

Security Implications of Violating Nigeria Broadcasting Code during the 2019 General Elections

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Abstract

Participation in elections by the electorate is aided by media campaigns through content dissemination of relevant information. The campaigns are a constitutional right for political parties and candidates and are defined in terms of mode, time and rules by the Electoral Act. One of these rules is stoppage of partisan campaign on broadcast media 24 hours to election day; otherwise called 'election silence.' One of the essence of the ban was to allow the voters to reflect on parties and candidates' manifestos in making their informed choices and to avoid violence because of politicians' access to the media on the day. But media organisations often violate this provision on election day and this has grave security implications on the general conduct of elections. Therefore, this study examined the extent of violations by broadcast media organisations and sanctions imposed on them by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) during the 2019 general elections. Content analysis method was used to examine the Weekly Monitoring Reports (WMRs) of the NBC. The findings showed that presidential election attracted more sanctions than gubernatorial election and the sanctions were more on private broadcasters than public and they occurred more in the north-central and south-west than any other geo-political zone. The researchers concluded that such might have arisen due to so many factors, including the desire of politicians to grab power on one hand and the broadcast stations' economic interest for survival. Based on this, the paper recommends that NBC's fine imposition alone might not stem the tide; it should be complemented with a more severe sanction such as reduction of transmission hours for any partisan violation on election day.

Keywords: Election Day, Media Coverage, Political Broadcast, Broadcast Regulation, NBC

Introduction and Motivation for the Study

The National Broadcasting Commission is statutorily empowered by the NBC Act, CAP N11, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004 to among other things license, monitor and regulate broadcasting in Nigeria. The Commission has been in existence since 1992 and it has 10 Zonal Offices and 27 State Offices across the federation. NBC conducts its regulatory functions through the Nigeria Broadcasting Code (NB Code)

which spelt out the minimum standards expected of broadcast stations with regards to their conduct and content. The NB Code which is periodically reviewed to reflect the dynamism of broadcasting is divided into chapters. One of these chapters is on 'News and Current Affairs,' 'Programme Standards' and 'Advertising' which contain provisions on political campaigns and elections.

Some of these provisions are directly borrowed from the Electoral Act which explains how broadcast stations are required to cover campaigns and elections matters. This is done to ensure that media conduct a fair, balanced and transparent campaign and election coverage. On the part of NBC any action or inaction on the part of broadcast media organisations that constitute a breach against the Constitution, NBC Act, Electoral Act, NB Code or any other extant laws is a violation that attract sanctions. The measure of enforcing the NB Code is to ensure a transparent conduct of periodic, free, fair and credible election because it is one of the characteristics of a liberal democratic society. And it could help minimise incidences of violence that has characterised Nigeria's elections in recent times. Mobilisation for such violence-free elections is often aided by the media which provide quantum of necessary information to the electorates (Jega, 2015). Such information offered by the media helps the electorates in taking informed decisions about who governs them and other governance issues generally. Electoral candidates' use of the broadcast media for campaign purposes according to the Nigeria's Electoral Act and provisions guiding campaigns and elections in the Nigeria Broadcasting Code is limited to 24 hours to the polling day. This compels the political parties and the candidates to stop all campaign activities 24 hours to election day. It is necessary to state that this study is on 'election day' violations only.

One of the Code's provisions on electioneering states that campaign period on broadcast media commences 90 days before polling day and ends any partisan content such as jingles, announcement and party identification like logo or symbol 24 hours to election day. Any violation of these provisions attracts sanction as prescribed by the Code (Nigeria Broadcasting Code, 2016). Despite the prescribed sanction, broadcast stations have violated the provisions of the Act and the Code on election day as evidenced in Ekiti State during the 2018 gubernatorial election where the State Broadcasting Service (ESBS) aired unauthorised election result that almost resulted in crisis situation in the state but for the intervention of security agencies and the NBC which shut down the station immediately (Malam & Rabilu, 2019). Media political campaign coverage against the provisions of the extant laws without punitive sanctions by the relevant authorities can encourage others to do same and that can escalate tension.

Ban on partisan electoral messages on broadcast media some hours before polling day is meant to allow voters to ponder on the bulk of campaign messages received during campaign period. Therefore, the day is called 'Day of Reflection' or 'Election Silence' (Glavaš, 2017), because it avails voters with the opportunity to reflect and make final decision on the candidates to choose. The period usually starts

from the midnight of the day preceding the election day and ends after polls are closed. Some countries, particularly the United States, oppose election silence owing to what it calls violation against one of the fundamental rights, right to freedom of expression. This study, therefore, investigates violations against campaign ban on election day in Nigeria's 2019 general elections and how that can affect the peaceful conduct of elections. The study specifically looks at the frequency, nature and focus of election day violations between public and private broadcasters. This is in addition to looking at the geographical spread of violations during the election days' ban.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the nature/focus of the violations of political broadcast codes on the 'election day' by private and public broadcast stations in Nigeria.
2. Compare the extent to which political broadcast codes (regulation) were violated on the 'election day' by public and private broadcast stations in Nigeria.
3. Find out the geopolitical spread of the violations of political broadcast codes on the 'election day' by private and public broadcast stations within the six geopolitical zones of the country.
4. Compare the extent of specific sanctions imposed on public and private broadcast stations who violated the political broadcast codes on 'election day' in Nigeria.
5. Assess the security implications of the political broadcast codes violations on 'election day' in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by media political economy theory which postulates that media is operated largely for political and economic ends. The entire media value-chain: production, distribution and consumption are being controlled to achieve political and economic motives (Baran & Davis, 2010). The theory suggests that ruling elite use media apparatus to consolidate their powers and exert their control on the ruled (those that are being governed). The argument that media are established for economic and political ends can motivate them to use all available opportunities in their struggle for survival. This is inclusive of committing infractions against the political broadcast codes as contained in the Nigeria Broadcasting Code. Government on the other hand, may control the media through sanctions enforcement to retain power and adjust media operation.

Review of Related Literature

Nigeria's media organisations have history of partisanship since independence with evidence of how they have often flouted ethical standards in their political broadcasting activities (Gambo, 2013). The media according to Gambo, had exhibited tendencies of unethical conduct such as giving platforms to politicians to castigate opponents unfairly, deceive electorates, biased coverage, rig elections and in some cases promoted

hatred among diverse Nigerians. Such unprofessional conduct has continued till date with some broadcast organisations being used as instruments for hate speeches (European Union, 2015) and this can lead to violence. This is a negative trend for the media which is expected to play its role of enriching democracy positively (Oso, 2017).

Ekeanyanwu (2015) argued that such attitudes being exhibited by the media could be linked to media ownership. Ekeanyanwu who examined media performance during the Nigeria's 2015 general elections, concluded that high level of unprofessionalism was exhibited by the private media in 2015 elections coverage. Even in South Africa's 2016 municipal elections, there was a report of biased coverage with more focus on major political parties particularly the ruling party in terms of advertisements placements in prime times (Media Monitoring Report, 2016). Even though, the bias reported is insignificant but it tells how media organisations portray partisanship during election campaigns. Overall, the bias was only 10% of the entire news stories and programmes on SABC (SABC is a national public broadcast organisation and its affiliates) during the elections. The bias took place in three different ways; first at the level of language used in news/programme presentation which favours or damage the image of one party over the other. Secondly, presentation, appearance and depiction of footages of political parties in news or programme determine to a significant extent the level of favour or disfavour towards competing political parties. The last determinant is bias by omission where parties were found to have not been treated in a balanced and fair manner especially in offering right of reply to some parties on some substantial allegations about burning issue made by competing political parties (Media Monitoring Report, 2016).

The framing of campaigns in favour of political parties with large budget or those in power just like what happened in the South Africa's 2016 local government elections and Nigeria's 2015 general elections has become a reoccurring decimal in Africa's political contraption (Obukoadata *et al* 2016). Porto (2007) had earlier argued that Brazilian TV Globo was deeply partisan and biased in the 2002 Brazilian presidential campaigns in favour of the ruling party. More so, Porto had optimistically postulated that the national television (TV Globo) may change in line with the election coverage guidelines as evident during the 2002 elections. Although, there are some scholarly submissions that broadcast media bias in election coverage is not pervasive in some parts of the world (Gulati, Just & Crigler, 2004), but, in Nigeria, several studies have established contrary viewpoints (Umar, 2014; Malam & Rabilu 2016).

Similar findings which corroborate that of Porto (2007) and Media Monitoring Report (2016) is that of Dahiru & Yakubu (2018) who content analysed the news bulletins on 2015 presidential campaigns coverage by the Nigeria's public TV broadcast network, Nigeria Television Authority (NTA). Their findings indicated that there is a significant positive bias towards the then ruling party, PDP. The public broadcast organisation showed partisanship in its coverage through censoring of campaign materials to favour the ruling political party, and weak portrayal of other political parties. The findings showed that the then ruling party PDP got 43.3%, APC

which was the then leading opposition party got 11.7% and other political parties got 45% coverage. Percentage of positive portrayal was 38.3% for PDP and 1.7% negative coverage (unfavourable coverage). APC got 11.7% positive portrayal only. They concluded that there was 'disequilibrium' in the news coverage of the political parties by the NTA. This scenario played out during the Nigeria's 2019 general elections, where broadcast media paid more attention to the ruling party, the APC with 41.8% of the coverage time, while some opposition party, the PDP, got 33.9% and other 89 political parties which participated in the elections were paid 24.3% of attention (Institute for Media and Society, 2020). The Institute for Media and Society added that, the coverage focused more attention on urban areas 84.6% than rural with only 13.6% coverage attention, even though, majority of Nigerians reside in rural areas. In terms of unprofessional broadcast particularly offensive, hurtful, inflammatory and hate speeches, the report said private broadcast stations championed the course with 51.4% of the respondents feigning the unprofessional attitude of these stations towards political coverage, while 48.6% of the respondents castigating public broadcast stations. The report concludes that with the level of unprofessionalism exhibited by broadcast stations during election's coverage, there is need for proper capacity enhancement for them in the area of national election coverage.

Any amount of bias in election campaign coverage counts negatively and could adversely impact on the electorate who most often rely on media for information. For example, Madni & Khan (2016) had used survey study to assess the impacts of exposure to political campaigns of major political parties on viewers' participation in electoral process during the media coverage of 2013 general elections in Pakistan. The researchers reinforce the notion of correlation between television viewership and voting decision, where they found that electorates prefer television (60.5%) to educate them during political campaigns over other media (45%). This view validated Sada (2002) earlier position on Nigerian media coverage of elections where he argued that television stations allocate more airtime to political issues in their daily coverage with 8.2% against 5.7% by radio. Some of his other findings include 11% airtime allocation to political programmes by the federal government's NTA in the north-east, Nigeria, while all the states' TV stations in the zone had cumulatively allocated 7.25%.

Dallatu (2014) conducted a study to find out the most ethical issue of concern among journalists in Kano state. Findings of the study indicates that 54.6% of the respondents chose bias as their most unethical practice, followed by false report with 49.6% and sentiment which got 36.9%. These are the habits which they believe should be avoided. Moellar (2010) concurred with the view that, media particularly, privately-owned, somehow resort to helping the political interests of the powerful and wealthy, hence, acting in a sensational way for profit and power. But even the public broadcast organisations cannot be exempted from this accusation and other unwholesome broadcasts activities (ACSPN, 2018), because in some cases it serves as government mouthpieces rather than serving the public (Ezeigbo, 2004).

Nwammuo, Edegoh & Iwok (2015) also linked media unprofessional elections coverage to the influence of ownership. They said the level of partisanship exhibited in 2015 elections was a clear manifestation of ownership. Besides ownership influence, there is also undue governmental interference for possibly some political ends in negation to the code of practice (Jibril, 1998). Such interests, most often, reduce editorial independence of broadcasters and forced them to abandon the objectivity and fairness principles (Asomba & Arowolo, 2018). Such tendencies attract more sanctions by the regulator (Institute for Media and Society, 2018). But this was never the case as almost all the violators that had government patronage were left off the hook. Partisan position of broadcasters according to Pate & Yar'adua (2015) leads to the violations of the codes of practice in elections period. They cited in their work a report by the NBC on media coverage of elections which showed that the 2011 election coverage was partisan as 64% of respondents adjudged the coverage of the election to be unfair against opposition political parties and their candidates and such unfairness happened in public broadcast stations.

Some scholars are of the view that some broadcasters are not familiar with the codes of political practice during electioneering period, hence the violations. But some empirical study suggests otherwise, for example, Bala (2012) conducted a study on the level of awareness, knowledge and attitudes towards the Nigeria Broadcasting Code on some staff of Freedom FM, Kano. The researcher found that 91.36% of respondents were fully aware about the broadcast industry code called the Nigeria Broadcasting Code and large number of them amounting to 61.73% had read it. Only 82.72% of the respondents attested to applying the provisions of the Code in their operations, while 65.43% of them said their adherence to the Code, impacts positively on their programming, but 83.95% of them understood the Code to be a tool for the protection of public interest. This study was further replicated by Inuwa (2014) and found that the level of operatives/journalists that are aware about the Code of practice has reduced to 80.6% from 91.36% and only 46.4% out of the previous 61.73% have read it, a reduction of about 20% if compared to Bala's findings, two years earlier. However, only 54% were mindful of adhering to its provisions while discharging their responsibility. Interestingly, 47.1% of those surveyed believed that political regulation is the major challenge being faced by the regulator and 62.7% opined that the Commission faces political interference from different corners.

But, even the regulator is not spared of accusations by scholars. For example, Ukah (2011) described the Nigeria's broadcast regulator as not neutral in the conceptualisation of policy and implementation. He argued that the Commission's policies and practices as enshrined in the Code is just an instrument of political manipulation. While Sani (2017) faulted NBC's ban on the granting of broadcast license to political parties which according to him impedes the development of media practice in Nigeria, just like how Ukah (2011) faulted NBC's ban on the granting of broadcast license to religious organisations.

Some studies have examined NBC's regulatory role during the 2015 general elections. One of such studies by Malam & Rabilu (2016) examined the Weekly Monitoring Reports (WMRs) to determine the extent of sanctions on political broadcast in Northeast Nigeria, found that between November 14, 2014 and April 19, 2015, NBC Maiduguri Zone, has recorded a total of 179 breaches from which 54 representing 30.17% were purely political breaches. Commensurate sanctions were found to have been imposed on broadcast stations. For example, 27.8% of sanctions were for inflammatory remarks, indecent and abusive language, 29.6% were on jingles exceeding one minute as stipulated by the Code of practice. Staff voice-over of political jingles or what other scholars called on-air personnel voicing was reported 23 times representing 42.6%. The study came at a time when there was high level of hate speeches in the Nigeria's media. The media stations in the zones mostly recorded inflammatory broadcasts, unfair remarks and unprofessional jingle production, which if left unchecked especially during electioneering can fuel the level of insecurity in the country.

Security Implications of Political Broadcast Code Violations

Security which many scholars described as a state of being free from threats (Gwaza, 2019), was severally threatened in Nigeria particularly during elections. Electoral violence of 2007, 2011 and much recently in 2019 in some places like Kano during gubernatorial election could result in a humanitarian crisis in a fragile country like Nigeria which is already divided along regional, ethnic and religious lines. Such situation can lead to anarchy and unsettle the country which suffered military interventions in the past (Campbell, 2010). The broadcast media is a major stakeholder in political conflict management and resolution. Several examples abound not only in Nigeria but Africa at large. For example, the genocidal role the media played in Rwanda in 1994 which claimed over 800,000 people majority of whom were Tutsi had been well documented (Gwaza, 2019; Ayuba, 2019). Here in Nigeria, some media content had led to loss of lives and properties. For example, In 2013 Wazobia FM Kano, through one of its popular programmes then, *Sandar Girma* presented by Yakubu Musa, broadcast an episode that condemned in entirety the polio vaccine. The broadcast influenced so many people to reject the vaccine and subsequently alleged to have led to the killings of some polio officials because of an attempt to force it on the people.

Political elites in Africa have their way of violating laws governing elections for their personal interest and this attitude has deeply characterised the African political process which often breeds political instability, thereby disrupting the democratic process (Danjuma, 2019). Therefore, enthroning the true democratic culture of free, fair and credible election with balanced and accountable media coverage is becoming difficult in some African states (Lawan, 2019). During electioneering, media tendencies to broadcast campaigns during prohibited period or announce election results unofficially are being regulated by the NBC to avert crisis. For example, during the 1993 annulled June 12 Presidential election, media was sharply divided along political lines and heightened the tension in the country (Pate & Ibrahim, 2021). Such

dangerous tendencies need to be carefully regulated in order not to plunge the country into anarchy.

Under the fourth republic, several broadcast media stations were at various points, found wanting by NBC in circumventing the provision of the Code concerning campaign ban on election day. For example, during the 2011 gubernatorial election in Zamfara State, the CEO of Zamfara Radio and Television Services started announcing election results in favour of the incumbent Governor Mamuda Aliyu Shinkafi of the PDP in contravention to the extant law. The situation almost caused riot in Gusau where the supporters of the ANPP's opposition candidate Abdul'aziz Yari disagreed with the results arguing that it was unofficial. NBC and security agencies intervened immediately, stopped the programme and subsequently sanctioned the station. However, in Kano's 2011 gubernatorial election, the then Managing Director of Radio Kano, showed partisanship as he openly sided with the ruling ANPP. At a point, he was heard on a live radio show arguing with a reporter who reported with "actuality" (voice of the LG Returning Officer) that PDP won that LGA. NBC had to intervene immediately to avoid crisis in Kano by instructing the station to withdraw him from the panel of discussants. Also, in Kano during the 2015 gubernatorial election NBC attempted to shut down Radio Kano and ARTV for unofficial results declaration. Even though, the attempt was viewed as political because the center (Federal government) was being controlled by the PDP and Kano was being controlled by the APC, the issues were that they violated the extant political broadcast codes.

Similarly, in 2015 electioneering there were some advertisements in the print particularly that which was sponsored by the then Ekiti State Governor Ayodele Fayose in which APC Presidential Candidate, Muhammadu Buhari was portrayed as deeply sick person that would die in office if elected. The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) described the advertisement as not only inciting but lacking in maturity because of its inherent bad taste. The advertisement according to APCON did not pass through the Advertising Standard Panel (ASP) for pre-exposure approval. APCON therefore sternly warned political candidates, party members and supporters, media consultants and media organisations against such dangerous trend that can plunge the country into chaos (Smith, 2019). Despite such warnings, Ekiti State came to limelight again in 2018 when NBC shut down the state TV and radio services for violations bordering on unauthorized result declaration in respect of 2018 Ekiti State gubernatorial election (Malam & Rabilu, 2019). The declaration was made by the State Governor in favour of his deputy (standing as PDP Gubernatorial candidate) that he won the election and any contrary declaration by INEC should be rejected (Smith, 2019). These and several other instances constitute threats to Nigeria's security during elections because it can escalate violence.

Methodology

Quantitative content analysis was deployed to find out, determine and compare the extent of violations and sanctions for breaches committed by private and public broadcast stations on Election day in Nigeria during the 2019 general elections. The population of the study comprises all the documented breaches that occurred on February 15, 16 and 23; March 8 and 9, 2019. February 15 and 16, 2019 were the initial

days that the ban on partisan campaign begun for Presidential and National Assembly (NASS) elections before the postponement to February 23, 2019 by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC); and March 8 and 9, 2019 for Gubernatorial and State Houses of Assembly elections. Census as a sampling technique was used since the population is assumably manageable. The Nigeria's broadcast regulatory Commission (NBC) has 10 zonal offices in Abuja, Lagos, Kaduna, Uyo, Benin, Ibadan, Enugu, Jos, Maiduguri and Sokoto and all the reported breaches emanated from these 10 zonal offices were studied and analysed.

The study developed content categories that focused on election day political breaches reported by the NBC. These categories are broadcast news stories, programme announcements, newspaper review, campaign jingles, partisan phone-in comment/programme, mobile coverage of political office holders, party identification elements and situation report room activities.

Units of analysis for this study are all the reported partisan campaign messages on Election day which are classified into eight different categories. These are broadcast news stories, programme announcements, newspaper review, campaign jingles, partisan phone-in comment/program, mobile coverage of political office holders, party identification elements and situation report room activities. These units of observation were coded using manifest coding system to find the frequency, nature and geographical spread of breaches and sanctions. For sanction frequency, the researchers looked for the number of sanctions throughout the Election days. Sanction viewed from the perspective of number of sanctions imposed on violations committed during the presidential/NASS elections in comparison to that of gubernatorial/state houses of assembly elections on one hand; and those imposed on public and private broadcast stations on the other hand. Inter-coder reliability was achieved by using two independent coders to code. The level of agreement between the two coders was 0.94% or -94% using Holsti formula.

Result

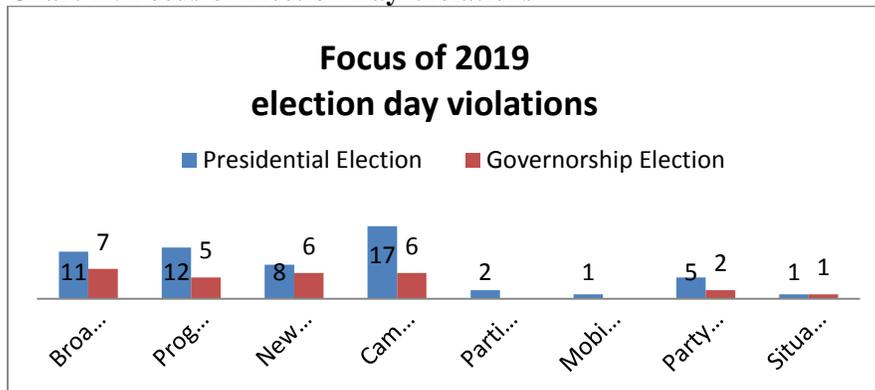
Chart I: Frequency of Election Day Violations of 2019 General Elections



The chart above shows that a total of 84 violations have been reported by the ten zonal

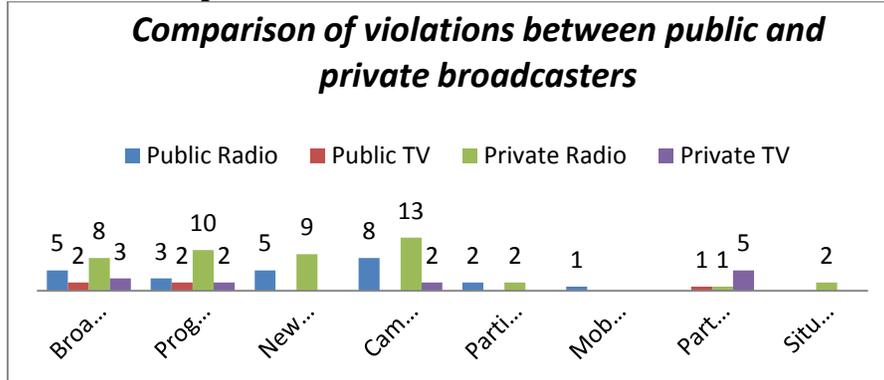
offices of the NBC being breaches recorded on Election days of 2019 general elections against the political broadcast codes. Violations were more in campaign jingle than in any other content categories with 27.3%, followed by news which recorded 21.4% of the reported breaches. 20.2% of violations were purely in programmes, followed by newspaper review which recorded 16.8% and 8.3% for portraying party identification on Election days. Partisan phone-in programme and situation report recorded same frequency of 2.4% while mobile coverage of political office holders had 1.2%. NBC has ten zonal offices spread across the six geopolitical zones. Five zones are in the north and the other five in the south. The zones in the north are Abuja zone which comprises four states and FCT: Kwara, Kogi, Nasarawa and Niger. Kaduna zone include states like Kaduna, Katsina, Kano and Jigawa states under it. Sokoto zone comprises Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara states. There is Jos zone with Taraba, Bauchi, Plateau and Benue states under it. Maiduguri zone has Borno, Yobe, Gombe and Adamawa states. The zones in the south are Lagos zone which stands alone because of broadcast media concentration in the city. There is Ibadan zone which oversees Ekiti, Ogun, Osun, and Oyo states. Benin zone has Delta, Edo, and Ondo states. Enugu zone is overseeing Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states. The last zone is Uyo which has Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River and Rivers states under its jurisdiction.

Chart II: Focus of Election Day Violations



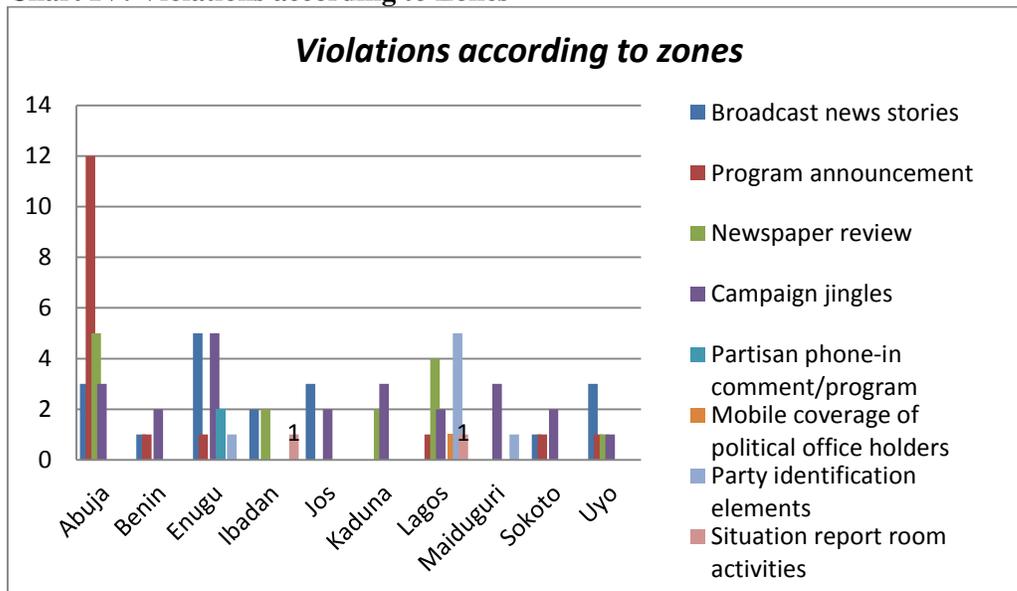
While 57 sanctions representing 67.86% of the entire sanctions on election days were imposed during presidential elections, 27 representing 32.14% were imposed during gubernatorial elections. Where 20% of the sanctions were imposed for airing campaign jingles during presidential elections, it was only 7% during gubernatorial elections. Programmes which were laced with partisanship or campaigns had 14% during presidential elections against 5% during gubernatorial election. Partisanship in news presentation recorded 13% during presidential election against 7% during gubernatorial. Partisanship in newspaper review was 9.5% during presidential election against 7% during gubernatorial election. Use of party logo or any other form of party identification got 6% sanctions during the presidential election and 2.4% in gubernatorial election. The entire sanctions on partisan phone-in comment amounting to 2.4% was recorded during presidential election. Use of mobile coverage of political office holders was 1% during presidential election, just like situation report. Situation report centers on breaches that occur on election day in which discussants/participants portrayed partisanship while commenting in a live broadcast.

Chart III: Comparison of Violations between Public and Private Broadcasters



Private radios accounted for 53.6% of the breaches committed on election days against 26.2% by its public counterpart. Even on the television category, private television stations recorded 14.3% against 5.9%. Eighty-point-two percent (80.2%) or 69 of the breaches occurred in the radio category while the remaining 19.8% or 17 breaches occurred in the television categories. Interestingly, 65.2% of the violations in the radio categories were recorded by the private radio stations across the various zones as compared to 34.8% by the public radio.

Chart IV: Violations according to Zones



There were more sanctions in Abuja zone than in any other zone with 27.4%, followed by Enugu and Lagos zones with 16.7% each. Uyo zone got 7.1% sanction, while Ibadan, Jos and Kaduna got 5.9% sanction each. Benin, Maiduguri and Sokoto recorded 4.8% sanction each.

Discussion of Findings

As stated somewhere in the work, 85% of violations that occurred on election days during the 2019 general elections were mostly in campaign jingles, broadcast news stories, programme announcements and newspaper review. Other categories like partisan phone-in comment/program, mobile coverage of political office holders, party identification element and situation report room activities (update on election situation from reporters) constituted 15% of the sanctions imposed.

The findings showed that the focus of the breaches and sanctions were on the presidential and NASS (PreNASS) elections. This is not surprising looking at the level of commitments by political parties to grab power at the centre. Because the center is the most lucrative economically, the Constitution set aside 52.68% of accrued revenue for it alone; states 26.72% and local governments have 20.60%. Also, whoever emerges as the President, will wield enormous power; he will be the president and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The executive powers the Constitution arrogates to the President is so enormous that people aspire to become the president of the world's most populous Black nation, arguably the richest country in Africa, the seventh most populous nation in the world. These findings regurgitate the allegations by the Institute for Media and Society (2018) which ahead of 2019 elections alleged that the Nigerian media including the regulator did not learn from the downsides of the 2015 general elections, because broadcasters were left at their mercies without proper training, hence the increasing of breaches.

Therefore, desperation to get to the exalted position by candidates and their political parties may possibly increase the level of political broadcast violations on election day and this may have security implications on the election management and credibility owing to Nigeria's fragility. Presidential election took place alongside the National Assembly Election which has Senate and House of Representatives. The two houses have a total of 469 members: Senate 109 and HoR 360 (Jega, 2015). Thousands of candidates aspired for the seats across the country, and almost all of them ran media campaigns. The two houses have former governors, ministers, ambassadors and CEOs of public and private enterprises as well as business moguls as members. This alone could make the election highly competitive with more broadcast violations due to desperations.

The gubernatorial election on the other hand was conducted alongside the State Houses of Assembly with 990 State Constituencies (Jega, 2015). The State Houses of Assembly are arguably a training ground for most politicians at the state level, particularly for politicians eyeing for NASS or any executive position. Also, presidential election has been concluded with the winner already known, therefore, some candidates and parties that are not popular enough may not even continue with the media campaign, since their performance during the presidential election was not encouraging. Therefore, having fewer sanctions during this election is not surprising. On the quantum of sanction on private and public broadcast organisations, the data showed that private radio and television stations accounted for 67.9% sanctions while 32.1% sanctions for public broadcast stations. This finding corresponds with that of Ekeanyanwu (2015) who concluded that high level of unprofessionalism is mostly

exhibited by private media organisations as compared to the public media. It has also reinforced the findings of Inuwa (2014) and Malam and Rabilu (2019) who empirically established that NBC sanctions private stations more than public broadcast organisations, possibly due to high level of unprofessionalism in private media compared to public (Ekeanyanwu, 2015).

On sanctions based on 10 Zonal Offices of the NBC which the researchers regrouped based on the 6 geopolitical structure of Nigeria: North-West, North-Central, North-East, South-West, South-South and South-East. For example, according to chart IV North-Central which comprises Abuja and Jos zones led with 33%, followed by South-West which comprises Lagos and Ibadan zones with 22%, and North-West (Kaduna and Sokoto zones combined) got 10%. North-East (Maiduguri zone) got 5%; South-East (Enugu zone) recorded 17% while South-South (Uyo and Benin Zones) got 12%. For North-Central to have led, was not surprising because of the number of stations in the zone. The zone has more than 100 functional broadcast stations similar to the South-West with about 100 also. This is in addition to Abuja being the seat of power of Nigeria and headquarters of political parties. Lagos state is situated in the South-West and is the most industrious city in Nigeria: therefore, it serves as a headquarters of the south-west sub-region. The city was the former capital of Nigeria and serves as headquarters for many political parties and broadcast stations.

To compare the extent of specific sanctions imposed on public and private broadcast stations who violated the political broadcast codes on ‘election day’ in Nigeria, the researchers reviewed provisions of some sections in the Nigeria Broadcasting Code pertaining sanctions on political broadcast codes. For example, in spite of the stern warning by section 5.2.12 of the Code which bans campaigns 24 hours to elections “all partisan political broadcasts, campaigns, jingles, announcements and the use of all forms of partisan political party identifications or symbols on air shall end not later than twenty-four hours before polling day,” and section 7.6.7 “no broadcaster shall permit any political campaign or advertisement on its facilities 24 hours immediately preceding polling day or on polling day,” broadcasters went ahead to violate the provisions. For violators of these sections, the Code specifies that “any broadcast station that contravenes the provisions of sections 7.6.6 to 7.6.13 above, shall be liable, in the first instance, to a fine of N500, 000 and N1, 000,000 for subsequent breach(es) suspension or revocation of license.” The outright fine on violators includes section 5.2.12 of the Code.

To sum it up, violations of the political broadcast codes have security implications particularly on ‘election day’ looking at instances where local media stations were used to pass across rhetoric that incite political supporters to disagree with elections result in 2007 and 2011 general elections (Campbell, 2010). Such attitude suggests the nature of desperation by the politicians on one hand, who want to grab power and broadcasters on the other hand, who need revenue for sustenance. Therefore, this finding validates the dictates of the political economy theory because of the inherent political and economic interest of actors (Onoja, 2005; Malam, 2006; Yaradua, 2014; Idris, 2019).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Just as pervasive as the presidential election in terms of cost, competition and desperation to win elective positions by parties and candidates, the broadcast media was not different in trying to largely achieve an economic end. Empirical evidence from the findings show that Presidential election attracted more sanctions with 67.86% than gubernatorial election with 32.14%. Some broadcast organizations might have violated the Code not because of economic motive alone but political because of ownership influence and this calls for careful regulation to avoid tension or any security challenge because of desperation by actors. It was not surprising to find that sanctions were more on private broadcasters than public because literature has shown that already. First, private broadcasters are usually more profit-oriented than public interest, even though, they often give lip service to it. Secondly, several private stations are owned by politicians in government or in opposition. Therefore, the owners may take the advantage of their platforms to propagates their ideas even during prohibited times and may lead to violence if not effectively managed. Thirdly, the leading geopolitical zones in terms of violations on election day; south-west and north-central are places where private media outnumbered public broadcast stations by far.

Based on the geopolitical zones findings regarding sanctions imposed on violations of political broadcast codes which showed North-Central leading with 33%, followed by South-West with 22%, it can be concluded that compliance to the provisions on campaigns on election day was more in the north-west, north-east, south-east and south-south in 2019 general elections as more sanctions occurred in the north-central and south-west than any other geo-political zone. Based on this, it can be concluded that broadcast media in Nigeria seems not bothered to circumvent the code of practice on election days even if they will get sanction from the regulator and this may have attendant security consequences.

Therefore, the researchers recommend that NBC's fine imposition alone might not stem the problem; it should be complemented with a more severe sanction such as reduction of transmission hours for any partisan violation on election day or a much tougher sanction such as suspension of broadcast license. However, allowing media to operate without stiffer sanctions on election day political broadcast codes violators might encourage other broadcast stations to venture into the act. In view of this, the regulator should be allowed to discharge its regulatory role autonomously without any undue executive interference to avoid crisis and strengthen our democratic culture.

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