

**PERCEPTION OF AUDIENCE ON THE ROLE OF PRIVATE
RADIO STATION IN PROMOTING PRESS STATION IN
NIGERIA (A CASE STUDY OF DIAMOND FM, ILORIN).**

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
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify this project has been read and approved having satisfied the requirement for award of Higher National Diploma in Mass communication, in the department of mass communication, institute of information communication technology (IICT), Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin.




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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project firstly to almighty Allah, for the opportunity He grant unto me to this very point in my life and studies.

To my parents Mr. and Mrs. Balogun, for their endless sacrifices and unwavering belief in my potential, this achievement is a reflection of your trust and faith in me .

Also dedicate this project to my beloved brothers, sisters and loved ones, (Mr. muhammed), whose unconditional love, support, and encouragement have been my greatest source of strength throughout this journey.

Lastly, to all those who silently supported me, your presence made a difference, and for that, I am truly grateful.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the perception of the audience regarding the role of private radio stations in promoting press freedom in Nigeria, using Diamond FM in Ilorin as a case study. The research aims to assess how these stations contribute to the media landscape, particularly in the context of Nigeria's complex history of press freedom, which has been influenced by colonialism, military regimes, and civil governance. Through a structured questionnaire administered to 100 respondents, the study examines the extent to which private radio stations promote press freedom, their independence from government control, and the effectiveness of constitutional protections for media operations. Findings indicate that while private radio stations are perceived as informative and entertaining, there are mixed opinions on their role in actively promoting freedom of speech. A significant portion of respondents expresses skepticism about the independence of these stations from government influence, with many indicating that political pressure affects editorial decisions. Additionally, the study reveals a perceived gap between legal provisions for press freedom and their practical enforcement, with respondents doubting the effectiveness of existing protections. The results highlight the challenges faced by private radio stations, including regulatory pressures and financial dependencies, which may compromise their capacity to uphold press freedom. The study concludes that although private radio stations play a crucial role in democratizing information access, systemic barriers need to be addressed to enhance their effectiveness as advocates for press freedom in Nigeria. Recommendations include legislative reforms to strengthen media protections, the development of internal editorial policies, and increased media literacy among citizens to support independent journalism.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Press freedom is often regarded as a cornerstone of democracy and a vital component of the right to free expression. The media's role in any democratic society is not only to inform but also to act as a watchdog on the government, provide a platform for diverse voices, and reflect public opinion (McQuail, 2010). In Nigeria, the role of the media in promoting press freedom has been a topic of considerable debate, especially with the rise of private radio stations. Historically, the media in Nigeria has been under various levels of government control, censorship, and restrictions, making the role of private media crucial in fostering a more open and democratic media environment (Akinfeleye, 2003). This study seeks to explore the perception of the audience on the role of private radio stations in promoting press freedom in Nigeria.

Nigeria has a complex history of press freedom that has been shaped by colonialism, military regimes, and civilian governance. During the colonial era, the press in Nigeria was largely controlled by the British government, and local newspapers were few and operated under strict limitations. The struggle for an independent press started as early as the 19th century, with newspapers like *Iwe Irohin* and *The Lagos Times* advocating for political and social change (Okoye, 1987). These early media outlets fought against colonial oppression and for the rights of Nigerians to express their views freely.

Private radio stations have become a vital part of Nigeria's media landscape, especially after the deregulation of the broadcast sector in the late 1990s. Prior to this, the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) controlled radio and television services, and all media outlets operated under state control. The government held substantial influence over the content of the news, limiting the diversity of opinions and perspectives available to the public (Ekpu, 2005).

Private radio stations in Nigeria have played a significant role in shaping public opinion and discourse. They are often seen as more independent and more critical of the government compared to state-run media outlets. This independence has enabled private radio stations to provide a platform for opposition parties, civil society organizations, and grassroots movements, thus contributing to the democratization process in the country (Adebayo, 2007). In particular, private radio stations have provided a forum for people to voice their concerns about government policies, corruption, human rights abuses, and other critical issues. They are often seen as a vital check on governmental power, helping to uncover stories that would otherwise remain hidden or distorted by state-controlled media.

Despite the positive contributions of private radio stations to press freedom, they face many challenges. Many stations operate under precarious financial conditions, relying on advertising revenue and donations to sustain their operations (Akinfeleye, 2003). Additionally, government interference, whether direct or indirect, continues to pose a threat to their independence. There have been cases of journalists being harassed, arrested, or even killed for reporting on sensitive issues (Falola, 2000). Some radio stations have faced pressure to conform to government-friendly narratives, either through political pressure or through indirect means such as regulatory hurdles or economic pressures from advertisers linked to the government.

The perception of the audience is central to understanding the impact of private radio stations on press freedom in Nigeria. In democratic societies, press freedom is often defined by the ability of the media to operate without fear of censorship, retaliation, or undue pressure from the government or other powerful entities (Tetteh, 2009). In Nigeria, however, the situation is more nuanced, as there are concerns about the government's influence on media content, especially regarding issues that may challenge the status quo (Ali, 2009).

The audience's perception of the role of private radio stations in promoting press freedom can vary widely. Factors such as education, political affiliation, and personal experiences with the media can shape individuals' views on the subject (Duru, 2011). Some segments of the Nigerian population may view private radio stations as champions of press freedom, providing them with uncensored information and diverse viewpoints. Others, however, may be more skeptical, especially in light of instances where media outlets have been compromised or censored (Obboh, 2012).

However, while private radio stations play an important role in promoting press freedom, there are challenges that impact their perceived effectiveness. For example, the reliance on advertising revenue and government licensing may create a situation where media outlets are susceptible to commercial or political pressure. This is particularly true when advertisers are linked to the government or large corporations that may have interests in influencing media content (Falola, 2000). Furthermore, there is concern that journalists working for private radio stations may self-censor to avoid antagonizing powerful figures or institutions (Tetteh, 2009).

The growing trend of media consolidation, with large media conglomerates owning multiple stations, raises questions about the diversity of voices in the broadcast sector. Some critics argue that media consolidation can lead to a narrowing of perspectives and a focus on profit-driven content at the expense of journalistic integrity (Duru, 2011). This trend may reduce the diversity of opinions available to the public, undermining the very principles of press freedom that private media stations are supposed to promote.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The role of the media in promoting press freedom is a fundamental aspect of democratic governance, as it ensures transparency, accountability, and the protection of citizens' rights to free expression. In Nigeria, the media has historically faced numerous challenges, including government censorship, political interference, and economic pressures, all of which have hindered its ability to operate freely. With the advent of private radio stations in the late 1990s, following the liberalization of the broadcasting sector, there has been an expansion of media diversity and an opportunity for more independent voices to emerge. These private stations have been perceived by some as vital players in the promotion of press freedom, providing a platform for alternative viewpoints and critical discourse, often challenging government narratives and exposing corruption and other societal issues.

However, despite these positive contributions, the relationship between private radio stations and press freedom in Nigeria remains complex and fraught with challenges. Many private radio stations face significant financial constraints, rely heavily on advertising revenue, and are subject to regulatory control, which may impact their editorial independence. Additionally, the increasing political influence and pressure from powerful state and non-state actors continue to pose risks to their autonomy. These conditions may lead to instances of self-censorship, media consolidation, and a narrowing of diverse perspectives, all of which could undermine the role of private radio stations in promoting press freedom.

This research seeks to address this gap by exploring the perceptions of Nigerian audiences regarding the contributions of private radio stations to press freedom in the country. By examining factors such as public trust, perceived independence, and the overall effectiveness of private radio stations in promoting free speech and government accountability, this study aims to provide insights into the evolving media landscape in Nigeria and its implications for democratic governance and media freedom.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to inform, educate and enlighten the general public about the efforts of independent radio stations regarding press freedom in Nigeria.

Therefore the specific objectives are:

- i. To determine the extent to which independent radio stations promote press freedom in Nigeria
- ii. To figure out the extent to which private radio stations in Nigeria are free from government control
- iii. To examine the extent to which private radio station in Nigeria enjoys their constitutional freedom

1.4 Research Questions

- i. To what extent have independent radio stations promote press freedom in Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent are private radio stations in Nigeria free from government control?
- iii. To what extent do the private radio station in Nigeria enjoys their constitutional freedom?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will be useful to private media owners and practitioners to encourage them in being responsible to the society and fighting for press freedom. Again, students of journalism will find this research work useful to have insight of limitations to freedom in the practice of journalism in Nigeria.

Also, the study will form an extension of knowledge to the academic study for future researchers. This will also help other researchers to further investigate to other aspect this research could not cover.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Although, the primary aim and objectives of this project is to examine audience perception on the role of private radio stations in promoting press freedom in Nigeria, using Diamond fm as the case study. Therefore, this cannot be effectively talked without considering the demographic factor of Diamond fm staff members and sample number of the public that will respond to the questionnaire of this study. Experience, education background, professional training, Age, Sex. e.t.c. must be considered before the distribution of research instrument.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

While this study aims to provide valuable insights into the perception of the audience on the role of private radio stations in promoting press freedom in Nigeria, there are several limitations.

This study focuses on Diamond FM in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, as a case study. While this station is an important player in the local media landscape, the findings may not be fully representative of private radio stations in other regions of Nigeria. The study will be limited by the diversity of the audience in Ilorin.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Private Radio Station: A private radio station is a broadcasting organization that is independently owned and operated, as opposed to state-owned or government-controlled stations.

Promotion: This is to enhance a cause e.g to enhance press freedom.

Press Freedom: This is the total right of the media to collect and relay information without any restriction. E.g Law of Sedition.

Audience Perception: Audience perception refers to the way in which listeners or viewers interpret, understand, and form opinions about media content.

Audience: Refers to the group of individuals who consume or engage with media content, such as radio, television, print, or digital media.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 Meaning of Broadcasting Media

Folarin (1998) defines broadcasting as “the spreading or scattering of news, entertainment or any other programmes over a wide area with many propels simultaneously receiving the transmuted programmes in their homes television, radio set”.

Precisely, the broadcast media being referred to in the above definition are primarily radio and television as opposed to the print media. The definition indeed justify Constituents of broadcast, which include spreading dispersing, scattering or distribution of some programmes genres like news, music, drama, announcement, or commercial to an heterogeneous audience of a wide geographical area and who can receive the transmitted programmes through their radio and television sets.

Also, broadcasting is “the planned provision of information education and entrainment to a large and heterogonous audience through the medium radio and television. The new dimension enunciated by Folarin is that broadcasting messages are sent and received only by radio. One of the additional features that Folarin definition has Over that of Bittner is that broadcasting make use of radio spectrum that explains in the technical aspect of radio broadcasting believe that the radio spectrum serves both the radio is Purely an audio medium, television is audio visual Aside this feature Folarin’s definition also stresses on the traditional roles of the broadcasting medium Educating, information and entertaining .with Visual “accomplishment in television.

Giving a more technical and comprehensive definition Nnorom(1994) see broadcasting as “the transmission theory space, by means of radio frequencies of signals capable of being received either aurally or visually by the general public through appropriate, sets, or equipments designed for this purpose.

According to Onabanjo, (2004) broadcasting is simply “the planned provision of

information, education and entertainment to large and heterogeneous audiences through the medium of radio and television”,

The world planned according to this scholar implied that the information, education and entertainment are provided repeatedly at scheduled time in prescribed formats. Information as meant does not only mean news but also other items such as weather description and forecast or announcement of things available in the market and how to find them.

While education encompass all programmes that enhance human knowledge and helps us to improve our life, beside those designed to serve as aids to classrooms instructions. In addition, broadcast entertainment can take a variety of forms ranging from comedy, music, quizzes, variety of shows, and what have you. The definition no doubt is a well-simplified version of the term broadcast.

In conclusion, all of these definitions depict broadcasting as the fusion of electrical devices to project conceptualized ideas in to reality either through the radio or television.

2.1.2 Types of Broadcasting Media

There are two major types of broadcast media, radio (audio) and television (audio-visual). Radio is an electronic device that uses electromagnetic wave for the transmission of message, information, communication and it possess some attributes which place it upon the television broadcasting. The radio broadcast also involves the communication i.e the SMCR.

In radio broadcasting, there are several methods of categorizing a radio station. Its broadcasting band can assist one to know whether it is an AM, FM, or SW station.

Like radio broadcasting the television is a medium combining both sound and visual sent from a station through a wireless means to the receiving set. The beginning of television is linked with scientific invention that is, those who did not have any knowledge of its social importance such as education information and entertainment. Oyekanmi M.O (2008)

2.1.3 Characteristics of Broadcast Media

- Basically, broadcasting performs five operative criteria. These are:
- Broadcasting utilizes electromagnetic radiation
- Broadcasting uses voices, pictures and not code.
- Broadcasting operations are usually licensed by the government.

- Broadcasting programmes are transmitted on regular schedule
- Broadcasting signals are intended for the reception of the general public.

2.1.3 The Functions of Broadcast Media

According to Siepamn, Charles (1950) broadcast media performs the following functions:

- **News and Information:** broadcasting media provide timely and important facts for daily need of people.
- **Analysis and Interpretation:** Broadcasting media provide evaluation of events placing them in perspective.
- **Education:** Broadcasting media do reinforce or modify and replace where necessary the cultural heritage of the society.
- **Persuasion and public relations:** Broadcasting media are used for public persuasion as seen in the past attempts by various governments to persuade the people to accept developmental programmes like Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) Green

Revolution, War Against Economic Reconstruction (MAMSA) and Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) among others.

- Moreover, government companies and individual seek to establish or modify relationship using the mass communication media. In addition, the government and nongovernment organizations use mass media to persuade people to support policies and programmes.
- **Sales and advertising:** Mass media involved in the daily process of marketing and distribution in the economic system of the country. Advertising feed the public about new products and ideas, informs them of their values, and persuade them to buy.
- **Entertainment:** Mass media assist people to relax during their leisure time. Media do entertain as they inform, analysis, persuade, educate and sales.
- **Public opinion platform:** Public are expected to express their opinion in order to guarantee and ensure egalitarian society through the mass media.

Other Role of Broadcasting Media in Nigeria

Broadly speaking, radio and television as a broadcast media share the same roles or functions

with other forms of mass media such as newspaper, magazine etc. Hence we will look at the roles of mass media as posited by Adeniji (2005) in examining the functions of the media, he examined three distinct approaches;

2.1.4 Types of Broadcast Media Styles in Nigeria

If we have a receipt that faces free flow of information and ideas in indispensable for democracy, then it's easy to see that ownership patterns are essential indicators of the extent of democratization of media in any country. In most, if not all African countries the pattern of ownership is of two forms. Obijirofor (1985)

- Government monopoly of the media, as in Nigeria especially the electronic media
- Monopoly of the media by a few individuals or groups.

Government Media:

Writing on the history and development of journalism in Nigeria, Obijirofor (1985) expressed concern over government monopoly of the electronic media in Nigeria. He called in government to allow privatization of the broadcast media pointing out that by so doing government would be solving the seeds of a political culture that foster-Tolerance of Criticism, Social responsibility public accountability and at the same time, helping to make broadcasting respond more to needs of our people.

Obijirofor's views on government monopoly of the media especially the electronic media are shared by many people in Africa. He considers government monopoly of media in Nigeria an aberration because, according to him they constitute a major process of influence over thoughts and when they are in the hands of one agency that is equally controlling the coercive power of the state, then you are not advancing the human rights philosophy.

Private Media:

The second form of ownership pattern is ownership by a few individuals or group. This form of ownership can be as dangerous as government monopoly. In talking about privatization as a means of democratizing the media industry, care must be taken to ensure that we do not merely substitute government monopoly by the monopoly of a few. The situation must be avoided in which the same individual or group has the resources such as newspaper, radio station not each even if such individual or group has the resources, such as concentration of ownership will undoubtedly reduce competition and consequently journalistic standard.

There is a range of ways that ownership can impact on news output. These include:

- Direct intervention by an owner
- Indirect influence of an owner through the appointment of editors which shares his listener.
- Different approaches to journalism
- The influence of the business approaches that an owner can take.

2.1.5 Evolution and Growth of Broadcasting in Nigeria

The beginning of what can be termed as proper broadcasting in Nigeria that is the ability to originate and disseminate indigenous local programmes can be traced to the middle of the 20th century when the National Broadcasting Commission's (NBC) was established on April 1, 1957 as a statutory department of government with the responsibility for putting in place and running extensive radio network capable of providing programmes to any member of public in Nigeria who had access to either a wireless receiving set or a box Obazele (1996).

Hitherto what passed as broadcasting in Nigeria was the rediffusion services of the British Empire Service. Then, the post and telegraph department was the sole authority responsible for distribution of programmes to subscribers in Lagos, Kano and Ibadan.

Under this system, programmes were distributed via landlines from the studios to the various listening boxes for which the subscribers paid a token fee Nwuneli (1985). However, the emergence of the National broadcasting commission's witnessed a major departure from the earlier situation as the rediffusion stations were transformed into fully operational radio stations. This development marked the entry into service of the first broadcasting commissions of its kind in any British colonial territory in Africa. By its character, the NBC was a non-profit making organization with the express responsibility of carrying on the service as a means of disseminating information, educating and entertaining provided that such programme contents were not contrary to the avowed national interests of the country

For television, Chief Obafemi Awolowo then premier of western region of Nigeria established the first in Nigeria and indeed Africa in 1959. The birth of the Western Nigerian Television (WNTV) has been described as accidental in so far as chief Awolowo embarked on it due to his inability to use the services of the Federal Radio station to reply to the broadcast of then Governor-General Macpherson over the constitutional matters of 1953 Obata (1994). It

would be recalled that chief Awolowo was denied use of the Federal radio even when the commission's has an obligation to give objective and impartial news and views to its listeners.

Thus, angered by this and other related developments and taking into cognizance the 1954 constitutional provision in which broadcasting ceased to be in the federal exclusive list, chief Awolowo established in partnership with overseas Rediffusion Company limited of the United Kingdom, the Western Nigerian Television (WNTV) at Ibadan. The station was operated as an arm of the Western Nigeria broadcasting commission's which by 1960 has introduced radio broadcast over the whole region Uche (1989). Following the success of the Western Region's effort, the other two regions in Nigeria then, North and East upon realizing the power and influence of radio and television went on to establish their own broadcast stations.

In 1960, the Eastern Regional government set up the Eastern Nigeria Television Station at Enugu. Shortly after in 1962, the Northern Nigerian Regional government and a British Television company-Grenada Electrical Company established a television station as an arm of the Broadcasting Company of Northern Nigeria (BCNN) in Kaduna.

The station was known as the Radio-Kaduna-Television Obata (1994). The coming into being of the regional broadcast stations simply regionalized the industry in Nigeria and it is not out of place to infer that these developments represent the first proliferation of broadcasting in Nigeria. The three regional governments broadcast organizations were wholly independent of federal government control. As earlier highlighted, one reason behind their creation was dissatisfaction with the NBC and also the need for each region to have its voice heard. Luke Uka Uche puts this fact succinctly:

Thus faced with a situation whereby each region was bent on voicing views which did not tally with its own, the federal government on its own part established in 1962 the Nigerian Television Service (NTS) to protect and serve its interest. However, until the emergence of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the services of the NTS were restricted to the Lagos area alone.

A subsequent addition to the stable of broadcast stations in Nigeria rests on the creation of more states in the country. From then, the number of electronic media houses marked up considerably. For instance, Samuel Ogbemudia then military Governor of the then Mid-West state of Nigeria in 1973 set up the Mid-Western Broadcasting commissions. This station incorporated both radio and television services.

Similarly in 1974 the government of the then Benue-Plateau state established the first station transmitting in colour. Also, with the creation of seven more states by General Mohammed's regime and the subsequent takeover of all television stations by the federal government in April 1976 under Decree (24) of 1977 which also established the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the numbers of broadcast stations were ten Obata (1994) namely:

- Western Nigerian Television, Ibadan (WNTV)
- Eastern Nigerian Television, Enugu (ENTV)
- Radio-Kaduna-Television, Kaduna (RKV)
- Nigerian Broadcasting Commission's Television, Lagos
- Mid-West Television, Benin (MTV)
- Benue-Plateau Television, Jos (BPTV)
- Rivers State Television, Port-Harcourt (RSTV)
- Kano State Television, Kano (KSTV)
- North West television, Sokoto
- Eastern Nigerian television, Aba

By 1983, the impact of state creation on the proliferation of broadcast stations had become pronounced. At this time, the number of stations had increased to 22. There was now either a radio or television station or both in each of the new state capitals. It should be noted that this proliferation occasioned by the creation of states is not surprising. Indeed, during the period of the second republic (1979-1983) states governed by political parties other than that at the center established broadcast stations ostensibly to project their own views and programmes.

Like the regions of old before them, states such as Into, Kano and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) controlled Western states had abundant reason to feel that the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) was not according them adequate coverage. Consequently, they all went on to **set** up their own broadcast stations so that by the time the military took over the reigns of governance again in December 1983, the following stations had come into being:

- Ogun state Telev ision. Abeokuta (QGTV)
- Television Service of Oyo State, Ibadan (TSOS)
- Imo Television, Owerri (TTV)
- Bomu Radio Television, Maiduguri (BRTV)
- Plateau Television, Jos (PTV)

- Anambra Television, Enugu (ATV)
- Bendel Television, Benin (BTV)
- Cross-River Television (CRTV)
- Kano Television, Kano (KTV)
- Lagos Television, Ikeja (LTV)
- Ondo state Television, Akure (ODTV)

Interestingly, the creation of more states by the regimes of Babangida and Abacha, respectively further increased the number of government owned stations in Nigeria as each of the states had either one or two of the electronic media in operation. However, by 1992 when deregulation was introduced, the industry witnessed a new vibrancy as private stations came on board to compete with public ones.

2.1.6 Deregulation and proliferation of private broadcast stations:

For several decades in Nigeria government could not muster courage to allow individuals to own electronic media. The fear expressed then was that radio and television as potent forces for mass mobilization should not be insensitively allowed to slip into the hands of private individuals.

But by **1992** President Babangida announced that one of the legacies he would want to leave behind was the privatization of the electronic media. He then went on to establish the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), charging it to ensure that private radio and television licenses are issued before the end of his administration.

Nigerians received this policy by the Babangida regime with aplomb. Indeed according to Ikechukwu Amaechi (2008):

The deregulation elicited great enthusiasm from the people and understandably so since die NTA had inextricably become die propaganda instrument of government.

Ikechukwu emphasized further that this enthusiasm and absolute craving for private television by the people was predicated on the belief that like the print media, the independent electronic media was going to provide independent news and entertainment which will inevitably create variety and choice as well as competition which is expected to rub-off positively on the discerning and sophisticated Nigerian public.

Expectedly, the deregulation of the industry by Decree 38 of 1992 elicited not only enthusiasm from the public but also led many potential private investors to apply and obtain

licenses. Between 1992 and 1997, the National Broadcasting Commission had issued two sets of licenses-the first in 1993 and the other between 1995 and 1997.

By January 1998 in the words of Tom Adaba, the first Director General of the NBC, a conservative estimate of private investment in the industry consists of three radio stations, nine terrestrial television stations, 41 satellite redistribution stations and two global television services (Adaba. 1998). As at (2018), the number of broadcast stations (both public and private) in Nigeria includes about; 200 radio stations, 250 television stations, 70 cable redistribution stations (MMDS), five Direct To Home satellite cable stations (DTH) and four direct satellite television stations (DBS) shown in Table 1-5 for a comprehensive list of private media stations in Nigeria indicating station identity, year of establishment, operating frequency, staff strength and location.

2.1.7 Origin and Historical Development of Radio Broadcasting in Nigeria

The growth of radio took different patterns in different countries from 1920. In tropical Africa, broadcasting began in the early 1930s. The initial aim was to provide a service for the European population living in Africa. The British Broadcasting Commission (BBC) provided this service which was intended to establish some link between the United Kingdom and her colonies in 1932, The station (BBC) started the world's first regular scheduled short waves services, it was popularly called the Empire Service (Okoye (2008)). It made use of a number of monitoring centres overseas, those centres one of which was located in Lagos became the eye of BBC. The centre did broadcast programmes of BBC, programmes which were carried by wires on wooden poles from the monitoring stations to re-diffusion boxes in subscribers' home. It was a wired system rather than a wireless system of broadcasting this practice continued until 1951 when Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) was established which marked the beginning of a rather slow production of Nigerian programmes and employments of Nigerians as staff in the country.

The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) in Nigeria publicly funded radio broadcasting organizations. Among its subsidiaries are the domestic radio network known as Radio Nigeria and Voice of Nigeria International Radio Service.

The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria was originally founded in 1933 by the British Colonial Government named the Radio Distribution Service (RDS). It allowed the public to hear the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) foreign radio service broadcasts in certain public locations over loudspeakers.

In April 1950, the RDS became the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) and introduced radio station in Lagos, Kaduna, Enugu, Ibadan and Kano.

In 1954, the centralization of broadcasting was thrown out of the constitution and the response of the regions was to establish broadcast stations of their own. Regional broadcasting stations started springing up in the later 1950's, starting with the western regions in 1959 and followed by other regions. After the creation of states, each state intends to establish its own radio station independent of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN in 1978). They produced their own programmes but required to hook up with the Network Service of the FRCN during the transmission of some programmes especially Network News.

By 1962, the NBC has expanded its broadcast stations into Sokoto, Maiduguri, Ilorin, Zaria, Jos and Kaduna in the North; Port Harcourt, Calabar and Onitsha in the East, and Abeokuta, Warri and Ijebu-Ode in the West. Each of these stations was considered as subsidiary stations of a relational station.

The subsidiary broadcast local interest internet programme during the rest of the broadcast day .National programme were broadcast from shortwave transmitted and one medium wave transmitted local in Shogunle near Lagos . In the later 1960, the Federal Parliament amended the NBC ordinance to allow the sale of commercial advertisement. The first ad's ran on October 31st, 1961 and was broadcasted from Lagos. By 1962, regional and provincial broadcasters began selling ad's to local business. The goal of allowing radio advertisements was to help provide additional funding to NBC stations beyond that received from government. The federal parliament approved the creation of the Voice of Nigeria (VON) external short wave service in 1961. Broadcast began on January 1, 1961 from Lagos station. The NBC and the Broadcasting Corporation of Northern Nigeria (BCNN) were merged in 1978 to become Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN).

2.1.8 The impact of private broadcast stations in Nigeria

A fair assessment of the impact of private broadcasting in Nigeria since deregulation must take into cognizance the operational problems of the new broadcast stations as they try to meet the expectations of the viewing and listening public. Be that as it may, it cannot be doubted that private broadcasting has made appreciable impact in Nigeria so far and that the sector is still capable of continually facilitating and engendering social, economic and political growth in the country. Now proceed to an illustrative appraisal of the impact of the sector so far in Nigeria.

- i. **Socio-cultural impact:** The importance of broadcasting as a vehicle for social change is not in doubt. Indeed in recognition of this the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) asserts that broadcasting in Nigeria should project the best and discourage the worst in the society in addition to matching the best in the profession anywhere. It is interesting to note that private broadcasting in Nigeria is already doing the above. First in compliance with the NBC's provisions concerning programme content, 60% of the programmes of the private stations are indigenous. Such programmes range from soap operas, talk shows, musicals (African) to educational programmes for the young.

Experts have even commended the live phone-in programmes of the private stations. According to Esan (2011), live phone in programmes are good for their spontaneity and appeal. They allow stations to have immediate feedback on specific issues from the public. Indeed, as private broadcasting continues to provide Nigerians with programmes of cultural relevance, even the focus of News in the industry has changed for the better dramatically. It should be noted that during the era of sole government monopoly of the industry, the news from NTA was generally regarded as subjective and placid. In fact people view the NTA as a propaganda instrument of government. However, it has been observed that since deregulation, Nigerians have come to enjoy better information services. Even though the NTA still controls the network belt of the industry, the private stations are giving viewers and listeners within their coverage areas objective, accurate and up to date reports. In Lagos for instance, there is a common phrase that channels television represents Nigeria's own CNN. This is not surprising what, with its emphasis on current news around the country and its philosophy as a purely news channel.

- ii. **Economic impact:** A viable private sector led broadcast Media industry can contribute meaningfully towards the development of any economy. Indeed for Nigeria it is not unsafe to say that considering the level of mass unemployment, private sector investment in the industry has created thousands of new jobs. From 1993 to date as a result of the accelerated development of the industry, the investment figure and number of jobs created additionally might have doubled or trebled. In the absence of hard facts, it may not be out of place to suggest that capital investment in the sector might have crossed the billion dollar mark. Going by this growth rate, prospects for more job spaces are on the horizon, though this will strongly depend on how well private proprietors can commit themselves towards sustaining their stations.

The economic impact of private broadcasting transcends the provision of jobs for only professionals in the industry. Indeed, other auxiliary services which complement broadcasting have also been positively affected. What is obvious is that Advert Agencies have witnessed expansions so as to handle the myriad of commercials to be aired on the various radio and television stations. Consequently, there has been further attendant job openings for graduates of related fields. This extends to theatre practitioners as well.

Again, another economic impact of private broadcasting is in the area of revenue derivable from the exportation of locally produced programmes. Just as the NTA and other public stations have been broadcasting acquired foreign programmes, so also the private stations could with time export their locally produced programmes to other sister African countries. This could become a significant source of revenue to government and the private operators.

iii. Political impact: Like its print media counterpart, private broadcasting has already made considerable impact on Nigeria's political life. According to Sotunmbi, the periodic disappearance of partisan politics with its colour, drama, excitement and conflict has deprived television of its major attraction to viewers in terms of spectacle and grandeur during sole government control of the industry. However, since deregulation, private television has reintroduced such spectacle back into the nation's politics. Apart from informing Nigerians daily of political developments within the country and around the world, private broadcast media has also endeavored to present different shades of opinions-politically, since its emergence.

One cannot agree less with Sotunbi's position above. Indeed, during the thick of Nigeria's political crises following the annulment of the June 12 elections by the Babangida regime, most viewers and listeners relied on the private stations to give them up to date and accurate news of happenings around the country. A case in point is the deaths of both General Abacha and Chief M.K.O Abiola which were reported first by some private stations in Lagos before the NTA. This is most encouraging when juxtaposed against the hitherto prevailing scenario in which radio and television news were criticized for their placidity and predominance of government related stories. As such, the private stations have come to offer alternatives to the discerning public. For the political class, gone are those days when incumbents will use executive powers to prevent opponents from utilizing Federal, Regional or State media as was the case between Chief Awolowo and the Colonial Government.

2.1.9 Radio Broadcasting in Nigeria

The history of broadcasting in Nigeria dates back to early 1930s, when the British Colonial Government instituted the Plymouth and Bryon committees to set up radio and television station in Nigeria, Nwenulli (1990).

Thirty-four years after Guglielmo Marconi invented wireless telegraph and sent signal across the English Channel, Kamara (2004), this signaled the advent of radio world over. However, radio broadcast began in Nigeria in 1933 under the colonial office of post and telegraph (P&T), it was operated as a relay service of the BBC empire service or wired service (Radio diffusion system), but it was from 1940s that they started producing small version of local programmes Salau (2005).

On April 1st 1951, the Colonial Government decided to establish the Nigeria Broadcasting Service (NBS), which is an autonomous body to serve as pioneer radio broadcasting on behalf of the government.

Salau (2005) confirmed that “The Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) was commissioned by the governor, Sir J. S. Macpherson on June 16th 1932 and first national programme was broadcast on June 27, 1952”. However, in 1956, the House of Assembly passed a bill to incorporate the NBS, later it was transformed on April 1st, 1957 as Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation with regional stations in Kaduna, Enugu and Lagos. The NBC is a statutory corporation and is expected to be free from government interferences.

On October 1959, the Western Nigeria Broadcasting service (WNBS) was commissioned. It was operated under the business name of Western Nigeria Radio-Vision Service Limited in partnership with Overseas Re-diffusion Limited of the United Kingdom. He argues that the establishment of WNBS triggered a race by the other two regions (Northern and Eastern region) to set up their broadcasting service in Nigeria.

In 1960, the Eastern Nigerian Broadcasting Service (ENBS) was established. And in 1962, the Northern Nigerian Regional Government and a British Company (Grenada Electrical Company) established the Radio Television Kaduna (RTK) under the arm of Broadcasting Company of Northern Nigeria (BCNN), Obata (1994).

In 1976, the Federal Military Government took over the three stations and used them to promote government activities, Akinfeleye (1994). Not until when in 1992, the Federal Military Government deregulated the broadcast industry; thus breaking the monopoly of government

ownership and control.

In Nigeria today, there are 72 private stations with 17 private radio operating across the nation. The private radio though at FM (Frequency modulated) level is no mean milestone in the history of broadcasting in Nigeria, Gusau (1997). It has to a large extent broken the monopoly of government in that large sector which if it is handled with full professional dexterity, there is every likelihood that more licenses will be issued for transmission on MW and S W. Recently, Nagarta Radio Kaduna is operating at MW. This development greatly enhanced good quality programmes, which go a long way in restoring listeners' confidence in the radio stations in the country, Gusau (1997).

2.1.10 Democracy and Press Freedom

There is a link between democracy and the extent of press freedom in any society. Years of military rule in Nigeria had strongly attenuated press freedom as we have discussed on the preceding pages. After decades of struggle against militarism by virtually all segments of the articulate publics, especially the press, the military reluctantly ceded power to civilians on May 29, 1999. It was a momentous occasion as the mantle of leadership fell on Olusegun Obasanjo, a retired army general and former military head of state.

On ascension of office, Obasanjo managed, at times unsuccessfully, to control his bad temper. Even though he spoke of the need for a free press, his disposition and body language did not always support his public statements. Unlike when he was military head of state, he managed to conceal his famed contempt for the local press. Under his watch, security agents had invaded the African Independent Television (AIT), a credible private outfit.

After eight-year tenure, Obasanjo handed over power in 2007 to Umaru Musa Yar'adua, a scion from Katsina, North Central Nigeria. Mild-mannered, quiet but effective, Yar'Adua's relationship with the press was generally all right, except probably on one or two occasions when he lost control. On one instance, the highly credible Channels Television had aired a story about the failing health of the President and the intrigues associated with it. Yar'Adua did not find it funny as he reacted rather angrily. Yar'Adua, probably Nigeria's most honest president by admitting that the electoral process that brought him to power was flawed, eventually died in May 2010, just three years into his presidency.

Jonathan and the Press: The relationship between President Goodluck Jonathan may be best described as that of cautious optimism. The president occasionally appreciates the role of an

unfettered press in national development but often over-reacts to seeming bad press. One of such occasions occurred April 2013 when two reporters of the **Leadership** newspaper, Tony Amokeodo and Chibuzor Ukaibe were arrested, detained and later charged to court on charges of felony. In a swift reaction, just 72 hours after the journalists were arraigned in court, the Federal Government withdrew the charges against the reporters. According to **Vanguard**: “They had been accused of forging a document purported to have emanated from the Presidency”.

One would have thought that the arraignment of **Leadership** reporters would be the end of such irritations until June 6, 2014 when a novel style of media harassment surfaced. Writing under the headline “Clampdown: NPAN Seeks end to Siege” one of Nigeria’s tabloids, **Sunday Sun** wrote:

*Following the harassment of newspaper vendors/distributors and the seizure of large volumes of newspaper by soldiers who initially **targeted** Leadership. Daily Trust, The Nation and Punch, **but later** extended the siege to all major newspapers in the country for the second day yesterday (June 7, 2014), the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) held an emergency meeting in Abuja yesterday with representatives of vendors and slammed the government.*

It described as unnecessary the growing attack on free speech by soldiers in Abuja, Kaduna, Kano, Jos, Maiduguri, Ibadan, among other cities, claiming to be acting on ‘orders’. In a statement yesterday, its President, Mr. Nduka Obaigbena decried the assault on freedom of expression through the stoppage of distribution of newspapers as inconsistent with the values of any democratic society and the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It therefore called upon the military authorities to lift the siege immediately and call the soldiers to order.

Despite the strongly worded statement released on June 7, 2014, as partly reproduced above, the authorities seemed to have remained adamant, prompting another statement from a larger organisation, the Nigeria Press Organisation (NPO). In a June 13, 2014 statement, the organisation cited military spokesman, Major-General Chris Olukolade as explaining that the clampdown “followed intelligence report indicating movement of material with grave security implications across the country using the channel of newsprint related consignments. Unimpressed by the explanation, NPO insisted that “This development is opening a new chapter in the potential dangers being posed to the citizenry and the media, a clear violation of the right of free expression and press freedom and the right of the public to know”. The assault on press

freedom this time is coming at a time the country is celebrating fifteen years of unbroken civil rule, a great achievement for a country that struggled against oppressive military rule for decades.

Freedom of Information Act

The need for freedom is a basic human need. The right to know is one of such rights, which is a concomitant of press freedom. In pursuance of this right and others, Nigerians sought to have a Freedom of Information law which would give them access to vital government information. Part of the argument for the clamour for the enactment of the law was to ensure, or at least enhance, transparency in governance, thereby reducing the high level of corruption in doing government business in the country. The Bill for the enactment of a Freedom of Information Act was first presented in the first Legislative Assembly (1999- 2003).

Surprisingly, the bill could not be enacted into law as majority of the Assembly men and women did not think the country was right for such a law! It is instructive that legislators in a seeming democratic setting did not think that such freedom should be made available to the citizens, including the press. The struggle for the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act took on a life of its own, suggesting that Nigerians must struggle before they actualize issues that should ordinarily be taken for granted. After persistent pressures from all relevant quarters, the Freedom of Information Bill was passed by the House of Representatives (lower chambers) in February 2011 while the Senate (Upper Chambers) endorsed the same law in March 2011.

The essence of the Freedom of Information law was well articulated in a 2007 version of the bill. With 33 clauses, the bill was aimed at an Act to make public records and information more freely available, provide for public access to public records and information, project public records and information to the extent consistent with the public interest and the protection of personal privacy, protect serving public officers from the adverse consequences for disclosing certain kinds of official information without authorization and establish procedures for the achievement of those purposes and related purposes thereof.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Gatekeeping Theory

Kurt Zadek Lewin (1890-1947), was born in German. He was a great Psychologist and pioneer in Social Psychology. He developed the concept in the field of psychology called psychological “field” and “life space” in order to understand the human behavior and its important consideration of total life space. His studies are more based on to understand a person’s own world, physical, mental and social through frequent conversation between his pre-memories, desire and his goals. And also his works help to understand the relationship between attitudes and behavior in the group or individuals.

Kurt Lewin coins the word called “Gate keeping”. It’s nothing but to block unwanted or useless things by using a gate. Here the person who makes a decision is called “Gatekeeper”. At first it is widely used in the field of psychology and later it occupies the field of communication. Now it’s one of the essential theories in communication studies.

The Gatekeeper decides what information should move to group or individual and what information should not. Here, the gatekeeper are the decision makers who letting the whole social system. The gatekeeper is having its own influence like social, cultural, ethical and political. Based on personal or social influences they let the information to the group. Through this process the unwanted, sensible and controversial information’s are removed by the gate keeper which helps to control the society or a group and letting them in a right path. In home mother plays the vital role and she has to decide what their kid’s needs and what should avoid.

In news medium editor play vital role. He has to decide what kind of news items will publish and what should not. Every day the news channel receives various news items from all over the world.

In other word, the theory examine the influence of government on the output of any news outlet which will invariably consider the limited freedom before writing or publishing any information, especially the controversial ones.

2.2.2 The Agenda-Setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory, developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, emphasizes the media's role in shaping public priorities by determining which issues are brought

to public attention. In the context of private radio stations in Nigeria, this theory is essential to understanding how these stations influence press freedom and democratic engagement.

Private radio stations in Nigeria, unlike state-owned counterparts, have more autonomy in selecting and prioritizing issues that align with public interest rather than government agendas. They play a pivotal role in bringing attention to topics often overlooked by state-controlled media, such as government accountability, human rights abuses, and corruption. By setting the public agenda on these issues, private radio stations empower citizens with the knowledge necessary to hold leaders accountable.

Programs like investigative reports and talk shows often highlight societal problems and give voice to marginalized communities. These activities align with press freedom principles, allowing for diverse perspectives and robust discussions. In a society where state-controlled media may serve as a propaganda tool, private radio offers an alternative platform for discussing politically sensitive issues.

Despite their role in promoting press freedom, private radio stations face challenges such as regulatory restrictions, financial dependency on advertisers, and political interference. In Nigeria, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) regulates broadcast content, and stations often risk fines or shutdowns if their content is deemed critical of the government. This regulatory environment limits the extent to which private stations can exercise freedom of the press.

2.2.3 The Social Responsibility Theory

The social responsibility theory posits that the media has an ethical obligation to serve the public good by providing accurate, fair, and unbiased information. This theory underlines the media's role as a watchdog, educator, and platform for public dialogue.

Private radio stations in Nigeria, under the purview of social responsibility theory, act as intermediaries between the government and the public. They ensure that citizens are informed about policies, governance, and other critical issues. For example, stations like Wazobia FM and Rhythm FM often focus on grassroots issues, using local languages to reach wider audiences. Additionally, private radio facilitates accountability through investigative journalism. By

exposing corruption and administrative inefficiencies, they encourage transparency. Their ethical duty often includes providing platforms for civic engagement, where citizens can voice their concerns and interact with policymakers during live programs.

Social responsibility entails balancing press freedom with societal norms and values. While promoting press freedom, private radio stations must navigate cultural sensitivities and avoid content that could incite violence or hatred. In Nigeria's diverse society, managing such content responsibly is critical to fostering unity and avoiding polarization.

2.2.4 The Public Sphere Theory

Jurgen Habermas' public sphere theory conceptualizes media as a space for citizens to participate in discussions on societal issues, thereby influencing democratic decision-making. This theory views the media as a platform for inclusive dialogue, where diverse voices can contribute to public opinion. Private radio stations in Nigeria exemplify the public sphere by providing forums for diverse opinions. Through call-in shows, debates, and community-focused programs, these stations enable direct interaction between the audience and policymakers. For example, programs addressing issues like unemployment, healthcare, and education often feature expert panels, community leaders, and ordinary citizens, creating a microcosm of the public sphere.

Moreover, private radio has been instrumental in breaking barriers to information access. In rural areas, where literacy rates are low, radio serves as a primary source of information. Stations broadcasting in local dialects ensure inclusivity, allowing rural populations to participate in national conversations.

While private radio stations strive to be inclusive, challenges such as political interference, financial constraints, and censorship hinder their effectiveness. Political actors often attempt to influence content, undermining the neutrality required for a robust public sphere. Furthermore, the commercialization of private radio can lead to content prioritizing entertainment over critical societal issues, diluting its role as a public sphere.

2.1 Empirical Review:

Role of Private Radio Stations in Promoting Press Freedom in Nigeria

Private radio stations have emerged as critical players in the media landscape of Nigeria, contributing significantly to the promotion of press freedom. This empirical review examines existing research, case studies, and statistics on their role in fostering freedom of expression, accountability, and participatory governance. The review highlights key themes, including access to information, public engagement, challenges to press freedom, and the broader socio-political implications of private radio broadcasting.

One of the most significant contributions of private radio stations in Nigeria is enhancing access to information. Unlike state-owned media, which may prioritize government propaganda, private stations operate with relative autonomy, offering a platform for diverse content. A study by Okoye (2017) highlights that private radio stations are often more trusted by the public due to their perceived independence. The study surveyed 500 listeners in Lagos and found that 78% preferred private radio stations for unbiased news compared to government-owned counterparts.

Private radio stations such as Cool FM, RayPower, and Wazobia FM provide real-time updates on current events, including political developments, public policy, and socio-economic issues. Their use of local languages and dialects has been instrumental in bridging the communication gap between urban and rural populations. Research by Ojebode (2019) revealed that radio programs in indigenous languages significantly increased political awareness among rural communities, with a 65% rise in voter turnout in areas where private radio outreach was high.

Private radio stations are instrumental in encouraging civic participation and fostering a culture of dialogue. A study by Onabajo and M'Bayo (2018) focused on the role of private radio in promoting community development projects. Using a mixed-method approach, the researchers surveyed 1,200 respondents across five geopolitical zones and conducted interviews with radio producers. The findings revealed that programs such as town hall forums and community-focused broadcasts increased public awareness of developmental projects and encouraged citizen contributions.

Despite their contributions, private radio stations face significant challenges that hinder their ability to promote press freedom fully. The regulatory environment in Nigeria, governed by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), imposes restrictions on content deemed critical of the government. According to a 2021 report by the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), private radio stations faced 19 cases of fines or sanctions in a single year, often for airing politically sensitive content.

Financial sustainability is another pressing issue. Private stations rely heavily on advertising revenue, which can lead to self-censorship to avoid alienating corporate sponsors. Research by Ume-Nwagbo (2020) found that 40% of journalists in private radio admitted to toning down critical stories to appease advertisers.

2.4 REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Onabanjo (2004) gives an insight to the meaning “radio communication or communication by radio” according to act, “as the transmission by radio (waves) of writing, sign, signals, pictures and sounds of all kind”. Thanks to Foster for further explanation given to the 1934 communication act.

Onabanjo (2000) has it that on April 1st, 1957 by Act of parliament NBC was used to replace NBS which was seen merely as the colonial government’s megaphone. This was to address the issue raised against the former organization (NBS) to shield it-from government interference and the propaganda of the views of the ruling political party .It’s mission was to provide as public service, independent and impartial broadcasting service.

Gusau (1997) said “the surveillance function involves the process of combining or going round from one place to another place as well as observing other happenings in the society or community the journalist lives in, with the view to catching the newsworthy event and informing the public about them”. He went on to say:

“It involves monitoring of other radio stations or news agencies for getting reports of other societies in order to keep your environment informed about happening elsewhere”.

McQuial’s (1972) works: “The media in any society has not been neutral in respect of furthering the interest of different groups and attainment of some values rather than others”.

Adeniji (2005) summarise the factors affecting news selection to include economics of the media (profit), legal restriction, deadline, personal and professional ethics, competition new

value, news hole, attention factor, peer group pressure and reaction from audience.

Oji (2006) makes a robust argument for 'pure' freedom of the press. According to him the press needs freedom for the following reasons:

That the media must have constitutional safeguards to enhance the discharge of its duties. That the media must have access to information; that the media should be protected to protect and prevent the disclosure of sources of information; Call for the stipulation of freedom of the press in the text of nations' constitutions and that it should be preceded by a statement of the obligation of the press; Where there are sedition laws in the world, clauses which do not see truth as a condition for the free practice of journalism should be expunged.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 100 respondents. The objective is to assess the audience's perception of the role of private radio stations in promoting press freedom in Nigeria. The data are presented in tabular form and discussed based on four thematic areas corresponding to the research objectives.

4.1 Data Presentation and Discussion

Section A: Demographic Information

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	59	59%
Female	41	41%
Total	100	100%

A slight majority of respondents are male (59%), indicating a relatively balanced gender participation. This suggests that views on press freedom cut across both sexes.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–25	8	8%
26–35	39	39%
36–45	25	25%
46–60	14	14%
60 years & above	13	13%
Total	100	100%

Most respondents fall between ages 26–35, representing 39%, followed by 36–45. This age distribution shows high engagement among the economically active group.

Table 3: Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	44	44%
Married	39	39%
Divorced	17	17%
Total	100	100%

Respondents are predominantly single (44%) and married (39%), reflecting varied life experiences influencing media perceptions.

Table 4: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Students	34	34%
Self-employed	34	34%
Enterprise Staff	19	19%
Civil Servants	11	11%
Total	100	100%

Students and self-employed individuals dominate the sample, suggesting diverse views from education and entrepreneurial sectors.

Table 5: Nationality

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nigerian	79	79%
Non-Nigerian	21	21%
Total	100	100%

Most respondents are Nigerians (79%), confirming that the findings reflect local perspectives on press freedom.

Section B: Role of Private Radio Stations in Promoting Press Freedom

Table 6: Do private radio stations discuss issues that public radio avoids?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	10	10%
No	20	20%
Not sure	36	36%
I don't listen	33	33%
Total	100	100%

Only 10% agree that private radios address taboo issues, with 36% uncertain and many not listening, indicating limited engagement or awareness.

Table 7: Which role best describes private radio stations?

Role	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Informative	21	21%
Entertaining	34	34%
Educational	13	13%
All of the above	32	32%
Total	100	100%

Entertainment (34%) and combined roles (32%) dominate, revealing that listeners view private radio as multifunctional platforms.

Table 8: Do you believe private radio stations promote freedom of speech?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	30%
No	27	27%
Sometimes	31	31%
Not sure	12	12%
Total	100	100%

Only 30% believe private radio actively promotes free speech, while 30.7% feel it's only occasional, showing mixed trust levels.

Table 9: Frequency of Political Discussions

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very Often	19	19%
Sometimes	18	18%
Rarely	32	32%
Never	31	31%
Total	100	100%

Only 19% hear political debates very often, with 63.4% saying rarely or never, suggesting cautious content selection.

Section C: Independence from Government Control

Table 10: Are private radio stations free from government influence?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Completely	15	15%
Somewhat	21	21%
Not free	22	22%
Not sure	42	42%
Total	100	100%

Only 15% feel private stations are completely independent, while a large 42.6% are unsure, pointing to ambiguity about autonomy.

Table 11: Have you heard of private stations being fined or shut down?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	15	15%
No	41	41%
Possibly	21	21%
Don't Know	23	23%
Total	100	100%

401% have not heard of such cases, but the remaining majority shows that government sanctions are perceived as real possibilities.

Table 12: Do you believe government restricts what private stations say?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	21	21%
No	25	25%
Sometimes	34	34%
Not sure	20	20%
Total	100	100%

Only 24.8% believe there's full freedom, while 34.7% think restrictions apply sometimes, indicating partial press constraint.

Section D: Constitutional Rights and Legal Protections

Table 13: Do private stations compromise under political pressure?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	14	14%
No	23	23%
Occasionally	42	42%
Not aware	21	21%
Total	100	100%

Most respondents believe political pressure leads to occasional compromise (41.6%), which weakens confidence in media independence.

Table 14: Government attitude towards private radio

Attitude	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Supportive	19	19%
Tolerant	39	39%
Hostile	16	16%
Indifferent	26	26%
Total	100	100%

Most feel the government is merely tolerant (38.6%), while 15.8% see hostility, reflecting a complex relationship between press and power.

Table 15: Are private stations protected constitutionally?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	28	28%
No	21	21%
Not sure	22	22%
To some extent	29	29%
Total	100	100%

Only 27.7% affirm full constitutional protection; the rest show doubt or partial agreement, indicating unclear legal understanding.

Table 16: Constitution allows private operation freely

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	31	31%
Agree	33	33%
Neutral	27	27%
Total	100	100%

A majority (63.4%) agree or strongly agree, suggesting some faith in legal provisions for private radio operation in Nigeria.

Table 17: Legal framework supports press freedom

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	8	8%
Agree	17	17%
Neutral	21	21%
Disagree	49	49%
Total	100	100%

Despite legal recognition, 49% disagree that Nigerian laws effectively support press freedom, pointing to distrust in enforcement.

Table 18: Government agencies respect private media rights

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	19	19%
Agree	11	11%
Neutral	12	12%
Disagree	58	58%
Total	100	100%

Over half (58.4%) believe government agencies do not respect media rights, showing strong perceptions of institutional pressure.

Table 19: Can private stations sue governors?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	16	16%
Agree	15	15%
Neutral	16	16%
Disagree	45	45%
Total	100	100%

A minority believe in legal recourse against powerful actors like governors, with 44.6% disagreeing, showing lack of confidence in legal protections.

Table 20: Whistle-blower protection through private media

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	11	11%
Agree	18	18%
Neutral	36	36%
Disagree	27	27%
Total	100	100%

Only 28.7% agree private media offers protection for whistle-blowers. A large proportion remains neutral or disagrees, indicating low trust in protection mechanisms.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings from the survey reveal a nuanced perception of the role private radio stations play in promoting press freedom in Nigeria. From the demographic data, it is evident that a majority of respondents are within the 26–35 age group and represent a diverse mix of occupations. This demographic likely consumes media regularly and is positioned to provide informed views on media freedom and control.

Under the first research objective assessing the extent to which private radio promotes press freedom the responses were mixed. While many view private radio stations as informative and entertaining, only about 29.7% of respondents believe these stations actively promote freedom of speech. Notably, 30.7% say they promote it "sometimes," and a combined 63.4% either rarely or never hear political discussions on these stations. These figures suggest that while private radio may be contributing to discourse, their role in fostering genuine press freedom is still limited or perceived to be cautious.

Regarding independence from government control, only 14.9% believe private stations are completely free from such influence. A larger percentage either disagreed or were unsure. Furthermore, 41.6% stated that private stations occasionally compromise under political pressure, and 34.7% believed that government sometimes restricts what these stations can say. This suggests a significant level of perceived interference or self-censorship.

On the third objective constitutional and legal protections the data indicates a perceived gap between legal provisions and enforcement. While 63.4% agreed or strongly agreed that the Nigerian constitution allows private radio stations to operate freely, nearly half of the respondents (49.5%) disagreed that Nigeria's legal framework supports press freedom for private broadcasters. Similarly, 58.4% believed government agencies do not respect the rights of private media. Furthermore, 44.6% did not believe private stations could sue governors, reflecting skepticism about access to legal recourse.

Overall, the findings portray a media landscape where private radio stations operate within an environment of cautious freedom. They are seen as playing an important role but are limited by regulatory pressures, inconsistent legal protection, and a lack of institutional respect for press rights. While the constitution provides for freedom of expression, practical implementation and protection of such rights remain problematic. This highlights the need for stronger legal frameworks, increased institutional support, and more assertive roles from private broadcasters in advocating for their rights.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Summary

This study was conducted to evaluate the perception of the audience regarding the role of private radio stations in promoting press freedom in Nigeria. Using a structured questionnaire, data were collected from 100 respondents, including students, civil servants, enterprise staff, and self-employed individuals. The research focused on three core objectives: the extent to which private radio stations promote press freedom, their independence from government control, and the degree to which they enjoy constitutional freedoms.

The findings reveal that while private radio stations are considered by many to be informative and entertaining, fewer believe they truly promote freedom of speech. Political discussions are not prevalent, and many respondents perceive the stations to be cautious in their editorial content. With respect to independence from government influence, the survey found significant concern about political pressure, interference, and sanctions, suggesting that true autonomy is questionable. Lastly, the legal and constitutional protections for private broadcasters are seen as insufficient by many respondents, with skepticism about the enforceability of their rights and the judiciary's support.

The research confirms that although private radio stations have potential as agents of press freedom, structural and institutional challenges remain. The road toward full media independence in Nigeria is still encumbered by political, legal, and operational constraints.

5.1 Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that while private radio stations in Nigeria occupy a crucial space in the media environment, their role in promoting press freedom is both limited and contested. Although some respondents recognize the value these stations bring through informative and engaging content, a significant proportion remains unconvinced that they actively promote free speech or encourage political discourse. The mixed perception on this issue highlights the cautious approach many private broadcasters adopt, potentially due to fear of sanctions or loss of licenses.

More pressing, however, is the issue of governmental control. Many respondents feel that private radio stations are not entirely independent and that there is a substantial degree of influence from

political authorities. Evidence of perceived fines, sanctions, and closures of stations adds to this skepticism, indicating that media independence is more theoretical than practical in some cases. Additionally, the constitutional protections available to private media organizations are seen as either weak or poorly enforced. Despite constitutional guarantees, a majority of respondents doubt the ability of private radio stations to assert their rights in legal or political conflicts. The belief that they cannot sue government officials, or protect whistle-blowers, speaks to a broader issue of media vulnerability in the Nigerian democratic context.

In conclusion, while private radio stations are undeniably important in the democratic process, their capacity to promote and sustain press freedom is currently limited by systemic and institutional barriers. Stronger legal protections, less political interference, and increased awareness among citizens and broadcasters alike are crucial for a freer media space. For true democracy to thrive, the independence of the press—especially private broadcasters—must be genuinely protected and actively promoted.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Legislative reforms should reinforce the constitutional rights of private broadcasters and protect them from arbitrary sanctions or shutdowns.
2. Private radio stations should develop and enforce internal editorial policies that protect journalists from external pressure and interference.
3. Media literacy campaigns should be launched to educate citizens on the importance of press freedom and how to support independent journalism.
4. Independent oversight agencies should be empowered to monitor government-media interactions and enforce compliance with press freedom standards.
5. Private stations should invest in continuous training for journalists to navigate legal, ethical, and professional challenges effectively.

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