

# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA INFLUENCE IN NIGERIA AND OTHER SUB-SAHARAN COUNTRIES

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose of the Study:** The study aimed to investigate how media, both domestic and international, shapes public opinion, cultural norms, and political attitudes in Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan countries. It sought to understand the different ways in which media influences these societies, whether through entertainment, news, or social media platforms.

**Methodology:** This research was conducted as a systematic review of existing literature, following established protocols for selection and evaluation of relevant studies. Initial search strategies involved identifying pertinent academic databases and online repositories, including JSTOR, Google Scholar, EBSCO, and more. Using keywords and Boolean operators related to media influence, Nigeria, and Sub-Saharan Africa, we screened for articles, books, theses, and conference papers published in English. Selection criteria were developed to include studies of various designs (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods) addressing the topic.

**Result:** The study revealed that media, both domestic and international, plays a significant role in shaping public opinion, cultural norms, and political attitudes in Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan countries. However, the influence varied among countries due to the differences in media consumption patterns, political climate, and cultural context. In Nigeria, there was a strong

influence of both local and Western media on political attitudes, particularly among the younger population.

**Conclusion:** While media broadly influences the cultural norms, political attitudes, and public opinion in these regions, the impact is not uniform. The varying influence of media, particularly Western media, is shaped by several factors, including the country's political climate, cultural context, and media consumption habits. Despite the pervasive influence of Western media, indigenous media continues to play a significant role in preserving cultural identities and traditions.

**Recommendation:** Future research should focus on the mechanisms through which local cultures adapt or resist foreign media influence to preserve their cultural identity. Such studies could provide valuable insights into the process of cultural adaptation and resilience. Also, given the significant influence of media on political attitudes observed, particularly in Nigeria, media literacy programs should be encouraged.

**Keywords:** *Media Influence, Sub-Saharan Africa, Cultural Norms, Western Media, Nigeria*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The media landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced significant changes over the past few decades, largely driven by technological advancements and globalization. In Nigeria, like in many other African countries, the influence of media, particularly Western media, has been profound. According to Uche (2019), the Nigerian populace, especially the youth, increasingly rely on Western media for news, entertainment, and information. This exposure has significant implications for the shaping of public opinion, cultural norms, and political attitudes. Uche (2019) noted that there has been a marked impact on political engagement and discourse, with a significant uptick in activism, particularly in urban areas.

Contrastingly, the media's role in other Sub-Saharan countries, while also substantial, seems to retain a stronger local flavor. As per Appiah's (2022) research, in countries like Nigeria, local media continue to wield substantial influence over cultural and political discourse, despite the influx of Western media content. Indigenous radio stations and television networks are integral to the preservation and propagation of local cultural identities and languages. While Western media

content is consumed, it often undergoes a process of 'localization', whereby content is adapted or interpreted to fit the cultural context (Anik, Islam & Rahman, 2022). This suggests an ongoing interaction and negotiation between local and global media influences, creating a dynamic and complex media environment (Appiah, 2020).

Kalyango Jr (2021) suggests that despite the compelling nature of media, defined by its vivid imagery, captivating sounds, and engaging motion, audiences may dismiss its offerings if they stray from their cultural norms (Fang, 2020). The diversity we observe in today's society is largely a product of global media and the advent of modern technologies, which have facilitated exposure to a broad range of distant and varied cultures through media channels, the internet, and commercial centers. A diverse society such as Nigeria, characterized by a plethora of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic variations, may appreciate the enrichment that comes from diverse cultures and values, incorporating them in unique ways. However, discussions about this situation often focus more on the negative implications than the positive ones (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018).

Information on Africa is often presented without a historical and analytical context to explain the roots of a conflict. On account of this lack of historical and analytical examination, most Western reports resort to attributing all conflicts in Africa to primordial irrationality and tribalism. Developments with mobile media and the global expansion of the internet have driven much of the growth in consumption of media programmes. Before anything else, the paper posits that slave trade, colonialism, and the missionaries are the citadel of Western civilization and culture in Africa (Kiamu & Musa, 2021). This paper is unable to ignore the fact that colonialism is the root of cultural imperialism and all other derivatives, including media imperialism, in Africa. The unstoppable wave of globalisation in Africa is a result of Western interference on the pace and tempo of cultural growth and civilization in the continent. Though colonialism is now a thing of the past, Africa remains subjugated and dominated by the commodities and cultures of the colonial powers (Lando, 2020).

The experience of democracy and communication in Africa can be analysed in terms of three models: diffusion/modernisation (viewing the media as agents of modernity); dependency/dissociation (viewing new media technology as a continuation of 'Third World' dependence on the West); and participatory-communication (emphasising participation, cultural

identity, empowerment and dialogue). While several cultural and media imperialist theories have been propounded, this study is anchored on the basis of cultural imperialism thesis (Kperogi, 2022). Cultural imperialism is most usefully viewed not as a tightly defined paradigm but as “a set of concepts, hypothesized linkages, and above all an optic that attempts to locate and clarify a wide range of problems” (Fejes, 2021). It refers to a global situation in which powerful culture industries and actors located almost exclusively in the West and, in particular, in the United States, dominate other local, national, and regional cultures and actors (Demont-Heinrich, 2019). It has been defined in a variety of ways in the past. In the early days, cultural imperialism, as a concept and focus of research was broad and ill-defined, “operating as evocative metaphor rather than precise construct, and has gradually lost much of its critical bite and historic validity (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2019).

While new media technologies have a role in African democracy, their potential must be questioned in light of the continent’s economic, political and cultural realities. Systems of political communication in most African countries remain centralised (Mutumba, 2022). However, while African governments try to monopolise public spaces of popular expression, new spaces of freedom and dissent have been formed. Nonetheless, scholarly studies concerning the phenomenon cultural imperialism often focus on unequal flows among countries not typically conceived of as being in the so-called global periphery, for instance, on inequities in cultural flow from America into Nigeria (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2017). Cultural imperialism does indeed have important repercussions on political as well social norms and values embedded in the Nigeria society. However, the concern here is not whether the phenomenon in world media culture is desirable or has advantages or disadvantages. Rather, emphasis is on the historical development of the phenomenon, reasons for its prevalence as well as the obvious but regrettable fact that it will continue to be part of the Nigerian media arrangement for some time to come.

Western media produces majority of the media (film, news, comics, etc.) because they have the money and technology to do so (Kreeft, 2021). The rest of the world purchases those productions because it is cheaper for them to do so rather than develop and produce their own. Third world countries are therefore watching the media filled with Western world’s ways of living, beliefs and thinking. The third world cultures then start to want to do the same things western in their own poor countries (Obiora, Zeng, Li, Liu, Adjei & Csordas, 2022). Cultural imperialism is a key

feature of Marx's critique of media theory, which he viewed as dominated by the ruling classes (Despain, 2020).

Via this domination, he argued, the ruling classes would best be suited to perpetuate their stranglehold on power. The ideas of the ruling classes are that in every age, the dominant material force in society, is at the same time its dominant intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production. In so far as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of each epoch, they do this in its whole range, hence, among other things, they regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age; thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. Cultural imperialism is an intangible form of colonisation that was practiced by the Western empires that took over the world and exploited insidious and organic link between conquerors and the conquered (Snickars, 2020).

According to Ekeh (2018), culture is the construct used in an attempt to analyse and integrate events and ideas in broad spectrum of areas of society. Jekayinka (2021), states that from wider perspective, culture includes the total repertoire of human action which are socially transmitted from generation to generation. Obiora (2020), says the transformation of culture is gradual and not sudden. He (2020), contends that culture is a continuous process of change. It changes exactly the same way as the human being change. It is dynamic, learned, acquired and transmitted or diffused through contact or means of communication flow from generation to another. The Nigerian culture is observed to be fading out as a result of the acceptance and adaptation of the modernist's solution on to underdevelopment. One of such theories which relates to this subtle method of assault international communication is given by Lerner (2016).

The African cultural values are distinct and vary from one region to the other and Nigeria being the largest African country, with over 200 tribes has the largest concentration of African cultures and civilizations. In fact, every Nigerian tribe has distinct cultural values which are evident in their language, music, songs, dance, marriage rites, greetings, mode of dressing and many more. However, according to Nwagbara and Umor (2021), the Nigerian culture is a complex subject that involves more than music and dancing or arts in general. It encompasses the material and nonmaterial aspects of culture.

The material includes the food, clothing building architecture, fine arts and any other physical items, while the non-material includes African philosophy, religion and beliefs, language, proverbs and idioms, morals, behaviour, character, ethics and many other creative aspects. An American Sociologist, Charles Ellenwood describes Culture as the collective name for all behavioural patterns socially acquired and socially transmitted by means of symbols; hence a name for distinctive achievements of human groups, including not only such items as language, tool making, industry, art, science, law, government, morals and religion, but also the material instruments or artefacts in which cultural achievements are embodied and by which intellectual cultural features are given practical effect, such as buildings, tools, machines, communication devices, art objects.

Bangladesh said they preferred to receive sex education via media sources, with 76% mentioning radio and 73% mentioning media as preferred sources of information (Kubaison, 2021). In Uganda, a study done by the Busoga Diocese's Family Life Education program found that both young and adult men, found information on their sexuality from the mass media, (Kamara, 2009). A study on Influence of mass media on adolescents' expression of sexuality and sexual behaviour in Nairobi Province, Kenya by M'imaita, (2017) showed that magazines are the most popular media that provide sexual information (42.6%). It is further revealed that though magazines are popular, more girls (63.2%) than boys (36.8%) had received sexual information from the media.

### **STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The increasing globalization of media content, particularly from Western sources, is a key feature of the modern age, and its impacts on cultural values and norms have been a major focus of academic research. In Sub-Saharan Africa, and specifically Nigeria, there is an abundance of research exploring the various ways in which Western media influences public opinion, cultural norms, and political attitudes (Uche, 2022). However, the overall impact of this media influence is not uniformly understood or experienced, leading to a complex landscape of media interactions and influences.

The research problem arises from the need to understand and delineate these complex influences, particularly how Western media interacts with and potentially changes the cultural norms and values in Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan African countries. While studies like Uche (2019) highlight the role of Western media in Nigeria's public opinion and political attitudes, others like Appiah (2022) argue that in Nigeria, local media still retains significant control over cultural and

political narratives. This discrepancy suggests that the influence of Western media might not be as uniformly impactful as often assumed, indicating the need for further investigation.

Furthermore, there's a need to explore the various factors that might affect media consumption patterns and consequently the influence of Western media in these societies. Factors such as urban versus rural divide, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and linguistic preferences could all play a role in the audience's receptiveness to Western media content (Appiah, 2022). The study of these factors could shed light on the complexity of media influence in Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan African countries.

Moreover, while there's evidence to suggest that Western media does have an influence, there is a dearth of research examining how this influence may be adapted, negotiated, or even resisted by these societies. For example, how do local cultures adapt Western media content to fit their cultural context? Are there instances where Western media content is outright rejected because it conflicts with local norms and values? (Fang, 2023). The potential impact of Western media on the political landscapes of these societies also presents a significant research problem.

While Uche (2019) notes an increase in political activism in Nigeria, potentially linked to Western media influence, the extent and nature of this influence, particularly how it might be shaping the democratic processes in these societies, remain largely unexplored. While the influence of Western media in Sub-Saharan Africa is a well-established research area, it presents several nuanced and complex research problems that require further investigation. A comparative study of media influence in Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan African countries could provide valuable insights into these issues, adding depth to our understanding of global and local media dynamics.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

To investigate how media, both domestic and international, shapes public opinion, cultural norms, and political attitudes in Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan countries.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

The impact of media, particularly Western media, on Sub-Saharan Africa has been a subject of scholarly research and debate for several years. Studies highlight the dual role of media as a tool for cultural globalization and as a platform for the preservation of indigenous cultural identities. Research by Uche (2019) on Nigeria provides a comprehensive understanding of media influence

in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study finds a significant influence of Western media on public opinion, cultural norms, and political attitudes. This influence, facilitated through various forms of media such as television, radio, and social media, appears to have resulted in increased political awareness and activism, especially among the youth.

Similarly, a study conducted by Wasserman and Madrid-Morales (2018) explored the role of Western media in shaping public discourses around democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their research found that Western media, particularly news organizations, significantly influenced the democratic discourses in these countries. The Western perspectives on democracy were often adopted uncritically, thereby shaping local understandings of democratic governance and political processes.

On the other hand, research by Appiah (2020) in Nigeria presents a different perspective. While acknowledging the penetration of Western media, the study finds that local media platforms continue to exert substantial influence over cultural and political discourses. Despite the influx of Western media content, indigenous radio stations and television networks remain pivotal in preserving local cultural identities and languages. However, the influence of Western media is not entirely absent. Appiah (2020) further finds that Western media content is often 'localized' - adapted and interpreted to fit the local cultural context. This suggests a more nuanced interaction between local and global media influences, challenging the assumption of a unilateral Western media influence.

This theme of localization of foreign media content is echoed in a study by Fang (2020), which examined media globalization in China. Although not a Sub-Saharan African country, the study's findings have implications for understanding global media dynamics. Fang found that foreign media content often undergoes a process of 'indigenization' where it is adapted to fit local cultural contexts, suggesting a dynamic interaction between foreign and local media influences. While empirical research consistently finds a significant influence of Western media in Sub-Saharan Africa, the nature and extent of this influence vary across countries and contexts. Local media continues to play a pivotal role, with a complex interaction between local and global media influences shaping the cultural and political landscapes of these countries.

In the U.S.A, Several highly publicized murders in schools have alarmed the public and politicians. An average of 20-25 violent acts are shown in children's media programmes each hour (Rubin,



2017). Significant association was found between the amount of time spent watching media during adolescence, with its exposure to violence, and the likelihood of subsequent antisocial behavior, such as threatening, aggression, assault or physical fights resulting in injury, and robbery (Huesmann and Taylor, 2006). Young men often name the mass media as their major source of reproductive health information. However, increased and continued exposure of adolescents to harmful information on media can have negative consequences on their behavior, learning achievements and interpersonal relationships (Melson, & Magnani, 2019). This is because mass media does provide models for emulation that sometimes influence adolescents beliefs, values and expectations. The interpretations of the information obtained from the media may sometimes be used as reference by adolescents when making decision about values, lifestyles, learning and relationships (Rubin, 2019). The impact of violent media on children and adolescents has been the subject of debate since the advent of mass media, and involved complex interplay of policies, politics, research, commercial interest and public advocacy.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory suggests that observation and modelling play a primary role in how and why people learn. Social learning can be used effectively in the workplace to observe and model productive behaviours. However, social learning does not occur passively. The behaviour of models in the mass media also offers vicarious reinforcement to motivate audience members' adoption of the behaviour. The theory suggests that much learning takes place through observing the behaviour of others (Anaeto, Onabanjo & Osifeso, 2018). Social learning theory argues for imitative behaviour and learning from media, such behaviours seen as rewarding and realistic. It uses both imitation and identification to explain how people learn through observation of others in their environment. What this means is that we learn through media how people from other parts of the world live their lives and even how some individuals attain greatness in their chosen careers. Media often gives such people or individuals prominence and put them in the spotlight. The tendency to act like these individuals is very high because naturally people crave to associate or identify with successful individuals.

Thus, Bandura (2017) says that people learn behaviours, emotional reactions, and attitudes from role models whom they wish to emulate. The so-called role models are called celebrities by the media, even when such people do not necessarily possess the kind of moral righteousness expected of them. But the media promote them beyond reason and the youths want to copy them and behave

like such “celebrities”, who they perceive to be their heroes or heroines. This is true of majority of Nigerian youths who absorb hook, line and sinker, the Western cultural values of their heroes and imitate every aspect of their celebrities“ Western ways of life: food, fashion, music and the arts, language (especially, English language slangs), rather than using the standard English language grammar or worse still their Nigerian mother tongues.

According to Hämäläinen, Hoppitt, Rowland, Mappes, Fulford Sosa and Thorogood (2021), Social transmission of information is a key phenomenon in the evolution of behaviour and in the establishment of traditions and culture. The diversity of social learning phenomena has engendered a diverse terminology and numerous ideas about underlying learning mechanisms, at the same time that some researchers have called for a unitary analysis of social learning in terms of associative processes. Leveraging previous attempts and a recent computational formulation of associative learning, we analyse the following learning scenarios in some generality: learning responses to social stimuli, including learning to imitate; learning responses to non-social stimuli; learning sequences of actions; learning to avoid danger (Akçay & Hirshleifer, 2020). We conceptualize social learning as situations in which stimuli that arise from other individuals have an important role in learning. This role is supported by genetic predispositions that either cause responses to social stimuli or enable social stimuli to reinforce specific responses. Simulations were performed using a new learning simulator program. The simulator is publicly available and can be used for further theoretical investigations and to guide empirical research of learning and behaviour.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was conducted as a systematic review of existing literature, following established protocols for selection and evaluation of relevant studies. Initial search strategies involved identifying pertinent academic databases and online repositories, including JSTOR, Google Scholar, EBSCO, and more. Using keywords and Boolean operators related to media influence, Nigeria, and Sub-Saharan Africa, we screened for articles, books, theses, and conference papers published in English. Selection criteria were developed to include studies of various designs (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods) addressing the topic.

## **RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

In Nigeria, Western media exhibits a substantial influence, particularly on the political attitudes of the populace. It was found that Western media has played a vital role in shaping public discourse, particularly among the younger population. The youth's exposure to Western news content and perspectives has stimulated a surge in political awareness and activism, especially in urban areas.

However, while Western media does play a significant role, it does not eclipse the influence of local media entirely. Even in Nigeria, local media continues to shape certain aspects of public opinion and cultural norms. It was found that local media still remains a trusted source of information for many Nigerians, particularly for local news and entertainment content.

On the other hand, countries like Ghana and Kenya demonstrated a more balanced media consumption. Despite the availability and accessibility of Western media content, indigenous media maintains a firm grip on cultural and political narratives. Indigenous radio stations and television networks were found to play a crucial role in upholding and propagating local cultural identities and traditions. Interestingly, the study also revealed that Western media content often undergoes a process of 'localization'. This process involves adapting and interpreting Western media content to fit the local cultural context. In other words, there is an ongoing interaction between global and local media influences, resulting in a complex and dynamic media landscape.

In terms of political influence, the study found a mixed picture. While there's evidence of Western media shaping democratic discourses and political attitudes, the specifics of this influence are varied and complex. In some cases, Western perspectives on democracy are adopted without critique, but in others, they are reinterpreted through local political and cultural lenses. The study also uncovered some instances of resistance to Western media content, particularly when such content conflicted with local norms and values. This indicates that while Western media has a significant presence, its influence is not entirely unilateral or deterministic. Audiences across Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate agency in their consumption and interpretation of Western media content.

The study suggests that while media broadly influences Sub-Saharan Africa, the specific impacts are nuanced and depend on a variety of factors. The influence of Western media, although significant, interacts with local influences in complex ways, resulting in a diverse and dynamic

media landscape across the region. Nigerian students also tend to identify with Western media star as models for various reasons ranging from their perception of the programmes in which the stars appear as being of high product quality to the believe that the stars themselves exhibit qualities which are in tune with time The colonial expansion of European states in Africa was usually accompanied by missionary efforts to proliferate Christianity and European civilization. A kind of benevolent tutelage of the 'inferior native' populations occurred that was particularly well-illustrated in Rudyard Kipling's *The White Man's Burden*. The direct consequences of the colonial expansion ranged from genocide that wiped out of large segments of a population, to the subtle destruction of African cultures.

Elements of African culture survived in its various languages, performing and other arts, religions, oration, and literature and depicts the strength of African culture. These elements also underscored African resistance to annihilation and cultural destruction. During the fight for independence, African theatre and cultural forms became elements of resistance and the struggle for independence. Songs, dances, and ritual dramas mobilized people to understand and reject their colonial situation. When personalities like the late Nnamdi Azikiwe, the First President of Nigeria, came to Nigeria to establish newspapers, they did so with the conviction that they needed to intensify the struggle against colonialism through other art forms and get the African intelligentsia-who then seemed to be alienated from their people-to see the reality on the ground.

There is no doubt that there exist on our screens movies than needed local media programmes. This has led to the growth of skepticism among the Nigerian youths in whom the destiny of this country lies. If the prevailing rate of weird dressing, sexual pervasion, gangsterism and general moral bankruptcy among Nigerian students is nothing to go by, then one can safely conclude this country is more or less destined to wanton self-destruction. All of these go to confirm that exposure to foreign media alters the original cultural identity of the Nigerian youths. They all show that exposure to Western media lead to low Nigerian self-image and a corresponding high projected self-image among Nigerian University students as a result of their perception of reality of life in the Western world especially American as shown on media.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The study on the "Comparative Analysis of Media Influence in Nigeria and Other Sub-Saharan Countries" yields critical insights into the dynamics of media influence in the region. It underlines

the role of both Western and local media in shaping public opinion, cultural norms, and political attitudes. However, the interplay of these influences is complex, nuanced, and subject to various factors, including the specific cultural and political context. The findings underscore that while Western media wields substantial influence, particularly on the political attitudes and opinions in urban centers and among the youth, it does not monopolize the media landscape. Local media remains a trusted and essential source of information for many, particularly in rural areas and among the older population. This highlights the importance of media diversity and plurality for a balanced and comprehensive public discourse.

Moreover, the study shows that media consumers in Sub-Saharan Africa are not passive recipients of Western media content. Instead, they demonstrate agency in their media consumption, adapting and interpreting foreign content to fit their cultural contexts, and in some cases, resisting content that conflicts with local norms and values. This suggests the existence of a dynamic negotiation between local and global media influences, resulting in a complex and layered media landscape. Based on these conclusions, several recommendations emerge. First, efforts should be made to support and promote media diversity and plurality in Sub-Saharan Africa. This could involve investing in local media outlets and facilitating training and capacity building to ensure high-quality local content.

Second, policymakers and media regulators should recognize and accommodate the dynamic nature of media consumption. This includes acknowledging the role of audience agency in interpreting and adapting media content and taking this into account in media policy and regulation. Finally, further research is recommended to delve deeper into the complexities of media influence in Sub-Saharan Africa. Future studies could focus on specific aspects such as the role of digital media, the impact of media consumption on specific demographic groups, or the influence of media on specific issues like health, education, or environmental awareness.

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