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Blessed Ngonso , Atairet Atairet , Bassey Bassey , Amah Williams , [Peter Egielewa](#) \*

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*Article*

# Media Complexity in the Mirroring of Nigerian Political System: A Historical Appraisal

Blessed Frederick Ngonso <sup>1</sup>, Atairet Clifford Atairet <sup>2</sup>, Bassey Esuk <sup>3</sup> Amah Maclean Williams <sup>4</sup> and Peter Eshioke Egielewa <sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Mass Communication, Edo State University Uzairue; ngonso.frederick@edouniversity.edu.ng

<sup>2</sup> Department of Public Administration, Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus; atairetatairet@aksu.edu.ng

<sup>3</sup> Department of Mass Communication, Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus; iniabasi2003@yahoo.com

<sup>4</sup> Department of History and International Studies, Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus; amahwilliams@aksu.edu.ng

\* Correspondence: peter.egielewa@edouniversity.edu.ng

**Abstract:** In the Post-Colonial period, the influence of media complexity in the transition to civilian rule and in shaping and consolidating democracy is self-evident in one hand and the post-colonial period the media have continued to watch and shout at misrule and governance in Nigeria. This paper examined how the Nigerian mass media mirrored the Nigerian political landscape using their major functions such as surveillance, correlation, cultural transmission, status conferral, enforcement of cultural norms and values, education, information and narcotizing dysfunctional role. This study was conducted as a longitudinal non-empirical study that relied on secondary data to examine how the mass media showcase political activities in Nigeria from the pre-colonial era through the independent era till date (2023). In this historical account, the researchers examined all media forms which include print, broadcast and new/social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Telegram, and Instagram. The study showed that the mass media have played a critical role in shaping the political system in Nigeria. The findings which stemmed mainly from secondary data also showed that the Nigerian mass media have shown great interest in the Nigerian political system and as well exposed some unethical dealings in the political structure, raised consciousness, empowered the vulnerable, and acted as the mouthpiece of the oppressed on the one hand and on the other hand have played to the gallery. The researchers conclude that Nigerian mass media have effectively mirrored the Nigerian political system, particularly in the age of social media.

**Keywords:** media complexity; political system; historical appraisal

## Introduction/Background to the Study

Otondo (2008: 30) posits that media complexity is the idea that media (like TV, movies, music, etc.) can be complex and multifaceted (it's not just about entertainment or information. It can also be a source of social commentary, cultural critique, and even political change. Media complexity can be broken down into four main factors: representation, interactivity, fragmentation, and globalization. Representation refers to how media portrays people and groups. Interactivity is about how people engage with media. Fragmentation refers to how media is broken up into different types and genres. Globalization is about how media crosses borders and cultures. Each of these factors contributes to the overall complexity of media.

The interface between the mass media and society is noticeably conspicuous. In a developing nation like Nigeria, the mass media have been identified as catholicons to development challenges. Bassey (2021) asserts the concept of how the mass media permeate society, become intertwined with, and influence institutions such as democracy, politics, economy and healthcare are called

mediatisation. Traditionally, the mass media act as the watchdog of the society. But in performing this watchdog role, information is often mediatised meaning that the reportage of such information will “suffer from the media outlet’s attendant bias and framing and must be located within media agenda and conform to the established news values, (Bassey, 2021, p.56).

The mass media usually play a crucial role in the development programmes of successive governments in Nigeria through news reportage but oftentimes media ownership structure and political leanings interfere with such reportage, (Bassey, 2018). The mass media report the happenings in society and also spotlight all wrongdoings. In performing surveillance activities, the mass media usually scout around their environment and bring news of development, danger, threats to national stability and threat to public welfare of the people, (Asemah, 2011). According to Bassey (2016, p.219), “the press does the work of surveillance of environment through creative reportage of socio-economic and political events in the society.” The media should report issues of widespread poverty, burgeoning dimension of unemployment, absence of basic amenities in the rural areas and the suburban, the challenges of girl-child education, maternal morbidity problem and the yawning gap of inequality between political office holders and other citizens, (Bassey, 2016).

In a multi-ethnic and multi-party democracy like Nigeria, the press is expected to be fair and objective in reporting activities of political parties, (Bassey & Iwok, 2019). They posit that unfair and unbalanced journalism is capable of eroding public confidence in the reporter or the media organisation. Udoudo and Bassey (2011) assert that given the importance of the media during electioneering, every politician in Nigeria tries to curry favour from the media and, where the politicians do not get exactly what they want, they tend to accuse the media of being unprofessional conduct. This assertion corroborates the submission by Alevomi (2013) that democracy in Nigeria simply depicts individuals’ quests for recognition or self-preservation rather than the greater purpose of service to the people and nation as enshrined in the letters of the definition of democracy. But as the watchdog of the society, “the journalists do not owe the politicians any obligation rather the society, which needs the services of the journalists the most,” (Udoudo & Bassey, 2011, p. 44).

The mass media serve as the critical link between the government and the governed. Bassey (2019) notes that most people in many communities have expressed their displeasure about the government through the media and the government has had to listen to the yearnings of the people and jettison some policies through information gleaned from the media. “Through its news programmes, documentaries, special reports, panel discussions, phone-in programmes, talk shows, tweeter messages and short messages, radio broadcast has alerted the citizens on everyday issues and events of popular concern, (Bassey, 2019, p.223).

From Independence in 1960 till date, elections in Nigeria like in any other democratic setting, are usually preceded by political campaigns or electioneering activities, where individuals vying for various elective offices or groups sponsoring people for offices market their programmes and candidates, (Bassey, 2021a). Elections and electioneering entail the struggle to grab power. There are always divergent views as each participant or political party devises means of outsmarting the other in the political race. It is therefore incumbent upon the media to remain detached by presenting all shades of opinion in the race (Bassey, 2020).

Mass media are channels of communication. In every human society, the mass media occupy a special place because of the special roles they play (Ngonso et. al, 2023). Among the roles otherwise known as functions are information dissemination, education function, entertainment function, correlation function, surveillance and agenda setting function as well (Ekharefor & Ngonso, 2013). Mass media are grouped into traditional media which include “the print media (newspapers, magazines, books, leaflets, pamphlets, fliers and handbills); the broadcast or electronic media include (radio, television, film and cinema) and digital or new media which include: the Internet, social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Quora, LinkedIn, YouTube, Snapchat, Telegram, Instagram, and TikTok” (Ngonso et. al, 2023c, p.205).

## Political system and the media in Nigeria

The Nigerian political system is a multi-party democracy, with a president and a parliament. The media in Nigeria plays a crucial role in holding the government accountable and informing the public about political developments as well as political education. According to Atairet & Dickson (2022), the right to education is fundamental. While, Williams and Egembe (2022, p.29) see education as “one of the avenues of cementing strong cultural relations between nation states” Egielewa and Aidonojie, 2021 cited in Ngonso, et.al, (2023c) assert that the right to access information protect the society from corruption.

During the decolonization process in Nigeria, the media played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and spreading information about the colonial government. Some of the most notable examples include the Radio Diffusion Service, which was established in the 1940s, and the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, which was established in the 1950s. These media outlets were important in spreading information and shaping public opinion during the independence movement (Williams et al, 2022).

The present political system in Nigeria could be traced to the colonial masters and as a country, the political system is guided by the constitution. The Nigerian constitution assigns specific national responsibilities to the federal, state and local governments (Atairet, 2020). The Nigerian constitution provided for the three organs of government, namely; Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary. The legislature has a unicameral legislature at the state level and a bi-cameral legislature at the federal level. The constitution also specifies the form of government to be operated which is democracy. All these are for orderliness. Human beings by nature need orderliness to co-exist and this cannot be carried out without laying down rules and regulations that are guaranteed in the Constitution (Atairet, 2021).

Every society operates a form of government to maintain order, peace, security and the general well-being of its citizens. Despite the various forms of government, such as autocracy (government by one) and aristocracy (government by few); democracy, (government by many), despite its imperfection and deficiencies, it is still considered the best. It is worthy of note that Nigeria despite a choice of democracy as a form of government had witnessed several military interventions. The military dictatorship in Nigeria had brought upon the country several challenges such as religious crises, corruption, poverty, abuse of fundamental human rights, weak institutions, nepotism, ethnicity, favouritism, abuse of office, poor policy implementation strategies and so on (Atairet & Dickson, 2022) and all these have impacted on the media. One of the pillars of democracy that makes it outstanding and preferable to other systems of government that had existed before it is the entrenchment of free speech and freedom of the press. The ideology of democracy which is based on representation, participation and rule of law is anchored on the ability of the electorates to freely express their interests through available media of communication. The difficulty in distinguishing the multiplicity of political systems or political regimes derived from history and human imagination has prompted political theorists to settle for a continuum ranging from non-democracies (authoritarian regimes) to democracies. Dahl (1995) considers political systems to be the boundaries (governance rules) that limit opportunities for participation in government processes. The regimes that restrict participatory changes in political processes to relatively few adult members of society are authoritarian, and the ones that open chances to a greater variety of authorized adult members are democracies.

Democracy is adjudged the most popular system of government in the world. As a form of government democracy has gained popularity in almost all the countries of the world (Atairet, 2022). It is popularly seen as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Nigeria as a nation-state is not left out in this global trend (Atairet & Dickson, 2022) As a concept, according to Obasanjo and Mabgunje (1992) cited in Ogah and Ogeyni (2014), democracy as an ideology is the philosophy of governance which sets a high premium on the basic freedom or fundamental human rights of the citizens, rule of law, the property right, the free flow of information and the right of choice between alternative political positions. Simply put, democracy is that system of politics in which sovereignty is vested in the people rather than in a small clique or an oligarchy, where the rule of law, majority rule and constitutionalism are basic guiding principles of governance. Democratic governance enables citizens to have a say in how decisions are made in a political system (Mark & Atairet, 2022). According to Ramaswamy (2007), democracy means the rule by the people as contrasted with the rule by one person



or a group. Ramaswamy went further to say that it is the people who are both rulers and rule, unlike other systems like monarchy, dictatorship or oligarchy where a distinction between the ruler and the ruled exists. But a cursory examination of the scenario in Nigeria seems to negate this basic ingredient of democracy. It creates a system of government that is characterized by transparency and accountability in both the public and private sectors (Mark & Atairet, 2022). In the context of Nigeria, instead of the majority having their way in the process of governance, a few cabals seems to have hijacked the state of affairs in the Country. The media in most cases in Nigeria recently have not been able to give the required check it is supposed to have given. There is a general agreement that the development of democracy is closely linked to the development and nature of the system of mass communication. The media are regarded as the voice of the people, the social watchdog.

The basic social values of society, including; the rule of law, human rights, freedom, wealth creation, liberty, and equality, among others are expected to be promoted by the media. The media is also expected to hold the government accountable to the people. In essence, the media is very crucial in any democratic setting in that it serves as the watchdog of society. This is why it is more dangerous for the media in a democracy to lose its head in unconscionable partisanship (Ogbodo, 2016). The media informs and educates the electorates concerning democratic values and the citizens' rights. It also promotes equality. This is to ensure that every law-abiding and healthy adult is legally entitled to vote and be voted (Igwe, 2007). With the mass media taking the role of information dissemination in a democratic society, the mass media has a great influence on democratic politics (Roskin et al., 2015).

The mass media is the agent of political communication that plays a vital role in the survival of democracy, as well as disenchantment with democracy; since the political system and the communication system parallel one another (Roskin et al., 2015). The media operators traditionally decide which events to report and how to handle the elements in those stories (Janda et al., 2005). Mass Media is central to the institutionalization and survival of democracy anywhere in the world because it serves as a vital link between the government and the governed. Media and democracy are like Siamese twins because one cannot meaningfully function without the other. In a democratic society, the media, which is synonymous with the press is expected to function as the Fourth Estate of the Realm. Every civilized society or nation has functional media to sustain its democratic system. The economic and technological sector, the political sector, the legal and administrative sector, and the cultural sector has their communication needs upheld through the media (Ndolo, 2011). Expressing the import of the media in society, Ngonso et.al, (2023c, p.206) assert that, "since the days of Gutenberg, print media have provided man with the needed information for human existence".

The performance of the Nigerian mass media right from the first Republic to the present one could be described as a combination of both success and failure. This is because in preserving and consolidating the hard earn democracy the media struggled and fought to reestablish, there are a plethora of encumbrances the media is facing which serve as impediments in stabilizing Nigerian democracy (Atairet & Ndaeyo, 2022).

Historically, the first form of mass media that mirrored politics extensively in Nigeria was the newspapers. The first newspaper ever published in Nigeria is *Iwe Irohin* which was published by Rev. Henry Townsend, a European Missionary of the Church Missionary Society an Evangelical arm of the Anglican Church. Townsend founded his newspaper in the year 1859, December 3<sup>rd</sup> (Sambe, 2005). This first attempt in newspapering business was indeed a welcome development which herald a new beginning in the Nigerian mass media landscape. Henry Townsend undoubtedly killed the newspaper when he dived into Egba and Lagos politics. His paper took a deep root in the Egba and Lagos land issues. Churches were the first to initiate the idea of newspapering in Nigeria. According to Ngonso and Egielewa (2023a), the Churches were involved in the printing of leaflets, pamphlets, fliers and handbills for evangelical tools.

After the death of beloved *Iwe Irohin*, Robert Campbell in 1886 founded Anglo-Africa. This newspaper was judged as the very first newspaper in the sense of newspaper business. Campbell newspaper was a firebrand that incessantly attacked the colonial administration. Lagos Weekly was published by John P. Jackson in 1891, this was another newspaper that opposed colonial rule. The coming of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe with his conglomerate of papers brought a new twist to the press and

politics in Nigeria. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe *West African Pilot* was the most powerful of all the newspapers published in Nigeria from 1890 to 1960. Zik fought and won independence for Nigeria using his newspapers.

Nsidibe et al (2017, p.24) capture it succinctly, “there were several print media outlets that played an important role in the decolonization process. For example, *The Daily Times*, *West African Pilot*, and *Iwe Irohin* were all newspapers that were critical of the colonial government and helped to spread information about the independence movement”. They also helped to educate people about their rights and encouraged them to fight for independence.

In the military era, particularly General Ibrahim Babangida, and General Sani Abacha, the Nigerian press in combination with civil society organizations fought hard to send the military back to the barracks. The notable media outlets that took up the fight were: *Newswatch*, *Tell*, *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers. This was the era that Nigerian news magazines were striving very well.

In contemporary times, the Nigerian press has mirrored the Nigerian political system and exposed dirty political activities.

**Table 1.** Under Olusegun Obasanjo(1999-2007).

Crime	Political Office Holder/Office	Media Role
Certificate Scandal	Senator Evans Ewerem(Senate President)	Brought to the limelight
Bribery in the Senate	Senator Chuba Okadigbo	Brought to the limelight
Certificate Forgery(The Toronto Saga( <b>The Face of a Liar</b> ) <i>Newswatch</i>	Ibrahim Salisu(Speaker House of Rep)	Brought to the limelight(Surveillance-Nigerian Print Media)
Financial Crime	Tafa Balogun (Police IG)	Brought to the limelight(Surveillance-Nigerian Print Media)
Financial Crime	Bode George(National PDP Stalwart)	Brought to the limelight(Surveillance-Nigerian Print Media)
Financial/ Illicit business transactions with Transcorp and Nigerian Telecommunications Limited(NITEL)	Olusegun Obasanjo(President of Nigeria)	Brought to the limelight(Surveillance-Nigerian Print Media)
Tenure elongation(Third Term Deal) with money politics in National Assembly	Olusegun Obasanjo(President of Nigeria)	Brought to the limelight(Correlation)

Source: Authors’ compilation 2023.

**Table 2.** Umaru Musa Yar’ Adua (2007-2010).

Crime	Political office Holder/Office	Media Role
Flagrant violation of constitutional power when he refused to hand over power to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan on his medical/ health leave to Uk	Umaru Musa Yar’ Adua(President of Nigeria)	Brought to the limelight (correlation)

Source: Authors’ compilation 2023.

**Table 3.** Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015).

<b>Crime</b>	<b>Political Office Holder</b>	<b>Media Role</b>
He granted Diepreye Alamieyeseigha State pardon after being convicted of a criminal offence	Goodluck Jonathan	Correlation(Nigerian Media)
illegal deal with BMW, a German automobile firm	Stella Udua (Aviation Minister)	Surveillance(Nigerian Print)

Source: Authors' compilation 2023.

**Table 4.** Mohammadu Buhari (2015-2023).

<b>Crime</b>	<b>Political Office Holder/Office</b>	<b>Media Role</b>
Document forgery(NYSC Certificate )	Mrs Kemi Adeosun (Minister for Finance)	(Surveillance-Nigerian Print Media)
Financial Crime	Ayo Fayose (former governor of Ekiti State)	(Surveillance-Nigerian Print Media)
Financial Crime	Senator Musiliu Obanikoro	(Surveillance-Nigerian Print Media)

Source: Authors' compilation 2023.

Nigeria became a theatre of war, selective corruption charges, and APC members were exempted from corruption charges. One of its national chairmen, a former governor of Edo State, Comrade Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole, testified on national TV that, everyone is forgiven once you join APC. Notable corruption cases were swept under the carpet. Beneficiaries included Ayo Fayose of Ekiti and Musiliu Obanikoro. Buhari spent most of his days in foreign countries on health grounds and meeting Commonwealth Heads of State and Government. His administration is judged to be the most corrupt, most careless and most wicked. The press such as *Sahara Reporters*, *Daily Trust*, *Vanguard newspaper*, *The Punch* and *Premium Times* seriously mirrored this administration and scooped these incidents to Nigerians

However, social media platforms have also helped us to unveil corruption in less than 100 days administration of President Ahmed Bola Tinubu.

**Table 5.** President Ahmed Bola Tinubu (2023-).

<b>Crime</b>	<b>Political Office Holder/Office</b>	<b>Media Role</b>
Money Laundering(18 U.S.C\$1956)	President Ahmed Bola Tinubu	narcotizing dysfunctional role(social media)
Using funds from unlawful activity(18 U.S.C 1957)	President Ahmed Bola Tinubu	narcotizing dysfunctional role(social media)
Bank fraud(18 U.S.C1344	President Ahmed Bola Tinubu	narcotizing dysfunctional role(social media)
Failure to file tax returns (26 U.S.C7203)	President Ahmed Bola Tinubu	narcotizing dysfunctional role(social media)
Lying to federal agents( 18 U.S.C1001	President Ahmed Bola Tinubu	narcotizing dysfunctional role(social media)
Conspiracy(18 U.S.C 371)	President Ahmed Bola Tinubu	narcotizing dysfunctional role(social media)

Source: Tweet from Peter Obi Grassroot Mobilization(9:26pm. Aug 23.17.5K Views)

<b>Crime</b>	<b>Political Office Holder</b>	<b>Media Role</b>
Certificate forgery(NYSC Certificate Scandal	Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo(former lawmaker and ministerial Nominee(2023)	Electronic media(TV) before Print/Social Media(Information function)

Certificate forgery(NYSC Certificate Scandal)	Hannatu Musawa	Electronic media(TV) before Print/Social Media(Information function)
Controversy in her CV/ avoiding questions bothering her family	Doris Uzoka Anite	Electronic media(TV) before Print/Social Media(Information function)
Age falsification	Prof Joseph Utsev	Electronic media(TV) before Print/Social Media(Information function)

**Source: Authors’ compilation 2023.**

In the 1940s and 1950s, Radio Diffusion Service and the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation were both crucial in spreading information about the colonial government and its policies. They also played a role in promoting the independence movement and shaping public opinion. For example, the Radio Diffusion Service broadcasted a radio program called "Voice of Freedom," which was dedicated to promoting the independence movement. Radio broadcasting has remained a major source of information to many in Nigeria particularly rural Nigeria where electricity supply remained a huge problem (Ngonso, et.al, 2023). Rural dwellers in Nigeria still depend on the radio for news information on politics and several other issues (Ukhurebor et al, 2022, Ngonso &Nworisa, 2022; Ugwonno & Ngonso, 2013) found that the media audience still sourced information on radio and other mass media outlets.

In 1959, the Nigerian Television Service was launched, which was the first television station in Nigeria. It aired a mix of news, sports, and entertainment programming, and it helped to spread information about the independence movement (Nsidibe, Emaimo, & Amah, 2017). However, it was not as widely accessible as radio, so it did not have as much of an impact on the process. Television broadcasting set one political agenda that would never be erased in the political history of Nigeria. Ngonso et al (2023c) posit that since the arrival of TV in the late 50s in Nigeria through the Western Nigerian Government led by its Premier, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, television has been a major source of news information and entertainment. Television has become a major communication channel that political parties used to disseminate political information.

Television has also been used to cover political rallies, political debates, and political campaigns, and creates political awareness for mass political participation. Since 1999 till date television provided information concerning the government, worthy of mention is the constant coverage of the National Assembly which also through the camera lens Nigerians have come to realize the shortcomings of the National Assembly. In August 2023, television mirrored the National Assembly screening of Ministerial Nominees when it was exposed to Nigerians that certain nominees have no clear credentials and also forged their age. Despite these flaws, the Senate went ahead to clear the nominees. The present Senate President, Senator Godswill Akpabio was cut on Camera telling Senators how he has deposited 218 million naira holiday allowance to them. TV is an audio-visual medium with the characteristic of transmitting live events into the homes of the viewers. Its audio-visual impact attracts children, youths, teenagers and women to the medium. It is a glamorous medium that presents events most colourfully and attractively, this may have accounted for the reason for its use by many (Ngonso et. al, 2023a). Ngonso and Uchenunu(2021) concluded that the role of the media in shaping and reshaping public opinion has been established through the agenda-setting role of the media(p.32). Nwabueze et al (2011) assert that ‘the media play agenda-setting role in the society, determining which issues move from press agenda to public agenda. Ngonso and Chukwu (2021) maintained that broadcast media convey powerful messages to the audience. Ozekhome and Ngonso (2021) opined the media have a crucial role to play in the reform agenda by totting social balance to a more sustained growth, while (Ngonso, 2017, Uchenunu & Ngonso, 2021) asserts that TV only reinforces the pre-conceived belief.

The sincerity otherwise known as the objectivity of the mass media has been questioned in the 2023 general elections as regards the role of some privately owned TV stations in Nigeria. Ngonso



et.al, (2023c,p.207) assert that “TVC news for example was fingered for supporting APC, while AIT was fingered for supporting PDP and Arise TV was fingered for supporting the Labour Party. This development has sparked off accusations on the part of the media”. Based on this, a section of Nigerian society believes that Nigerian media may have turned blind eyes to certain crimes and misrule particularly when it concerns the owners of the media outlet.

Social media is another example of media complexity affecting the mirroring of the political system with the rise of social media influencers in Nigeria. Social media platforms have been effectively deployed in the 2023 elections both in the monitoring of the electioneering process and the announcement of the results. The power of social media also posed a serious threat to the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC). Social media influencers use social media to share their views and opinions on political issues, and they often have a large following (Egielewa & Ate, 2020). But some of these influencers are not always accurate or objective in their reporting, and this can influence public opinion and even affect election results. Social media allow Nigerians to use the new technology for daily interaction including political participation (Egielewa, 2020b; Egielewa, 2022). It has also increased inter-personal conversations as well as broken the barrier in delayed responses during emergencies (Ngonso et.al, 2018; Ukhurebor et.al, 2023; Ngonso & Egielewa, 2023c; Ngonso & Egielewa, 2023b). Meanwhile, Ngonso et al (2020) in their study found that social media are used even in rural areas.

One of the biggest advantages of social media is that social media create platforms such as Facebook, *Twitter*, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp for youths, teenager, the poor, and women to effectively monitor what is happening in the political arena ( Nzekwe et.al, 2017, Ngonso, 2019). Ngonso et al (2018) found that Nigerian youths increase their cognitive ability through the use of social media. Egielewa et al(2021,p.71) assert that “social media use has become varied, use for business, health, and in recent times, for educational purposes because of their usefulness to teachers and students”. Bassey (2020) cited in Ngonso et al 2023 asserts that “social media are essential components of the contemporary society and have exerted a pervasive influence on human communication, especially among younger generations who are internet savvy and explorative”. The social media problem in monitoring the political system is the issue of ethics and moral values. Despite the positive impacts of the media, a certain portion of the population still sees social media as a whiplash of digital civilization due to several nude and pornographic materials shared on social media (Ngonso, 2020).

Social media have eroded the sense of decency amongst many users forcing all nations of the world to seriously think about social media ethics. Ngonso, 2022a and Ngonso,(2022b) state that ethical behaviour is the “proper thing to do”. The critics have also accused the media, particularly the social media of promoting gossip, rumours, wrong election results, misleading political information, nude pictures, sexual assault, sexually explicit materials, sexual violence, indecent dressings, and alien culture. (Ngonso & Egielewa, 2019; Ngonso & Egielewa, 2023, Ngonso, et.al, 2023c). Ngonso et.al (2023c, p.208) also state that “social media have provided platforms for verbal and online abuses among political actors and their supporters. This may not be unrelated to Williams and Egembe(2022) cited in Ngonso et.al (2023c, p.208) assertions that, “political actors are individuals with emotions, biases and other human attributes”.

During the 2015 Nigerian general election, there was a lot of misinformation and fake news spread through social media and traditional media outlets. This caused confusion and tension among the electorate, and it also impacted the way that the political system was reflected in the media. During the 2015 election, there were a lot of false claims made about the candidates and the electoral process. For example, there were rumours about vote-buying and other forms of electoral fraud. This led to increased tensions and violence, and it also affected the way that the media covered the election. Many media outlets focused on sensationalizing and dramatizing the situation, rather than providing accurate and balanced information. This hurt the way that the political system was mirrored (Akpojivi, 2018).

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Media complexity has exposed several shortcomings, flaws and problems in the Nigerian political system. It has helped to improve the mirroring of the system in Nigeria, it allows for more accountability and transparency by shining a light on the problems in the political system. Media

complexity has allowed for more public discourse and debate about the political system. Social media has played a major role in the mirroring of the political system in Nigeria. It allows for more direct and immediate communication between citizens and the government. It's also allowed for more organization and mobilization around political issues. The spread of false or misleading information on social media, also known as "fake news," can hurt the mirroring of the political system. It has led to confusion and division among the people and makes it difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction, (Egielewa 2020a, Ngonso & Egielewa, 2023).

Traditional media outlets like newspapers and television channels play a crucial role in reflecting the political system. They provide a platform for politicians and political parties to communicate their messages, and they also report on the actions and policies of the government. But some traditional media outlets are not always objective in their coverage as a result of ownership influence. A good example is the TV reportage of the 2023 presidential elections. Generally, the Nigerian mass media including the new media (social media) have performed the following functions in mirroring the Nigerian political system; surveillance, correlation, cultural transmission, status conferral, enforcement of cultural norms and values, education, information and narcotizing dysfunctional role.

We recommend that media literacy should be enshrined into our educational curriculums from our secondary schools up to the universities, which would help people to be more critical and understand the power of media messages in shaping public opinion when consuming media. Another recommendation is the development of a code of ethics for citizen journalists and online media outlets.

Also, the government should impose harsher penalties on those who spread false information, like banning them from the platform or labelling their posts as "disputed." This could help to discourage the spread of fake news and make it easier for users to be identified. More education around media literacy, to help people critically evaluate the information they see on social media. And the platforms themselves could also use better algorithms to detect and flag potentially false information. It's also crucial for the platforms to work together with government, academia, and civil society to create transparent media systems.

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