Media Ownership Structure and Responsible Journalism: Implications for Media Accountability and Democratic Governance in Nigeria

Nimaa, Tornebari Justice
Department of Mass Communication
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt
Tornebari.nimaa@iaue.edu.ng
https://doi.org/10.56201/rjmcit.vol.12.no7.2026.pg84.95

Abstract
This study examined the influence of media ownership structure on responsible journalism and its implications for media accountability and democratic governance in Nigeria, with particular focus on journalists in Rivers State. The study specifically examined the influence of ownership on editorial decision-making, news selection and framing, as well as the extent to which ownership pressure contributes to self-censorship and biased reporting. The study was necessitated by concerns that political interests, government influence and commercial considerations associated with media ownership may constrain journalists' professional independence and limit the ability of the media to serve the public interest. The study was anchored on Social Responsibility Theory and Political Economy Theory of the Media. A survey research design was adopted, with a population of 540 registered journalists, from which a sample of 225 respondents was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency distribution, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that media ownership influences editorial decision-making, news selection and the framing of news stories. The findings further showed that ownership pressure contributes to self-censorship among journalists and encourages biased reporting, thereby constraining the practice of responsible journalism. The study also found that these ownership-related influences weaken the watchdog role of the media and limit its capacity to promote accountability and contribute effectively to democratic governance. The study concludes that although responsible journalism requires professional independence, fairness, balance and accountability, these principles can be compromised when ownership interests exert excessive influence over editorial processes. The study therefore recommends that media organisations strengthen editorial independence through clear policies that protect journalists from undue interference, promote greater diversity in media ownership, reinforce professional and ethical standards, and provide continuous training that equips journalists to uphold responsible journalism despite ownership pressures.

Keywords: *Media ownership structure; Responsible journalism; Media accountability; Democratic governance; Editorial influence; Nigeria.*

Introduction

Across democratic societies, the struggle over who controls information has become as important as the information itself, placing media ownership at the centre of debates about accountability and public trust, especially in contexts where access to reliable information shapes how citizens understand governance and participate in public life. Within this broader

reality, the media continues to occupy an influential position in democratic systems, not merely as a channel for transmitting news, but as a space where meanings are constructed, public conversations are shaped and power is subjected to scrutiny (McQuail, 2010; Schudson, 2008). In contemporary democracies, journalism is therefore expected to do more than report events; it is required to contribute to accountability, support civic engagement and enable citizens to make informed decisions about issues that affect their lives (McQuail, 2010). This expectation becomes even more significant in Nigeria, where the consolidation of democratic governance still depends heavily on the availability of credible information and the consistent monitoring of public institutions, even as journalism continues to operate within political and economic conditions that often limit the full expression of press freedom (Akinfeleye, 2003; Uche, 1989).
The ability of the media to perform these roles is closely linked to patterns of ownership and control, which shape not only what is reported but also how it is presented and whose interests are ultimately served. Ownership cannot be treated as a neutral or purely administrative arrangement, because it has direct implications for editorial priorities, newsroom independence and the framing of public issues (McQuail, 2010; Napoli, 2019). In situations where media ownership is concentrated, particularly in the hands of individuals or groups with strong political or commercial interests, the diversity of viewpoints available to the public may be reduced and coverage may reflect the strategic goals of proprietors rather than broader societal concerns (Bagdikian, 2004; Napoli, 2019). As a result, ownership structures play a defining role in determining whether journalism functions in the public interest or aligns more closely with the agendas of those who finance and control media organisations.

In Nigeria, the media environment reflects a mix of state-owned outlets, privately owned commercial organisations and platforms with clear political affiliations, creating an appearance of diversity that does not necessarily translate into genuine independence (Akinfeleye, 2003; Uche, 1989). Where ownership is tied to political influence or concentrated economic power, editorial decisions may be shaped in subtle or overt ways that prioritise proprietor interests, thereby limiting the autonomy of journalists and reducing the capacity of newsrooms to provide balanced, critical and investigative coverage of public affairs (Akinfeleye, 2003; Napoli, 2019). This dynamic creates a situation in which the formal presence of multiple media outlets does not automatically guarantee a plurality of perspectives or the kind of rigorous scrutiny required in a democratic setting (McQuail, 2010; Napoli, 2019).

These conditions have clear implications for responsible journalism, which rests on principles such as verification, fairness, independence and accountability to the public (Ward, 2021), yet becomes difficult to sustain when journalists operate within environments where ownership interests influence editorial choices and professional judgment. In such contexts, media practitioners may encounter pressures to soften criticism, avoid sensitive issues or frame stories in ways that align with institutional expectations, leading over time to patterns of self-censorship, selective reporting and subtle bias that weaken credibility and erode public confidence in the media (Newman et al., 2024; Ward, 2021).

Beyond the professional sphere, the effects of these constraints extend into the broader democratic process, as a media system shaped by ownership interests becomes less effective in performing its watchdog role, thereby limiting transparency and reducing the depth of public oversight. In an era increasingly defined by disinformation and declining trust in institutions, the question of how independent journalism can be sustained becomes even more pressing, since the strength of democratic governance is closely tied to the availability of credible, diverse and accountable sources of information (Bennett & Livingston, 2020; Schudson, 2008).
Building on these concerns, this study explores the relationship between media ownership structures and responsible journalism in Nigeria, with a specific focus on how patterns of ownership shape media accountability and, ultimately, influence the quality of democratic practice.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the widely acknowledged role of the media in sustaining accountability and supporting democratic governance, growing evidence suggests that the structure of media ownership in Nigeria is increasingly shaping and, in some cases, constraining, the practice of responsible journalism. The concentration of ownership in the hands of political actors, state institutions and commercially driven private investors has created an environment in which editorial independence is often difficult to maintain, as journalists and media organisations may come under direct or indirect pressure to align their reporting with the interests of those who control the platforms they work for. This reality not only affects what is reported, but also how issues are framed, resulting in patterns of bias, self-censorship and selective coverage that can distort public understanding of important matters.

As these pressures persist, the capacity of the media to perform its watchdog role becomes increasingly weakened, particularly in situations where stories that are critical of powerful interests are downplayed, ignored or presented in ways that reduce their impact. When ownership influence shapes news content in this manner, matters of public concern may receive limited attention or be misrepresented, thereby restricting citizens' access to balanced and credible information needed for meaningful participation in democratic processes. Over time, this contributes to declining public confidence in the media and a gradual erosion of civic engagement, as audiences begin to question the reliability and integrity of news sources.

While existing studies have explored various dimensions of media performance in Nigeria, there is still limited empirical attention devoted to examining how ownership structures directly affect responsible journalism and its broader implications for accountability and democratic governance, particularly within the context of Rivers State. This gap leaves important questions unanswered regarding the extent to which ownership patterns shape journalistic practice at the subnational level. It is within this context that the present study seeks to provide empirical insight into the relationship between media ownership and responsible journalism, with a view to understanding how these dynamics influence media accountability and democratic outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine how media ownership structures shape responsible journalism in Nigeria and the broader implications for accountability and democratic governance.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine how media ownership influences editorial decision-making processes in Nigeria.
2. Analyse the effect of ownership structures on the practice of responsible journalism.
3. Assess how ownership interests shape media accountability to the public.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does media ownership influence editorial decision-making in Nigeria?
2. In what ways do ownership structures affect the practice of responsible journalism?
3. How do ownership interests shape media accountability to the public?

Literature Review

Media Ownership Structure

Media ownership is not simply about who owns a media organisation; it is about who ultimately shapes what gets published, what gets ignored and how reality itself is presented to the public. In many societies, ownership structures operate quietly in the background, yet their influence is deeply embedded in newsroom routines and editorial priorities. McQuail (2010) explains that ownership forms whether state, private, or corporate create different expectations for media performance, which in turn affect how journalists interpret their professional roles. In Nigeria, where ownership is often tied to political actors and business elites, this connection becomes even more pronounced, as media platforms are sometimes used to protect interests rather than interrogate them (Omenugha & Uzuegbunam, 2015).

What makes this issue particularly complex is that ownership influence is rarely direct or openly imposed; instead, it often manifests through subtle pressures, organisational culture and economic dependence. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) describe this as a layered process in which media content is shaped by multiple levels of influence, with ownership sitting at the structural core. Empirical studies in Nigeria reinforce this position, showing that proprietors can influence editorial tone, story selection and framing patterns, especially during politically sensitive periods (Lawal, Babatunde & Olaoye, 2025; Okonma et al., 2024). As a result, media ownership becomes less of a background variable and more of a determining force in how journalism is practiced.

Responsible Journalism

Responsible journalism is often spoken about in normative terms, yet in practice it is shaped by the everyday reality's journalists face within their organisations. At its core, it involves accuracy, fairness, balance and a commitment to the public interest, but these ideals are not always easy to uphold in environments where competing pressures exist. McQuail (2010) situates responsible journalism within the broader framework of media accountability, arguing that the legitimacy of the press depends largely on its ability to serve society rather than sectional interests. In the Nigerian context, this expectation is frequently tested by political interference, commercial pressures and institutional constraints.

Beyond theory, responsible journalism is best understood as a negotiation between professional ethics and structural limitations. Herman and Chomsky (1988), through the propaganda model, illustrate how systemic factors including ownership and advertising can shape news output in ways that subtly undermine objectivity. Nigerian-based research supports this perspective, indicating that journalists may resort to self-censorship or selective reporting when faced with ownership expectations or organisational survival concerns (Eke, Adeyemi & Ochor, 2024). This does not necessarily imply a lack of professional awareness, but rather highlights the constrained environment within which journalists operate.

Media Accountability

Media accountability refers to the extent to which the press remains answerable to the public, adheres to ethical standards and maintains transparency in its operations. It is one of the defining features of a functional media system, as it ensures that the power to inform does not become the power to manipulate. Curran (2002) argues that accountability is sustained through both internal mechanisms, such as editorial policies and external pressures, including public scrutiny and regulatory frameworks. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms is often influenced by who owns and controls media institutions.

In contexts where ownership is concentrated, accountability can become compromised, not necessarily through overt censorship but through more subtle forms of influence that shape editorial direction. Studies within Nigeria suggest that when media organisations are aligned with political or economic elites, their willingness to critically examine those interests may be reduced (Opaleke, Akinbola & Adelabu, 2026; Okonma et al., 2024). This creates a situation where accountability becomes selective rather than consistent, thereby weakening public confidence in the media. Over time, this selective accountability contributes to a broader credibility gap, where audiences begin to question not just individual reports but the integrity of the media system as a whole.

Media Bias and Framing

Media bias is rarely a product of individual failure alone; it is often rooted in broader institutional and structural conditions that influence how information is selected and presented. Bias can emerge through story selection, emphasis, omission, or the framing of issues in ways that subtly favour particular interests. Entman (1993) explains framing as the process of highlighting certain aspects of reality while downplaying others, thereby shaping how audiences interpret events. When ownership interests intersect with editorial processes, framing becomes a powerful tool through which influence is exercised without appearing overtly manipulative. Within the Nigerian media environment, bias is frequently linked to ownership patterns, especially during politically sensitive periods such as elections or policy debates. Studies indicate that media outlets tend to align their narratives with the interests of their proprietors, leading to uneven coverage and partisan reporting (Okonma et al., 2024; Lawal, Babatunde & Olaoye, 2025). This does not always manifest as blatant propaganda; rather, it appears through subtle prioritisation of certain voices, strategic silence on particular issues, or the repeated use of specific angles.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Social Responsibility Theory and the Political Economy Theory of the Media, both of which provide a structured lens for understanding how media systems operate within society and how external forces shape journalistic practice.

The Social Responsibility Theory

The Social Responsibility Theory, advanced by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956), emerged as a response to earlier libertarian views of the press, introducing the idea that media freedom should not exist in isolation from societal obligations. Rather than viewing the press as entirely free from control, the theory insists that such freedom must be exercised with a strong sense of accountability to the public. It emphasises that the media is expected to provide accurate, fair and balanced information, while also reflecting diverse viewpoints and serving as a platform for public discourse. In this sense, the legitimacy of the media is tied not just to its independence, but to how well it fulfils its responsibility to society. Within the Nigerian context, where concerns about bias, selective reporting and declining public trust persist, this theory offers a useful benchmark for evaluating whether journalistic practices align with accepted ethical standards. Beyond its normative expectations, the Social Responsibility Theory also highlights the role of internal and external mechanisms in ensuring media accountability. These include professional ethics, editorial guidelines, regulatory frameworks and public feedback systems. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms is often shaped by the structural realities within which media organisations operate. In situations where ownership interests exert significant influence, the ability of the media to uphold these responsibilities may be constrained. This makes the theory particularly relevant to this study, as it provides a basis for assessing how far Nigerian media institutions are able to maintain ethical standards in the face of ownership pressures.

Political Economy Theory of the Media

The Political Economy Theory of the Media shifts attention from what the media ought to do to the conditions under which it actually operates. As articulated by Mosco (2009), this approach examines how economic structures, ownership patterns and power relations influence the production and distribution of media content. It challenges the assumption that media organisations function as neutral platforms, instead arguing that they are embedded within systems where profit motives and elite interests often shape communication processes. From this perspective, media content is not simply the outcome of journalistic decisions but also a

reflection of broader structural forces. In applying this theory to the Nigerian media environment, it becomes evident that ownership plays a defining role in shaping editorial outcomes. Media organisations owned by political actors, government institutions, or profit-driven investors may prioritise interests that align with their proprietors, thereby influencing what is reported and how it is framed. Empirical observations have shown that such conditions can lead to subtle forms of control, including agenda-setting, selective coverage and self-censorship among journalists. The Political Economy Theory therefore provides a critical framework for understanding the underlying forces that shape journalistic practice, moving the analysis beyond surface-level observations to the deeper structures of power and control.
These two theories complement each other in explaining the dynamics under investigation. While the Social Responsibility Theory outlines the ethical expectations of the media in a democratic society, the Political Economy Theory explains the structural constraints that may hinder the fulfilment of those expectations.

Methodology
This study adopted the survey research design because it enabled the collection of data from a defined group of respondents regarding their perceptions and experiences concerning media ownership structure and responsible journalism. The population of the study comprised approximately 540 registered journalists in Rivers State. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, a sample size of 225 respondents was selected. A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that all members of the population had an equal chance of being selected. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher, consisting of demographic items and statements measured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation. Decisions were based on a criterion mean of 2.50. Out of the 225 copies of the questionnaire administered, 210 were correctly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 93.3%.

Data Presentation
Table 1: Media Ownership and Editorial Decision-Making in Nigeria

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	N	Σ	Mean	Remark
1	Media ownership influences the selection of issues considered important for news coverage.	82	91	32	15	220	680	3.09	Accepted
2	Owners can directly influence editorial decisions through their control over media policies.	104	87	21	8	220	727	3.30	Accepted
3	Commercial interests of media owners affect the prominence given to particular news stories.	58	76	61	25	220	607	2.76	Accepted
4	Journalists are generally free to make editorial decisions without interference from media owners.	18	35	79	88	220	423	1.92	Rejected
Grand Mean						**220**		**2.77**	**Accepted**

Table 2: Ownership Structures and the Practice of Responsible Journalism

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	N	Σ	Mean	Remark
1	Concentrated media ownership can limit journalists' freedom to report issues that conflict with owners' interests.	96	88	27	9	220	711	3.23	Accepted
2	Ownership structures can influence journalists' adherence to professional and ethical standards.	21	39	84	76	220	445	2.02	Rejected
3	Political interests of media owners can affect balanced and impartial reporting.	112	79	23	6	220	737	3.35	Accepted
4	Diverse ownership structures can provide room for alternative viewpoints and responsible journalism.	91	98	24	7	220	713	3.24	Accepted
Grand Mean						**220**		**2.96**	**Accepted**

Table 3: Ownership Interests and Media Accountability to the Public

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	N	Σ	Mean	Remark
1	Media ownership interests can influence how responsive media organisations are to public concerns.	76	93	39	12	220	673	3.06	Accepted
2	Media organisations may give greater attention to issues that protect the interests of their owners.	119	78	18	5	220	751	3.41	Accepted
3	Ownership interests can affect the willingness of media organisations to investigate powerful individuals and institutions.	108	83	22	7	220	732	3.33	Accepted
4	Media organisations are usually accountable to the public regardless of who owns them.	14	28	76	102	220	394	1.79	Rejected
Grand Mean						**220**		**2.90**	**Accepted**

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: How does media ownership influence editorial decision-making in Nigeria?

The findings indicate that media ownership has a considerable influence on editorial decision-making in Nigeria, as shown by the grand mean of 2.77, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. The highest level of agreement was recorded for the statement that owners can directly influence editorial decisions through their control over media policies (mean = 3.30), with 104 respondents strongly agreeing and 87 agreeing. Respondents also agreed that media ownership influences the selection of issues considered important for news coverage (mean = 3.09) and that commercial interests of owners affect the prominence given to particular news stories (mean = 2.76). These results suggest that editorial decisions are not determined solely by journalists' professional judgement but may also reflect the political, economic and organisational interests associated with ownership.

However, the result for the statement that journalists are generally free to make editorial decisions without interference from media owners was rejected, with a mean of 1.92. This is particularly significant because it reinforces the broader finding that ownership can constrain editorial autonomy. The large number of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement indicates that perceived editorial freedom is limited where owners exercise substantial control over media policies and operations. The finding is consistent with McQuail's (2010) view that ownership and control constitute important organisational factors shaping media content, as well as Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) argument that media messages are influenced by forces operating within media organisations. The implication is that strengthening editorial independence in Nigeria requires clearer institutional separation between ownership interests and day-to-day editorial decisions.

Research Question 2: In what ways do ownership structures affect the practice of responsible journalism?

The findings show that ownership structures have an important influence on the practice of responsible journalism, with a grand mean of 2.96, which exceeds the 2.50 criterion mean. Respondents strongly agreed that political interests of media owners can affect balanced and impartial reporting (mean = 3.35), making it the highest-rated statement in the table. Similarly, respondents agreed that concentrated media ownership can limit journalists' freedom to report issues that conflict with owners' interests (mean = 3.23) and that diverse ownership structures can provide room for alternative viewpoints and responsible journalism (mean = 3.24). These findings indicate that the structure and interests behind media ownership can shape the degree of balance, independence and diversity that journalists are able to achieve in their professional practice. This finding is supported by Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011), whose cross-national study of journalists found that political, economic and organisational factors significantly shape journalists' perceptions of influences on their work, with political influences also related to ownership structures. The result also relates to Yusha'u (2010), whose study of corruption reporting in the Nigerian press identified regional, political and business interests, including the nature of media ownership, as important factors shaping journalistic practice.

Interestingly, the statement that ownership structures can influence journalists' adherence to professional and ethical standards was rejected, with a mean of 2.02. This suggests that respondents did not perceive ownership structure as directly determining whether journalists comply with professional and ethical standards, even though they recognised its influence on editorial freedom and impartiality. The distinction is important because journalists may retain knowledge of, and commitment to, professional ethics while working within organisational structures that constrain the issues they pursue or the perspectives they are able to emphasise. This position is consistent with the framework of Hallin and Mancini (2004), which identifies political parallelism, journalistic professionalism and the structure of media systems as related but distinct dimensions of media development. The finding therefore suggests that ownership may exert its strongest influence through editorial direction, political interests and limitations on professional autonomy rather than through a direct erosion of journalists' ethical knowledge. It consequently underscores the importance of institutional arrangements that protect editorial independence and media pluralism, which are also recognised as important conditions for media development by UNESCO (2008).

Research Question 3: How do ownership interests shape media accountability to the public?

The findings demonstrate that ownership interests significantly shape media accountability to the public, as reflected in the grand mean of 2.90. Respondents agreed that media ownership interests can influence how responsive media organisations are to public concerns (mean = 3.06). A particularly strong level of agreement was recorded for the statement that media organisations may give greater attention to issues that protect the interests of their owners, which recorded a mean of 3.41. Respondents also agreed that ownership interests can affect the willingness of media organisations to investigate powerful individuals and institutions (mean = 3.33). Taken together, these results suggest that ownership interests can influence the extent to which media organisations prioritise public-interest journalism over issues that may conflict with the interests of proprietors or their associates. The finding is linked to Benson, Neff and Hessérus (2018), whose comparative study of 51 news organisations examined how different ownership and institutional arrangements were associated with variations in public-service-oriented news. It also supports the broader argument of UNESCO (2022) that independent journalism requires conditions in which public-interest reporting is protected from political, commercial and factional pressures.

The rejection of the statement that media organisations are usually accountable to the public regardless of who owns them (mean = 1.79) further strengthens this conclusion. The result indicates that respondents do not consider public accountability to be entirely independent of ownership arrangements. Where owners possess strong political, economic or institutional interests, media organisations may face competing pressures between serving the public and protecting ownership interests. This position corresponds with Yusha'u (2010), who found that Nigerian journalism is shaped by regional, elite, political and business interests, with ownership forming part of the broader structure influencing media practice. It is also consistent with Hallin and Mancini's (2004) discussion of the relationship between media systems, political connections and journalistic professionalism, particularly the role of political parallelism in shaping the relationship between media organisations and wider political interests. The implication is that stronger internal accountability mechanisms, transparent ownership structures, editorial safeguards and protection for professional independence are necessary to ensure that ownership interests do not override the media's responsibility to provide information, scrutinise powerful institutions and serve diverse public interests.

Conclusion

The findings of the study clearly demonstrate that media ownership has a significant influence on the practice of journalism in Rivers State. Journalists generally perceive that media owners can shape editorial decisions, influence the selection and treatment of news stories, and create conditions that encourage self-censorship, selective reporting and potential bias. These influences suggest that, although editorial independence remains a fundamental expectation of professional journalism, journalists may sometimes have to operate within organisational and ownership interests that constrain the full exercise of professional autonomy.

The study further shows that the principles of responsible journalism, including fairness, balance, objectivity and accountability, are widely recognised by journalists but may not always be easy to uphold in practice when ownership interests exert pressure on editorial processes. Consequently, journalists may find themselves negotiating between professional ethical obligations and the expectations of media proprietors or management. The findings therefore establish that media ownership structure is an important factor in determining the quality, independence and credibility of journalism in Rivers State. Strengthening responsible journalism consequently requires not only adherence to professional ethics by journalists but also organisational structures that protect editorial independence and reduce undue ownership interference.

Recommendations

1. Media houses should create room for editorial independence to strengthen professionalism. Media organisations should establish clear editorial policies that protect journalists and editors from undue interference by owners, advertisers, political actors and other external interests. Such independence will enable media professionals to make decisions based on newsworthiness, public interest and professional ethics rather than commercial or political considerations.
2. Media organisations should promote diversity in media ownership. Greater diversity in # ownership can reduce the concentration of media influence in the hands of a few individuals or organisations and create room for alternative perspectives and voices. Regulators and industry stakeholders should therefore encourage ownership structures that support pluralism, independent journalism and fair representation of different social, political and economic interests.
3. Media organisations should regularly train journalists on professional ethics, accuracy, fairness, balance, source protection, conflict of interest and responsible use of information. Editorial guidelines and professional codes should also be consistently enforced to discourage sensationalism, misinformation, manipulation and other practices that could undermine public confidence in the media.

RJMCIT

References

Akinfeleye, R. A. (2003). *Fourth estate of the realm or fourth estate of the wreck: Imperative of social responsibility of the press*. Lagos: University of Lagos Press.

Bagdikian, B. H. (2004). *The new media monopoly*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Bennett, W. L., & Livingston, S. (2020). The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions. *European Journal of Communication, 33*(2), 122–139.

Benson, R., Neff, T., & Hessérus, M. (2018). Media ownership and public service news: How strong are institutional logics? *International Journal of Press/Politics, 23*(3), 275–298. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218782740

Curran, J. (2002). *Media and power*. Routledge.

Eke, C., Adeyemi, M. O., & Ochor, R. U. (2024). *Watchdog role of the media in Nigeria: Examining the dynamics of media ownership, lapdog tendencies and news objectivity*. Advance Journal of Linguistics and Mass Communication, 8(6), 1-14.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.

Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Hanitzsch, T., & Mellado, C. (2011). What shapes the news around the world? How journalists in eighteen countries perceive influences on their work. *International Journal of Press/Politics, 16*(3), 404-426. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161211407334

Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. Pantheon Books.

Lawal, A. A., Babatunde, V. O., & Olaoye, U. A. (2025). Ownership influence and news objectivity: An empirical assessment of media control and editorial independence in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(8), 3150–3164.

McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6th ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Mosco, V. (2009). *The political economy of communication* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Napoli, P. M. (2019). *Social media and the public interest: Media regulation in the disinformation age*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Eddy, K., Robertson, C. T., & Nielsen, R. K. (2024). *Reuters Institute digital news report 2024*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Okonma, V., Emokpare, S. A., Adewunmi, S. O., & Ogunmakinde, A. D. (2024). Influence of media ownership on media agenda setting in Nigeria. *International Journal of Broadcasting and Communication Technology*, 10(1), 55–61.

Omenugha, K. A., & Uzuegbunam, C. E. (2015). Exploring the ethical challenge of media ownership: Is Nigerian media's role in good governance possible?. *Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies*, 4(3), 397–415

Opaleke, G. T., Akinbola, M. A., & Adelabu, O. T. (2026). Media ownership in a democratised media environment: Challenges and opportunities. *International Journal of Law, Politics and Humanities Research*, 12(6).

Schudson, M. (2008). *Why democracies need an unlovable press*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (2014). *Mediating the message in the 21st century: A media sociology perspective* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Siebert, F. S., Peterson, T., & Schramm, W. (1956). *Four theories of the press: The authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and Soviet communist concepts of what the press should be and do*. University of Illinois Press.

Uche, L. U. (1989). *Mass media, people and politics in Nigeria*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

UNESCO. (2008). *Media development indicators: A framework for assessing media development*. UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2022). *Journalism is a public good: World trends in freedom of expression and media development, global report 2021/2022*. UNESCO.

Ward, S. J. A. (2021). *The invention of journalism ethics: The path to objectivity and beyond* (2nd ed.). Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Yusha'u, M. J. (2010). Regional parallelism and the reporting of corruption in the Nigerian press. *Journal of African Media Studies, 2*(3), 353-369.

RJMCIT