

Media Use as a Predictor of the Political Behaviour of Undergraduates in South-West Nigeria

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to determine the predictive value of media exposure on the political knowledge and behaviour of undergraduates in South-West Nigeria. It also sought to discover which medium is the dominant or preferred source of political information for respondents and which of the media would have greater influence on their political knowledge and behaviour. The research platform was survey. Through a combination of stratified and multi-stage sampling, a comprehensive sample frame of 4,700 respondents was generated from a cluster of faculties/colleges from six universities. From the 4,228 copies of questionnaire returned and analysed, findings showed that contrary to earlier-held notions, exposure to the electronic media (Radio, Television and Internet) predicted higher political knowledge and behaviour among respondents than the print media. The results also showed that there was a significant influence of exposure to media on respondents political behaviour ($t_{4226} = 2.365$; $p < .05$). The calculated t value of 2.365 was found to be significantly higher than the critical t value of 1.960 at 4226 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. The study also revealed that television was the most dominant source of political information among the respondents. Based on these findings, it was suggested, among others, that Government and media proprietors should synergise efforts to curb the incidence of poor reading culture among youths through reduced costs and richer contents of the print media.

Keywords: Media Use, Political Knowledge, Media Exposure, Political Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

The ability of an individual to have informed views or opinions as well as take decisions on political issues reflects the amount and quality of information at his or her disposal on such issues, which also depends on the degree of his or her exposure to the media. Several studies have been conducted to measure the impact of mediated messages on individuals, culture and institutions. Others try to establish a link, for instance, between a people's media exposure and the manifest dispositions and actions such as political knowledge, behaviour, interest etc.

The issue of the link between media use or exposure and other variables such as political knowledge, behaviour and interest remains contentious in media scholarship. A school of thought believes that knowledge is the most significant factor, which is shaped by the use of mass media, and that exposure is not necessarily linked to actual political behaviour. Another school argues that political behaviour is the most important criterion for observing mass media effects.

There is also the issue of, which of the mass media – electronic or print – is the dominant and more preferred source of political information among youths as a crucial group in the voting population. In Nigeria, the contest to reach out to this vital segment of the society compelled many politicians to embrace the social media for interactive exchanges, especially those of user/consumer-generated content (UGC), all in a bid to mobilise the youth in support of their candidatures in the 2011 elections.

As far back as 1978, surveys had shown in Nigeria that newspapers had been used as a major medium from which information from other sources could be verified. All these however appeared to have changed as Sobowale (2010) citing a survey of 2,756 people conducted in March 2003 in Lagos State confirmed a major shift in the way people used and perceived television. The study revealed that more people than in the past had come to regard television as a primary source of information about events around them. Television was also seen as a more credible medium than radio and newspapers.

Data on media use and political behaviour are scarce in Nigeria. This is unlike the trend in the developed world and even South Africa. Even at that, respondents of the few reported studies in Nigeria cut across the strata of media audience generally. Hence the differential impacts of the mass media on the political behaviour of critical segments of the voting population such as youths and undergraduates are not known.

This observation becomes crucial against the backdrop of research findings that young voters might generally be more receptive to negative and strategic framing in the news than older voters. Young people are reported to have less stable and more discontinuous political orientations than those with higher age, more experience, and more sophistication in politics. The media, it is therefore said, are likely to exert a significant influence on young adults still developing understanding of, and relatively uncrystallized attitudes toward politics and

political processes (Elenbass and de Vreese, 2008:55).

The specific engagement in this research therefore was to investigate the relationship between media use, in terms of exposure, preference, reliance, attention and political knowledge, behaviour and interest of undergraduates in South West Nigeria. This was to discover whether such presumed relations, tested and confirmed in similar but earlier researches in the United States, Israel, Japan and even South Africa could raise some issues or provide certain insights in the Nigerian context.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

From Lazarsfeld & Field (1946), Lazarsfeld & Kendall (1948) to McQuail, Blumler & Brown (1972) and Blumler and Katz (1974), attempts have been made through appropriate theories to establish and explain the relationship between media use on the one hand and dependent variables such as political interest, knowledge and behaviour on the other.

It however appears that many, if not most of these studies, focus on situations and research contexts in Western countries. Few, very few, have examined the situation in Africa, especially Nigeria, hence this study. For instance, there is insufficient research about the connection between media use and political knowledge and behaviour in Nigeria. This development becomes worrisome when Nigeria is reported to have the largest media configuration in Africa. (Olukotun, 2004: 69-90)

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The major objective of this study was to determine the predictive or predisposing value of media use on the political behaviour of selected undergraduates in South Western Nigeria. At a secondary level, the study also set out to, among other things:

- (i) Identify which medium is the dominant or preferred source of political information for the respondents.
- (ii) Discover if exposure and attention to any of the print or electronic media by the respondents will have any direct link, positive or negative, to their knowledge of political issues.
- (iii) Determine which of the media will have a greater influence on the political knowledge and behaviour of the respondents.
- (iv) Find out the point of convergence or divergence of the research findings with earlier and similar studies conducted in the United States, Japan and South Africa as identified in the reviewed literature.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to provide answers to the following questions:

- (i) What medium is the dominant or the preferred source of political information for the respondents?
- (ii) Will the exposure and attention paid to any of the media by respondents have any direct link, positive or negative, to their knowledge of political issues?
- (iii) Which of the media will have the greatest influence on the political knowledge and behaviour of the respondents?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The following null hypothesis was tested.

- (i) **H₀:** There is no significant difference in the political behaviour of respondents exposed to the electronic media and those exposed to the print media.

MEDIA USE AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

Literature provides abundant evidence that differential media access among segments of any population leads to differential political participation. Putnam (1995), Norris (1996), Pinkleton, Austin & Fortman (1998), Stroud (2007), Okoye (2008) and Boyle and Schmierbach (2009) are some of the researchers who have found a consistent relation between news media use and forms of political participation. Okoye (2008: 272) specifically asserts that:

Those who use the media more actively also participate in the political and democratic process more actively. Those without access to media often resort to violent and other anti-social and anti-democratic behaviours, out of ignorance or frustration, or both. Others resort to complacency and/or resignation, of what the late Bola Ige famously referred to as siddon look.

Researchers examining media effects on political attitudes have produced conflicting results and explanations. For instance, scholars like Robinson (1976), Robinson and Sheehan (1983), Patterson (1980, 1993), Iyengar

(1994), Rutnam (1995), Hallin (1997), and Capella and Jamieson (1997) conclude their studies along the thematic position that media use diminishes political knowledge and involvement and contributes to political cynicism and declining turnout. Others like Inglehart (1990), Dalton (1996), Norris (1996,2000), Brelim and Rahn (1997) and Ladd (1999) believe that media use contribute to learning, political involvement, trust, efficacy and mobilisation.

Reviewing these seemingly contradictory positions, Aarts and Semetko (2003) in a study conducted on the situation in Netherland discover what could be regarded as a middle-point position or resolution. Against the backdrop of the Dutch democracy, the scholars report:

Viewing behaviour separates the more knowledgeable, the efficacious, and the politically involved from those who are not, revealing what might be described as a virtuous circle for some and a spiral of cynicism for others.

Explaining further the direction and context of their findings, Aarts and Semetko (2003: 774), comment:

Our findings suggest that the virtuous circle described by Norris (2000) may only exist in a European context for those who rely largely on public television for their news, and this number has diminished as competition for audiences increases. At the same time, commercial news viewing in Netherlands and probably in a number other European countries, if not ultimately contributing to what Capella and Jamieson (1997) have dubbed a spiral of cynicism, then at least is contributing to diminishing political involvement.

The polemics continue in the typical which-one-comes-first-the chicken or the egg- fashion. But be that as it may, many scholars agree that an active citizenry is central to the issue and well-being of a participatory democracy. As Boyle and Schmierbach (2009: *ibid*) have explained. Government can hardly be said to represent the people if most people make no attempt to influence governance. Political participation is a key index of political behaviour as it has been conceptualised in this study. Political participation embraces, but is not limited to, voting.

As explained by McLeod, Scheufele and Moy (1999), political participation includes attendance in town or neighbourhood meetings, volunteering and canvassing for support on behalf of candidates, writing opinion articles/letters, attending club and meetings. In the wake of the social media, political participation will include debates or exchanges of *Facebook*, *Twitters*, *Boxbe*, *Linklidn* etc. It will also embrace donating money to candidates and participation in political fora or rallies such as the One man One Vote movement in Nigeria instigated by the Save Nigeria Group (SNG).

Boyle and Schmierbach (*ibid*) also identify protest also as a form of political participation outside of the traditional means often emphasized by scholars. Pinkleton *et al* (*op. cit*) operationalize political participation as an interactive process by which individuals strive to develop the ability to function as competent members of society. Citizens, according to Pinkleton *et al*, are likely to participate in the political process to the extent that they feel their participation can make a difference. The kernel of the competence-based perspective on socialization as upheld by Pinkleton *et al* is that people interact with the environment rather than react passively to messages. Hence they submit that understanding citizens' motivational processes, therefore, takes on great importance if scholars are to develop an understanding of how individuals use mass media to develop political competence and the confidence that their efforts can affect the system.

Although there are other factors that account for a people's participation or engagement in politics such as demographic characteristics like income, education, gender, religion, etc. media use, research has shown, has the potential to shape political engagement. Shah (1998) and Shah *et al*, (2001) confirm that using news media can prompt participation, whereas entertainment and other kinds of media use may inhibit activity. The reason for this, according to Boyle and Schmierbach (*ibid*), may be the differences in why people use the media. Proponents of the Uses and Gratifications theory disclose that people use news for information seeking purposes and other sorts of media to satisfy different expectations (Rubin 2002). Even at that, information-rich media such television news, newspapers, and some Internet content, according to Boyle and Schmierbach, may have differing effects on participation.

Of the variants of the mass media, the print media, especially newspapers are seen as strong predictors of traditional participation. This linkage is attributed to the important role newspapers play in heightening political knowledge (Robinson & Levy, 1996). Besides, newspapers are also noted for helping to facilitate local discussion and interest in local politics. Kim & Ball-Rokeach, (2006) also confirm that newspapers offer more detail than other media, particularly TV news. It is also reported that emphasis on local issues can be reported because a feeling of connectedness to the local community can be a key driving force in participation.

The relationship between media use and civic and political behaviour as many scholars have discovered, is

complex and only partly understood. Williams and Carpini (2004: 418) confirms that there appears to be a positive and consistent correlation between public affairs media use and participation because more active citizens are more likely to say that they follow politics, read newspapers, watch or listen to the news, and visit Internet sites.

Delli Carpini admits, like others, that though the causal relationship between public affairs media use and participation is unclear, there is the general assumption that more participatory citizen are more likely to follow public affairs in the media as exposure to public affairs also increases participation. It is Delli Carpini's conviction that the media can also have a more direct impact on participation through the provision of mobilizing information such as specific calls to action and the identification of specific opportunities to act.

Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995); Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon and Valentino (1994), Kahn and Kenney (1999), among others, believe that although the general impact of media use on participation and its prerequisites is positive, the content of the media militates and can even reverse the relationship. Although the findings by these scholars are mixed, they provide ample evidence for instance, that negative campaign adverts can depress voter turnout.

METHOD

The population of the study comprised undergraduates of universities in South West Nigeria registered for the 2010/2011 Session. The South West accounts for 28 (34.1%) of the 82 universities in the country (JAMB Brochure, 2010). For ease of data gathering, the universities were purposively stratified into six in terms of their status as Federal, State and Privately-owned. Two universities were selected purposively in each category. This is because, by its nature, this study did not set out to measure any regional or ethnic variable. The total estimate of the population of the six universities thus selected was 94,000. The breakdown is as follows:

1.	University of Lagos	..	..	..	22,000
2.	University of Ibadan	..	..	..	20,000
3.	Lagos State University, Ojo	..	..	..	20,000
4.	Olabisi Onabanjo University	..	..	..	18,000
5.	Covenant University, Ota	..	..	..	7,500
6.	Babcock University, Ilishan	..	..	..	6,500
	Total	..	..	..	<u>94,000</u>

After this the Faculties, Schools, Colleges or Departments in each of the selected universities formed a cluster. From each cluster of faculties in each selected university, two faculties were selected by simple random sampling utilizing the ballot method. From the selected school or college, two departments were subsequently picked by simple random method.

Finally, using the list of registered students as a sampling frame in each selected department, systematic random sampling technique was used to select 4,700 students who were the respondents in the study. Of this figure, 4,228 copies of the questionnaire were returned and analysed. The principal instrument for collecting data for this study was questionnaire tagged Media Use and Political Behaviour Survey (MUPBS). The questionnaire was divided into four basic segments. The first segment/section elicited information on the socio-demographic background of respondents. Other segments included Media Access and Exposure, Political Knowledge, Interest and Behaviour. Copies of the questionnaire were administered on respondents during class time.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What media is the dominant or the preferred source of political information for the respondents?

Table 1

Frequency Count and Percentages of Respondents Media Preferred Source of Political Information

Types of Medium	Frequency	Percent
Radio	1,112	26.3
Television	2,039	48.2
Internet	569	13.5
Newspaper/Magazine	361	8.5
Interpersonal Communication	141	3.3
Others	6	0.1
Total	4,228	100.0

Results in Table 1 showed that of the 4,228 respondents sampled in the study, Two thousand and thirty nine (48.2%) preferred television as the main source of political information. However 1,112 (26.3%) had preference for radio. Five hundred and sixty nine (13.5%) and 361 (8.5%) had preference for Internet and Newspaper/Magazine respectively. This table revealed that Television is the dominant or the preferred source of political information by the respondents. This is followed by radio and Internet the latest entrant into the electronic media family. It is particularly instructive here that, in spite of its noted efficacy, interpersonal communication ranked after Newspaper and Magazine with 141 (3.3%). Hence, while the impact of other sources of political information, like political parties, religious organisations, family etc. cannot be ruled out, respondents seemed to rely more on both the traditional electronic media (Television and Radio) and the Internet as their preferred sources of political information.

Research Question 2

Will the exposure and attention paid to any of the media by respondents have any direct link, positive or negative, to their knowledge of political issues?

Table 2
Cross tabulation of Respondents Preferred Source of Political Information and their Knowledge of Political Issues

Media	Knowledge of Political Issues		Total
	Low	High	
Radio	504	608	1,112
	11.9%	14.4%	26.3%
Television	1,071	968	2,039
	25.3%	22.9%	48.2%
Internet	319	250	569
	7.5%	5.9%	13.5%
Newspapers / Magazines	162	199	361
	3.8%	4.7%	8.5%
Interpersonal Communication	65	76	141
	1.5%	1.8%	3.3%
Others	3	3	6
	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Total	2,124	2,104	4228
	50.2%	49.8%	100.0%

(a) 2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.99.

Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2 = 27.853$; df = 5; Sig. (2-sided) = .000

Table 2 indicated that there was a significant difference in the distribution of respondents' media preference and their knowledge of political issues ($\chi^2 = 27.853$; df = 5; $p < .05$). This implied that the respondents' knowledge of political issues will differ by media preference. Of respondents with preference to radio, while 504 (11.9%) had low knowledge of political issues, 608 (14.4%) had high knowledge of political issues. 1,071 respondents (25.3%) with preference for television had low knowledge of political issues, whereas 968 (22.9%) had high knowledge of political issues. Of the 361 respondents who preferred Newspapers/ Magazines as their main source of political information, 162 (3.8%) had low knowledge of political issues, whereas 199 respondents (4.7%) had high knowledge of political issues. However, of respondents who preferred the Internet, 319 (7.5%) had low knowledge of political issues, while 250 respondents (5.9%) had high knowledge of political issues. There thus appeared to be a direct link between the type of media respondents are exposed to and the extent of their knowledge of political issues. For instance, in spite of the general low performance of respondents in the knowledge-based questions in the questionnaire (Section C), results still showed that respondents with preference for television as the main source of political information with 22.9% performed better than those of other media in the knowledge of political issues. They are followed by radio (14.4%) and Internet (5.9%). Those with preference for Newspapers and Magazine trailed behind with 4.7%, while Interpersonal Communication recorded 1.8%. Preference for other sources like political parties, families, religious organisations etc. recorded 1%.

Research Question 3

Which of the media will have the greatest influence on the political knowledge and behaviour of the respondents?

Table 3
Responses on Media Influence on Political Knowledge

	Don't know (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total (%)
Radio, more than the other media, gives me political knowledge	338 (8.0)	394 (9.3)	721 (17.1)	1,628 (38.5)	1,147 (27.1)	4,228 (100.0)
Television, more than the other media, makes me politically knowledgeable	192 (4.5)	268 (6.3)	306 (7.2)	1,693 (40.0)	1,769 (41.8)	4,228 (100.0)
Newspaper/Magazine, more than the other media, gives me political information	390 (9.2)	430 (10.2)	614 (14.5)	1,702 (40.3)	1,092 (25.8)	4,228 (100.0)
Internet, more than the other media, gives me political knowledge	443 (10.5)	763 (18.0)	884 (20.9)	1,305 (30.9)	833 (19.7)	4,228 (100.0)
What I heard on the radio influenced my attitude to political issues on or before the election	469 (11.1)	706 (16.7)	863 (20.4)	1,407 (33.3)	783 (18.5)	4,228 (100.0)
What I watched on the television affected my political decision before the election	400 (9.5)	636 (15.0)	689 (16.3)	1,350 (31.9)	1,153 (27.3)	4,228 (100.0)
What I read from the newspaper/magazine affected my attitude to political issues before the election.	462 (10.9)	628 (14.9)	852 (20.2)	1,430 (33.8)	856 (20.2)	4,228 (100.0)
Information brought from the Internet affected my political choice before the elections.	403 (9.5)	801 (18.9)	886 (20.9)	1,314 (31.0)	834 (19.7)	4,228 (100.0)

Table 3 revealed that media preference influenced respondents' political knowledge. One thousand one hundred and forty seven (27.1%) strongly agreed, 1628 (38.5%) agreed while 721 (17.1%) disagreed and 394 (9.3%) strongly disagree 338 (8.0%) don't know that radio, more than the other media, gives me political knowledge. However, 1,769 (41.8%) strongly agreed, 1,693 (40.0%) agreed, 306 (7.2%) disagreed while 268 (6.3%) strongly disagree when 192 (4.5%) don't know that television, more than the other media, makes me politically knowledgeable. Of the 4228 respondents, 1092 (25.8%) strongly agreed, 1702 (40.3%) agreed while 614 (14.5%) disagreed and 430 (10.2%) strongly disagree that Newspaper/Magazine, more than the other media, gives me political information whereas 390 (9.2%) don't know.

Eight hundred and thirty three (19.7%) strongly agreed while 1,305 (30.9%) agreed, 884 (20.9%) disagreed, 763 (18.0%) strongly disagree and 443 (10.5%) don't know that the Internet, more than the other media, gives me political knowledge. Again, 783 (18.5%) strongly agreed, 1407 (33.3%) agreed, 863 (20.4%) disagreed, 706 (16.7%) strongly disagree when 469 (11.1%) don't know that what they heard on the radio influenced my attitude to political issues on or before the election.

Also, 1,153 (27.3%) strongly agreed, 1,350 (31.9%) agreed, 689 (16.3%) disagreed, 636 (15.0%) strongly disagreed whereas 400 (9.5%) don't know that what I watched on the television affected my political decision before the election. When 856 (20.2%) strongly agreed, 1,430 (33.8%) agreed, 852 (20.2%) disagreed and 628 (14.9%) strongly disagree whereas 462 (10.9%) don't know that what they read from the newspaper/magazine affected my attitude to political issues before the election.

To answer Research Question 3, the data obtained from Table 3 were further compressed and divided into two categories as reflected in the variables. The study set out to examine thus: Responses on Media Influence on Political Knowledge (Table 4) and Responses on Media Influence on Political Attitude and Behaviour (Table 4.20).

Table 4
Responses on Media Influence on Political Knowledge

	Radio	TV	N/Paper Magazine	Internet
SA+A	2,775 (65.6%)	3,462 (81%)	2,794 (65.8%)	2,138 (50%)
SD+D	1,115 (26.4%)	574 (13.5)	1,044 (24.7%)	1,647 (38.9)
DK	338 (8.0%)	192 (4.5%)	390 (9.2%)	443 (10.5%)
Total	4,228 (100.0%)	4,228 (100.0)	4,228 (100.0)	4,228 (100.0)

Legend: SA+A = Strongly Agree + Agree
 SD + D = Strongly Disagree + Disagree
 DK = Don't Know.

From Table 4 above, 3,462 (81%) of the sampled respondents agreed and strongly agreed that television, more than any other medium, had the greatest influence on their political knowledge. Only 574 (13.5%) of the respondents stated otherwise. 192, that is, 4.5% of the respondents could not indicate specifically which medium influenced their political knowledge. Newspapers and magazines, according to the respondents, were next to Television in terms of influence on political knowledge. 2,794 (65.8%) of the respondents confirmed this while 1,044 (24.7%) claimed otherwise. Radio ran close to Newspaper/Magazine as 2,775 (65.6%) of the respondents indicated its influence on their political knowledge. 1,115 (26.4%) stated otherwise while only 338 (8.0%) of the respondents did not know.

The Internet had the least score of 2,138 (50%) of respondents who acknowledged its influence on their political knowledge while 1,647 (38.9%) thought otherwise. 443 (10.5%) did not know whether or not this medium influenced their political knowledge.

Table 5
Responses on Media Influence on Political Attitude and Behaviour

	Radio	TV	N/Paper Magazine	Internet
SA+A	2,190 (51.8%)	2,503 (58.2%)	2,286 (54%)	2,125 (50.2%)
SD+D	1,569 (37.1)	1,325 (31.3%)	1,480 (35.1%)	1,658 (39.2%)
DK	469 (11.1%)	400 (9.5%)	462 (10.9%)	445 (10.5%)
Total	4,228 (100.0%)	4,228 (100.0)	4,228 (100.0)	4,228 (100.0)

Results from Table 5 revealed that Television maintained its lead as the communication medium that had the greatest influence on the political behaviour of respondents. 2,503 (58.2%) of the respondents sampled either strongly agreed or agreed that this medium influenced their political choice, attitude and behaviour. 1,325 (31.3%) strongly disagreed or disagreed on the proposition, while only 400 (9.5%) did not know. However, Newspapers/ Magazines had an edge on radio in this aspect as 2,286 (54%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it influenced their political behaviour. This was against 1,480 (35.1%) of the respondents who thought otherwise. Radio recorded a 51.8% acceptance by the respondents with a total figure of 2,190. Thirty-seven point one points of the respondents (1,569) disagreed that radio influenced their political actions / behaviour. Only 469 (11.1%) did not know whether or not this medium actually influenced their political behaviour.

The implication of the above tables is that Television had the greatest influence on the political knowledge and behaviour of the respondents. It is followed by Newspapers / Magazines, Radio and the Internet. This development may be due to the fact that television, as Druckman (2003: 561) observes, focus on image in a way that radio or print medium cannot, thus making its viewers have access to visual imagery and non-verbal ones that often play important roles in shaping personality evaluation of others.

Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in the political behaviour of respondents exposed to the electronic media and those exposed to print media.

Table 6
Independent t-test Analysis of Influence of Exposure to Media on Political Behaviour

Type of Media	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Mean Difference	df	t _{cal}	t _{cri}	Sig. (2-tailed)
Electronic	3720	9.2457	3.72565	.06108	.41696	4226	2.365	1.960	.018
Print	508	8.8287	3.73377	.16566					

The results in Table 6 showed that there was a significant influence of exposure to media on respondents political behaviour ($t_{4226} = 2.365$; $p < .05$). The calculated t value of 2.365 was found to be significantly higher than the critical t value of 1.960 at 4226 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Respondents exposed to electronic medium had higher political behaviour than those exposed to print media. The hypothesis which postulated that there is no significant difference in the political behaviour of respondents exposed to the electronic medium and those exposed to print medium was by this finding rejected. The scores were derived through items 26 – 29 of the questionnaire. The rejection of this hypothesis implied that the combined cores of respondents political behaviour in the electronic media showed a total sample of 3,720 with a mean score of 9.2457 and a Standard Deviation of 3.72565, while those of the print media revealed a population sample of 508 with a mean score of 8.8287 and a Standard Deviation of 3.73377.

Exposure to the electronic media (i.e. Radio, Television and Internet) by the respondents, therefore, predicted higher political behaviour than those of respondents exposed to the print media (Newspapers and Magazines).

DISCUSSION ON HYPOTHESIS

The t-test analysis of the influence of Exposure to Media on Political Behaviour helped to measure the relationship between the two variables in contact in the hypothesis. Items 26 – 29 of the Research Instrument were designed to capture the embedded indices of the respondents political behaviour. This included their attitude to political and campaign issues, before the election and how information, news or programmes watched on many of the media affected their decisions. Other indices of respondents political participation as captured in the research instrument included the frequency of their engagement in political discussion with friends, participation in rallies, voters registration exercise, campaigns and actual voting in elections. These were the inputs that were correlated with the respondents exposure to the telephone and the print media.

The significant difference in the political behaviour of respondents occasioned by their exposure to either of the print and electronic media as revealed by this hypothesis, showed some degrees of consistency with the earlier findings of the research questions. Television, for instance, has been found not only as the most preferred source of information but has consistently demonstrated its predisposing influence on most of the respondents political knowledge. This fact seems to corroborate some earlier findings by Sobowale (2010) and Aririguzor (2010). As far back as 1982, Gerbner et al have revealed in several studies that heavy television viewing is correlated to several real world perceptions.

The combined impact of television, radio and the Internet could have accounted for the seemingly diminishing influence of the print media on respondents political behaviour.

Aarts and Semetko (2003: op cit) seem to have captured this fact when they observed that political interest, discussion, and ideological sophistication have increased over the past few decades in a number of countries, adding that this trend is associated with the rise of the media and the educative role of television in particular.

CONCLUSION

A people s political behaviour is the outcome of the interaction of many variables. This study has established the fact that media use is a strong predictor of the political knowledge and behaviour of undergraduates in South-West Nigeria. The mass media provide a platform for communication exchanges on ideas, issues and views which define the socio-political welfare and well-being of people in a society. Information obtained through a people s exposure to the various channels of the mass media influences their reasoning and behaviour in varying degrees. This study has confirmed, among other findings, the dominant preference of undergraduates in

South-West Nigeria for television over and above the other media as their source of political information. Exposure to television was also found to be the strongest predictor of the political knowledge and behaviour of this crucial segment of the Nigerian youth population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the research:

1. Undergraduates constitute a crucial portion of youths and the voting population. To this extent, deliberate policies must be initiated to widen their access to the mass media. While it is instructive and salutary that the miniaturisation of technology and media convergence liberalised access to the electronic media, especially the Internet, a lot still needs to be done by government and other regulatory bodies to provide the requisite infrastructure to make these services available, as well as address the rising costs of phones, computers, I-pad, Android, Tablets, etc. to make these devices more accessible to this class of Nigerians.
2. The mass media generally are products of technology. A crucial requirement for their effective functioning and operations which could, in turn, reduce costs and enhance access / exposure is electricity. Government needs to address the electricity problem across the country. University campuses need to regain their lost glories as research incubators with stable power supply that could keep staff and students abreast of developments in the world.
3. Students Union Government in the universities should liaise with newspapers proprietors to find ways of further reducing the cover prices of newspapers and magazines on campuses.
4. Since it was discovered through the research findings that the respondents generally performed low in the knowledge-based questions in the Questionnaire, it is implied that respondents dependence and reliance on the broadcast media have not translated into effective knowledge of political issues. Broadcast journalists therefore need to focus more on issue-based educative and informative programmes on political and current affairs than the on-going trend and competition for mass entertainment.
5. The preference shown to the electronic media by respondents desires commensurate responsibility by broadcast journalists. Deliberate and concerted efforts must be made to ensure that broadcast content, especially on political coverages conform to the highest ethical and professional standards. Ownership, proprietary influence and commercialisation drives should not be allowed to short-change the higher goals of media objectivity, fair and accurate coverage, report and transmission of political issues.
6. Also, media organisations should be involved in periodic audience research in order to have a better understanding of the composition of the audience and their media needs. This will provide the required information for programming and scheduling.

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