

# **Broadcast Media Readiness and Engagement of Electoral Issues Towards the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria**



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and Engagement of Electoral Issues  
Towards the 2019  
General Elections in Nigeria**



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## Foreword

This publication has been produced in the context of the work of the Support to Media Component of the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) Project.

The EU-SDGN aims to contribute to the reinforcement of Democracy in Nigeria through peaceful, credible, fair and transparent electoral process and building of strong, effective and legitimate democratic institutions. The Support to Media component, being implemented by the Institute for Media and Society (IMS), works towards the achievement of a specific objective: the media provides fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process.

This study has been conducted in the early phase of the project to provide a clear, picture of the situation in the media sector and its engagement of the electoral process. The report of the study in the pages that follow, is a testament to the fulfilment of the expectation. Starting with the performance of the media in the 2015 elections, it assesses the current state and readiness of the broadcast media for the 2019 elections as well as the current level of voter education, identifies areas of media workers' needs and sums up early warning signs of challenges. It then provides quality findings and recommendations for improved professional performance in the coming elections.

The study is a timely and important document which will be very useful to stakeholders. It will be useful for the project team in refining and strengthening implementation. Other stakeholders will find it a must-read and must-use capacity-building instrument as the industry prepares for improved coverage of the electoral process and broader democratic governance in Nigeria.

We thank our consultant, Prof. Ayobami Ojebode, and his team – Dr Obasanjo Oyedele, Mr Oyewole Oladapo and Ms Busolami Oluwajulugbe, for their commitment to the assignment.

Finally, we are grateful to the European Union for providing the support for the conduct of this assessment.

**Dr Akin Akingbulu**  
Institute for Media and Society  
2018.

## **List of Abbreviations**

AIT: Africa Independent Television

APC: All Progressives Congress

BON: Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria

CAN: Christian Association of Nigeria

EWS: Early Warning Signs

FOI: Freedom of Information

FRCN: Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria

INEC: Independent National Electoral Commission

NAWOJ: Nigerian Association of Women Journalists

NBC: National Broadcasting Commission

NDPVF: Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force

NTA: Nigerian Television Authority

NUJ: Nigeria Union of Journalists

PDP: People's Democratic Party

RATTAWU: Radio, Television, Theatre and Arts Workers Union

TVC: TV Continental

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## Executive Summary

**T**he media are by law and professional obligation expected to guard democracy by, among other ways, ensuring that elections are free, fair, and credible. To fulfil this function, the media must provide the electorate with trustworthy electoral information, education on voter registration, candidate and party options, and voting processes and locations. The broadcast media of radio and television are central to this function considering the powers of sound and moving images they combine with their simultaneity of reporting often combined in their reporting and their reach beyond the limits of formal literacy. This report draws lessons from the 2015 Nigerian general elections and appraises the Nigerian broadcast media of their readiness for the upcoming 2019 general elections.

Stakeholders from National Broadcasting Commission and journalism professional associations maintained that the performance of radio and television stations during the 2015 general elections was not ideal. The coverage was marred by explicit media partisanship in private stations as well as denial of media space to opposition parties and candidates by government-owned stations. It was also marred by limited voter education contents and limited electoral information. Even though journalists rated their stations high in terms of fairness, balance, and objectivity, other stakeholders rated them low. It was enforcement from National Broadcasting Commission rather than self-censorship from journalists which brought little sanity to the media landscape during the 2015 elections.

The situation twelve months to the 2019 general elections does not promise anything different except urgent measures are taken to address obvious warning signals. Many journalists lack training on election coverage, conflict reporting, and hate speech, even as social media are rivalling radio and television as major sources of electoral information in the country. The audience are aware of little or

no voter education programmes on radio and television and journalists equally confirmed the same. Among other concerns, journalists are worried about their security as broadcast stations and NBC consider inadequate manpower as a major obstacle.

To get the media ready for balanced, fair, and objective reporting of the 2019 general elections, relevant stakeholders must take certain urgent actions. Journalists must be trained on election coverage, conflict reporting, and hate speech. NBC must be well equipped with adequate manpower to play its oversight function on both private and public radio and television stations. The government must take a deliberate action to democratise government-owned media space for both ruling and opposition parties and their candidates.

## Background

**T**he 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the National Broadcasting Code, and the Independent National Electoral Commission Act (Electoral Act, 2015) are quite explicit on the role that the broadcast media are expected to play in the electoral process in Nigeria. The roles specified in these documents are such that should the broadcast media, for any reason, refuse to perform them, the chances of any general elections – fair or not – would be foreclosed.

Section 22 of the Constitution, for instance, requires “the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media [to] at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter ...”. One of those objectives, earlier stated in the Constitution is that the nation will remain and be run on “the principles of democracy” (Section 14, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). One major way the broadcast media can uphold this objective is by being responsive to one of the fulcra of democracy, which is regular elections. As is often said, it is possible to have elections without democracy but it is impossible to have a democracy without elections.

The National Broadcasting Code is even more explicit about the role of the broadcast media in the electoral process. In Section 5 of the Code, the role as well as the regulation of the broadcast media with regard to elections is discussed. Such roles include providing political enlightenment to voters and conducting a balanced coverage of election activities. Regulation or precautions sounded in that section include refraining from speculating the outcome of an election, announcing election results and airing election-related content when the election is within 24 hours away.

The Electoral Act (2015 as amended) is as well clear on the central place of the broadcast media. In Sections 100, 101 and 105, it states the place of radio and television in voter education and stipulates some guidelines for media

involvement in elections and electoral campaigns. What is notable about the Electoral Act is the implication that voter education would most likely be a partnership between the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the media.

According to these statutory provisions, the broadcast media are also squarely saddled with pre-election, election and post-election duties. These include information, education and mobilization for voter registration, information, education and mobilization for validation of registration, serving as a platform for parties and candidates to present their manifestoes to the citizens, monitoring and reporting the voting process, providing a platform for the accredited electoral officers to announce election results, creating an ambience that discourages electoral violence, and dousing post-electoral tension.

For the broadcast media to perform these functions, five integral factors must be assured. The first of these is that the broadcast media must make adequate preparations for the election in terms of staff training. Training of staff on the different aspects of the electoral law and the National Broadcasting Code is an important part of the preparation. The second is provision of needed broadcasting equipment and ICT facilities that allow staff movement and reporting from remote locations. The third is training on response to emergencies or crises. Staff members need this training given the often chaotic and violent actions and reactions that characterize campaigns and elections in Nigeria and Africa. Reports of injury and even death of journalists on election duty are not scant. The fourth concerns the question of editorial freedom.

For the broadcast media to adhere to the type of impartiality contained in the Broadcasting Code, journalists need wide elbowroom. This is often a problem in Nigeria because many of the broadcast stations are owned either by the government or politicians. Ongoing partnership between the broadcast media and other actors in the electoral process, especially INEC is the fifth factor that must be in place.

As we write this report, the 2019 general elections are about twelve months away. It is therefore important to ask: what is the state of the broadcast media with reference to the five factors outlined above? How well are the media engaging

pre-election issues at this moment? Answering these two questions is the focus of this investigation and report.

Many studies of the media and elections in Nigeria often focus on how the media contributed to the success or failure of the electoral process of a given year (See, for instance, Abubakar, 2015; Nmanani, 2014). These studies are not just many but they are also robust. Their major weakness, however, is that they are reactive rather than pro-active. Constrained by their adoption of post-hoc descriptive designs, these studies lack redemptive powers and are no more than post-mortem jeremiads. Our study and report are a departure from this in that we were able to identify early warning signs of tension and failure so that these might be rectified before it is too late. In a sense, conducting this study is like blowing the *shofar*, a rallying call to individuals, political parties, trade unions and the civil society to take urgent steps to ensure that the 2019 elections will be free, fair and non-violent. We look backwards at the lessons from the 2015 elections but as well look forward towards the 2019 elections.

## Objectives of the Study

**T**he overriding aim of this study is to assess the readiness of the broadcast media to perform their role in the 2019 general elections. To accomplish this aim, the study:

1. Investigated the performance of the broadcast media in the 2015 elections from the perspectives of the stakeholders
2. Assessed the state of the media at this moment, which is twelve months before the general elections with reference to their credibility among the audience, their centrality as media for electoral information and education in the audience's reckoning, and their technical and personnel readiness
3. Assessed the level of voter education, if any, which is going on at this moment –that is, twelve months before the general elections.
4. Identified areas of need, which if met, will better equip broadcast media workers to perform their role in the 2019 elections.
5. Summed up early warning signs of tension or failure with reference to the role of the media in the approaching 2019 elections.

### Methodology

The study is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. This combination allowed us to harvest the strengths of width inherent in quantitative analyses and those of depth inherent in qualitative inquiries.

We administered two questionnaires: one on media workers and the other on broadcast media audience. We then conducted ten interviews with management staff of the regulatory agency, broadcast media managers, and leaders of journalists unions. (See Appendix I for a copy of the journalists' questionnaire and Appendix II for a copy of the audience questionnaire.)

The journalist-respondents were selected from three of the six geo-political

zones in Nigeria: North West, South East and South West and they make a total of 102. Table 1 shows the distribution of journalists by geo-political zone.

**Table 1: Journalist-Respondents' Zone**

Zone	Number of journalists selected
North West	35
South East	33
South West	34
Total	102

These were selected using double stratification and convenience methods. The existing stratification of Nigeria into geo-political zones was adopted to prevent lopsided distribution of journalist respondents. Then attempt was made to select respondents from the two broad broadcast strata: television and radio.

Broadcast media audiences were selected from the same geo-political zones as journalist-respondents. As shown in Table 2, there were 356 respondents to the audience questionnaire.

**Table 2: Audience-Respondents' Zone**

Zone	No of audience respondents selected
North West	120
South East	118
South West	118
Total	356

We conducted interviews with ten key interviewees: Three of them were from the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the broadcasting regulatory agency.

Three were from different unions of journalists –the president of the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), the General Secretary of Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ); and the Secretary General of the Radio, Television, Theatre and Arts Workers' Union (RATTAWU). We interviewed managers/management staff of three broadcast stations: Delta State Broadcasting Corporation; Impact Radio FM and Premier FM. We also interviewed the Executive Secretary of Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON).

We adopted frequency counts and percentages in analysing the questionnaire. We also adopted analysis for the interviews.

### **Nigerian Media Performances in Recent Elections**

The media play important roles in sustaining representative democracy among which is providing an environment that is conducive for the conduct of free and fair elections. The information and education functions of the media are very important, especially because exposure to the media continues to determine who votes in Nigerian elections as it does in other African countries (Kuenzi and Lambright, 2010). The media thus have a responsibility to the electorate, the parties, the aspirants, and most importantly to democracy. The Nigerian media are well placed to deliver on these responsibilities. According to Jega cited by Iheanacho (2013:71), 'Nigerian media are the most vigorous in Africa'. However, this strength of the Nigerian media has not always translated to an advantage during coverage of elections.

The national radio and television stations, the largest networks of government-owned media in Africa, remained the preserve of the ruling party as they used to be in previous elections (Omotola and Nyuykonge, 2015). This kind of incumbent monopolization of the largest media resource in the country renders other parties media-disadvantaged and media poor. The European Union Election Observation Mission (2015) also confirms this position, adding that a similar pattern of ownership influence was observed among state-owned broadcast stations in the country. Private broadcast stations also were not so different from the public stations. It was only Channels TV that was found to offer a seemingly fair amount of coverage to major political parties.

According to the European Union Election Observation Mission (2015:25)



Channels TV demonstrated generally balanced reporting of key political contestants, allocating in its main news programme 40% to APC, while PDP was given 33% and PDP officials 16%'

In addition, media coverage of the 2015 electioneering campaigns focused almost solely on the two dominant parties: the PDP and the APC and their candidates (Idi, 2017). That was exactly the same way they focused almost exclusively on the PDP, the ACN, and the CPC during 2011 elections. The European Union Election Observation Mission (2015) reported that 'in the period before the 28 March elections (starting from 16 January), in prime-time news, PDP received 57% of NTA's political coverage, and 43% of FRCN's.' In addition, the report adds that: 'of the overall prime-time news coverage dedicated to presidential candidates, NTA and FRCN allocated to President Jonathan 85% and 77%, respectively' (24-25). As a result, other political parties and their activities were left outside of public focus.

The foregoing observations reveal that instead of functioning as choice expanding agents, the Nigerian media acted in previous elections as choice limiting agents. Even though there were many broadcast and print media houses in the country, the electorate were exposed to election messages that were homogenized across media platforms in favour of the two big parties. The electorate were thus made to see the elections as a game between the two dominant parties. The situation was made more complicated by the fact that media coverage of the elections was not issue-based. Election issues were traded off for the attention the media devoted to reporting the elections as battles between the major parties. This lack of focus on important issues is a disadvantage for voters as it is for democracy.

The reason is that policy issues influence voters' preferences among politically knowledgeable individuals while they do not among politically uninformed individuals (Nicholson, Pantoja, and Segura, 2006). It becomes a double tragedy for the electorate when the media do not prioritise voter education and election issues. The result will be a large number of politically uninformed people voting in elections that are not issue based. The unbalanced pattern of election reporting found in the Nigerian media is not the best for a growing democracy. This is very critical as 'credible and conscientious media and media practitioners are the last line of defence for democracy and good governance' (Jega cited by Iheanacho

(2013:71).

## **Nigerian Media and Political Hate Speech**

The reporting of the 2015 general elections in major Nigerian newspapers was characterized by hate speech (Obot, 2018), despite that broadcast stations especially ran different campaigns to promote peaceful elections (Orji, 2016). Those efforts at promoting peaceful elections were nullified by the attention the media devoted to propagating hate speech during the period. The hate speeches emanated primarily from the two major political parties, that is, the APC and the PDP and were targeted at each other and their candidates. Public analysts were also found to make inciting statements with ethnic and religious appeals. The attention the media devoted to this kind of speeches was found higher than that devoted to educating voters about the election process (Idi, 2017).

In 2015, the media thus neglected voter education which has been identified as important to curbing election violence in the country for the kind of speeches that promote election violence. It should be noted that absence of post-election violence in 2015 was not attributed in any way to the way the media reported the elections. However, had there been post-election violence in 2015, the possibility is high that it would have been blamed on the media. Seteolu (2017) provides instances of provocative statements made during the 2015 election period to which national newspapers devoted space to propagating.

In a counterfactual analysis of what election would be without the media, Seteolu (2017) chronicles the instances of Nigerian newspapers propagating inflammatory remarks made by stakeholders prior to the 2015 general elections. The following are part of his findings:

A prominent Northern leader, Lawal Kaita was quoted to have said that “the only way Nigeria can remain as one is for the Presidency to return to the North this 2015” (The Vanguard, 2015:3). The All Progressive Congress (APC) National Chairman, John Odigie Oyejide was also quoted to have said, “...as a party, we wish to reiterate that we will not hesitate to consider forming a parallel government if this 2015 elections are rigged either by the use of security agencies (police and military), to harass, intimidate and cajole voters or through the compromised Independent National Electoral Commission” (This Day, 2015: 2).

(Seteolu, 2017:87)

In addition to politicians, the newspapers were found to also provide space for individuals who are not officially affiliated to any of the contending power blocs in the country. Instances of this are provided in the following excerpts:

A notable ex-militant in the Niger Delta region, Tompolo, however, declared on 29 January, 2015 that "... I remain resolute on my earlier position that President Jonathan 'must' win this election for Nigeria to continue to stay together" (The Nation, 2015: 1). Another ex-militant, Mujahid Asari Dokubo, leader of the Niger Delta Peoples' Volunteer Force (NDPVF), stated that "there will be no peace in the whole country if Goodluck Jonathan is not President by this 2015" (Premium Times, 2013). He reiterated his threat of violence in another statement when he was reported that oil exploration and mining will be made difficult, if power shifts to the North (The Nation, January 14, 2015: 17). (87)

Without the media, the implications of this kind of provocative speeches would not have been far-reaching as they were. Okafor (2015) is of the view that, during the 2015 general elections, the media was used to inflict psychological violence on opposition and to heat up the polity in the build up to the elections. The European Union Election Observation Mission (2015:5) also noted that 'issue-based campaigning was overshadowed by negative tactics, with increasing use of inflammatory language, hate speech and religious, ethnic and sectional sentiments and appeals'. Furthermore, media coverage focused on the character of the aspirants at the expense of their manifesto (Ukonu and Ajaero, 2017). It is noted as well that the coverage was characterized by exchange of abuses and character assassination. The implication of this kind of reporting is that, the electorate were distracted from important issues which could have informed their voting choices. The EU report notes also that the perpetrators of hate speech during the 2015 elections acted in violation of the Abuja Accord and various peace accords signed by all the states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory to ensure violence-free elections.

### **Social Media and Nigerian Elections**

Globally, social media have become influential tools of election communication for all stakeholders including aspirants, political parties, election commissions,

civil society organisations and the electorate. The situation is the same in Nigeria with increased adoption of social media for election recorded between the 2011 and the 2015 general elections (Udanor, Aneke, and Ogbuokiri, 2016). Use of social media was believed to pluralise the Nigerian media for political expressions by serving as alternatives to state-dominated broadcast stations (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2015). Political parties, aspirants, different organisations were found to use especially Facebook and Twitter during the last two general elections. Even the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was said to have appropriated different social media platforms for election publicity and voter education prior to the 2015 general elections (Seteolu, 2017). Despite the increased adoption, there has not been a generally agreed position among media scholars on the influence social media use has on Nigerian elections: positions in existing literature are as different as they are contradictory.

An instance is the study of social media use in the Nigerian 2015 General Elections by Udanor, Aneke, and Ogbuokiri (2016). Udanor et al. (2016) attributed election victories in the 2015 general elections to public engagement on interactive social media platforms, especially Twitter. The authors believe that social media were central to influencing voting decisions during the elections. Similar observations were made by Alao, Alao, and Nwogwugwu (2013) concerning the role of social media in the 2011 general elections. The authors consider the influence of social media in the 2011 general elections enormous, with pro-democracy groups and activists having shifted the location of their interventions online (Alao et al., 2013). They believe that civil society groups and activists influence the decisions of the electorate directly by engaging with them on social media platforms.

To other scholars, the use of social media in Nigerian elections does not fulfil the utopian dream of their proponents. Like their mainstream media use, Ezeibe's (2015) study finds that social media use by aspirants during the 2015 general elections was not issue-based. In other words, social media users did not focus on issues that are important to democratic governance. This kind of use makes Mustapha (2017) to maintain that the role of social media in the 2015 elections is overrated. Although he acknowledges their usage for mass mobilization, he finds them ineffective in mobilizing the kind of transformation which democratic

struggles produce. He observes that social media only normalized the political status quo of elite domination, ignoring the division and social inequality that characterize Nigeria. All of these positions suggest that social media have not been able to fill the gap created by traditional media imbalance in reporting Nigerian elections.

### **Contextual Challenges to Nigerian Media Reportage of Elections**

Nigerian media have a history of commitment to democratic ideals. This clearly reflects in the roles they played in the restoration of democratic rule to the country in 1999. However, the history does not extend to their roles in recent elections. Some factors, which in many instances are beyond the control of media practitioners, have been identified as responsible for their undemocratic performance during elections. Pate and Akingbulu (2016) identifies the following as factors that hamper media practitioners' efficient delivery of their professional duties: proprietorial influences, overall economic situation, welfare of the journalist, environment of practice, and access to information. They note that media proprietors wield limitless power over the operations of media houses, both broadcast and print. It then becomes an unwritten law for media houses to tilt their coverage to favour the interests of their proprietors. They note also that the country's strained economic situation takes its toll on the media, such that many journalists are either poorly remunerated or unpaid at all. They also indicate that the country's environment is not friendly for free media practice. They note also that the Freedom of Information Act does not make access to information easier for journalists as especially public office holders remain unyielding to its provisions. Ojebode (2011) has identified a number of challenges to journalists taking full advantage of the provisions of the FOI Act to access important information which can boost their reportage of fact-based stories. Among those challenges are journalists' insufficient knowledge of the Act and lack of operational definition of public interest upon which the Act predicates information access and denial (Ojebode, 2011).

In making recommendations to improve the election reporting performance of the Nigerian media, attention must be given to these highlighted inhibitions. However, not all recommendations have taken them into consideration, making such recommendations of little practical relevance. For example, Nigeria Peace and Security Working Group (2015) made the following recommendations in the

build up to the 2015 general elections: that the media should collaborate with civil society to educate voters; ensure that election messages are non-inflammatory; and ensure that reporting is issue-based and balanced. While these are good recommendations, they do not offer practical steps on how to address the challenges that make the Nigerian media to devote space and airtime to propagating hate speech, push voter education out of focus, and devote attention to reporting only the dominant parties. It is only when the challenges are addressed that the media can be truly free, credible and conscientious in the delivery of their election reporting functions.

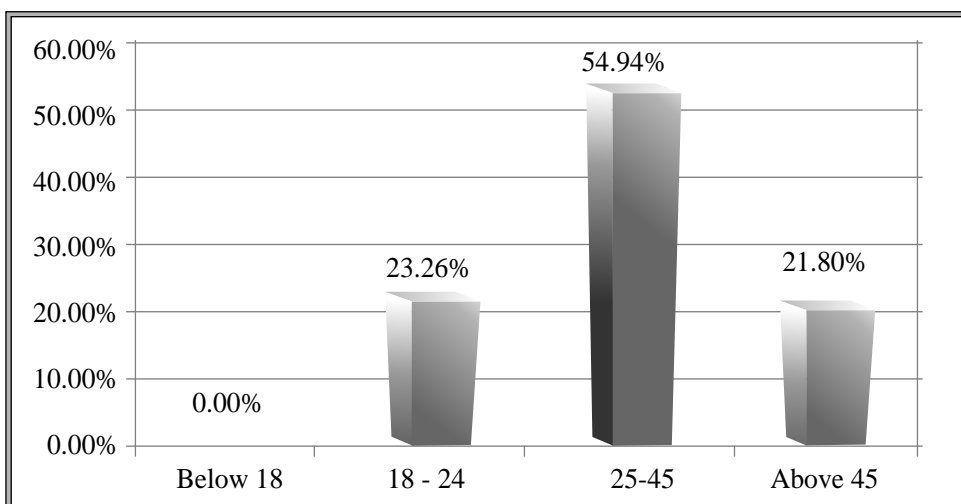
## Findings

We set out to achieve five key objectives. In this section, we presented the key findings based on the information provided by key stakeholders in the Nigerian broadcast industry and broadcast media audience. The findings were presented in the order in which the objectives were presented. However, before that, we present some basic information about the audience and the journalist-respondents.

### Information about the respondents

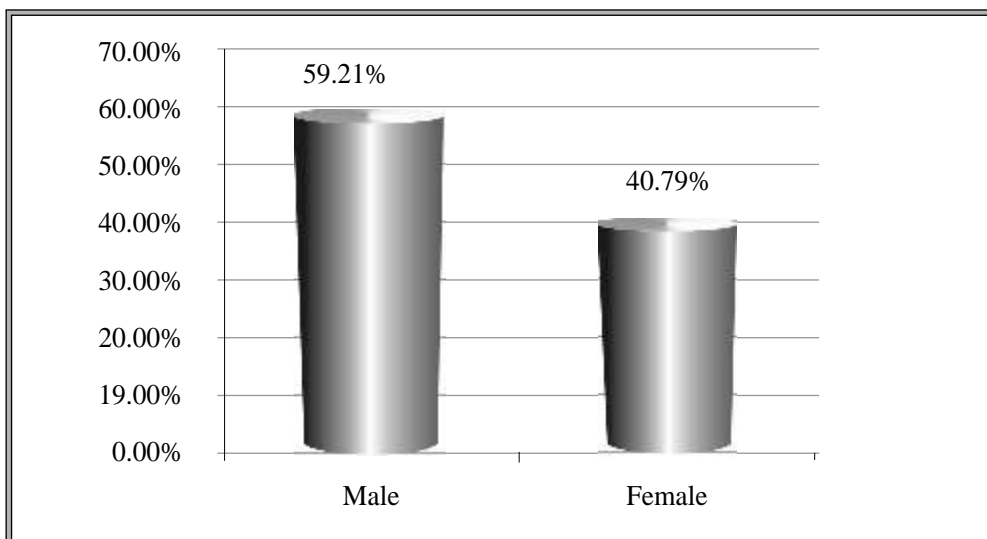
First, we began with the age of respondents. As Figure 1 shows, all the respondents had attained the mandatory, legal age for voting in Nigeria. Most of them are above 24 years. They are therefore potential voters in the forthcoming general elections.

Fig.1: Age of Audience-respondent



We then considered the distribution of respondents across gender. The gender composition of the respondents shows that more of them were male than were female.

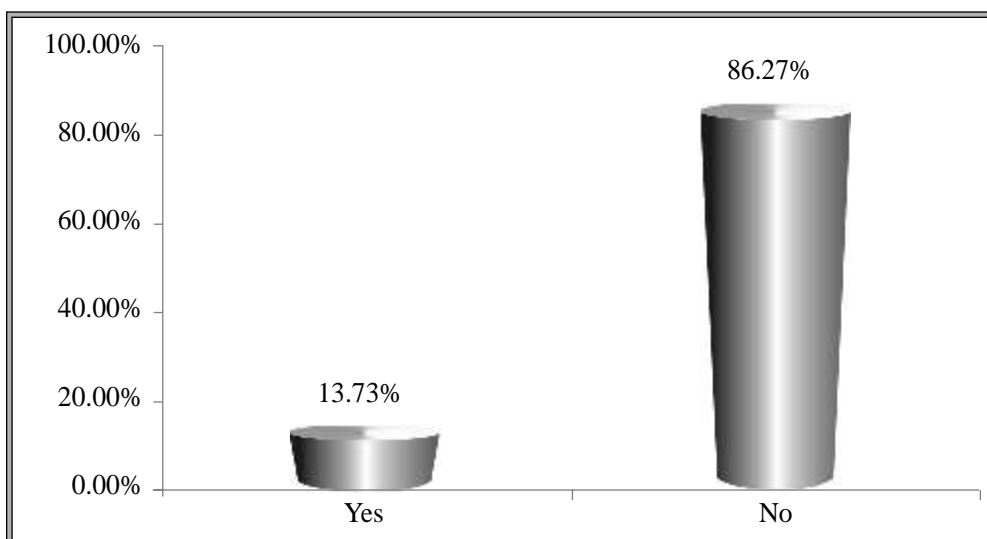
Fig.2: Audience-respodents' gender



We considered this distribution a fair representation of the reality when the subject for consideration is voting, political activism and electoral violence.

We also considered respondents' membership of political party. Figure 3 shows that most of them had no party affiliation.

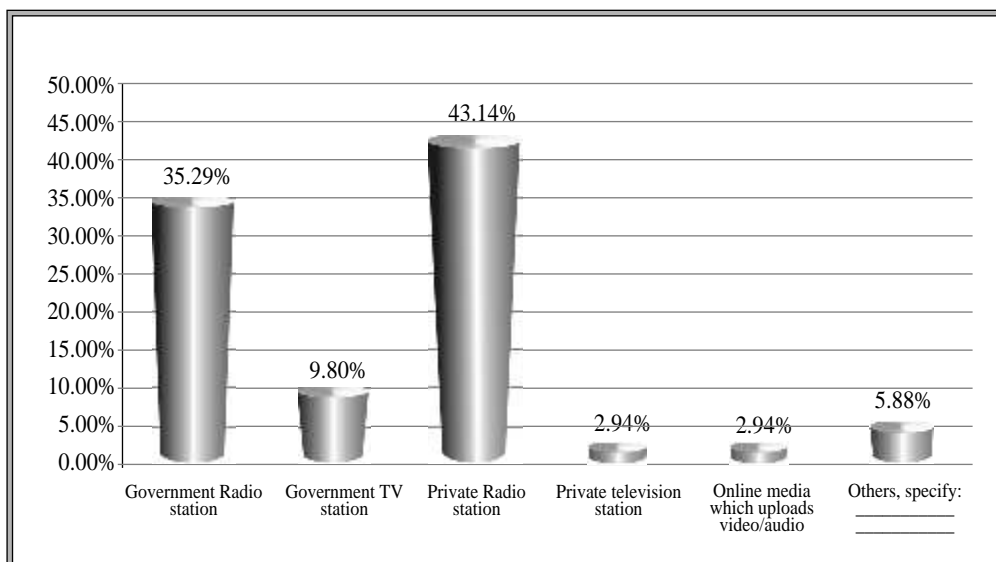
Fig.3: Membership of a political party



Less than 14% of the respondents are registered members of political parties. This large presence of non-partisanship possibly suggests that the views and opinions of most of the respondents might be without significant political bias.

We turned our attention to the general information about journalist-respondents, starting with the kind of media organization in which they worked.

Fig.4: Media Organisation in which Journalists-respondents worked

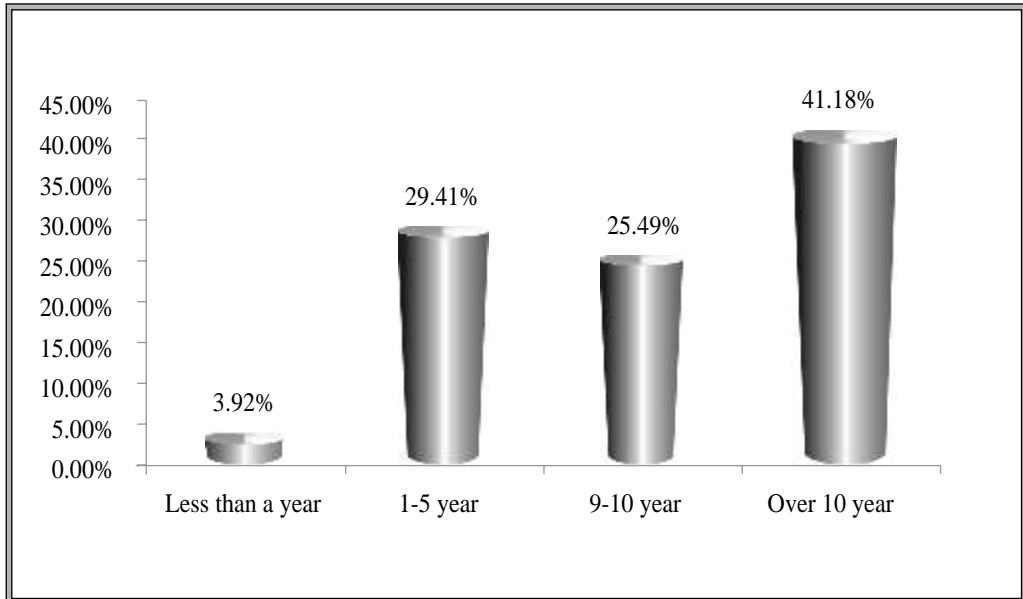


Radio journalists are mostly represented in the study and they are from both private and government radio stations. However, journalists who work for private radio stations are more than those from government radio stations. Journalists from government television stations follow in the ranking; those who could not indicate their place of work follow, with those from private television stations and those working for online media following with equal proportions.

The experiences of journalists matter when it comes to electoral matters. Experience seems to logically correlate with professionalism. Figure 5 shows that the journalists involved in the study were mostly professionals with over ten years of experience.



Fig.5: Journalists-respondents years of experience

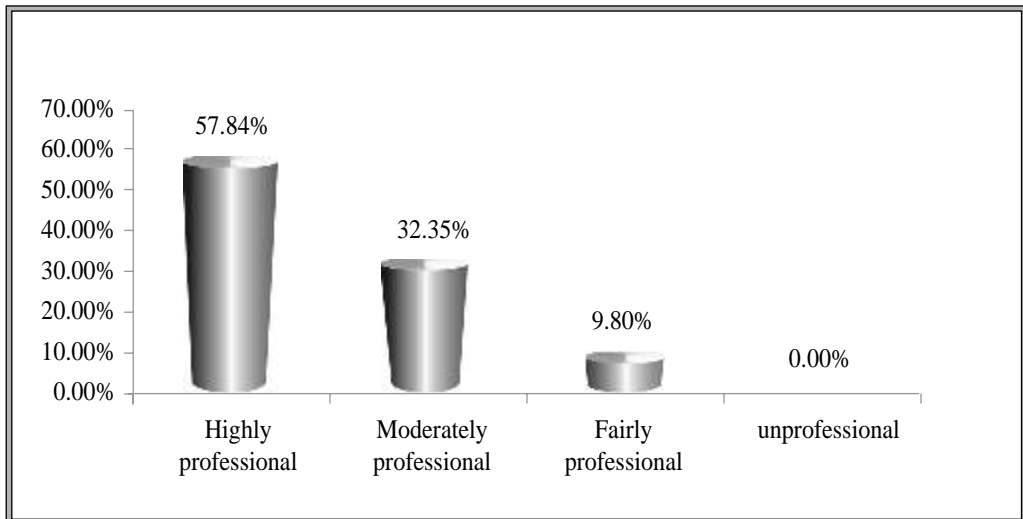


Most of the journalists have worked for more than five years and those with ten years of experience are mostly represented. It is possible to conclude that based on their years of experience, most of them must have participated in election coverage or reporting around 2011 and now.

### **1. Performance of the broadcast media in the 2015 elections**

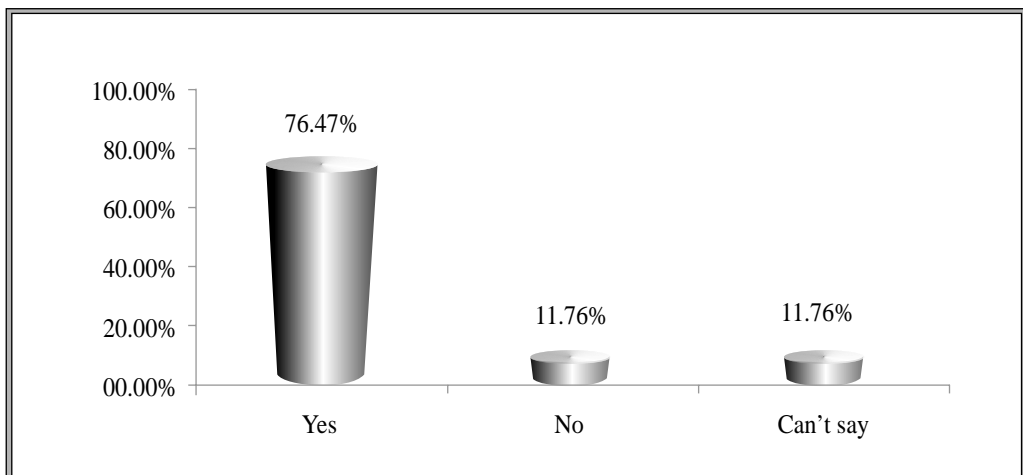
The most striking finding about the performance of the broadcast media in the 2015 elections is the contrast between how journalists rated the stations for which they worked and how regulatory bodies and professional associations rated them. On the one hand, journalists rated the performance of their media organisations in the reportage of the 2015 general elections as excellent – which is somewhat expected. On the other hand, the regulatory agencies and professional bodies rated the media rather poorly with reference to the 2015 general elections. We begin this section with the assessments of media performance by the journalists.

Fig.6: Journalists' Assessment of their media organisation's performance in 2015 elections



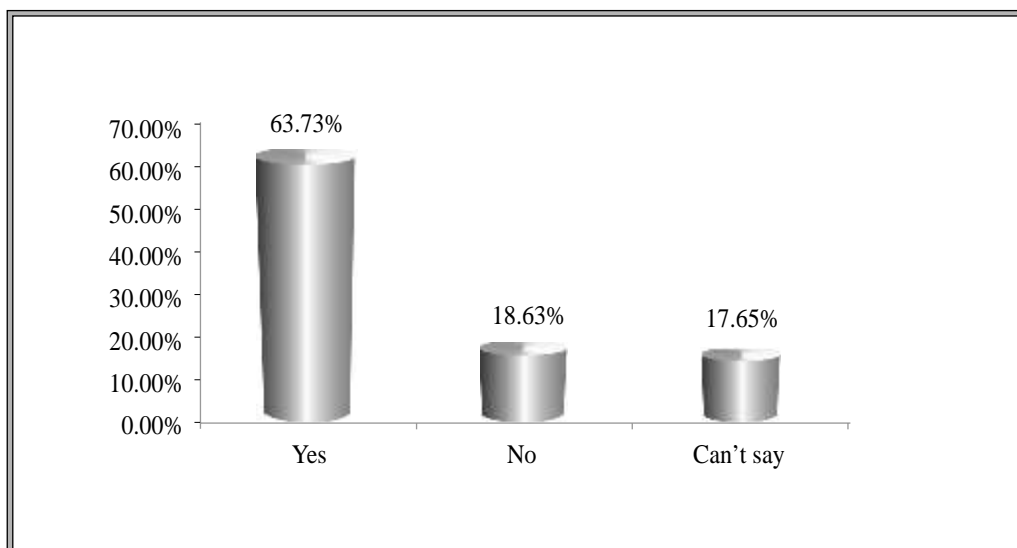
None of the journalists who were surveyed reported any unprofessional conduct on the part of their media organisation during the 2015 general elections. Instead, they saw their media agencies as highly and moderately professional in the reportage of the said elections. The journalists also rated the media agencies very highly in terms of how fair, balanced, and objective their reporting of the 2015 general elections were. Only 9.8% of the journalists who responded to our survey rated their agencies as fairly professional.

Fig.7: Journalists' Assessment of objectivity and fairness in reporting electoral issues in 2015



Also, about 12% of the journalists said their stations' reportage of the 2015 general elections could not be said to be fair, balanced and objective while the same percentage were inconclusive on the subject. Majority of them maintained that their stations adhered to the principles of fairness, balance and objectivity in reporting the 2015 general elections.

Fig.8: Journalists' practice of voter education in 2015



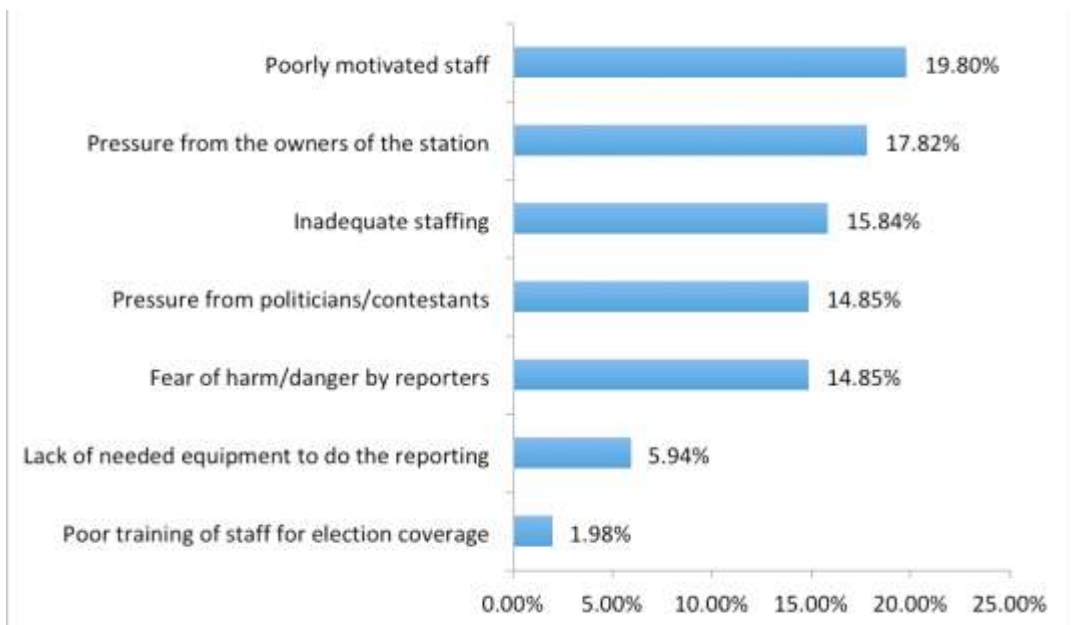
The journalists also submitted that their stations performed their obligation of educating voters before and during the 2015 general elections. Voter education through the media is seen as a way of raising awareness, educating and informing the electorate on all activities connected to elections in the country. It starts from encouraging citizens to register to vote at INEC designated registration centres, educating potential voters on political participation and legal conducts before and during elections, and even their safety and good conduct after the elections. The journalists also submitted that their stations performed their obligation of educating voters before and during the 2015 general elections. About 19% of them however objected to this submission while almost the same percentage said nothing on the issue.

In addition, Ms. Toyin Balogun, Manager, Programmes at Premier FM 93.5, reported that though the Federal Government owned her station, it was impartial to the political parties during the coverage of the 2015 general elections. She

maintained that because the station was careful not to run against the NBC code, it was objective and therefore resisted pressure from politicians. Also, Mrs Ify Omowole, the President of the National Association of Women Journalists, considered journalists' performances during the 2015 general elections largely positive. She attributed it to increase in capacity building workshops for journalists, especially on hate speech. She maintained that the media stations self-regulated their reporting and use of language and attributed the absence of tension experienced after the elections to these factors. The foregoing presentation reveals how highly journalists rated their performance during the 2015 general elections in terms of adherence to professional code of conduct and regulatory codes.

However, in what appeared like a twist, journalists' responses to the question on causes of unprofessional practices during the 2015 general elections signal some inconsistency in their earlier claims to high professional conduct.

Fig.9: Journalists' view on why they performed below expectations in 2015



Responses to this question on factors accounting for unprofessional conducts during the 2015 elections partly negate the earlier submission by the journalists that their broadcast stations were highly professional in their coverage of the 2015 general elections. Poor training of staff for coverage of elections, poor staff motivation, fear of harm and pressure from owners of stations, lack of needed equipment for accurate and prompt reporting, inadequate staffing and pressure from politicians and contestants are the factors that affected coverage of the elections. Perspectives of professional associations and regulatory agency shed light on what the media situation was during the 2015 general elections.

### *Perspectives from professional associations and regulatory agency on the media and the 2015 general elections*

Although journalists rated high the performances of their stations during the 2015 general elections, regulatory and professional bodies rated the performances generally low.

### *Clashes of interests*

For instance, Mr Shuaib Leman, the NUJ General Secretary, says the media did poorly in the 2015 general elections. According to him, the media “sometimes deliberately played into the hands of politicians who really wanted to destroy the country”, resulting in “...some ugly reportage” and “a lot of propaganda by the media that should know better”. He specifically mentioned AIT, Daily Trust, The Nation, The Sun, and The Telegraph. He noted that those are media organizations owned by politicians “whose interest is primarily in their politics and in their businesses, not actually in the development of the media or in the development of democracy”. He maintained that “it was obvious that reports were skewed in favour of these same politicians” and that “as long as the interest of some of these politicians were protected, the journalists were satisfied doing their job”.

### *Flouting of regulatory codes and sanctions*

In addition, the views of Mr. Femi Ayeni, Head of Investigations and Enforcement of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission, are also not any different. He observed that then, while TV Continental (TVC) was reporting to favour Bola

Tinubu, its alleged owner, NTA was doing its own from the headquarters in Abuja in favour of the PDP. He noted also that AIT was also reporting in favour of the PDP because of its owner's, Raymond Dokpesi, affiliation to the party. Dr Idachaba of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission maintained a similar position, noting that some media stations violated some of the provisions of the NBC Code on election reporting in Nigeria. According to the staff of the regulatory body interviewed, it took the interventions of the body to keep the situation under control. For instance, Mr. Femi Ayeni, Head of Investigations and Enforcement of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission, maintained that NBC had to monitor broadcast stations round the clock and sanction the erring ones to ensure compliance with the NBC Code. He said specifically, "I fined every station to the level that they complied...". He noted that the NBC was able to control the spread of unprofessionalism, indecent political broadcasting and hate speech through the empowerment and commitment of his staff, insistence on following extant regulations and placement of fines when rules were flouted.

In his views, Dr Idachaba of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission holds that the regulatory agency significantly played its role in ensuring that broadcast stations respect and follow the code of ethics. He sees no big difference between the general elections of 2015 and the preceding elections in Nigeria since the return to elective democracy in 1999. According to him, the commission was active in enforcing the provisions of the broadcasting code 'with regards to election coverage and election catch'. Based on his experience, once in a while, "some stations either get carried away or they get careless and they forget the provisions of the code." He noted that stations were sanctioned for such infractions. He submits that 'both public and private broadcast stations were equally sanctioned for infractions regarding political broadcast.' He cited "the vilification and dehumanization" of General Muhammadu Buhari of APC by AIT as an extreme case of attempts by media stations to ridicule and humiliate political opponents during the 2015 elections. He noted that, in responding to the situation:

...the NBC reprimanded the station by writing to them and were going to take further action on that material until I think one of the parties went to court and it was only then or thereabouts that both parties now decided to resolve the matter out of court. Remember AIT had to publish an unreserved apology to then

candidate of the APC President elect, Mohammed Buhari.

The foregoing findings reveal that the alertness of the regulatory body did not deter broadcast stations from serving the political interests of their owners, even when doing so mean violating the provisions of the regulatory code.

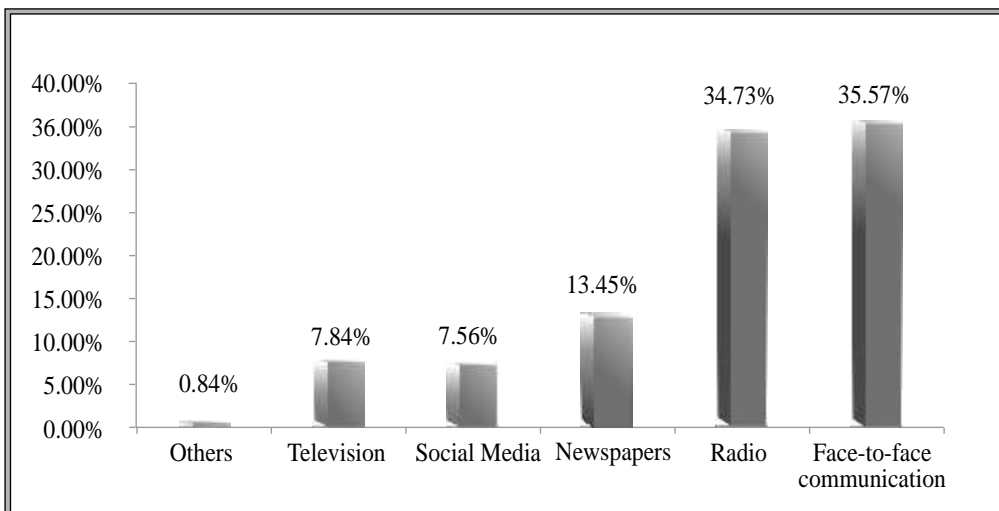
## 2. Broadcast media twelve months before the 2019 general elections

As the 2019 general elections are about a year away, we appraised the current situation of the Nigerian broadcast media. We focused on four key issues: how much of electoral information is available to the audience, how credible the audience perceive electoral information they receive from broadcast media, how well they serve as sources of electoral information to the citizens, and how they assess their technical and personnel readiness for the elections.

### *Availability of electoral information to audience*

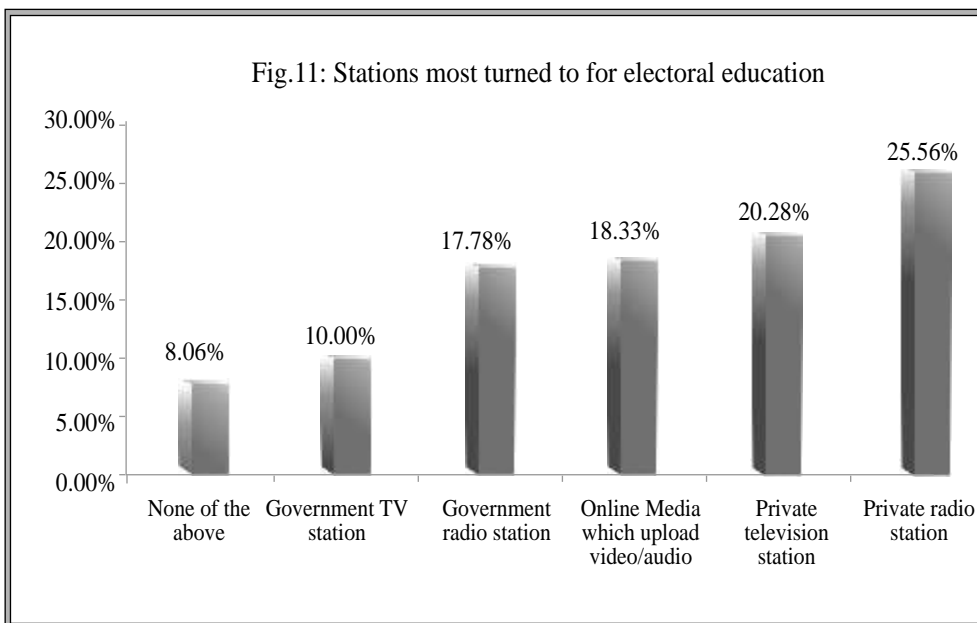
With the advent and popularity of social media, the strength and relevance of traditional media – radio and television – have come to be in doubt. This is even more so when it comes to electoral issues given the widespread use of social media in electoral campaigns. However, our findings showed very surprising outcomes when we analysed the major source of electoral information for the audience. Radio emerged the most common medium following face-to-face interpersonal communication.

Fig.10: Audience’s major source of election-related information



For approximately 35% of the respondents, radio remained the major source of information while social media were the choice of only about 8%. This is contrary to expectations and underscores the need to be more cautious in assessing the importance of social media or in announcing the waning influence of radio and newspapers. It is most likely that social media platforms are indeed the most preferred of the young, educated and middle-class people who do not constitute a majority of the Nigerian citizens.

Digging further, we examined the station of preference among the audiences. Not surprisingly, private radio stations emerged the preferred stations of most of the respondents.



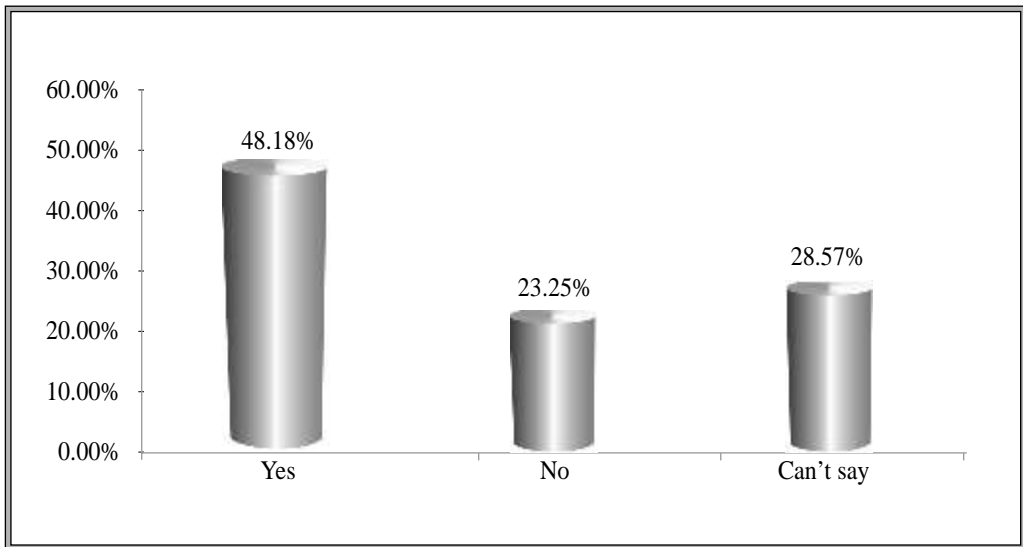
A breakdown of the group of respondents shows that many of the respondents preferred private to government radio stations for information on elections. More than half of the respondents received electoral information from television also preferred private to government television stations. This preference for private media stations could possibly be interpreted as the existing belief that government-owned media stations are fond of supporting any government in power. Online sources of electoral information ranked in-between radio and television in terms of respondent preference.



## Audience positions on broadcast media credibility

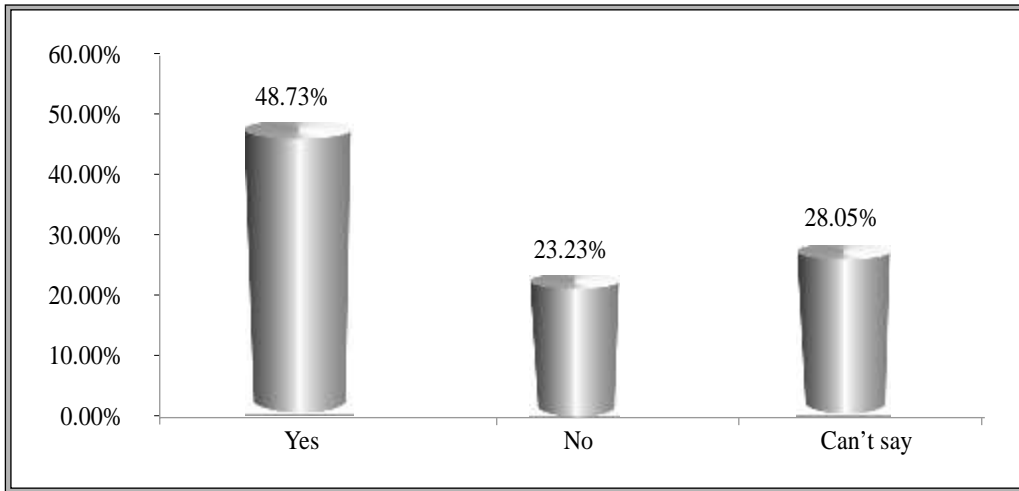
The respondents were asked whether they trust the electoral information they received on radio. If the information supplied by the respondents on the trust they put in voter education information they get on radio stations is taken as a whole, the radio stations are yet to build serious trust in their audiences based on voter education.

Fig.12: Whether audience members trust electoral information on radio



About 48% trust information on electoral information from radio stations, about 23% do not agree with this, while about 29% of the respondents could not say. The observations of respondents on their trust in what their preferred radio stations give on voter education agree with the opinions on trust in what television stations offer on voter education. This further reinforces the need to strengthen radio as a means of electoral information in Nigeria.

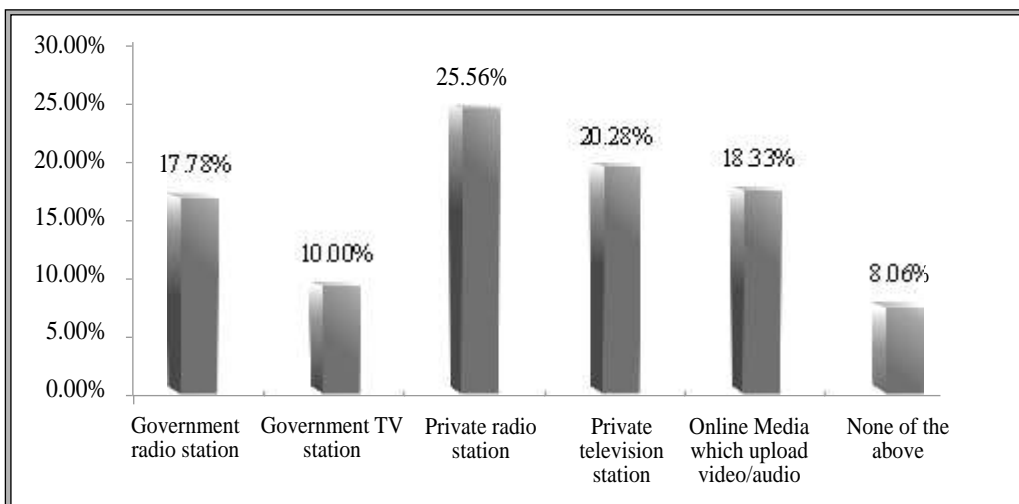
Fig.13: Whether or not audience believed electoral information on television



Interestingly, about 49% trust what they receive from television stations, about 23% do not trust what television stations give, while about 28% could not say. This very much resembles the distribution that obtains for radio.

Given the role that ownership allegedly played in the 2015 elections, we asked respondents to indicate what their preference was between private and government stations when they wish to receive electoral information. Added to these was social media as well. Though the respondents have access to social media and radio as sources of information on elections, there is a slight preference for radio above online media and television among them.

Fig.14: Stations type preferred by respondents

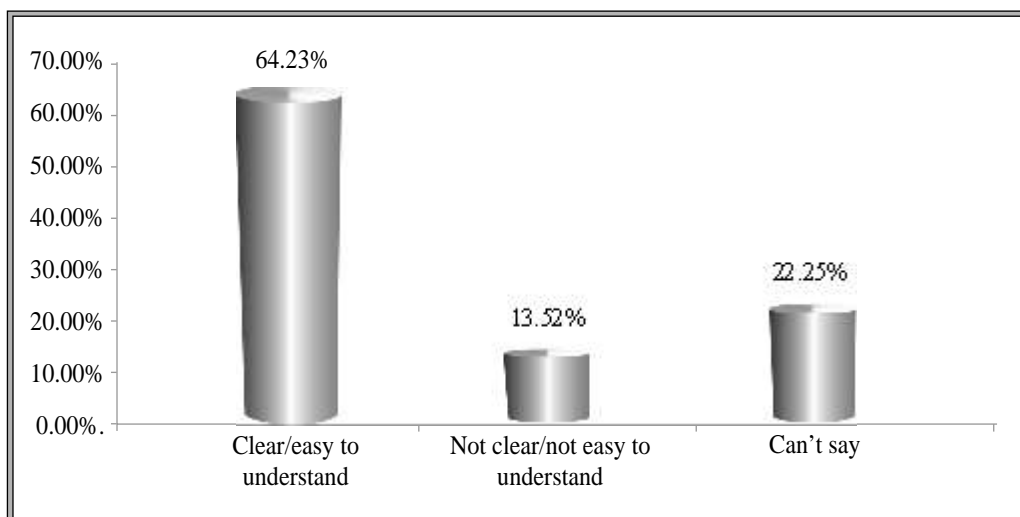


About half of the total respondents would depend on and prefer radio far above online media and television for information on elections. A breakdown of this group of radio lovers shows that many of them prefer private to government radio stations for information on elections. Slightly following the trend established above, online media are also very close to television on the scale of preference. More than half of the respondents who prefer television would also rely on private rather than government television stations for information on elections. The preference for private media stations could possibly be interpreted as the existing belief that government-owned media stations are fond of supporting any government in power. However, there is another discourse which does not favour private ownership, as popular opinions hold that private media owners are in the media business for their political and economic interests, far above the interest of the public.

*Audience assessment of broadcast media's current electoral information provision performance*

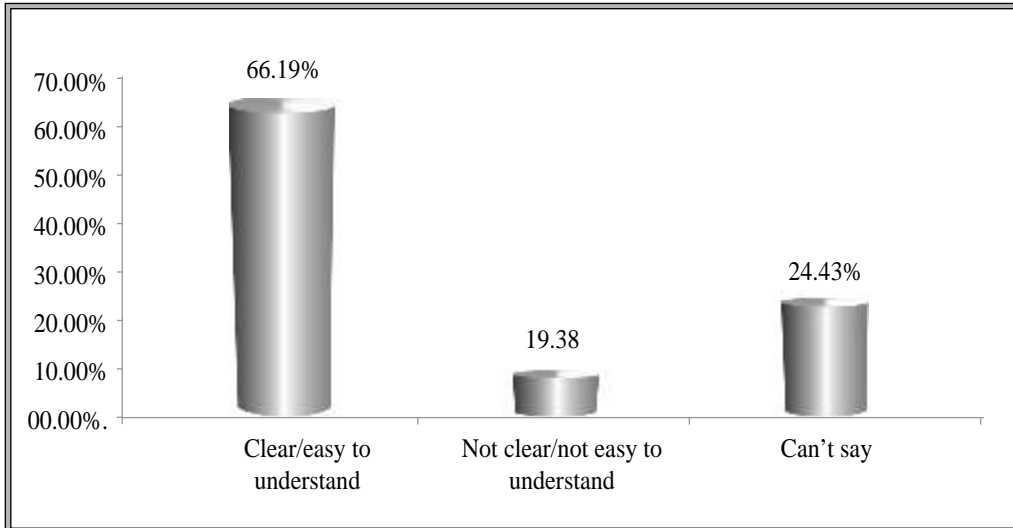
In addition to identifying their sources of electoral information, the respondents were also asked about their assessment of the electoral information they received from broadcast media. First, we asked them to indicate if the electoral information they obtained on radio and television was clear and easy to understand.

Fig.15: Clarity of electoral information received on radio



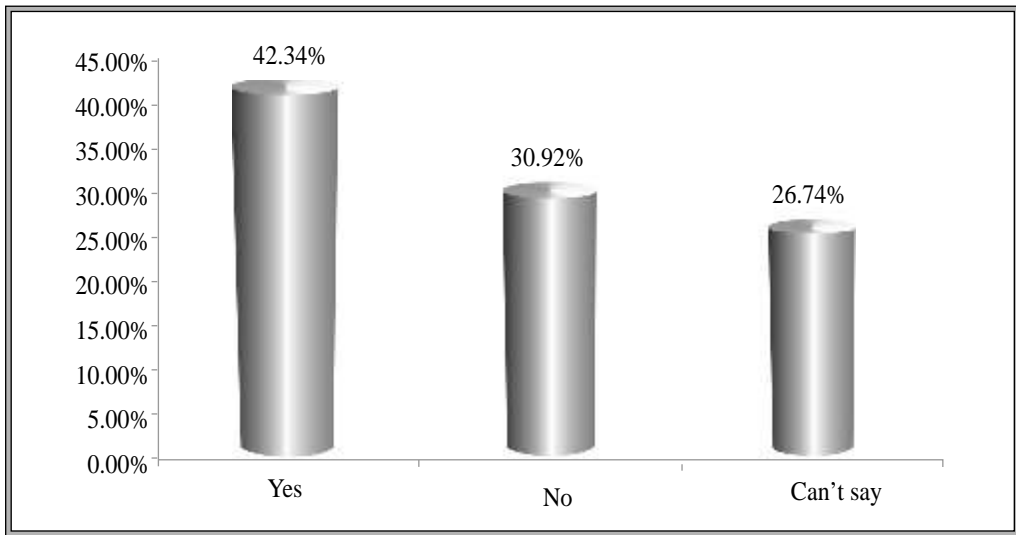
Majority of the audience described the electoral information they received on radio stations as clear and easy to understand. Only about 14% of the total respondents described the information they received as unclear and not easy to understand. In addition, about 22% of them could not decide on how clear and simple the information they received was.

Fig.16: Clarity of electoral information received on television



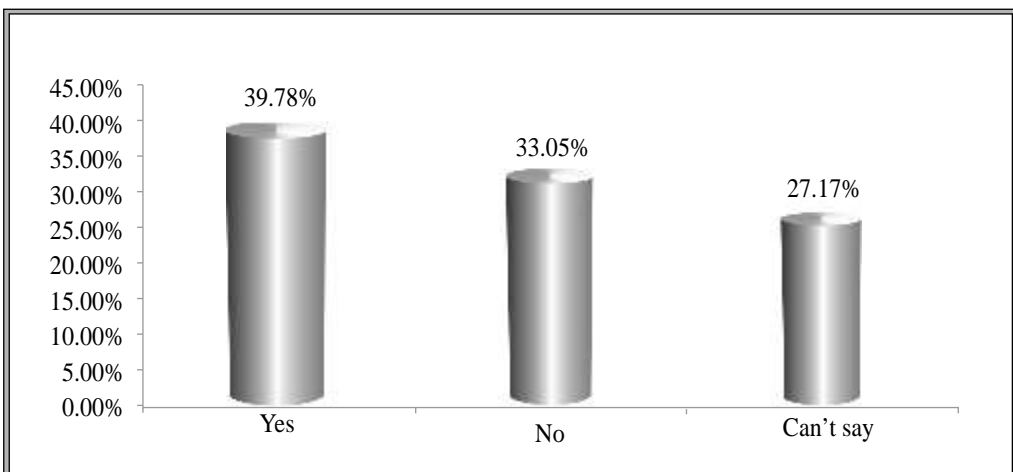
The same observation goes for the information about elections they received from television stations. Most of the respondents indicated that they received clear and easy-to-understand information on television. About 24% could not make this claim while 10% of the respondents observed that electoral information from television was not clear and easy-to-understand.

Fig.17: Timeliness of electoral information received on radio



Since most of the respondents have observed earlier that they received clear and easy-to-understand electoral information from radio and television, it is important to ascertain whether the information was available at the time the audience considered right and convenient for them. More than 40% of the respondents received the electoral information from radio stations at the time they considered right and convenient for them. About 31% of them claimed that they did not while about 27% could not say. This shows that voter education was yet to feature as required in the coverage of the radio stations.

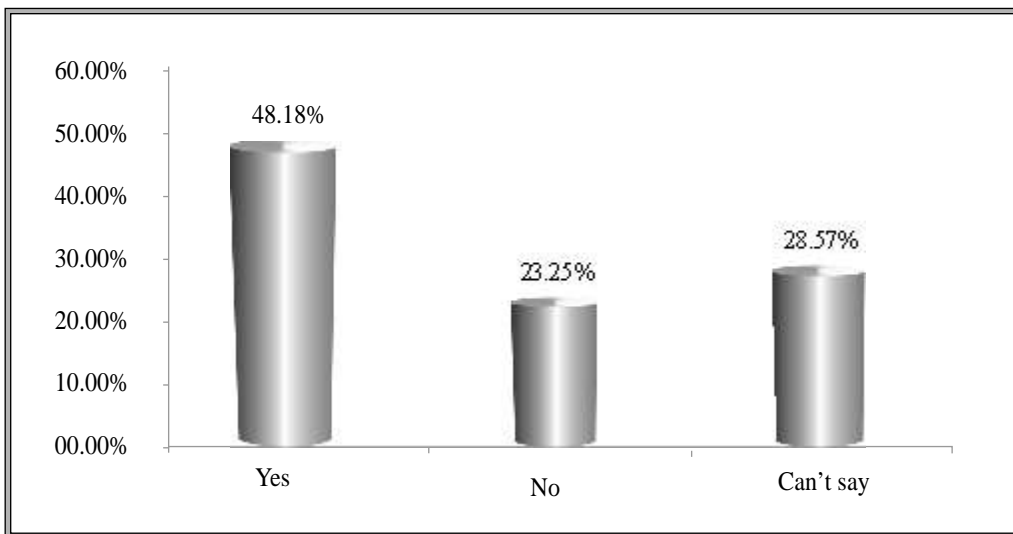
Fig.18: Timeliness of electoral information received on television



The opinions of respondents on timely reception of electoral information on radio agree with their submission on timely reception of electoral information on television. Only about 40% of the total respondents get timely electoral information, while about 32% do not, and about 27% could not say. This shows that the little amount of electoral information that is available on television and radio stations as of now may be broadcast at a time when many of the audience considered inappropriate for them.

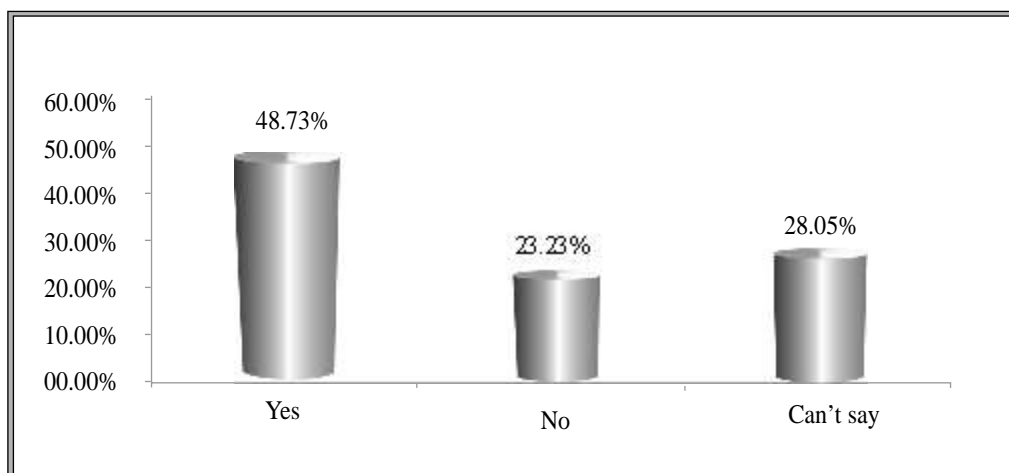
### Trust in broadcast media electoral information

Fig.19: Timeliness of electoral information received on radio



If the information supplied by the respondents on the trust they put in electoral information and education which they get on radio stations is taken as a whole, the radio stations are yet to build serious trust in their audiences based on voter education. Less than 50% trust the voter education they receive from radio stations, about 23% do not agree with this, while about 29% of the respondents could not say.

Fig.20: Trust in electoral information received on television



The observations of respondents on their trust in what their preferred radio stations give on voter education agree with the opinions on trust in what television stations offer on voter education. Less than 50% trust what they receive from television stations, about 23% do not trust what television stations give, while about 28% could not say.

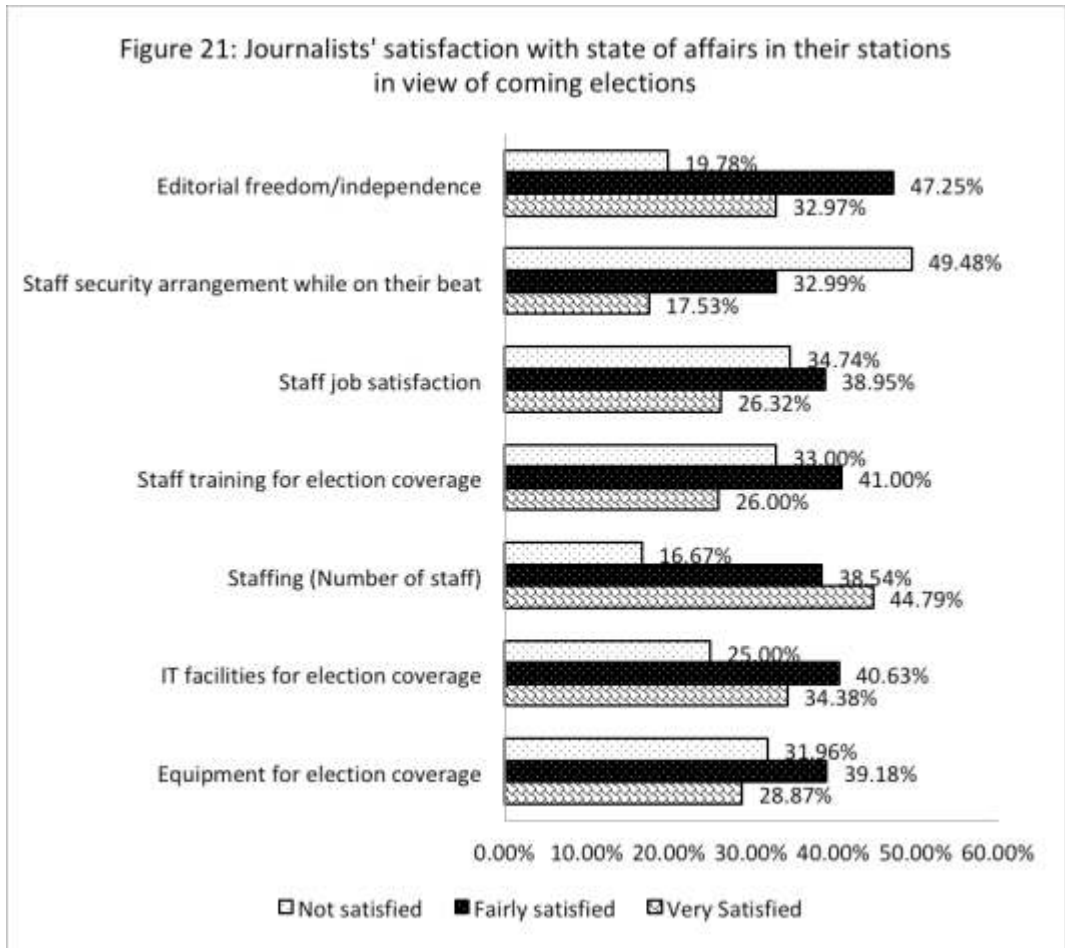
### **3. Level of voter education twelve months before the 2019 general elections**

The Independent National Electoral Commission has released the timetable for the 2019 general elections and the media stations are expected to be preparing for the coverage of the elections. As observed earlier, media coverage starts from this time and ends when the elections are concluded. Though data supplied on provision of information on voter education show that the stations are not adequately doing this yet, it is important to understand other things that the media stations are doing to fulfil their responsibilities to the electorate and other stakeholders. The journalists first provide information on the state of affairs in the media organizations pertaining to their readiness for the 2019 elections.

#### *Preparedness of broadcast stations for the 2019 general elections*

We asked for journalists' views on their satisfaction with the state of affairs in their stations with reference to preparedness and preparation for the 2019 elections. Their responses showed that not many people were very satisfied with the station

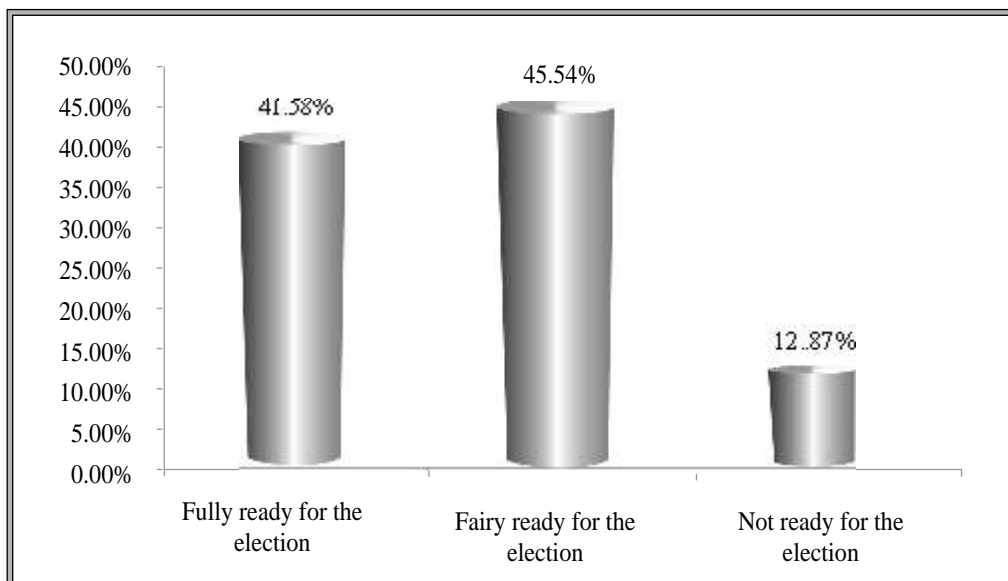
editorial freedom, equipment, arrangements for journalists' security, among other issues. Figure 21 shows the results.



The percentage of those who were very satisfied with the state of affairs in their station are small, compared to that of those who are fairly satisfied especially with respect to editorial freedom, staff security arrangement, staff job satisfaction, staff training on electoral matters, and equipment in the studios. These matters remain a source of concern for most journalists. It is only in the area of staffing or staff number that the “very satisfied” category outnumbered the “fairly satisfied” category.

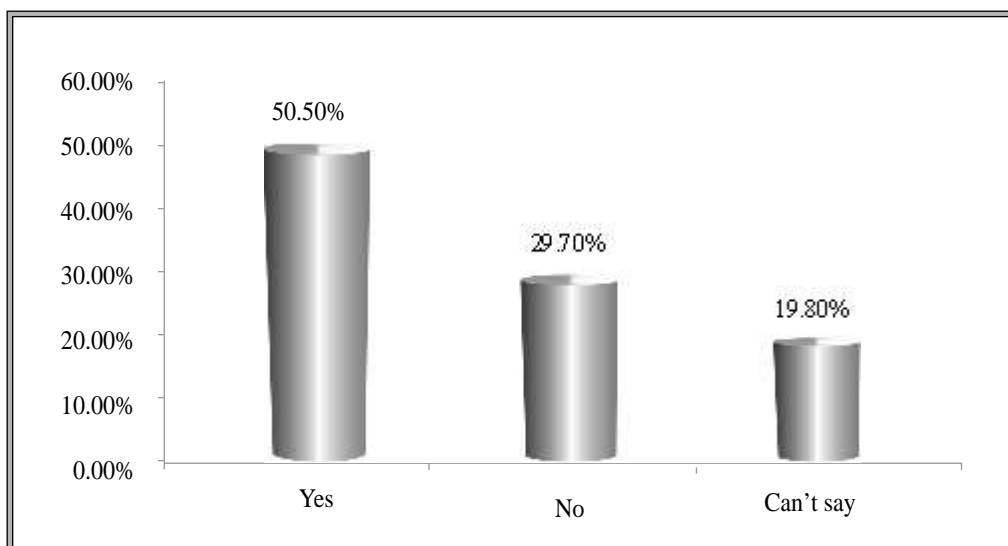


Fig.22: Journalists' assessment of the readiness of their stations for the 2019 elections



The ratings of the journalists show that none of the media stations is fully ready for the 2019 elections. About 45% of the journalists observe that their stations are fairly ready for the elections; about 42% boldly declare that their stations are fully ready for the elections, while some 12% see no readiness among the media stations.

Fig.23: Journalists' view on whether or not adequate preparation towards the 2019 elections is going on in their station

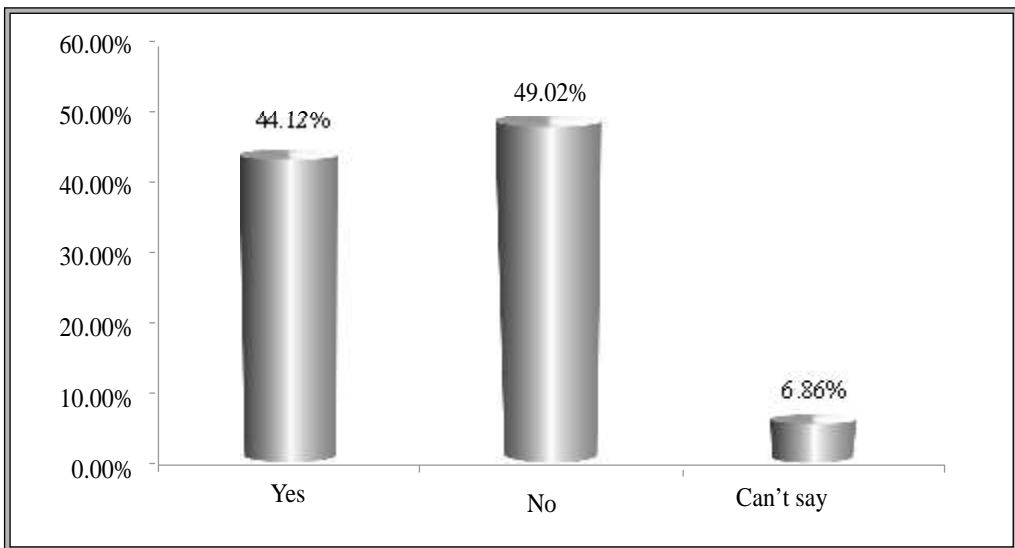


Only half of the respondents could see and pin-point sufficient preparation for the elections happening in their stations. About 30% have not seen any on-going preparation for the forth-coming general elections and about 20% could not say.

*Current state of electoral information on broadcast media from journalists' perspectives*

Part of the preparations expected from the stations is voter education. We, therefore, asked the journalist-respondents if any voter education was going on in their stations twelve months before the general elections.

Fig.24: On whether or not journalists' stations are carrying out any voter education currently



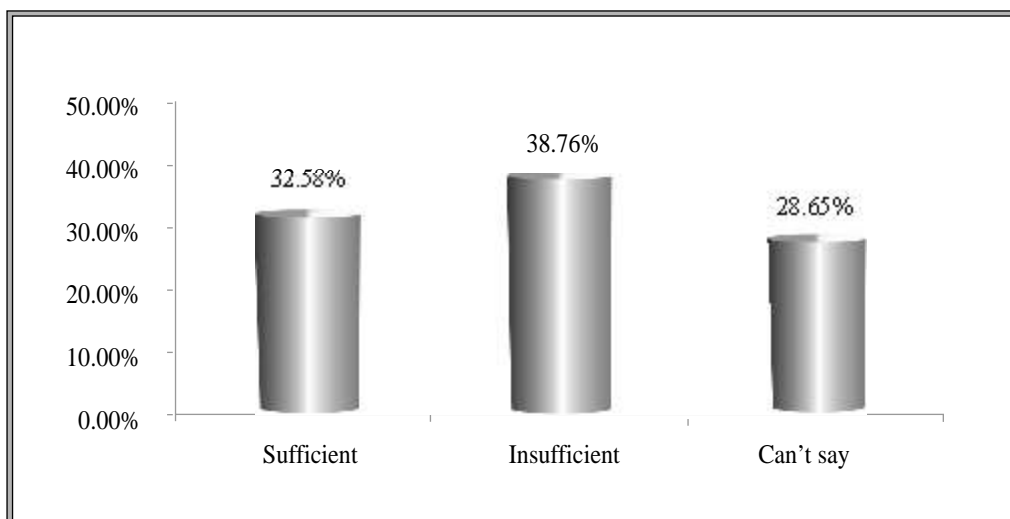
The conclusion of media audiences on availability of voter education in the schedules of media stations they know is that voter education has not been given adequate coverage. Information provided by journalists who work in these media stations also affirms this conclusion. Though about 44% of the journalists observe that there are programmes, jingles and voter education on the forthcoming elections, about half of the journalists deny this submission. The fact that journalists who have not seen any programmes/jingles/voter education efforts on the 2019 elections are more than those who have seen such shows that a lot has not been done on the preparations for the elections.

Mr Mapaderun of Impact Business Radio, Ibadan, in his contribution on voter education observes that the station is yet to start anything concrete on voter education. He says, “We just let them know that they should go and collect their PVC. We are telling those who have attained the age of 18 to go to their nearest local government to register, and if they have registered, they should go and collect their PVC. So, that's the education we are giving now.” He confesses that there is no particular programme set aside for voter education yet. However, presenters have been asked to tell the audience something about what is happening regarding 2019 each time they are on their programmes.

### Current state of voter education on broadcast media from audience's perspectives

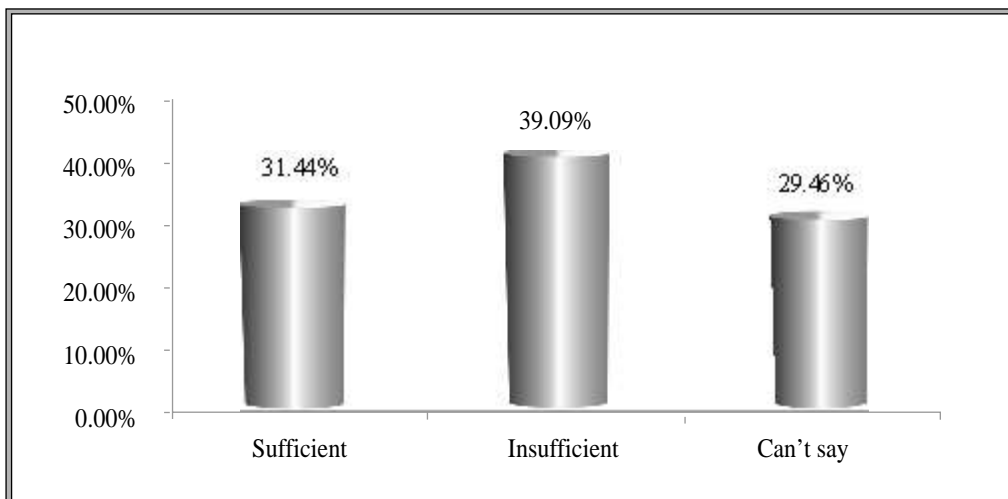
One of the things that show the readiness of the media houses for the 2019 general elections is the voter education that precedes the elections. Here, the audiences rate the quantity and quality of voter education they receive both on radio and television.

Fig.25: Audiences' assessment of the sufficiency of current voter education on radio



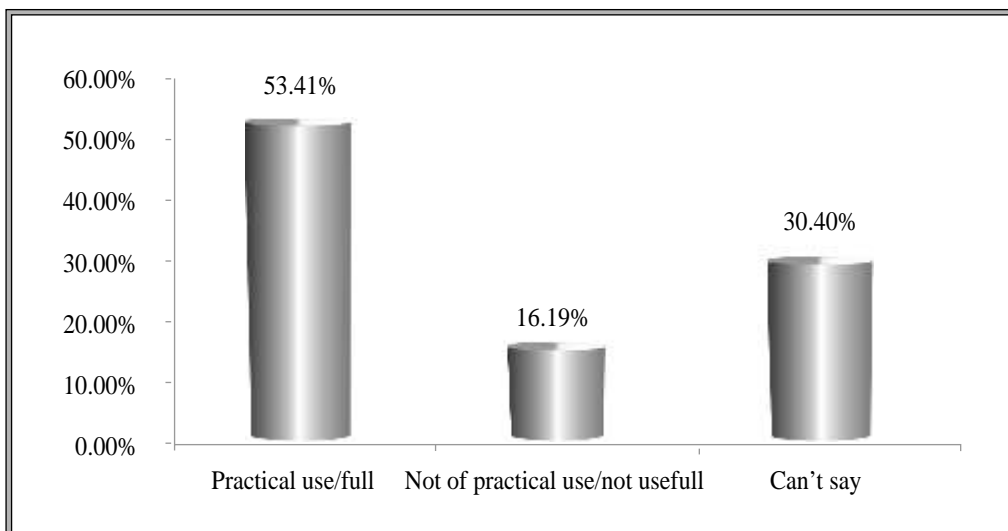
The percentage of the audiences who think the quantity of voter education from radio stations is not sufficient (38.76%) is higher than the percentage of those who think it is. If the percentage of those who could not decide is taken as a sign that members of this group are yet to see any meaningful voter education on radio stations at all, then the radio stations are yet to seriously start voter education.

Fig.26: Audiences' assessment of the sufficiency of current voter education on television



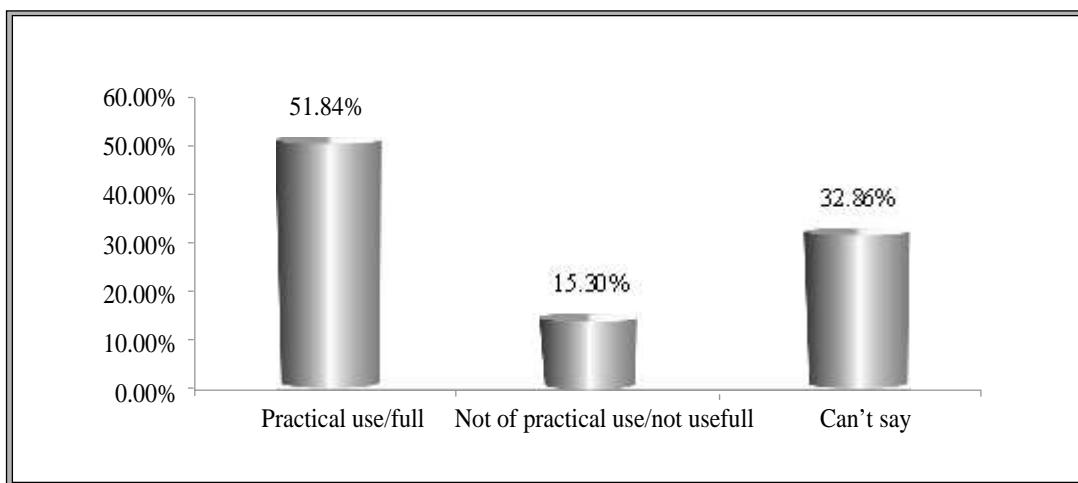
The same pattern recorded under radio is repeated under television here. The quantity of voter education on television stations concerning the 2019 general elections has been insufficient (39.09%) though 31.44% of the audiences think it is sufficient. The percentage of those who could not give their opinions on this issue and the percentage of those who think it is insufficient double the percentage of those who think it is sufficient.

Fig.27: Audiences' assessment of the usefulness of current voter education on radio



However, though the quantity of voter education on radio is very low, there is some fading hope that what is available is useful to the electorate. This is because more than half of the respondents find such information useful, though about 30% of them too could not decide on its usefulness or not. There is a possibility that the low quantity of voter education and the low level of preparation could account for the remaining half of the respondents yet to see any usefulness in the voter education available on radio stations.

Fig.28: Audiences' assessment of the usefulness of current voter education on television

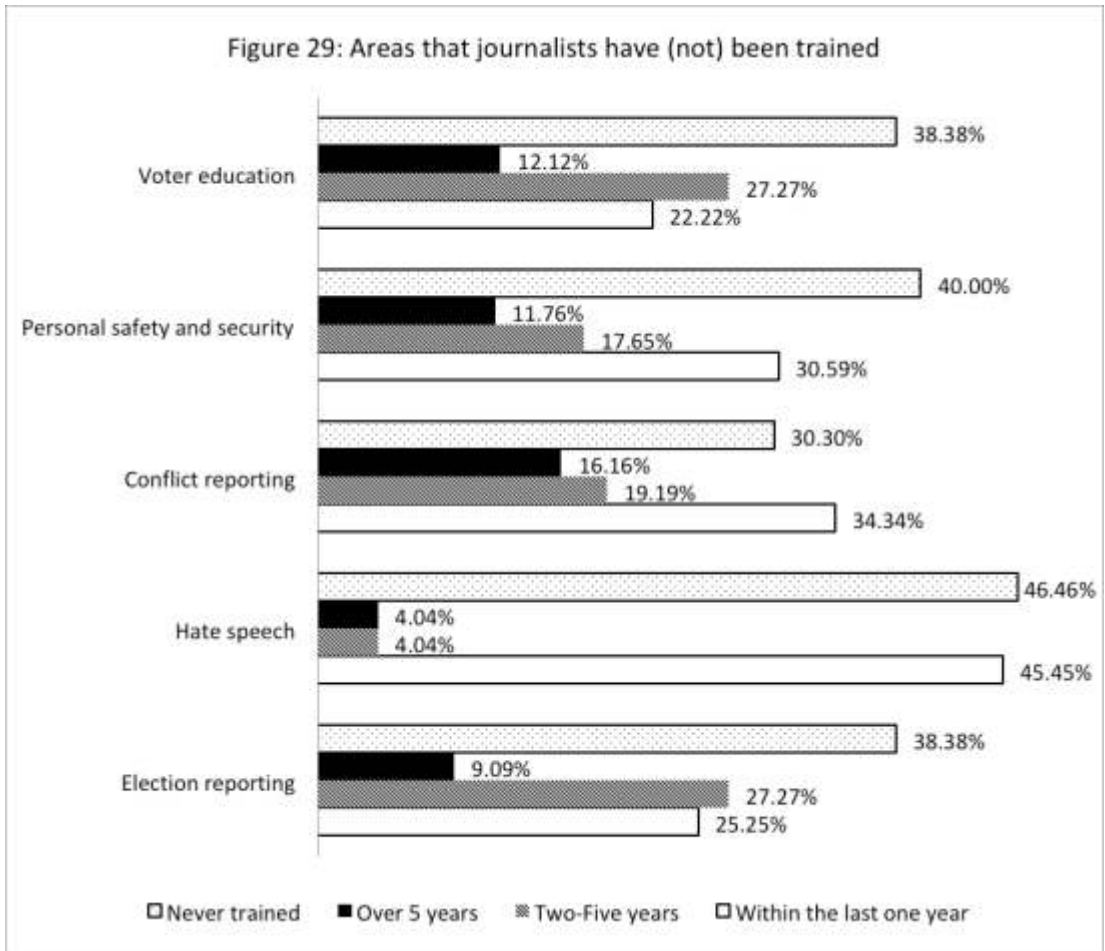


As it is for radio, so also for it is television. Only 51% of the respondents believe that voter education programmes and jingles on television are of practical use and about 33% could not say. This shows that about half of the respondents would need to be convinced on the usefulness of voter education releases on television.

#### **4. Areas of need for better equipping broadcast media workers to perform their role in the 2019 elections.**

The findings reported in the previous sections reveal that there are loose ends that need to be tied in order to get the media ready for the 2019 general elections. One area of need is filling the skill gaps that may incapacitate journalists and media stations from meeting professional expectations and regulatory conditions on election reporting. As Figure 29 shows, the most glaring area of need for training

is in detecting and avoiding hate speeches. Most journalists, the report shows, have not received any training on this burning subject.



### On election reporting

The competence level of the surveyed journalists in reporting election is doubtful, as 75% of them have not received any training about how to report in the last one year. In fact, 38% of them stated that they never received any training on election reporting. Only a quarter of them claimed to have received such training in the last one year.

The information provided by the journalists reveals that majority of them might not have the relevant skills required for election reporting. A similar situation was reported when the journalists were asked about the trainings they have received

on conflict reporting.

On conflict reporting:

Within the last one year, only 36% of the journalists indicated that they received training on conflict reporting. However, a little less than one third of them (30%) have never been trained on how to report conflict. With election being a potential source of conflict, the journalists who is not trained on conflict reporting cannot be said to be prepared to report elections in ways that do not escalate election-related violence. A little difference is observed, however, in the percentage of journalists that have received training on how to handle the issue of hate speech.

On hate speech:

With 45% of the surveyed journalists indicating that in the last one year they had received training on how to address the problem of hate speech, it is evident that the issue has been attracting attention lately. This is understandable with the rise in the problem of hate speech in the country. The reach of the training needs to be extended to all journalists, especially those who will be reporting the 2019 general elections because a whopping 47% said they had never been trained on how to spot and avoid hate speech.

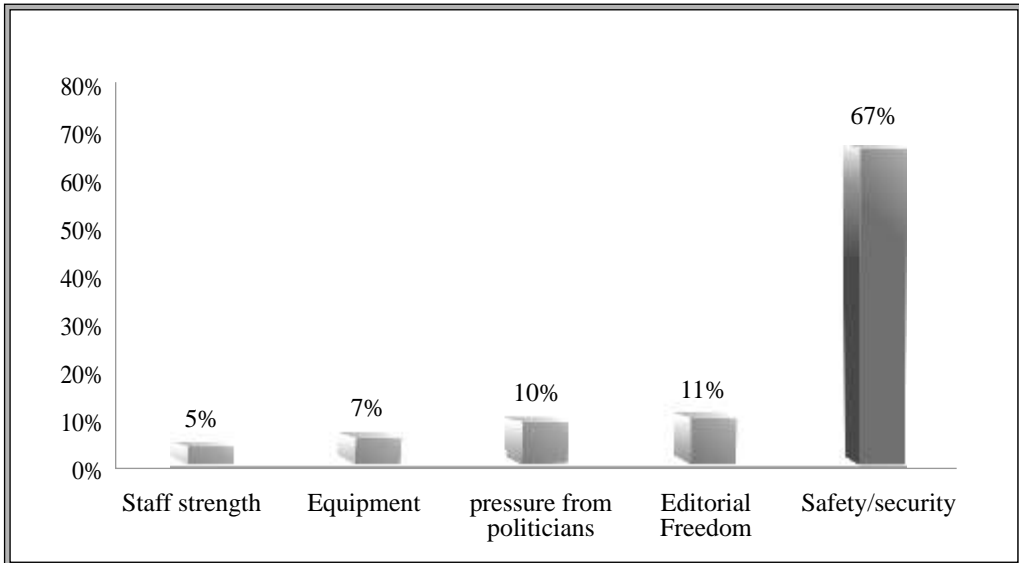
On personal security:

Since the nature of journalism often put reporters in a risk of being attacked, journalists have a high need of safety and security skills. The election context makes the need more important, since elections are potential sources of conflict which may get violent if not well managed. Despite that personal safety and security are important issues for journalists during election reporting, 34% of them indicated that they have never been trained on the issue. Only 26% of them indicated that they received such training within the last one year. This also creates a need to which concerned stakeholders must respond to provide a favourable atmosphere for the journalists who will participate in reporting the 2019 general elections.

The foregoing information is corroborated by responses given by the journalists when asked to indicate their major source of worries as they thought of their role

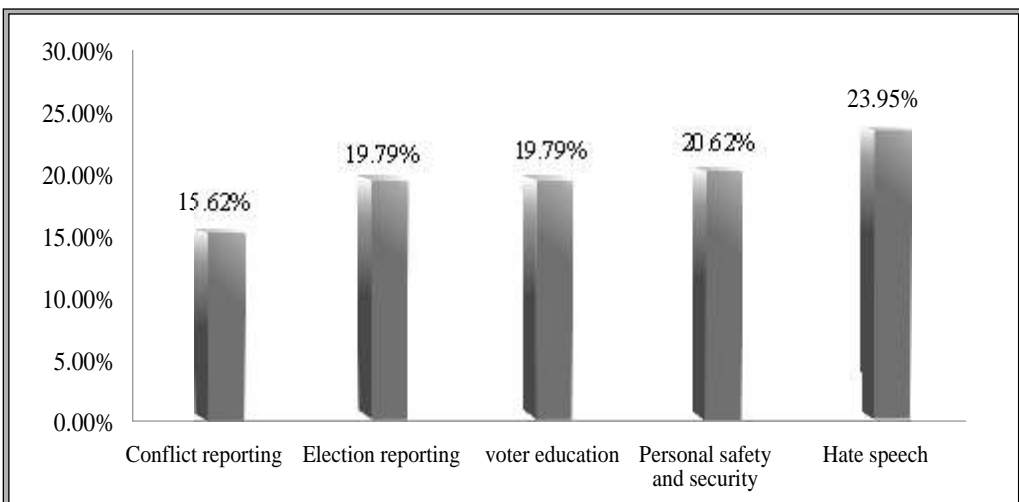
in the coming elections. For the great majority, security of the journalist was a major concern.

Fig.30: Journalists' greatest source of worry with reference to covering 2019 elections



The journalists were then asked to indicate the training they considered a priority need for them to be able to report the upcoming 2019 general elections professionally. Their responses are presented in the next chart.

Fig.31: Most urgent area of training need





In the journalists' responses, only marginal differences exist in the priority they placed on each of the training needs. Those who said they need trainings on hate speech are the highest at 23.95% while those who indicated that they need training on conflict reporting are the least at 15.62%. Those who needed to be trained on election reporting and those who need to be trained specifically on what constitutes voter education are 19.79% for each. Personal safety and security training is the priority need of 20.62% of the surveyed journalists. The responses suggest that all the trainings are equally important to get the journalists ready to report the upcoming 2019 general elections.

Training on hate speech was emphasized by Femi Mapaderun of Impact Business Radio who reiterates what his station has started doing on this. He said that before newscasters read news about elections, they are expected to be in the newsroom thirty minutes before the newscast to be part of the news production. To him, one of the things the station is working on now is to give staff training on political reporting and newscasts during elections. He observed that on election reporting, “The same thing applies to our reporters and we started the training for our reporters two weeks ago on political reporting. And when you do political reporting, you expose them to the different sides, the pros and the cons. And one of the challenges we gave them is that if in any situation you find out that it is becoming too difficult for you to cover, or the atmosphere is tensed or charged, please withdraw.”

In addition, the general opinion about the 2015 general elections is that hate speech was not seriously controlled by the media houses. Mrs. Ify Omowole of NAWOJ believes “that in the build up to 2019, we would now be able to reduce and change our language because what I know is that the language and perception of people who most of the time comes from the media is what drives the tension in elections.” As a result, trainings for journalists on elections must prioritise the place of the language of peace in reporting. Furthermore, the President of NAWOJ harped as well on a special training for female journalists because of their vulnerabilities during crises. She stated that “female journalists should be equipped to have safety skills and be able to sense that violence is about to erupt...” She is of the opinion that in case of such a situation, women journalists are supposed to be trained on what to do to avoid falling victim.

## Equipment needs

Equipment for election coverage feature prominently also on the list of needs media stations highlighted for accurate and standard coverage of the 2019 elections. Mr Femi Mapaderun of Impact Business Radio, Ibadan, observed that the station does not have some of the equipment it needs to properly cover the election. He says,

We have salaries to pay, we have diesel to buy, we have other things to do, we have equipment to buy and maintain. If you have been using equipment for two years, certainly, you must be thinking of maintaining or replacing. And don't forget these are digital equipment; the one you use in January might be outmoded in July.

The Manager of Programmes Department at Premier FM, Ibadan, Ms. Toyin Balogun also observes equipment will be needed by the station to prepare for and adequately cover the forthcoming elections.

Furthermore, some media professionals envisaged a big security issue in the coverage of the general elections of 2019. The fear of insecurity centres on the persisting security problem in the Northern Nigeria. Because of the insurgency in the North East and the herdsmen-farmers clashes in some parts of the country, media professionals doubt if states like Adamawa, Taraba, Niger and Benue would be safe. These media experts think that if government is not proactive enough to do things that will make the place safe and secure, people may not even bother to vote. The Manager of Programmes Department at Premier FM, Ibadan, Ms. Toyin Balogun also emphasized the need for security but “not the security that will not listen to what people are saying”. However, she stated that the security that will be provided should be such that is committed to respecting and protecting the rights of those they are assigned to protect.

## Manpower and logistics needs

Concerns about manpower were also raised during the interviews conducted for the purpose of this report. Most of the media houses would need more staff to be able to successfully cover the 2019 general elections. The situation is the same with the regulators as Mr. Femi Ayeni, Head of Investigations and Enforcement of the NBC stated that the agency “never had enough staff strength”. He stated

that his team consists of only 16 people who worked as if they were a hundred. The manpower needs must be met in preparation for the upcoming elections.

In addition, most of the interviewees spoke on logistics as a big need of the stations for improved coverage of the 2019 general elections different from what happened in 2015. Mr. Femi Mapaderun sees it as the only problem or challenge the station may have in 2019. To him, logistics is “in that we want to go to the interior places and other areas far beyond. We want to go beyond the South West. That's why we are saying we want to bring on board people that will be doing Hausa programmes as well as Pidgin. Because we identify that those people are about being cut-off in this particular area. So, we want to reach out to them. And when we reach out to them, we want to be able to station correspondents in places like, Edo, Delta, Kaduna and Kano that will feed us with stories from there on daily basis.” They all submit that this will cost a lot of money.

They observe that media organisations in Nigeria today, especially broadcast stations, face a problem of funding. There is fierce competition and it is now about survival of the fittest. This situation, according to the media professionals, is worse as most of these stations transmit with diesel generators. Public electricity is not regular. For example, Impact Business Radio in Ibadan transmits 18 hours a day, and out of these 18 hours, not less than 14 hours is on generator, and “you know that costs money. So, if you must recoup your investment, that means you must have an aggressive marketing drive; and we are in the same market with other stations”, according to Mr Femi Mapaderun.

## **5. Early warning signs of tension or failure with reference to the role of the media in the approaching 2019 elections.**

Electoral violence and all forms of electoral malpractice are typically not a sudden outburst of savagery or fraud. Rather they are the explosions of pent up tension, and carefully planned rigging. All forms of media unprofessionalism with reference to election coverage are also a process, rather than an event. What is comforting therefore is that these could be foreseen and possibly prevented if attention is given to the early warning signs. The general elections come up in about twelve months. What, therefore, are the early warning signs that justify the blowing of a shofar? In this section we discuss six visible early warning signs

(EWS) that are connected with the role of the broadcast media in the approaching elections.

EWS 1: Journalists without a training on election coverage and conflict reporting: Election coverage is a specialised area of journalism that requires special training for journalists. It is an area of reporting where the biases of a journalist can be easily betrayed. To remain credible arbiters, journalists covering elections need to be trained in the art. As this report shows, about 40% of the journalists who will be reporting the 2019 elections have not been trained at all. It is not difficult to imagine what the performance of such journalists would be in reporting the elections.

EWS 2: Journalists without a training on hate speech: The 2015 general elections were characterised by the uncontrolled instances of hate speech broadcast on both radio and television across the nation as well as on social media. In fact, the whole electoral atmosphere was fouled up by hate speech from all the contesting parties. They came in the forms of news, documentaries and special features. As the nation began to recover from this invasion after the elections, professional bodies and civil society organisations organised training for journalists and others on hate speech. One of such trainings was organised by the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) according to its General Secretary. However, the training has not been widespread. Only 47% of the journalists involved in this study have been trained on hate speech. What guarantee is there to suggest that the untrained journalists will eschew hate speech in the 2019 elections? It is hard, therefore, to imagine that hate speech broadcast would be less prevalent in the coming elections unless an urgent measure is taken to train journalists on this issue.

EWS 3: Journalists worried about their security: For most (67%) of the journalists, the greatest source of worry for the 2019 elections was their personal security and safety. This is understandably so given the history of violence against journalists on electoral duty in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Most journalists are not trained on basic security and safety precautions; they do not have any life insurance cover, and do not have any security officials attached to them when they are on election duty. Fear of harm, real or imagined, is therefore palpable for the journalist making many of them to dread and even abandon election duties. Where journalists suspect danger, they withdraw. And where

journalists withdraw, the chances of electoral malpractice and violence increase. Training journalists on security and danger assessment and response strategies would be a way to contribute to enhancing their role in the coming elections.

EWS 4: Citizens who depend on private stations: When asked to specify their preferred source of electoral information and education, most of the audiences (26%) specified that they preferred private radio stations. This is followed by private television stations (20%). Government-owned radio stations and television states rank lower – 18% and 10% respectively. Responses to open-ended questions showed that majority felt private broadcast stations were more objective in their election reporting and education than government stations. A respondent said this of government broadcast stations:

The government-owned media station broadcast only what the government of the day approves. In most cases such broadcast [sic] are not the truth of the situation.

Mr Segun Olaleye, Executive Secretary of Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON) stated that it should not be surprising that government-owned stations are biased in favour of the government in power. This, according to him, is because even the very piece of legislation establishing them stated that the stations are created to support government. Interestingly, in his view, many journalists do not know the difference between supporting government and supporting an administration.

On the contrary, another respondent said this of private broadcast stations:

That station, as far as I say, is objective in its reportage and wants the best for Nigerians. It is not partisan nor does it defend the government or any of its agents. So they can be trusted to say the truth in any situation, especially when it comes to voter education.

If government-owned broadcast stations are so distrusted, and the majority prefer private broadcast stations for electoral information, what are the implications of this for the role of the broadcast media in the 2019 elections? There are many negative implications. One, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) works more often with government stations than they do with private stations in disseminating electoral information and enlightenment. This suggests

that a major part of the electorate is unreachable by these efforts of INEC. Two, private stations are owned by individuals some of whom are also politicians and businessmen or businesswomen. As such no one can overrule the partiality of these stations when it comes to the dissemination of electoral information and education. In fact, pressure of station owners was one of the reasons given by journalists for their unprofessional practice in election reporting in 2015. Three, in many multi-ethnic and multicultural states in Nigeria, most private stations broadcast in the English language and sometimes the Nigerian Pidgin. The only stations that broadcast in the native languages are government-owned broadcast stations. If these are so totally distrusted, it means that listeners would not be persuaded by what is broadcast to them by the stations.

EWS 5: Delayed voter education: According to Mr Malcolm Oteri of the Delta State Broadcasting Services, voter education is expected to be a partnership between INEC and broadcast stations. In his station, as well indeed as in all the stations involved in the study, voter education was little or totally absent even though the elections were about twelve months away. As indicated by 49% of the journalists, there was no voter education going on in their stations currently. In fact, only 33% of the respondents said that they ever received sufficient voter education on radio – and 32% on television. This suggests that even in the past, voter education had been barely sufficient. The implications of having uneducated or ill-educated voters in an election are glaringly negative. Registering as a voter, knowing when, where and how to vote, proper conduct at polling stations and knowing when and where to obtain election results all depend on the kind of education given to voters – and the broadcast media should be at the forefront of the efforts to provide this education.

EWS 6: Social media: an unregulated source of information: Although most respondents claimed that their source of electoral information and education was the radio and television, a good portion (18%) would turn to online platforms that uploads videos and images (Figure 14). This number cannot be totally discountenanced. The emergence of social media as a major source of information about election is a source of concern regarding the credibility of the electoral information that the citizens will access on such sites. The reason is that, social media are unregulated platforms of sharing information. Social media have

become tools being used to mobilise hatred against sections of the country. Broadcast media must strive to win back the trust which the audience have lost in them as sources of authentic and verified electoral information. They also must become active on social media and use the platforms to reach the section of the society that has turned to social media as preferred source of electoral information. By so doing, they will be able to leverage the strengths of social media to make authentic electoral information available to the populace.

There are many more early warning signs of the difficulties that lie ahead for Nigeria with reference to the 2019 elections. The ones highlighted above are those relevant to the theme of this study and have been brought into bold relief by the findings of these studies. Other signs of trouble such as increasing desperation of politicians and the political class, nationwide insecurity and violence (especially but not only the insurgency in the North East and the other forms of violence across the country), poverty and unemployment are potent signs that beckon for urgent attention.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In concluding this report, we return to the driving question: are the broadcast media ready for the 2019 elections? And are they engaging electoral issues at this moment? The answers to these questions are glaring from the findings of the study: the broadcast media are not ready for the 2019 elections. There are hurdles of training, professional freedom, safety concerns, delayed voter education among others that are still to be crossed. As to whether or not they are engaging electoral issues at the moment, one would say there is engagement but it is minimal.

The broadcast media still remain the major source of electoral information and education for the majority of Nigerians in spite of the widespread use of social media. It is, therefore, important to strengthen the broadcast sector to perform its crucial role in the electoral process. First, donor agencies and civil society groups should embark on widespread training of journalists on the crucial areas identified above: election reporting, hate speech, conflict reporting, personal safety and security awareness and strategies. These kinds of training will fill the wide skill-gaps identified in the study.

One of the fundamental flaws in workshops organised for journalists and others in Nigeria is the problem of right recruitment. Many in management positions select and send for training those who please them rather than those who would make the best use of the training. It is, therefore, not unusual to find someone in the accounts department – for instance—being sent to a workshop in health reporting. Unless this is eliminated, lots of workshops would continue to be a waste of resources.

Second, INEC should partner more deliberately with broadcast stations – both private and government-owned to advance the quantity and quality of voter education and other forms of electoral information dissemination. This should start as soon as possible, and should be an on-going practice even after elections.

Third, civil society should begin the advocacy for converting the government-owned stations to real public broadcasters. Government-owned stations lack credibility as of now. If they become real public broadcasters in the model of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) or any comparable model, they would be largely insulated from the control of the executive, a situation that erodes their credibility. This is a long process and will take years of advocacy possibly and require the amendment of their various establishment laws. It is, nonetheless, worth it as it would return independence to the stations.

In addition to these, broadcast stations must increase their online presence. Many stations in Nigeria are online already but most of them are streaming platforms only; they lack online interaction with the audience. There is need for the stations to make use of online platforms to engage the audience interactively.

There is need to establish a kind of peer-review mechanism among private station owners, a kind of organisation of media owners which can exert some level of pressure on media proprietors in areas of journalists professional freedom and elbowroom. Where a media station owner is seen to be treating his or workers unfairly or appears to be pressurising them to take biased unprofessional stands, such an organisation can intervene and fellow media owners can exert informal pressure on the station owner and make him or her relax his or hold on the media workers.

INEC, NBC and civil society organisations should work together to reward best



practices in electoral education and electoral reporting. The awards should cover different aspects of electoral broadcasting starting from voter education to announcement of results and should be in different categories – for journalists and for stations. This would serve as motivation for stations as well as journalists to devote more time and resources to balanced and ethical electoral reporting.

Finally, the Federal Government should equip the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to monitor and detect erring stations more effectively than it is currently able to do. There is shortage of modern monitoring equipment and manpower in the NBC national and zonal offices. It should also grant the NBC sufficient elbow room to perform its statutory duties.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I: Audience respondents questionnaire

#### Media Readiness for and Engagement of Issues Concerning the 2019 General Elections Media Audiences

Dear Sir/Ma,

I am conducting a study of the state of the broadcast media in Nigeria with reference to the coming 2019 elections. This short questionnaire is for Nigerian citizens. I would be glad for your candid response.

Thank you.

A. Ojebode  
University of Ibadan

1. What is your major source of information on election – information such as where to register, where to vote, existing political parties etc?

Newspapers

Radio

Television

Social Media

Face-to-face communication

Others

2. How would you describe the quantity of voter education you receive on radio stations?

Very sufficient

Insufficient

Can't say

3. How would you describe the quantity of voter education you receive on television?

Very sufficient

Insufficient

Can't say

4. Would you say the voter education you receive on radio is of practical use?

Practical use/useful

Not of practical use/not useful  
Can't say

5. Would you say the voter education you receive on television is of practical use?

Practical use/useful

Not of practical use/not useful

Can't say

6. Would you say the information you receive about elections on radio is clear and easy to understand?

Clear/easy to understand

Not clear/not easy to understand

Can't say

7. Would you say the information you receive about elections on television is clear and easy to understand?

Clear/easy to understand

Not clear/not easy to understand

Can't say

8. Do you receive information about election (voter education) from radio at the right time?

Yes

No

Can't say

9. Do you receive information about election (voter education) from television at the right time?

Yes

No

Can't say

10. Do you trust/believe what the radio stations tell you about elections (voter education)?

Yes

No

Can't say

11. Do you trust/believe what the television stations tell you about elections (voter education)?

Yes  
No  
Can't say

12. When you want voter education or information about elections, which station would you turn to?

Government Radio station

Government TV station

Private radio station

Private television station

Online media which uploads video/audio

None of the above

13. Why would you turn to that particular station and not another station?

14. Do you have a permanent voter's card (PVC)?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

15. If you have a voter's card, how did you know where to get it?

16. If you don't have a voter's card, why don't you have?

If you don't have a voter's card, do you intend to go and get it?: Yes [ ] No [ ]

17. Your age:

18. Your sex:

19. Highest educational attainment:

20. In which state do you live:

21. Employment/Job:

22. Are you a registered member of any political party? Yes [ ] N [ ]

## Appendix II: Journalists' Questionnaire

### Media Readiness for and Engagement of Issues Concerning the 2019 General Elections

#### Media Professionals

Dear Sir/Ma,

I am conducting a study of the state of the broadcast media in Nigeria with reference to the coming 2019 elections. This short questionnaire is for media professionals. I would be glad for your candid response.

Thank you.

A. Ojebode  
University of Ibadan

1. In which of these media do you work? [a] Government Radio station [b] Government TV station [c] Private radio station [d] Private television station [e] Online media which uploads video/audio; [f] Others, specify: \_\_\_\_\_
2. For how long have you worked for the media? [a] Less than a year [b] 1-5 years [c] 6-10 years [d] Over 10 years
3. How would you assess the performance of your media organization in reporting the 2015 general elections?  
[a] Highly professional [b] Moderately professional [c] Fairly professional [d] Unprofessional
4. Would you say your station's coverage of the election was fair, balanced and objective? [a] Yes [b] No [c] Can't say
5. Would you say you engaged in enough voter education? [a] Yes [b] No [c] Can't say
6. If your station was not professional enough in its coverage of the elections, what do you think was responsible for this? [You can choose more than one].  
[a] Pressure from the owners of the station [b] Pressure from politicians/contestants  
[c] Lack of needed equipment to do the reporting [d] Inadequate staffing  
[e] Poor training of staff for election coverage [f] Poorly motivated staff  
[g] Fear of harm/danger by reporters  
[i] Others, specify:
7. Looking forward to the 2019 elections, how would you describe the state of affairs in your media organization? [a] Fully ready for the elections [b] Fairly

ready for the elections [c] Not ready for the elections.

8. Would you say there is sufficient preparation for the elections going on in your station now? [a] Yes [b] No [c] Can't say
9. When you think of the state of affairs in your station right now and the coming elections, how satisfied are you about:

1.	Equipment for election coverage	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied
2.	IT facilities for election coverage	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied
3.	Staffing (no of staff)	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied
4.	Staff training for election coverage	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied
5.	Staff job satisfaction	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied
6.	Staff security arrangement while on their beat	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied
7.	Editorial freedom/independence	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied

10. When last did you receive any training on any of the following issues?

1.	Election reporting	Within the last one year	2-5 years ago	over 5 years ago	No formal training on it
2.	Hate speech	Within the last one year	2-5 years ago	over 5 years ago	No formal training on it
3.	Conflict reporting	Within the last one year	2-5 years ago	over 5 years ago	No formal training on it
4.	Personal safety and security	Within the last one year	2-5 years ago	over 5 years ago	No formal training on it
5.	Voter education	Within the last one year	2-5 years ago	over 5 years ago	No formal training on it



1. What is your major worry/concern when you think of your role in covering the 2019 elections?

.....  
.....

2. What would you as a journalist require to enable you to cover/report the elections properly?

.....  
.....

3. What would your station need to enable it cover the elections properly?

.....  
.....

4. Are there any voter education efforts/programmes/jingles in your station going on right now? [a] Yes [b] No [c] Can't say

5. If yes, briefly describe the efforts:

.....  
.....

6. Personal details:

Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]

In which state is your station located:

Designation/rank at work:

**IMS Head Office:**

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