outfit do you work with?** [a] NTA, Benin [b] ITV[c] Nigerian Observer
5. How long have you been working with the organization? [a] Less than 1 year [b] Less than 1 - 3 years [c] 4 - 6 years [d] 7 - 9 years [e] 10 years and above

SECTION B: PSYCHOGRAPHICS

6. Has your organization been affected negatively by Governmental policies that limits press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari administration? [a] yes [b] No (c) not sure (d) can't tell
7. What is your attitude towards policies that affect press freedom during President Muhammadu Buhari civilian rule [] Positive [] negative [] can't tell [] neutral [] not sure
8. Positive steps have been taken to protect press freedom and ensure that journalists are able to do their jobs without fear of harassment or

- intimidation under PMB (a) Strongly agreed [] (b) agreed [] (c) Disagree [] (d) Strongly disagree [] (e) Undecided []
9. Replacing editors and staff members is one of the ways through which press freedom is curtailed in my organization? strongly agreed [] (b) agreed [] (c) Disagree [] (d) Strongly disagree [] (e) Undecided []
 10. Which amongst these factors is a major limitation to freedom of the press during PMB civilian rule (a) Government censorship (b) intimidation (c) laws and regulations, (d) media ownership
 11. The manner in which events in the society are reported is determined by existing policies and bills put in place by the PMB administration (a) Strongly agreed [] (b) agreed [] (c) Disagree [] (d) Strongly disagree [] (e) Undecided []
 12. How would you rate the performance of your organization as regards area of coverage and reports during PMB civilian rule? [a] Very effective [b] Effective [c] cant tell [d] not effective [e] not effective
 13. Do you agree that Government's direct control of the press during the civilian rule of PMB has been favorable? (a) strongly agreed [] (b) agreed [] (c) Disagree [] (d) Strongly disagree [] (e) Undecided []