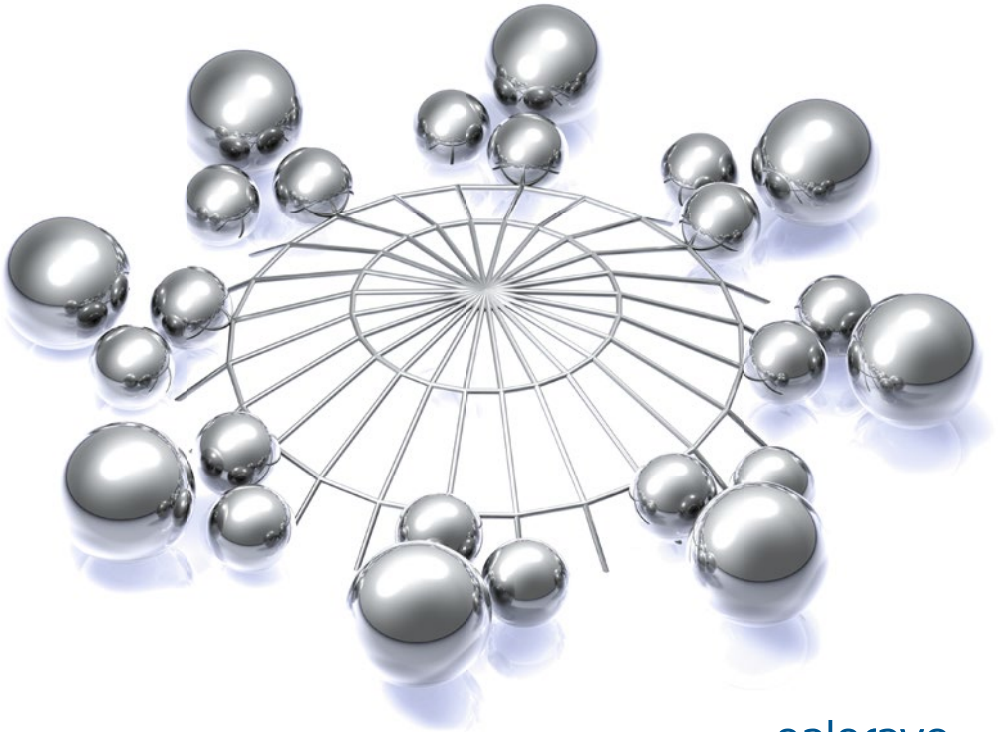




# Media and Communication Theory in Africa

*Edited by* Nelson Okorie  
Babatunde Raphael Ojebuyi · Ngozi Okpara



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## PREFACE

One of the fundamental and sacred procedures in the scientific method of knowing is the application of theories—facts and hypotheses constructed through scientific methods—to explain the natural world and predict the outcome of the relationship between or among various phenomena. Because of their significant role in different aspects of our everyday social life, communication and media have become an increasing object of interest and study in terms of research and theorising (McQuail, 2005) among scholars across the world.

Thinking about the media has produced different theories and models (see Baran & Davis, 2009; McQuail, 2005; Siebert et al., 1956; Watson, 2003) that scholars use to explain the concepts, principles, nature, role, functions and social impact of communication and the media in our complex world. These communication theories have been organised into four major categories: *Post-positivism*, *Hermeneutic Theory*, *Critical Theory*, and *Normative Theory* (Baran & Davis, 2009; Siebert et al., 1956).

In terms of providing platforms for good scholarship and understanding of the dynamics of communication in the social contexts, the four categories of communication theories share similar commitments. However, they differ in some key aspects such as their *goals*, *ontology* (view of the nature reality), *epistemology* (view of creation and expansion of knowledge), *axiology* (view of the proper values in research and theory building) (Baran & Davis, 2009; Miller, 2005).

Because most of the media and communication theories are pro-pounded by western scholars whose axiological perspectives and

epistemological orientations are largely western, when these theories travel to African countries with normatively diverse contexts, there are bound to be significant anti-democratic, conceptual, policy and ideological shifts (Tomaselli, 2009), especially in their application and interpretations by non-western scholars. Consequently, scholars (e.g. Mano & Milton, 2021; Tanjon et al., 2016; Tomaselli, 2009; Willems, 2014) have advocated a radical paradigm shift where African scholars and institutions take the lead in creating scholarship and contributing both empirically and conceptually to the process of understanding the nature, dynamics and functions of media in the African context.

The foregoing objective is what this book—*Media and Communication Theory in Africa*—has addressed. Edited by Nelson Okorie, Babatunde Ojebuyi, and Ngozi Okpara, the book assembles well-researched chapters by established authors from different African institutions. Through analytical discussion and stimulating theorization, the authors use their chapters to make original contributions to contemporary conversations in African media studies by providing cases and examples of how existing media and communication theories, models and approaches could be applied to the African realities and interpreted in the African normative context. Overall, the book extends the scholarly focus on communication and media studies from the Global North to the Global South, with Africa as the specific focus.

The book has 14 chapters focusing on the broad aspects of theorization in communication, media studies and journalism using existing case studies from Africa.

Chapter 1, authored by Toyosi Owolabi, examines the normative theories of the press, traces the evolution of the press in selected African countries, and evaluates the application of normative theories and the traditional functions of the press in Africa's changing socio-economic and political contexts, especially with the emergence of social media. Through a thematic analysis of news coverage of China's megaprojects—the Belt and Road Initiative and the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (BRI-MSRI)—in four African newspapers, Cornelius Pratt and Ibanga Isine use Chap. 2 to conceptualise African journalism strictly from a theoretical perspective vis-à-vis a global infrastructure-development initiative that is making far-reaching inroads in Africa. In Chap. 3, Melchizedec Onobe, Desmond Onyemечи Okocha and Barigbon Gbara Nsereka argue that Netizens (people constantly or keenly using the Internet) are yet to discover the sanctuary in metaphorical cues embedded in many native metaphors of

Nigerian and other African heritage. The authors, therefore, recommend message sender's encryptions that use native metaphors, which are the essential bulwarks against legislative fiats and sundry control ticks that could inhibit freedom of expression on social media, especially in the African context.

Moses Ofome Asak, in Chap. 4, interrogates critical cultural theories through the juxtaposition of African standpoint and the foreign dominance of African culture. To do this, Asak used data from existing literature with the critical cultural theories serving as the framework. Based on the findings that show the prevalence of foreign dominance virtually in all aspects of African culture, the author contends that African scholars must be more critical of foreign dominance if African identity, sovereignty, and dignity are to be preserved.

In Chap. 5, Babatunde Ojebuyi proposes a model for theorizing secondary gatekeeping using newspaper reviews by broadcast stations in Africa as the framework. To accomplish the objective, Ojebuyi adopts the Gatekeeping Theory as the baseline framework to reframe White's Simple Gatekeeping Model and Westley and Maclean's Model of gatekeeping. With cases from Nigeria and Ghana providing the context, Ojebuyi deploys the new model to explain the secondary gatekeeping process and demonstrate how different variables not captured by the existing gatekeeping theories and models interact to produce the outcome and implications of newspaper review as secondary gatekeeping. The chapter promises a significant contribution to the explication, conceptualization and theorization of secondary gatekeeping as an emerging discourse in media and communication studies, especially in the African context.

Authors of Chap. 6, Simon Amarachi and Olugbenga Elegbe, review theories and research reports in communication studies from the family communication perspective. Drawing case studies and practical examples from different sections of the African continent, the authors explain the application of these theoretical perspectives as they affect communication and development in African family systems. Chapter 7 by Olanrewaju Ajakaiye et al. examines the basic structure of the Agenda-Setting Theory in the African social context by attempting the relationship between agenda-setting in media practice and politics of some West African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Mali. The authors relied on data gleaned from the works of founding fathers and pioneers of Agenda-Setting Theory—Professors Emeritus Maxwell E. McCombs and David Weaver—to investigate the existence of agenda-setting principles in Nigeria, Mali

and Ghana. The findings show that media in the selected African countries are subjective in their agenda-setting roles as their contents are largely influenced by the politicians.

Obiorah Edogor, Olusola Oyero and Mercy Obichili use Chap. 8 to report their study that focused on the emerging practice of predictive journalism where Nigerian journalists make forecasts through the mass media. Relying on the data obtained from Nigerian journalists, the authors propose the “Omniscience Theory” as a philosophical basis to explain the trend of predictive journalism in Nigeria. Chapter 9 (*Application of Theories in Film Techniques and Production in Africa*) by Lawrence Akande examines the generative premises of some established film theories, and how the theories debate the essence of film techniques and production. The overarching objective of the chapter is to provide a framework for a deep understanding of film as it relates to Africa’s reality, the African audience and the African society.

In Chap. 10, Oludare Ebenezer Ogunyombo identifies a dearth of models that address intra-personal communication and the style of reporting conflict by African journalists. The author, therefore, proposes the *multi-sieve model for conflict-sensitive reporting*. The model is personality-based and useful in conceptualising the information refining process for journalists to achieve cognitive consonance, ethical gatekeeping and socially responsible reporting across African countries.

Nelson Okorie notes in Chap. 11 that there is scant literature that describes how theories can serve as parameters or benchmarks for the utilization of celebrities in African society. Relying on case studies such as endorsement deals of beverage and telecommunication companies in Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa, Okorie, therefore devotes the Chapter (*Theorizing the power of celebrities in the media landscape of Africa*) to the exploration of the theoretical postulations for understanding the nature and influence of celebrities in the African context. Chapter 12 by Ben-Enukora Charity appraises the relationship between communication theories and health communication practice. The author selects some case studies and explicates the applicability of their assumptions to health communication practice in Africa relying on some key communication models and theories about knowledge, attitude, and behaviour regarding health as the framework.

The penultimate chapter authored by Juliet W. Macharia draws examples from African countries such as Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania to discuss the role of the media in the management of



pandemic situations in Africa. After reviewing studies conducted in Africa and other continents, the author concludes that the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Health Belief Model (HBM) and the Protection Motivation Theory can also be applied in Africa to persuade people to maintain COVID-19 protocols and to convince them to be vaccinated.

As argued in the final chapter (Chap. 14) by Jeremiah Nganda, even though contextual understanding and relevance underscore the application of theories, research and scholarship output that contribute to theory development from Africa are comparatively low. Because of this paucity of communication theories from Africa, Nganda contends, there is a need to contextualize the available theories to make them more relevant to the continent. The author, therefore, reviews the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as one of the most common theories used in studies on the adoption of technologies and proposes an extended model with more variables suitable for application in health communication studies in Africa.

This book is not an attempt at epistemic resistance. Rather, it contributes to the existing literature in media and communication studies by presenting African perspectives on the contextual utilization, application and reconstruction of communication and media theories, models, approaches, and processes to address contemporary realities in African media scholarship.

Ibadan, Nigeria

Babatunde Raphael Ojebuyi

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# Normative Press Theories and the Revisiting of Media Roles in Africa's Changing Socio-economic and Political Contexts

*Toyosi Olugbenga Samson Owolabi*

## I INTRODUCTION

The normative theories of the press as propounded by Siebert et al. (1956) attempt to situate the media structure and performance within its operational environment. The basic assumption of the normative theory is that the press, like a chameleon, assumes the system and colouration of the political, economic and social environment where it operates. Going by this assumption, the normative theories explicate the ways in which the societal communication principles and common-sense rules impact on mass media structure, workings and conventions. In addition, it describes the forms and standards of conduct and performance anticipated of the mass media institutions in a society (Folarin, 2005; Anaeto et al., 2008). Today, the global society and its media are experiencing tremendous

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changes, which are altering the media structure, convention and performance vis-a-vis their relationship with the political, social and economic institutions in the society. This change has manifested in many ways. The expanding media and communications sector, for example, is now largely characterized by national and cross-border expansion, mergers and acquisitions, and corporatization and globalization. The dawn of the Internet and digital technologies, advent of the new media, and convergence of both new and traditional media among other transformation are noticeable in both private and public media (Iraki, 2010; Suraj, 2014). Being an expanding economy with a growing middle class, the transformational shift has also significantly affected the socio-economic and political landscape and by extension, communication environment leading to change in tastes and preferences for media products, and the gradual emergence of multiple and young social groupings that are actively seeking to establish their own identities.

Media scholars have over the years acknowledged the importance of the media as change agent in the society. However, the current transformation of the society, the media and their newly imposed roles have in-turn thrown up new predicaments that communication scholars have to contend with. This explains why McQuail (2006) argues that there is need for new communication theories to account for socio-economic, political and new media settings that are now defined by unbounded freedom and diversity. This, indeed, is what Fourie (2011, p. 43) refers to as “the age of the mixed media culture—a diversified mass media in which cultures of entertainment, infotainment, interactivity, analysis, tabloid and mainstream press not only work side by side but intermingle and merge”. These characteristics did not only suggest dynamism within the media systems, they also affirm the view that journalism practice is affected by the political, social, economic and technological development in the society. In an attempt to correctly situate the normative press theories and practice in this era, the study discusses the views and opinions of media scholars and professionals within Africa, and examines how they perceive the traditional role of the media. Lastly, this chapter brings to the fore the challenges which characterizes normative media theory in a changing social, political and economic contexts, and therefore, the inability of traditional normative theory to account for new developments in the media and society in general.

### 1.1 *An Overview of African Media Environment*

This section neither attempts to produce a compendium on the history of African media, nor is it to embark on any historical voyage into Africa media history. Rather, it simply attempts to capture landmark events that have contributed into shaping the African media landscape. There are 54 independent Sub-Saharan countries (including Island nations), each with its own history and characteristics. In order to develop a deeper understanding of Africa's media history, it is important to pay attention to both unique characteristics of each nation as well as to identify commonalities. To properly situate the historical narrative, the continent of Africa is divided into four and a country is picked for analysis as follows: West Africa (Nigeria); East Africa (Kenya); North Africa (Tunisia); and South Africa (South Africa).

### 1.2 *Evolution and Development of the Mass Media in Africa*

#### 1.2.1 *Nigeria*

The Nigerian press actually started in the British fashion and has been described in various ways by different media scholars. According to Oso et al. (2011), print journalism started in 1859 when Rev. Henry Townsend established the pioneer newspaper in Nigeria: *Iwe Irohin fun awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba*, (simply put, Newspaper for the *Egba* and the *Yoruba* people). His motives were a combination of social, economic, political and cultural commentaries spiced with religious flavour. Other newspapers such as the *Anglo-African* (1863) by Robert Campbell, and *Lagos Observer* (1880), *Lagos Echo* (1894), *Lagos Weekly* by Thomas Jackson (1900), *Nigerian Chronicle* and *Nigerian Times* followed in 1908 and 1914 respectively. Other private newspapers were established during the pre-independence era. These include the *Nigerian Daily Times* by Hurbert Macaulay (1925), *West African Pilot* by Nnamdi Azikwe in (1937) and Nigeria tribune by Obafemi Awolowo (1949).

At independence, in 1960, Nigeria inherited a very volatile and complex political system characterized by ethnic segregation and religious dichotomy. The polity was partitioned along the line of North, East and West with each region under the control of different political parties and regional-based press to articulate its programs. While the Northern Region comprising the Hausa-Fulani tribe belonged to the Northern People's Congress (NPC), publishers of *Nigerian Citizens*, the Eastern Region

consisting of the Igbo ethnic group belonged to the National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) party under their late leader, Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe whose *Pilot* Group served as their mouth piece. Similarly, the Yoruba race occupied the West and belonged to the Action Group (AG) party. Their official newspapers were *Tribune* and the *Daily Service* (Duyile, 2004).

However, the entrance of private investors into the electronic media business was somehow delayed for political reasons. The British Empire service relay stations in Lagos in 1932 actually marked the beginning of broadcasting in Nigeria (Kalejaye et al., 2006). In 1936; the colonial government in Lagos started the radio distribution service (re-diffusion) to beam programs from London to Nigeria. Subsequently, in 1951, the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) was established by the national government with headquarters in Lagos and three regional stations in the then three regions to which the nation was divided (Rauf, 2003). The need to break the monopoly of the national government's use of radio broadcasting explains why Western region government established its own television and radio stations (Western Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation) in 1959 and 1960 respectively. Following the creation of 12 states structure in 1967, each state established its own newspapers, radio and television stations to serve as its publicity and information dissemination organ.

It is also pertinent to note that license to operate electronic broadcasting was not issued for private ownership until 1992. Nigeria, as at 2003 had 262 radio and television stations owned by the Federal, state and private individuals. It is remarkable to observe that the media were not only partisan, they were actually run and funded by political parties and the concentration has followed the lopsided international pattern illustrated by inequality in the information flow within Nigeria (Owolabi, 2014). This is what MacBride cited in Oso and Tijani-Adenle (2014, p. 86) describe as "a gap between cultural elites and illiterate or semi-literate masses" or "gap between the information-rich and the information-poor". Both print and electronic media are believed to be urban-centric in their content and coverage and have consistently paid less attention to rural community reports. This lopsided structure, perhaps explains why the Federal government under President Obasanjo approved licenses for the establishment of one FM stations in all the 36 states of the Federation including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. These are apart from other privately established community radio stations established at the same time. According to the Institute for Media and Society (2017), there are



about 96 television and 265 radio stations in Nigeria. Lagos State alone has forty-one (41) radio stations (eight public and thirty-three private), and twenty-one television stations (four public and seventeen private).

### 1.2.2 Kenya

Kenyan media have a rich history that began much earlier than the age of liberalization in the early 1990s and that the complex media situation existing today is the result of social, political, and economic changes over time. As it was in Nigeria, the introduction of the printing press in Kenya is associated with the Christian missionaries whose primary aim was to expose the traditional African society to Christianity and the western ways of life. The pioneer newspaper in Kenya titled *Taita Chronicle* (1895) was credited to Reverend Albert Stegal of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) (Abuoga & Mutere, 1988).

In 1901, the *East African Standard*, the oldest newspaper was established by the Asian trader Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee, but was soon bought over by people keen to promote settlers' interests in Kenya. However, from the late 1920s, growing disenchantment and agitation for self-rule by the African elite led to the emergence of the early African press (Ali, 2019). One of such earliest publications was *Muigwithania* (The Arbitrator), which was started and published in Kikuyu language in 1928.

In 1960, the Nation Media Group, founded by His Highness the Aga Khan, was established. Odero (2000) notes that the interest of the Aga Khan was to produce newspapers that were edited and managed by Africans for news dissemination to African audiences. It is important to note that the establishment of the Nation Media publications at this point marked a break from colonial newspapers that had the main objective of muting African voices (Iraki, 2010). During the pre-independence years of the 1950s, African publications had played the collective role of providing a voice for colonised African people in Kenya (Abuoga & Mutere, cited by Fourie, 2017). However, after independence, the media were expected to address itself to a host of new needs and primarily, the need to articulate the agenda of a society that had just emerged from colonialism.

To play a useful role in this process, the country's media needed to closely identify with the needs of the ordinary people and to reflect these desires in their contents. To a certain extent, this did happen, as Abuoga and Mutere cited by Ugangu (2012) pointed out. In fact, Odero (2000, p. 11) further argues that newspapers such as the *Daily Nation*, *Sunday Nation* and *Taifa Leo*, which were at that time judged to be sympathetic

to nationalist aspirations by their readers, were highly acclaimed while those like the *Standard* (which were regarded as pro-colonial) were shunned by readers.

Nevertheless, about a decade after independence, the Nation Media Group distinguished itself as a major player in the country's media sector. By 1973, the company was the first media organization to be listed on the Nairobi Stock Exchange. Odera (2000, p. 13) states that the first public offer of the company's 1.2 million shares was made at five Kenya shillings per share and was over-subscribed. By the year 2000, about 10,000 individuals owned 55 per cent of the company's shares with the Aga Khan remaining as the principal shareholder. On the other hand, public media (the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation) remained under strict government control throughout Kenyatta's and later Moi's tenures.

The government's tight control over the media sector (during the 1970s and the 1980s) had created a kind of patron-client relationship between media owners and the government of the day. For this reason, the Lornho Group, which owned the Standard Media Group, adopted the practice of appointing a chairman who had close links with the Head of State (Odera, 2000). Such appointments were meant to serve as a safety net for the group's survival in a tightly controlled media environment. Thus, during Kenyatta's time, Udi Gecaga, the president's son-in-law, served as Lornho's chairman while later during the Moi presidency, a close relation of Moi, Mark Too, was appointed chairman of the media establishment.

The liberalisation of most sectors of the economy thus created room for private participations in building commercial enterprises including the media industry thus, radio frequency was allocated mainly to political cronies and friends of the establishment at the expense of genuine investors. However, despite the underhand deals and many other weaknesses in policy (as discussed, for instance, by Mutere, 2010), the expansion of the country's media sector has been monumental. By 2008, Kenya had 53 operational radio services up from one in 1989, more than 244 FM frequencies had been allocated, and television stations had increased from one service in 1989 to 12 in 2008. By 2019, at least eleven newspapers were being published in the country (Ali, 2019).

### 1.2.3 *South Africa*

The long history of South African journalists fighting for freedom of speech started in 1824 with the founding of the first independent newspaper, the *South African Commercial Advertiser* in Cape Town by a printer,

George Grieg. Prior to this, the weekly *Government Gazette* had been the only permitted news medium and the authorities had underlined their opposition to a free flow of information by seizing a printing press found on board an 1820-settler ship (Lloyd, 2013).

According to the South African Audience Research Foundation SAARE, only 31 percent of adult South Africans read daily newspaper. Most newspapers still targeted urban elites (though there were exceptions) but they did not distribute outside of the major cities. Only three of the major newspapers published in *isiZulu*, the most spoken of 11 official languages in South Africa. All other major dailies and weekly newspapers were in English or Afrikaans, the two official languages of the apartheid government. The majority of South Africans still received news via radio or television, which did broadcast in all languages.

Under apartheid, the mainstream print media were accused of either actively or passively colluding with the government. The big four publishing houses were predominantly owned by private entrepreneurs with strong connection in the government that controlled the English language press, or Afrikaans' business interests. The broadcasting media also were controlled by the state with the national state broadcaster, the SABC, operating as a propaganda arm of the government (Lloyd, 2013).

The introduction of democracy significantly changed the broadcasting landscape. An independent regulator was established shortly after the 1994 elections and the SABC was declared a public broadcasting outfit, with a publicly nominated board of directors accountable to the parliament. The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), now the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) following a merger with the telecommunications regulator in 2000, has over the past 18 years licensed more than 200 community radio and five community television channels, 20 commercial radio stations covering different cities and towns, and one national free-to-air private television channel. Its founding legislation specifies that it must regulate the sector in the public interest and be independent of political and commercial interests and influence (Ugangu, 2012, p. 12).

A national newspaper, the *New Age*, launched in December 2010, is the only independent daily newspaper currently being published. The paper is seen as being pro-ANC as it is controlled by an Indian family reportedly close to Zuma and focuses on national "positive" news and "constructive criticism." NasPers is the biggest of these companies, owning 72 newspaper titles (including daily, weekly, and free-sheet publications), numerous

magazines, and the dominant subscription broadcasting service in South Africa, which provides a satellite service for other parts of Africa, as well as a terrestrial subscription channel. It also has interests in countries such as China and Russia, and is one of only 20 South African companies to make the Forbes list of the 2,000 biggest companies in the world, ranking 1,053rd with a \$27.7 billion market value. Limited access to broadband also obviously affects engagement on social media platforms—and limits its use as an alternative source of news (Lloyd, 2013, p. 46).

#### 1.2.4 Tunisia

The first daily newspaper printed in Tunisia appeared on July 22, 1860 under the name *Arra'id Attunisi*, calling itself “The official Journal of the Tunisian Republic” (Chelbi, 1986, p. 15). The anti-Arab attacks by the Colonial Party and its Editor in Chief, Victor de Carnières, pushed Tunisian intellectuals to launch *Le Tunisien* in 1907, to be the first French newspaper in Tunisia. This aims to influence the authorities of the Protectorate of Tunisia and French public opinion. The number of French-language titles grew to reach 41 in 1956, while the Arab-language press counted 288 titles by that year. At the beginning of 1991, there were six French language dailies, and nine in Arabic; there were 140 weeklies, 45 in French, and 160 monthly publications (Boulares, 2012, p. 522). In 1987, there were 91 newspapers and reviews published in Tunisia and these grew to 245 in 2007. In 2007, the Tunisian government’s website counted 245 daily newspapers and reviews, grown from 91 in 1987. These are in large part (90%) owned by private groups and individuals, with much of the press dominated by discussion of government matters.

As a developing nation, Tunisia was living under dictatorship until January 14, 2011 when the government of Ben Ali was brought down through a popular political revolution orchestrated by interplay of traditional media and social media network. The Tunisian media public service, two television stations, nine radio channels and the national news agency, have always been a governmental service managed by the government, and most of the time by the president himself. For over 23 years, according to Yacoub (2017), Ben Ali had a complete grip over the traditional media and, in most recent years, the Internet to the extent Tunisia was rated an ‘enemy of Internet’ for consecutive five years by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (RSF, 2010). Till date, the restrictive post-revolution laws are at play in Tunisia with the hope that one day it will be repealed (Bernas, 2016).

## 2 NORMATIVE THEORIES IN PERSPECTIVE

It is generally believed among mass communication authors and scholars that normative theories are those seeking to explain the workings of the media (Fourie, 2011). Though, there are diverse opinions about what the media ought to do, what it ought not to, and how well they appear to be effective in the society. Therefore, when we mention normative theories, we refer to the ideas of rights and responsibility that underlie the media functions to individuals and the society in general. The normative theories can also be explained within the context of the relationship existing among the media, government and the public and how each of these stakeholders contributes to shaping the society. This, perhaps, was the basis of McQuail's (2006) observation that the normative theories are concerned with the ways of exploring how the media operate or how they ought to operate under certain conditions and standards obtainable in the society if certain desirable changes will be observed. This means that normative theories help to explain the ways in which societal communication rules affect the media structure, convention and performance; detailing the impact of the divergence between the societal communication and mass communication principles.

Siebert et al. (1956) were the first to talk about normative theories and they came up with the first set of four theories namely: Authoritarian, Soviet-Communist, Libertarian and Social responsibilities press theories. However, the dynamic nature of the society has significantly altered the workings of the media under the original four normative theories thus, necessitating an additional two (Democratic-participant and Development media theories) propounded by Dennis McQuail in 1987. To engender a good understanding of the normative theories, a brief explanation of the assumptions of the six theories of the press is required.

The authoritarian theory as its name implies, is founded on the assumption of the supremacy of the state as embodied in the ruling elites in the society. The media here are subordinated to state power and the interest of the ruling class and cannot criticize the status quo. The state devises methods such as decree, licensing, censorship, tax and levies, harsh punishment and other crude means to regularly keep the media in check. According to Oso (2011), the authoritarian system still operates in some parts of the world, especially communist countries and many African nations that are prone to military coup.

The media under the Soviet-communist theory were under the direct control of the government, and since the media were seen as a service arm of the government, no private ownership and profit motive were allowed in media operations. There is a similarity between authoritarian and Soviet-communist theories as can be seen in how the state controls the media and compels it to perceive and interpret issues from the standpoint of the government. The obvious difference between the two is that, while the authoritarian theory allows private ownership and profit making in media operations, this is not allowed under the Soviet-communist theory. Notwithstanding, the global economic change and the advent of Internet technology experienced across the world including the communist countries do not allow the media to be solely funded by the government without private participation and profit motive (Chinenye, 2018).

The libertarian theory according to Daramola (2007) sees the media as a free marketplace of ideas and information from where people are free to seek the truth that can guide them to take an informed decision. In its basic form, the libertarian or free press theory assumes that an individual should be free to seek information, publish what he or she likes, and holds and expresses opinions freely. This was later extended to freedom of assembly and sharing views and opinions with others. Libertarian media exist to serve as partners with government and to watch on how it conducts the business of public affairs. The media are therefore expected to be free from government's control (Folarin, 2005).

The social responsibility theory assumes that the freedom and the position of eminence which the media enjoy must be accompanied by discharging certain responsibilities to the society. While explaining the basic principles of this theory, McQuail (2006, p. 89) summarises it as follows:

media must be socially responsible to the public; the responsibility must be based on truth, accuracy, objectivity and fairness; media must be self-regulating, it must not promote violence and civil disorder; the press must be pluralistic in giving equal voice to diverse groupings represented in the society, where the media become irresponsible, the society's interference can be justified to ensure public good; and although journalists must be accountable to their employers notwithstanding, they have superior loyalty to the public.

Having explained the tenets of the original four normative press theories, our attention now turns to the two latter theories by Denis McQuail.

First, democratic-participant media theory insists on the decentralization and democratization of the press and that the existing bureaucracy as well as the commercial and professional hegemony in the media system must be dismantled so as to allow easy access and popular participation in media use. Second, according to McQuail (2006, p. 92), the media under development press theory among others:

must accept and participate in carrying out development tasks as designed by the state; the freedom of the press must be justified by giving priority to economic development; the media must build bridges across countries that are related geographically, culturally and politically; the pressmen must be free to access information and disseminate same; and in the interest of development, the state's censorship of the media can be justified.

The theory is applicable among the developing countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia. Having observed and explained the tenets of the six normative press theories, certain issues were thrown up which this study will discuss in the next subsection.

### *2.1 Application of Normative Theories in Africa's Changing Socio-economic and Political Contexts: Matters Arising*

The institution of mass media as providers of information, education, entertainment and linkage operates within the confines of certain socio-economic and political systems available in their operational environment. Being the 'fourth estate' guided by the principles of normative theories, the media, according to McNair (2009), are expected to serve as custodians of common values, protect public interest and provide watchdog roles over the conducts of government affairs. Notwithstanding, this obvious position of eminence, media performance is mostly confounded by some socio-economic and political changes in the society. First and foremost, the watchdog role of the media has come under rigorous scrutiny by some media scholars who perceive this traditional role of the media as ambivalent. Curran (2000, p. 122) cited by Kanyegirire (2008) believes it will be inappropriate to assign this fundamental role of surveillance to the media. He sensed it was formerly and erroneously done based on the traditional assumption that the government is the seat of power and tyranny which the media must checkmate. This traditional estimation fails to consider the present unlimited influence of big shareholders in the private media

organizations. Against that background, the main issue now is that the media have become big business empires that must be watched. Then, who watches the 'watchdog' is the critical issue that remains to be determined. Since the commercially and profit-making media promote a largely unthinking allegiance to our social, economic and political structures, they cannot be relied upon to work for desired changes in that system. Social objectives are usually surrendered by commercialized media when it clashes with their economic interests (Mustapha et al., 2014). According to Curran (2000), since most media have turned to full profit-making outfits like other businesses, their ability to carry out the traditional watchdog role remains doubtful and normative theory of the press will be impracticable.

Another equally important issue is ownership influence which casts aspersion on the concept of objectivity and fairness in reporting. The media as a big business with substantial political and economic powers often have an anchorage in the political culture of the state and the ideologies of their various owners. This explains the position of Herman and Chomsky (2002) that the alliance between the owners of big media enterprises and those in control of political and economic powers in the state calls to question the ability of the media to be fair to all in public sphere thus, the normative assumptions that the media can serve as watchdog, participate and advocate on behalf of the public are mere hoax.

An assumption of the development media theory by McQuail (2010, p. 56) is that "the media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy." It also states that "the freedom which the media enjoy must be used to advance the economic priorities and development needs of the society in line with national interest." Many African countries are heterogeneous and the populations are diverse along ethnicity, culture, religion, language and political lineage. In these plural-ethnic societies, what is national interest, who defines it and how is it defined? This is the problem Nigeria and many other African countries have contended with. This is also the challenge the media are confronted with as they attempt to carry out their statutory roles.

The controversial issues of Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) and Sharia court debates as they affect the Northern region; the clamor for resource control as it affects the South-East and South-South oil producing regions; and the incessant call for restructuring and fiscal federalism or regional government autonomy from the South-west are different contentious issues that became nationalized at various times depending on where the ruling President of the nation comes



from. These also form part of the complex national issues which the media find difficult to deal with. There are times when what the government presents as national policy is nothing but sectional agenda. Oftentimes, the media have been labeled rebels as they seek to report and analyze national interest contrary to what the government of the day believes. This is because the interest of each region and state are not the same. Even in the same state where there are more than five ethnic groups, their interests may differ. If the development media therefore carry out its role in line with McQuail's assumption on national interest, it will create more problems than it attempts to solve. The reason being that national interest is a complex issue to define especially in a multilingual and multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. In fact, it becomes matter made worse if such nation operates a federal system of government as in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

An important assumption of social responsibility theory also stipulates that "the media should avoid what might lead to crime, violence, civil disorder or offence to the minority groups" (Anaeto et al., 2008). The issue relevant to this discourse stems from what (Isola, 2010, p. 34) refers to as "instigating and mediating roles" of the media in conflict situation. Due to ethnic bias, religious and political alliances, personal idiosyncrasies and casual display of unprofessionalism, a journalist can become conflict instigator through biased and unfair reporting, which may be offending to another party in the conflict.

As Odhiambo (2007, p. 203) asserts in a study on the role of the media, Kenya witnessed post-election violence in both 1992 and 1997, but in the 2007 elections, it experienced an unprecedented violence that left 1,100 people dead for which the Kenyan media were faulted for helping to fuel the violence by offering a platform for tribal extremists to broadcast their agenda. She also remarked that "some journalists were polarized along ethnic, religious and political lines, while others increased tensions by failing to report accurately, professionally, and neutrally." Accepting the same thesis that media represent a powerful mechanism in the context of conflict, Valentina Bau, a UN field office communication officer, explained the tragic consequences of the eleven-year Sierra Leonian war between 1991 and 2002 in which 70,000 people were killed and 2.6 million displaced. Furthermore, nowhere has the narrative interface between conflict and the media acquired an elaborative response than in the 100-day Rwandan genocide (April–July 1994) where about 800,000 Tutsi minority ethnic group, as well as some moderate Hutu and Tutsi people were slaughtered by armed militias orchestrated by what has been characterized as hate radio (Olorunyomi, 2021, p. 23).

The problem with the wholesale application of this normative assumption lies in the ownership structure of the media industry in most African nations. In Nigeria for example, the mainstream media are either owned by the government or a private individual or group. The same condition applies in Kenya and South Africa where media ownership is intricately interwoven with the political and economic class. One peculiarity of the privately owned media is that the owners are either card-carrying members of a ruling political party or they are contractors to the government. Whether publicly or privately-owned, the truth is that ownership determines the degree of control that proprietors exert on media output. The possibility of a journalist operating within normative assumption to be objective and unbiased in reporting can be significantly affected by issues arising from media ownership, which include hindered press freedom, poor condition of service, and wave of commercialization and protection of media proprietors' interests (Adejola & Bello, 2014). Despite the seeming obstacles, the media have continued to carry out its traditional roles and contributed its quota to the socio-economic development of Nigeria.

## *2.2 Rethinking Normative Media Theories in the Digital Era: Case Studies in Africa*

The digital era is described as a time frame in global history when the use of digital technological products, Internet networks and devices have caused transformational shift in the media public space (IGI Global, 2019). This technology is believed to be the propellant behind the transformational shift that characterizes the media landscape in recent time with its attendant impact in all levels of journalistic enterprise. In the digital media landscape with its ensuing mediatization of life, society and the world, normative media theories seem to have lost their pragmatic value. The reason for this, according to Fourie (2017), is because they are based on the principles of media ethics which are mainly concerned with journalism practice.

This proposition is expanded with a discussion on “traditional” normative theories as a yardstick for the measurement of ethical media practice and performance against the appropriateness and applicability of “traditional” normative theories in the digital media landscape. The striking features of the digital media landscape which differentiate them from the traditional media are:

Interactivity as opposed to one-way flow; co-presence of vertical and horizontal communication; promoting equality, disintermediation, meaning a reduced role for journalism to mediate the relationship between citizens and politicians; low cost for senders and receivers; speed greater than the traditional media, and absence of boundary (McQuail, 2006, p. 152).

With the new media technology where everybody is a potential reporter, editor and publisher, censorship in form of closing down the media organization and illegal arrest and hauling of publishers to jail are almost impossible. According to Oso and Tijani-Adenle (2014, p. 158), the digital era has opened the public sphere to many voices that were once marginalized and silenced. The implications of the above include: pulling down of wall and barriers to effective communication, dismantling of social hierarchy, crumbling of dictators while centres of capitalist power are trembling all because of the way these digital technologies are used. Going further from above, the digital technologies, the political environment, political communication and politics itself are becoming transformed, thus affecting the way and manner normative theories of the press are newly perceived and operated.

Despite the manifold opportunities the new digital technology offers in developed nations, Chinenye (2018) notes that there are certain common circumstances that often limit the developing nations of Africa from benefiting maximally from the technological development. According to Sassi (2005), the advantages of the Internet as the driver of the public sphere are only enjoyed by the select few who have access to it, while others who are restricted by reason of poverty and lack of purchasing power, which the society has created, remain marginalized. Thus, economic inequality is a key factor that makes full application of normative theories of the press difficult in Africa. Similar concern expressed by Hudson and Oboh (2012) is that as the barriers to becoming a journalist are being lowered and no formal training and regulations are required, the potential of unethical journalism may increase, and the credibility of media reports stands to be questioned. Most governments in Africa, though they wear the garment of democracy, ARE in actual fact self-appointed and may take advantage of this to indirectly persecute the media as a way of regulation. The digital technologies that could foster new media practice and contribute to the nation's GDP are not developed to the standard reached by the rest of the world. Even in some countries where the technologies are provided, they are priced beyond the reach of the masses. As a matter of fact,

most media organizations are still struggling to fully operate digitally due to the capital outlay it involves. Low broadband Internet uptake, which is being attributed to high cost of bandwidth acquisition, is a disincentive to media growth in Africa and a hindrance to the application of normative theories of the press (Suraj, 2018).

### *2.3 Critical Evaluation of the Normative Theories and the State: Press Relations in Africa*

Over the years, the political system in most if not all African countries oscillates between the military and civilian regimes. Africa is a continent of over a billion people spread across 49 independent countries yet questions of underdevelopment, misgovernance, and a form of political life based upon patronage are characteristic of many of the states (Chinenye, 2018). Until the last two decades when the wind of popular democracy began to blow across the world and the military regime thus became unfashionable, most African nations were under the shackle of military dictators. According to Taylor (2018), since the 1960s, there have been more than 200 coups, extra-constitutional or forced changes in government in Africa, with about half of them successful. The most important development in African countries in recent years is the democratization in the 1990s, during which military rule or single-party system was replaced by multi-party. The 1990s would probably go down in history as the decade of sweeping democratic reforms and structural economic adjustments in Africa.

Despite Africa's progressive steps towards democratic sustenance, there is a noticeable decline in press freedom as African governments, under the guise of constitutional rule, have resorted to the enactment of suppressive laws against an increasingly critical media. In most of the new democracies, as this chapter shows, new parliamentary bills that are hostile to the media are constantly evolving in countries that have traditionally been considered democratic (Olukotun, 2004).

The relationship between the states and the press during the military rule was tenuous as illustrated by the works of two scholars (Pate, 2002). Between 1960 and 1990 during which most African nations were still under military rule, several media houses were arbitrarily shut down and newspaper and magazine copies were confiscated at newsstands while scores of political critics and journalists were arrested and detained illegally; some were murdered by the faceless agents of the state.

Since Nigeria's transition to democratic government in 1999 up till 2015 when the present administration of President Buhari assumed office, there appeared to be a period of reprieve for the media. The media-state relationship however turned a new dimension as the federal government commenced some anti-media actions that are worse than the infamous Decree 4 of 1984. For instance, according to *The Guardian* newspaper (2021), the government announced the suspension of Twitter in Nigeria for making the platform available for activities that are 'capable of undermining Nigeria's corporate existence'. The government also mandated all the media organization to deinstall their Twitter accounts immediately, threatening to suspend the operation license of any media group that goes against the order. The height of the FG's onslaught against the media was the amendment sought from the national assembly to amend the NBC Act and Press Council Act to give more powers to the Minister of Information to control the conduct of the print media and media professionals. It also seeks powers to approve the establishment, ownership and operation of newspapers; create a national Press Code for media professionals; and impose punitive measures including revocation of license of any erring media. Journalists under the new amendment can be fined, jailed or deregistered.

The Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) as well as other civil society groups have condemned the proposed bill, claiming it violates section 39 of the Constitution, which makes it clear that everyone shall be entitled to freedom of expression and that under its section 2, "everyone shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium."

In Kenya also, the freedom of the press has been on a steady decline since year 2014. The political instability that characterized the 2017 election was accompanied by dozens of violations against journalists and media workers. On December 5, 2013, Kenyan National Assembly passed a contentious anti-press legislation, the Kenya Information and Communication Amendment Act and the Media Council Act, which were meant to effectively silence critical press through a new government-controlled regulator. The new legislations empower the regulatory board to impose a fine of 50,000 Kenyan Shillings (US\$5,500) and media organization up to 20 million Shillings (US\$ 230,000) if found guilty of a government-dictated code of conduct. Despite sustained oppositions from Kenya Editors Guild, Kenya Correspondent Association and Kenya Union of Journalists against the passage of the bill, the parliament still went ahead

to pass it. This made the entire media professionals to describe the period as a “dark moment” in Kenya’s once robust media environment.

In Tunisia under the previous regime, defamation was a legislative tool which the government used to imprison political dissident and independent journalists. Monitoring the aggressions and litigation issues, the Tunis Centre for Press Freedom (CTLP) compiled monthly reports from November 2012 to June 2015. Its analysis shows that almost three quarters of the law suits monitored by the center concerned journalists accused of defamation. Intimidating media workers with heavy legal sanctions and selective use of the law to serve narrow political interests are traits inherited from previous regimes. In particular, the 1975 Press Code involving ‘legal deposit’ obliged media owners and publishers to submit copies of their publications before their circulation to the public.

The broadcast media in Tunisia is another issue. With over 50 registered radio stations and ten television stations, besides those operating without license, the broadcast media landscape has become so unwieldy as ethical principles are sacrificed at the altar of commercialism. With no respect for objectivity, fairness and impartiality, private media owners are known to take side with one political party to the neglect of others. In some cases, media owners are card-carrying members of the ruling political party (Yacoub, 2017).

Against the above background, the media, government and society are believed to be involved in a trinitarian relationship. The society here refers to the media owners, news sources, advertisers and other stakeholders involved in influencing the conditions of work of journalists. If corruption is pervasive in a society, that corrupt nature will rub off on the government as well as the media. It will therefore be impossible for corrupt media to carry out watchdog role on the government. A socially irresponsible society will constitute a constitutionally irresponsible government and breed a socially irresponsible media. Of all the governments in Africa, there is hardly anyone that can pass integrity test especially in matters of providing good governance. A corrupt government has a lot to hide from the prying eyes of the media hence, the desire to corrupt the press and make them to be socially negligent and unable to constitute a formidable watchdog team on the government.

It is very worrisome the questionable fraternity between the political class and members of the fourth estate to the extent that journalists seek financial assistance and undue favour from the government they were

supposed to carry out watchdog role on. There have been instances when the government sponsored reporters on foreign trips. It is no longer a news that most, if not all the NUJ press centres in all the states of Nigeria, were either built or furnished by their respective state governments. In Tunisia under the government of Ben Ali, operation licenses were usually approved for relatives and political or business associates of members of the ruling class. Wherever the government is inept, value systems are easily degraded, corruption thrives, the economy becomes strangulated, development remains stagnated and the citizens consequently are frustrated. According to Folarin (2005), such circumstances predispose African countries to military coups as can be seen in the five once democratic countries in Africa (Mali, Chad, Guinea, Sudan and Burkina Faso) that have returned to military rule within the last 18 months.

### 3 CONCLUSION

Media scholars have over the years acknowledged the importance of the media as a change agent in the society based on the traditionally imposed roles of educating, informing and providing surveillance on the society. This study, however, has observed that the society which the media are meant to serve and influence positively have in-turn posed wide-ranging problems on them. These include: harsh economic milieu, inclement political and social environment, intimidation, assassination, harassment, poor remuneration, and poor adherence to professional and ethical standard among others. Going from the above, the government-owned mass media operate on not biting the fingers that feed them. This means that the media watchdog role is compromised and substituted with docile, servile lapdog role in the face of wrong doings.

Again, privately-owned media that are supposed to be critically constructive and unbiased have been compromised by ownership influence or sectional interests. If the normative theories are truly concerned with prescribing and probing into how media ought to operate if certain social values are to be attained in the society, it then becomes necessary that the society must revisit its perception, treatment and attitudinal disposition towards journalists and the journalism profession. Africa should strive to be socially responsible to the press as it expects certain responsibilities from the media.

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# Theorising African Journalism: The Reportage of China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative in Four African Newspapers

*Cornelius B. Pratt and Ibanga Isine*

## I INTRODUCTION

Theory is ubiquitous. It is all around us—that is, if we spare no effort in marshalling data on a subject of interest by organising, sequencing, and interpreting them systematically to enable us to understand our world as profoundly as possible. The everywhere-everyday presence of theory is avouched as three metaphors: as nets that capture phenomena on, say,

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selective human behaviour and actions toward news; as lenses that focus on certain aspects of, say, news coverage; and as maps that guide us through new and unfamiliar terrain or alert us to what to expect on the horizon (Brunner, 2019). Our own metaphor is this: as searchlights on a miner's helmet that provide better visibility in the pitch-black shafts.

Theory is practical, one reason applied behavioural scientist Kurt Lewin averred nearly eight decades ago that “There is nothing so practical as a good theory” (Lewin, 1944/1951, p. 169). Social science research, for the most part, uses theory as a procedure in a toolkit for guiding praxis and for developing research designs upfront—for example, in constructing questionnaires, in conducting surveys and experiments, in developing hypotheses and research questions, and in seeking an in-depth understanding of the way forward (e.g., Malik et al., 2021; Rui & Stefanone, 2016; Shahab et al., 2021). In that context, theories are a much-needed road map to an (upcoming) action or activity. But they also play key roles in the post-data-gathering stage by assisting researchers to reflect on the data collected and to take stock of the multiple strengths and pitfalls of their endeavours. They also provide opportunities for discussing research findings, for directing subsequent research, and for bridging the traditionally assumed divides between theory in research and practice. It is against the background of those possibilities, then, that we present a threefold purpose of this chapter.

First, it theorises journalism on the continent, arguing that news reportage on the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI), as a case study, is governed as much by culture-bound theoretical thinking in Africa as by universal journalistic principles and theories. For example, what is presented as news and views on the continent is as much a reflection of the standard five-W's-and-H approach to news reporting (universal journalistic principles and theories) as it is a reflection of what Chung and Ho (2012) label, specifically in relation to Asia's journalistic practices, the *chi* theory of communication, by which news is more a socioemotional or relational aspect of communication than of the straightforward reporting of an event, incident or activity.

Second, it seeks to identify the theoretical underpinnings and overlays of news media reports of a global infrastructure project, arguing that Africa's journalists, cognisant of their countries' development interests, can be selectively supportive or confrontational in their media fare. Put differently, the reportage of Africa-related development news stories is a direct function of theoretical underpinnings that seek collaboration and

mutual obligation (*harambee*) or of resistance and disagreement that are symptomatic of holdovers from the pre-independence era (e.g., Ouko, 2018), as exemplified in the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, in response to decades-long degradation of its land in Nigeria's Niger Delta region by Shell Nigeria's oil exploration and production practices. The movement initially used traditional and later social media to frame and disseminate its own (news) narratives of marginalisation, dehumanisation and environmental pollution, calling global attention to its plight that culminated in a ruling at The Hague Court of Appeal on January 29, 2021, for compensation to farmers for damage to their land by Shell's oil leaks. The nexus of justice and investigative journalism was clearly at play here.

Third, this chapter examines the news coverage of MSRI, as a case study, for its predominant themes that serve as a framework for identifying hallmarks of theories in African journalism. The rationale? MSRI will "illuminate the working of a social system" (Gluckman, 2008, p. 16). How? Brunner (2019) explains:

Theory is built every day by both practitioners and academics as they follow what is happening within the field. They will look at the issues. They will address problems. They will examine the trends. All this work is done to better the field and to develop new solutions. (p. 5)

Why is this chapter important? It must be stated here that this chapter does not focus on theory construction or extension; rather, it presents the pivotal role of theory in African journalism, anchored on MSRI. Particularly, it assesses the value of key theories in explaining journalism as a practice on the continent.

There is a paucity of studies on print-media coverage of a massive, continent-wide development project such as MSRI, thereby making the present study a potentially significant contribution to the extant literature. Investigations have been conducted on newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal* (Zhou & Kang, 2016) and *The Washington Post* (Zhu & Huang, 2016). Additionally, studies have been conducted on seven newspapers each in the United States and Pakistan (Xu, 2021); on newspapers in six countries (Australia, China, India, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States) (Yang & Van Gorp, 2021); on two leading newspapers in each of three European countries—the United Kingdom, Spain and Poland (Turcsanyi & Kachlikova, 2020); on Afghan and Chinese

newspapers (Hatef & Luqiu, 2018); and on those in Russia (Kuteleva & Vasiliev, 2020; Ravitsky, 2018). A similar study, which analysed articles and editorials in three Kenyan newspapers, focused on only one infrastructural element of the megaproject: standard gauge railway (Basu & Janiec, 2021). None of those studies, however, focused on BRI per se in Africa—and none used a strictly inductive-abductive qualitative approach to decipher manifest and latent newspaper contents on, and meanings of, MSRI.

MSRI offers, as Gluckman (2008) states, a case-study approach that “illuminates” (p. 16) theorising African journalism, which means, again, assessing news reportage that emerges from MSRI events. Similarly, Mitchell (2009) notes:

A case study is essentially heuristic; it reflects in the events portrayed features which may be construed as a manifestation of some general, abstract theoretical principle... Heuristic case studies are...deliberately chosen in order to develop theory. (pp. 170, 173)

The rest of this chapter is organised into five sections, beginning with an overview of MSRI as our case study, followed by the theoretical underpinnings of journalism practice in Africa, and ending with conclusion.

## 2 BACKGROUND OF THE CASE STUDY: MSRI

On 7 September 2013, China’s President Xi Jinping announced in a speech at Nazarbayev University, in Kazakhstan, a plan to build a Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asia. That project eventually became known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), that is, “the Belt” in short. In a speech to the Indonesian parliament on 2 October 2013, President Xi pledged to “vigorously develop maritime partnership in a joint effort to build the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st century,” as the sea-route segment of BRI; that project was eventually dubbed “the Road.” In the rest of this chapter, those projects as a collective will be referred to as BRI-MSRI.

Figures 1 and 2 show the geographic reach of MSRI, on which Blanchard (2021) writes:

...the MSRI aims to link China with Europe through a, primarily but not exclusively, maritime route. In its general form, the MSRI originates from China’s east coast, runs southward through the South China Sea, and then



**Fig. 1** Routes of the Silk Road Economic Belt (“the Belt”) and of the Maritime Silk Road (“the Road”). *Source.* Xinhua Finance Agency (2017)

transverses through the Indian Ocean. After this, it branches westward to the east coast of Africa and northwest-ward through the Arabian Sea before connecting to the Mediterranean and ultimately the European land-mass...(p. 4)

Beyond being China’s vision for a cooperative mechanism for enhancing regional connectivity and for building a brighter future globally, BRI has its geopolitical significance:

[It] is an essential component in China’s larger effort to solve the fundamental geopolitical challenge that it faces, something its strategic thinkers have been considering since at least the turn of the 21st Century: how can China “rise”—assert its influence and reshape at least its own neighborhood—in ways that reduce the risk of a countervailing response? The Belt and Road Initiative attempts to combine all of the elements of Chinese power and to use all the nation’s strengths and advantages in order to achieve these ends (Rolland, 2017, p. 136).



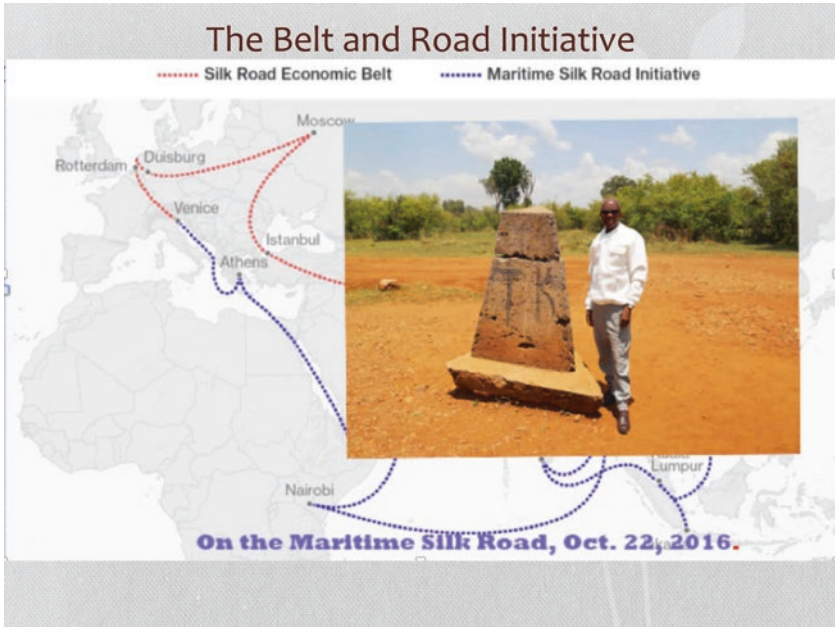


Fig. 2 The first author at the Tanzania-Kenya border, an MSRI hub

### 3 FRAMING (AND FRAME-BUILDING) THEORY AND RESOURCE DEPENDENCE THEORY: THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Africa's newspaper practices have appropriately been investigated from multiple theoretical prisms: agenda setting (and agenda framing), critical media theory, framing theory, and uses and gratifications. As noted at the outset, this study was not designed to develop, to test or to extend theories from a deductive approach. Therefore, it did not apply any theory to its data-gathering protocol; rather, the aims here are to present factual observations, then to search for patterns, and then identify existing theories that resonate with—and explain—those observations and patterns—or develop a (temporary) theory. That is, to what degree do the



observations of this study support theorising from a specific theoretical perspective? One such theory (framing), the focus of the next section, is among the most frequently used theories in newspaper research (in the deductive phase) in Africa, as exemplified in studies on the framing of HIV/AIDS in Kenyan media (Kiptinness & Kiwanuka-Tondo, 2019); of drug abuse in two South African newspapers (Mabokela & Muswede, 2021); of bloodsucking events in two publication groups in Malawi, the Nation Publications Limited and the Times Group (Sharra, 2019); of Kenya's oil exploration post-2012 in two national English newspapers (Irerri et al., 2019); and of Biafra agitation such as political, religious, economic and ethnic frames in four national daily newspapers (Nwabueze & Ezebuenyi, 2019). The impact of that theory on journalism in general is so far-reaching that Davis and Kent (2013) argued for “the framing journalism approach”—a reform of both journalism and journalism education based on integrating insights provided by framing theory and research into day-to-day news production, thereby providing the basis for educating future journalists.

In framing BRI-MSRI news, the private African news media seek to present news in a manner consistent with national interest—one reason themes were equally critical of parts of the megaproject (negative valence), if warranted, vis-à-vis Africa and China. There are differences between both geographic regions in positive- and mixed-valence news articles.

In historical contexts, media framing was used to create, manage and disseminate to audiences government information. Seminal work by Goffman (1986) described framing as a form of communication and defined “framing” as a “schemata of interpretation” that enables individuals to “locate, perceive, identify and label” occurrences or life experiences. He argued further that framing helps an individual understand occurrences by organizing the individual's collective experiences that guide actions. Consequently, framing is a tool by which the media make salient points that direct readers to a desired frame of mind.

### 3.1 *Critiquing Framing Theory*

Framing theory is not without limitations, however. First, to what degree does it influence newsroom behaviour regarding news products? Put differently, its relevance to news decision-making seems tenuous. As Davis and Kent (2013) assert, it “has had little impact on the way that news

production practices are taught in journalism classrooms. It hasn't found its way into journalism textbooks" (p. 75).

Second, related to the preceding limitation of its impact on the ground, a premise of the theory is that news events are related to identified frames, making top-down newsroom decisions critical to framing decisions. Because such decisions are not collective or dialogical—that is absent, an invitation to key stakeholders for inputs into the decision-making process—they wield an outsize influence on frames identified from newsroom products, making the bases for frames dependent on one element of the framing process, even though frames cannot be treated as discrete resources.

Third, context and framing matter: Two equivalent decision problems framed differently may result in different responses (DellaVigna, 2009). Such frames can affect readers' evaluation of the same object (Pleger et al., 2018), again, making meanings of frames more malleable and more contingent upon readers' characteristics.

### 3.1.1 *Resource Dependence Theory (RDT)*

A theory uncommonly applied formally to African journalism but which resonates with the present study and has major implications for much of the practice is RDT. It treats organisations as organic entities—that is, as organisms nurtured and sustained by their environmental networks and exchanges. It views an organisation as dependent on partnerships with other organisations and social agencies for its survival (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Schaffer, 2021), and situates an organisation in the domain of other community-based organisations or environments on which that organisation relies for its sustainability. A "resource" has been defined as anything that can be transmitted and exchanged from one person to another—that is, in interpersonal encounters—or between agencies (Foa & Foa, 2012).

An illustration of the importance of such resource networks is provided by the (first-hand) experience of this chapter's second author, one of Africa's most relentless investigative journalists, who wrote an investigative series on the persistent killings in Nigeria's northwest state of Kaduna. His investigations, which relied on resource networks and interpersonal encounters on background—that is, on undercover informants—could have helped stop the killings of innocent citizens and farmers by rogue herdsmen in Nigeria. Five informants linked to his series have died, three shot by still-unidentified gunmen; the second author fled Nigeria. The national importance of his series is underscored by the ethnic othering engendered by the killings, whose perpetrators have been labelled, among

other things, “Fulani herdsmen,” “Fulani terrorists,” “Rampaging/marauding Fulani herdsmen,” and “killer Fulani herdsmen” (Nwachukwu et al., 2021).

Several of the news articles in this study were sourced from Agence France-Presse (as in the *Daily Nation*), or from China’s foreign minister (as in *Daily News Egypt*), or from independent citizens (e.g., Professor Alemayehu Geda’s column in *Addis Fortune* [Geda, 2018]), possibly because a low availability of resources creates a high ex ante uncertainty about the future of a dependent social organisation. In essence, then, an organisation’s effectiveness in managing, producing and distributing goods and services is contingent on its ability to acquire critical resources from its external environment while seeking to control its resource dependencies by creating different forms of interorganisational networks or arrangements.

Interorganisational relationships and dependence on environmental resources can create environmental uncertainty; however, they can also increase opportunities to develop new capabilities and launch new products without investment in new infrastructure, and may motivate an organisation to seek favourable relationships with other organisations (Ahuja, 2000; Klein & Pereira, 2016). In December 2012, *China Daily Africa* launched its Africa edition, as did China Central Television’s (CCTV’s) launching of CCTV Africa early in 2012, both without significant investment in new infrastructure. A number of news stories in *Daily Nation* (Kenya) were sourced from *China Daily Africa*, making RDT critical to ensuring robust journalistic offerings on the continent. The *Daily Nation*, raised the socioemotional tone in a news article:

In their conquest of the continent, the West brought their media too, to tell their story, and published content in local tongues. Under President Xi Jinping’s school of thought—known as the Xi Jinping Thought—he has focused on cultural interactions, which Beijing called people-to-people relations (K’Onyango, 2021, para. 1).

## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 *Portrayal Patterns*

Our preliminary review of the frequency of coverage of MSRI in all four publications indicated a paucity of news stories in each; therefore, this

study used, as noted in the preceding section, a census of news stories on BRI-MSRI. Our Nexis Uni search, with “Group Duplicates” off, used the terms “Belt and Road” and “Silk Road” as a search tool. It yielded, across all four newspapers, a census of 280 news stories and opinion columns. That modest number was justified by the small size of the overall newspaper pool, particularly for the *Addis Fortune*, which had nine articles on BRI-MSRI over eight years. Opinion articles and editorials, also a minuscule number, may have been a gauge of public interest in internal issues, rather than in those with a remote, direct impact on citizens’ concerns.

#### 4.1.1 *Predominant Themes in Media Reportage of BRI-MSRI*

This chapter identifies the comparative predominant themes that emerge from the reportage on BRI-MSRI in four African newspapers. Since the launch of BRI-MSRI, as President Xi said during his keynote address at the Beijing forum on May 14, 2017, the initiative has (a) deepened policy connectivity, (b) enhanced infrastructural connectivity, (c) increased trade connectivity, (d) expanded financial connectivity, and (e) strengthened people-to-people relationships. Accordingly, we identified five predominant themes: (a) connectivity, (b) politics, (c) economy and trade, (d) culture and education, and (e) military and security.

The predominant themes seem consistent with Beijing’s expectations: economy and trade account for more than 61% of the themes, with military and security a distant second (15.7%), and connectivity third (16.1%). As would be expected from Beijing’s persistent insistence on steering clear of a country’s internal politics, interestingly, the political theme had the lowest frequency of coverage: 2.1%, with *Addis Fortune* publishing no articles on that theme. A primarily political column, which packaged MSRI in *The Nation* as an exemplar of “universal ownership,” concluded as follows:

Beijing’s outreach to the world through the initiative of the Belt and Road framework of international cooperation that has resoundingly earned universal ownership would receive enormous vitality as the party leadership push with greater vigour, the reform and opening up as the premium energiser of China modernisation efforts (Onunaiju, 2019, para. 12).

It must be noted here that China’s interest in people-to-people connectivity is indicated in “Culture and Education,” which accounted for 5% of the news articles. This category included programmes launched by China to project its soft power, which was reported as programmes in schools, and as its support of Africa’s management and control of

COVID-19, which were reported in stories on China's vaccine distribution on the continent. A news story headline on March 1, 2021, in *Daily News Egypt* reads: "China to provide 2nd batch of Sinopharm vaccine to Egypt soon."

A textual example on the health front from *Daily News Egypt*: "China will take further steps to boost health cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative and work with its partners for a 'silk road of health'" (Yi, 2020a, para. 49). In an opinion column in *Daily News Egypt*, Yi (2020b) wrote:

This highlights China's contribution to making vaccines accessible and affordable for African countries as soon as possible. China will continue to provide COVID-19 containment supplies, send expert teams, and facilitate Africa's procurement of medical supplies from China (para. 49).

BRI-MSRI is a platform for projecting China's soft image globally, even as it forcefully pushes its economic and trade agendas. In the same news story was embedded this assertion on China's interest in Africa's security: "In the age of economic globalisation, traditional and non-traditional security issues are putting mankind under one test after another. China will uphold multilateralism and work for a stronger and better global governance system centred on the UN" (Yi, 2020a, para. 50).

In a separate analysis, hard news was by far the most favoured news format (nearly 98%) of BRI-MSRI articles; editorials and opinion columns accounted for 1.6%. Perhaps the inherent nature of BRI-MSRI suggests that it is strictly a Chinese business approach to projecting and protecting mutual interests between China and Africa.

### **Primary Beneficiaries of BRI-MSRI Outcomes, as Indicated in the Newspapers**

A discussion on beneficiaries falls into one of two predominant categories: Africa (or an African country) and China. Debates raised by the positive and negative impacts of MSRI projects on MSRI-participating nations suggest a further analysis of the projected strengths and weaknesses of the project. Because "China has become the de facto world leader seeking to maintain an open global economy and battle climate change," (Gardels, 2017, para. 1) and is the progenitor of BRI-MSRI, there is reason to expect that it will be identified as a primary beneficiary of the initiative. After all, the global project is China's sign of global influence, placing an obligation on its trading partners in Africa.

Our observations indicate that Africa is projected as the favoured beneficiary of the outcomes of the project, meaning that the African newspapers overwhelmingly view BRI as proper investment (82.3%) in the continent's infrastructure, security, and economy. The downside of the project, by news coverage, was projected nearly equally between Africa and China—51% and 49%, respectively.

Mixed valence cuts two ways, as demonstrated in a *Daily Nation* opinion article that illustrates a mutual, win-win strategy: “The Sh320 billion Mombasa-Nairobi standard gauge railway, financed by Chinese lenders,...could boost the East African community's annual exports by \$192 million...But the...railway is producing economic deficits for Kenya as well as potential benefits...” (Kelley, 2019, paras. 4–6). The difference between both geographic areas in mixed valence is not as pronounced (60.5% for Africa versus 39.5% for China) as it is for positive news valence (82% for Africa, about 18% for China). This means that news accounts on Africa as a beneficiary are more subject to two-sided analysis than are those on China. It is plausible that, in light of China's being the sole driver of the megaproject, it is subject to less scrutiny than are recipients of the initiative. Similarly, in general, Africa is presented as more of a beneficiary than is China, which is also less identified in BRI news stories than is Africa.

Another report on China's image-making is indicated in a news article in the *Daily Nation*, which presents the strategic use of the project to boost China's global brand:

[Xi's] signature foreign policy aims to reinvent the ancient Silk Road to connect Asia to Europe and Africa through massive investments in maritime, road and rail projects—with hundreds of billions of dollars in financing from Chinese banks.

But critics say the six-year-old project is a plan to boost Beijing's global influence, riddled with opaque deals favouring Chinese companies and saddling nations with debt and environmental damage. The US, India and some European nations have looked at the project with suspicion. Beijing also published a list of 283 “deliverables” that bore the Belt and Road brand name, including agreements between museums and art festivals, and even mutual cooperation on space—a clear sign that BRI is a major soft power tool for China as well (Agence France-Presse, 2019, paras. 4–6, 20).

Brand-making is critical to building relationships between governments and people internationally, a reality not lost on the Chinese government as

it uses its international media services and domestic resources to build and expand its presence and programmes on the ground.

## 5 POINTERS FOR BUILDING THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS ON AFRICAN JOURNALISM

Pointers for building theoretical propositions on African journalism lead us to the Chinese government's interest in using BRI as a platform for peace, prosperity, openness, innovation, and connectivity among civilisations. The largest category of articles is on economy and trade—with more than 61% of the total. That is consistent with the overarching mission of MSRI. The lowest number is on politics—again, consistent with Beijing's oft-repeated policy of not interfering in the domestic affairs of other nations.

*Daily News Egypt* had the highest number of news articles in the military and security category, an indication of the massive security challenges of that region. Comparatively, while military and security issues generate the most interest for *Daily News*, economy and trade issues do for the *Daily Nation*. Culture and education, which are more in line with boosting China's soft image, attract the fourth-largest frequency of coverage—at slightly more than 5%.

Finally, the organisational theory of resource dependence situates organisations in the domain of other community-based organisations or in environments on which an organisation relies for its sustainability and well-being (Klein & Pereira, 2016; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Does ownership of the media determine their content? The evidence seems contradictory. In one study, newspapers did not systematically give higher ratings to films in which their own conglomerates had a financial interest (Rossman, 2011). Sjøvaag (2014) reported similar findings from a content analysis of chain newspapers in Norway. Other studies, however, find that ownership and financial interests of owners influence media contents (Gilens & Hertzman, 2000; Panis et al., 2015). But the financial challenges of the newspaper industry, particularly in the United States, are being exacerbated by its failure “to find a viable digital-news model as traditional forms of revenue—advertising and subscriptions—continue to evaporate like rain in the Sahara” (Cohan, 2017, para. 9).

Because all four newspapers investigated in this study are privately owned, it is not unlikely that a government-owned news outlet on the

continent will respond differently to MSRI events. Nonetheless, all of these observations contribute to theorising journalism on the continent.

### 5.1 *(Theoretical) Propositions*

A purpose of this study is to develop propositions informed by our observations—that is, propositions that are *not* based on normative theory to guide future reporting, but that describe, positively, the patterns of reporting that occur. In theorising, this chapter embraces African epistemologies, arguing that factors that define and frame news conceptualisation can no longer be understood only within the traditional boundaries of Western normative theories *per se*; rather, they can best be understood from epistemological perspectives, developed from a construction of social reality and cultural regimens, which in turn underscore several theoretical postulates, which, in the social sciences, guide future research designs—purposefully hypotheses and research questions. Put differently, African journalism can justify its products based on a positive theory of hybridity—that is, on the coalescence of the norms of social reality, of cultural practices and of professionalism to which it is tethered, regardless of the singularity and potency of predominant worldviews on or about their environments. This dovetails with calls to reform and adapt African journalism education through glocalisation and hybridisation, focusing on local needs and contexts, while working in a “third cultural space” (Ezumah, 2019).

In theorising, the aim of this chapter, again, is not theory building *per se*; rather, it is to identify the collective role of theories in the logics of assessing newspaper coverage of a global development and trade programme, justifying extracting the epistemological assumptions on, and implications of, such coverage for theoretical propositions on a positive theory of African journalism, that is, what African journalists actually do (situational analysis), but without drawing any conclusions based on normative theory, that is, what the journalists should do. The theory of the social construction of reality, for example, is critical to this chapter in that it aligns with positive theory, which corresponds (accurately) to reality, by analysing epistemologies as subjective truths created by social contexts transmitted through communication systems such as the news media.

African journalism, in qualitative contexts absent a formal application of theories in the inductive-abductive, factual-observation phase, relates to a number of theories that present news in valenced tones, in cultural



contexts, in historical trajectories. It is important to note that while valences can be critical to journalistic judgements, they may not always be in the best interest of the practice, because, among other things, of the tendency for some reporters to lapse into an occasional ethical misjudgement or subject themselves to journalistic routines. Even so, it is still challenging to offer news divorced from its sociocultural and historical contexts. Therefore, we now proffer the following (theoretical) propositions (P's):

- P1: African journalism ensures a proper balance among the frequencies of the use of positive, mixed and negative valences.
- P2: Mixed-valence news will be more believable than both positively and negatively valenced news on MSRI.
- P3: Resource dependency will negatively influence audiences' perceived news valence in African journalism, particularly if a newspaper is state-owned.
- P4: Resource dependency will positively influence audiences' perceived news valence in African journalism, particularly if a newspaper is privately owned.
- P5: Interdependence between private African newspapers and their environmental networks will lead to robust journalism, even to confrontational (read: investigative) journalism.
- P6: Interdependence between state-owned African newspapers and their environmental networks will lead to subservient journalism, to self-censorship, and to journalistic routines.
- P7: Journalistic emotionalism—and routines—will be predominant in environments in which Africa's sociocultural traditions such as *ubuntu* and *harambee* are also more predominant.

In theory-building research, propositional statements of working hypotheses (the bailiwick of deductive reasoning) serve the heuristic function of helping bridge the logics of inductive-abductive reasoning through tentative explanations with those of deductive reasoning, from which theories proper emanate, then subjected to testing.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This thematic analysis lays the groundwork for theorising journalism in Africa and for conceiving future research. Its significance is based on two factors: (a) the relative dearth of research on African press coverage of BRI-MSRI; and (b) the methodological approach to investigating news coverage of a global project, as a platform for identifying theories that resonate with observations and for projecting into future research through theoretical propositions. Its analysis is based on a census of news stories and opinion columns in premium newspapers in four African countries: Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria, all of which are MSRI participants. Five predominant themes emerged from this investigation, with those on economy and trade having the highest frequency; those on politics the least, suggesting that BRI-MSRI is not a front for perpetuating Chinese government's interference in African affairs. Such a result aligns with the overarching mission of BRI-MSRI: a massive global, infrastructural project launched in September 2013, with the expectation that it would have enormous potential to offer growth opportunities to all, regardless of country or region. Culture and education ranks fourth, suggesting its importance in China's projection of its soft power. This chapter focuses on one major media-related theory—framing—and on resource dependence theory, which also addresses ownership of abundant information and relationships between agents, because its results resonate well with both.

The major implications of the results of this study for theorising are twofold: (a) themes, consistent with framing theory, are the crux of the theoretical insight this study offers African journalism; and (b) networks, as described in resource dependency theory, acknowledge the extent to which African journalism relies on extra-organisational support—e.g., news agencies and independent influencers—to disseminate news. Seven theoretical propositions provide pointers for future directions. In sum, African journalism is a product of both African-culture-specific perspectives and of theories whose origins are inarguably as extraterritorial as they are rooted in local journalistic mores.

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# Legislative Control and Native Metaphors in Social Media Interactions in Africa: Making Liberal Press Theories Functional in the Continent

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## I INTRODUCTION

The first inalienable rights and seminal sense of gregariousness, irrespective of place of birth, culture or tradition and political normative is expressive freedom. In the African tradition for example, a newly born child must be loudly expressive; show its potential to protest by crying, else it gets a

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gentle stroke; more like a spanking, for not crying—protesting (Moyo & Tetsiguia, 2020) That admittance of expressive freedom is tamed by strictures and structures of society's norms, sometimes with regrettable consequences on the psyche of members of society and the development of communities, states and nations. It is not clear when laws, norms and legislations complicated unfettered freedom termed 'puerile' across cultures and civilizations. Now the nostalgia for freedom like a baby is absolutely endangered and fettered in the passing innocence tolerated or taunted briefly in a baby whose gracious euphoria wanes in a matter of time.

In organized societies and cultures around the world certain roles are passed to groups considered trained designates of accredited professions. The media were graciously entrusted the role of playing the intercom with authorities and the people, hence by understanding deemed to find more use for freedom to move within authorities, agencies and the people to freely carry around information that will benefit society.

Steel (2016) observes that much current debate about journalism's role centers around its pivotal place, if any, in engaging sectors like politics and the stretch of the civility that require transparency, accountability and a responsive critical feedback system to those in positions of power. These variables that border on significant structural and operational socio-transformation of journalism ought to be considered within a wider turf of ways in which the economic environment is impacting on profession and its products. This should form a strong plank in the reconstructive attempt of normative theories significance in the discussion, particularly in developing economies of Africa.

So far, researchers and members of the public have not been appeased as debates, ever so frequently, rise and fall on freedom of speech and communication since civilization and every new strand of that mutation and dialectics brings up new realities and questions. Realities of the present for instance, according to some scholars (Glasser & Gleason, 2013, p. 12), demand a re-interrogation of:

Who is 'the press'? In a world full of new types of communicators from 'aggregators to bloggers to designers of search engines.' Should the standard be so broad that it protects 'anyone that gathers and vets information (or as some might say, 'manipulates' it) for distribution to the public? Do essential criteria for being covered by reporters' privilege include independence, serving as a public watchdog, and serving the public good? Should

powerful players in the new communication landscape—Facebook, Twitter, Google and others—have access to the protections of reporters’ privilege? Do these entities act to promote the public’s right to know?

Freedom of expression in many cases has been rationed hugely, with higher exclusivity and room to swivel, to the media. The reason may be because of a certain belief that the media inseminate democracy and grows it better than any agency and institution in society. There are contending concerns that other groups, agencies and individuals may do quite as much for democracy as the media. Thus, worries are that the debate may have been conveniently set on populist terms; and Fenton (2014), Zelizer (2013) and Steel (2016) believe it is and that it compromises complexities.

Well, beyond that the other concern is a desire to understand the relationship between politics, economy, means/market and the under privilege; whether there is evenness, undue advantage. More pointedly the push has been to ask pertinent questions like, is freedom class related, means related, culture related and historically underpinned? Is it status bound? How do the contestation coexist with authority figure in society, and what is the situation like in the face of growing technology that is tending to change the calculus of the social equation and the balance of power between authority figure in both public and private sectors? These issues interlock one another and undercoat the objective of this chapter, which is an attempt to understand how native metaphors could be some safe valve and haven for speech freedom in many African countries and communities because of their thick thicket of native metaphors.

These concerns have a strong tapestry in theoretical foundations cemented by a medley of social, political, cultural, economic and philosophical way of arranging and weaving ideas to broadly present media relationship to society (McQuail, 2010) which is what a theory portends. Within these amorphous elements exist clusters of theories one of which is particularly relevant in contextualizing our discussion namely, the normative theories; particularly the earlier ones like Libertarian media theory and the Social Responsibility Media theory. Both theories have been used as floss and toothpicks in narratives of media freedom in African countries attempting a pull away from Authoritarian media framework. So how can a severance from observable legislative trappings be achieved within the ideological castle of Libertarianism and Social Responsibility theories or are the theories self absorbing without a cultural niche particularly in Africa?

## 2 DEBATING SPEECH FREEDOM AND THE POLITICS OF AUTHORITY

Essentially, the normative theories are postulations on media expectation rather than actual behavior or demonstration in society. Apparently the media are malleable to political and cultural pedometer of every society that spawns them. Society incontrovertible creates operational media pattern in their environments. According to Siebert, Peterson & Schramm in their book *Four Theories of the Press*, the media mirrors in a living way, as chameleon screens what its beholden to it, in society. Often, the direction of influence as McQuail (2010) avers, is in “matters such as freedom, equality before the law, social solidarity and cohesion, cultural diversity, active participation, and social responsibility. Different cultures may have different principles and priorities” (p. 5). The categorizations of normative theories into rubrics are tangential like shelves of temporary holding. The grounds shift with variations in dependent variables in societies. A breezy and brief description of the theories by McQuail (2010, p. 5) thus:

Authoritarian theory considers all media and public communication as subject to the supervision of the ruling authority and its expression or opinion, which might undermine the established social and political order. Although this ‘theory’ contravenes rights of freedom of expression, it can be invoked under extreme conditions. But what is “extreme conditions”, what interest defines it?

Free press theory (most fully developed in the United States of America, but applicable elsewhere) proclaims wide latitude of freedom in public expression and of economic operation of the media and tends to reject possible interference by constituted authorities in press activities. It however concedes all issues of media obligation and social need to a functioning market for resolution.

Social responsibility theory is a modified version of free press theory placing greater emphasis upon the accountability of the media (especially broadcasting) to society. Its thrust is that media are free, but they should accept obligations to serve the public good. Again what interest defines and designates meaning to what is considered public good, the ruling power? It vaguely suggests that the means of ensuring compliance with these obligations can either be through professional self-regulation or public intervention (or both).

Development media theory (applicable in countries at lower levels of economic development and with limited resources) takes various forms, but essentially proposes that media freedom, while desirable, should be subordinated (of necessity) to the requirements of economic, social and political development.

Alternative media theory favors media that are close to the grass-roots of society, small-scale, participative, active and non-commercial. Their role is to speak for and to the social out-groups and also to keep radical criticism alive (Atton, 2002). As was stated earlier the focus of this chapter is to evaluate the functionality of freedom in the context of Libertarian and Social Responsibility theories.

Like every other issue of control and public good Africa was never part of the narrative on freedom. A template was foisted on it and compliance was demanded and commanded never minding the fit or heat of it. Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2019) tend to affirm how endangered freedom of the press could be on a blanket submission given that it may be typically customary to mostly Western European countries, Eastern European countries, and North American countries. Limitedly, however, nations in the periphery like Oceania, Israel, and some African and Asian countries are exceptionally footnoted as part of the list.

Therefore in talking about the privileges of the contrived freedom there are polarized positions and extremes that file out with questions that mark each. Is freedom, for example a monologue; a soloist performance with linear representation and meaning or it appeals differently to class divides in society? Is public freedom press freedom, in other words; is the later a sanctuary for the former? Are they synonyms? Are the conditions for freedom necessarily parenthesized by professions, possessions and popularity of personalities? Is freedom valued by volume, preponderance of position or the economics of bazar—where the stakes are raised by the highest bidder whose rising call eviscerates competition and he/she becomes the emperor of gain? No easy answer satisfies the queries and brings closure to the insatiable quest.

There are those that believe that press freedom and public freedom should be honored with mutual sacred respect and response. One cannot be ventilated and venerated by acceptance while the other is vilified and captivated in subtle dishonor. In Nigeria the 1979 constitution-drafting committee reported having received some 400 submissions from the public, but from the titles recorded in the draft none was specifically concerned with the issue of press freedom. That led them to conclude thus:

There are no grounds for giving any Nigerian Citizen a lesser right to freedom of expression than any other person or citizen who happens to be a newspaper editor or reporter. It is felt that the right to freedom of expression is one of the most basic rights in any democratic society, and it should be a right to which every Nigerian should be entitled whether or not the Press employs him.

Furthering the argument in an editorial in the now defunct Nigerian Sunday *Times* Dr. Olu Onagoruwa pointed out that freedom of the press went considerably beyond freedom of expression (Onagoruwa, 1977 p. 3):

One bewildering paradox of our Press law is that it is a product, not of constitutional law but of the common law and statutes. It is paradoxical in particular because in any age when so much emphasis is placed on constitutionally guaranteed liberties; we still rely solely on the sterile generosity of the common law for the protection of our freedom in respect of our written thoughts and sentiments.

It probably should not shock any one that African countries are still beholden to received laws and the shadows of their trappings from Angola to Zambia (Senghore, 2012). The implication of that on functionality is like putting a round peg in a square hole. It just will not fit. Besides, the knowledge base of the profession cognoscenti is weak and may not have been able to identify the slavish implication of being cuffed to a tradition and system of operation with all its paraphernalia in the first instance. This is aptly encapsulated by the commentary of Mvendaga Jibo, in (Barbara, 1978) writing in *West Africa*, when he stated that:

Press freedom will not be a major constitutional issue for a number of reasons. First, journalists themselves have not defined what they mean by freedom of the press, and the Constituent Assembly won't spend much of its time doing this for them.

Others believe that there cannot be absolutism in the call of press freedom else it will be an inferential invitation for anarchy (Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Jeangène Vilmer et al., 2018; Zselyke, 2019). Thus the issue surrounding freedom is quicksand that caves in when positions of either extreme are built on it. It even becomes turbulent when legitimacy of power is the contest, leaving agitations like; is leadership a tyranny of a select few over

a majority that are bereaved of class and authority portfolio? Claude Lefort (1986, p. 13) contends that:

The legitimacy of power is based in the people; but the image of popular sovereignty is linked to *the image of an empty place*, impossible to occupy, such that those who occupy public authority can never claim to appropriate it.

Be that as it may, power is not abstracted neither is it hollow; it is delegated through systems of leadership to people who bear the responsibility of wielding the authority that goes with it. The question that gnaws away at the heart is that when it is given by the people to select representatives is it still retained, and to what degree? Where is the illusion of possession, with the people or the caretakers of power who instrumentalize freedom? Because of its amorphous nature of “Never meeting in one place or speaking with one voice, the public is unable to represent itself. It is doomed to be represented” (Coleman & Ross, 2010 p. 9).

Thus, Herberma’s public space is embroiled in contests for emancipation and self-determinism every day and everywhere in the narratives and discourse on freedom. As the framework for freedom, the space according to media scholars is sometimes crafted, essentially invented, contrived and customized before it is dignified with existence. The procedural labyrinth and passage whittle down its cohesion, form and steam. The residue, Lippman describes as a “phantom” the social imagination; “an idea, a postulate” (Schlegel), a “monstrous nothing” (Kierkegaard), “a ghostly figure, only ever made present through various proxies” (cited in Coleman & Ross, 2010 p. 8).

The consequence of shape-shifting existence of the sphere is the complexity of its mucky experiences and dilemma in the quest of elusive freedom in Africa especially. It is almost debatable to submit that if the space were to cease in its existence, strive for control and power may cease as well. Freedom may become mundane and less contested. So whether the message is represented panoramically, and the hortative echoes in the loudest decibel; and agitations rage in whatever hue and clamors from the press interjecting itself as voice of the voiceless; the “silent majority,” is really in a mad rush for rights of dominance of the public space (Coleman & Ross, 2010) for which no one really should be fooled.

It is instructive to note that before means of political relations became formalized by writing in the pre-colonial times, power was in speech not in writing. Formal education reduced authority to ability to write and so gave a few the opportunities; an edge of literacy, over the teeming many that

could only speak but not write. Elitism was midwife therefore into the crib of those that were able to write and so writing became a symbol of political hegemony in many African settings, especially in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, The Gambia etc. The press in many of these countries became an agency of authority in its own right, represented as a “voice for the voiceless” (Senghore, 2012). It soon became a counterpart of political actors who felt holding the press increased their sphere of control especially that many people had developed a fascination and near hypnotic appeal of the printed word. However the public, with the psychological effect of being deflowered by the elites and their agencies, continues in agitation and a hollow call for recognition as king makers; game changers. In perspective, that may be a delusional consolation in many of the African countries like Nigeria, The Gambia Guinea and Bokina Faso; where a cabal, not necessarily the public, determines political leadership.

The habitat of society generally referred to as public sphere is problematized by the ambivalence of its role as both actor and stage. As social actor, the public encapsulates those that loosely make up society. As stage, the public refers to a realm of social openness and transparency, as opposed to privacy and exclusion. Even then the notion of public space is complicated by a distinction between the official realm of “public affairs,” which tend to be highly regulated, and the inclusive public sphere that concerns everyone by virtue of its immersion into the daily routines of everyday life (Coleman & Ross, 2010).

Hence, the impression of a free system in a public sphere spawning democracy or making it robust and appealing, so it is thought, is ethnicitized within Western form of democracy. The proponents even believe it could lead to a free media. But something gives in the proposition, with a little prodding, that reveals that even the projection is inherently flawed by the beams of profit that the model of the media rest. Either position—that a free press leads to a better democracy or democracy leads to free press—spews out varying degree of media determinism that lends a type of logic supporting arguments for inherent emancipation and democratizing influence of new media forms like the internet, in spite of content or the broader context that they are a part of. Thus, media freedom finds itself morphed from a complex concept into a simplistic notion that has assumed a level of normativity and developed a common-sense relationship to the liberal democracy (Fenton, 2014).

For many, the increased call for Internet liberalism of news is because of its inherent potentials for pluralized information on broad spectrum;

assumed to better the lot of democracy (Kreiss & Brennen, 2015). Should that be the case, and does it follow in all cases? Democracy should be a secondary beneficiary of the dividend of communication technology, the Internet. The first should be the individual that is socialized into a community of a confluence of more information, ample choice from a bunch. Ultimately, he/she is oriented to be more expressive, critical and enlightened from communal correspondences. This is because; Africa like other cultures comes from “a proud tradition of ridicule and satire that has protected it from the abuse of power” (Eziefeka, 2013 p. 175) The liberal political structure in South-East Nigeria, South-West and the oligarchical North are practical examples of civil ridicule and satirical theatrics of the ruling class as normative in the tradition with no adverse consequences.

The nobility of that tradition is circumscribed by a tale-guided democracy of armchair representation that subtly de-robed the public of any vestige of power. The system has lulled the public into believing a simplistic ideological opiate that characterizes democracy as government by the people through and for the people. In reality the people are only beholden to a cycloramic wall that sets the illusion of communal control, when in the real sense they have become gratuitous victims ratifying the tyranny of the few over the many.

In many cases the position of The African Commission on ‘Human and Peoples’ Rights (African Commission) is reflective of the tradition of rights inalienable to the African. It clearly reveals the fundamental importance of freedom of expression and access to information as individual human rights, as cornerstones of democracy and as means of ensuring respect for other human rights. Many Africans knew freedom in the context of civil expression and cultural communication of communal interest, being their pristine pre-colonial norm and orientation. That was violated with the thrust of a variant of administrative system, colonial rule and later democracy, with strains of capitalism. A new culture of society was born.

### 3 INTERROGATING THE NIGERIAN PRESS SCENARIO: A SCRIPT FOR AFRICA

The moment Africa went low to be yoked with a political system it lost its communication system that was native to its political economy and social interactivity. The press it has today is not organically an African press, but a nursery for American, British, French and all European press operating system.



The emphasis on individuality and autonomy, which are key elements of liberal democracy, challenges the notions of community and interconnectedness that are paramount in African political cultures. Nigeria's political system is now a domesticated version of the United States' presidential system, although the country at the time of independence started out as a parliamentary system patterned after the British model. Both systems, American and British, are foreign replacements of indigenous governance structures. The scent of originality was lost to a complex of preference of foreign to indigenous systems hence the truism that the political economy is now a Mulato, a hybridized patch of political shades ferried from shores outside the continent of Africa. The point is, patch as we may, let us face it; liberal democracy is "too parochial for Africa's sociality, negotiability, conviviality and dynamic sense of community" (Nyamnjoh, 2005, 21). Pungently, Ette (2021, 3) adds that:

Similar to the political structure, what is regarded today, as the Nigerian press is an artifact of the colonial interlude and a derivative of the British newspaper system. It takes its bearing from traditions that emerged in the West. As a result, most of the cultural, economic and political factors that shaped the British press were products of its environment but unfamiliar to pre-colonial Nigerian society. And despite domestication and indigenization, contemporary journalistic practices in Nigeria still reflect their alien roots.

Although the imported ideologues are probably now socio-culturally tweaked, nuanced and domesticated, the systems continue to wear a toga of having mutated apparently and looking like they could acclimatize; but on almost all test grounds they continue to falter in their applicability to reality in countries like Guinea, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Ivory Coast Niger etc. Because of the collateral misfit of systems borrowed—political and the media—the affinity of the press to the politicians as co-axial elites has shifted the emphasis and focus. The debate on freedom of speech is easily morphed to press freedom. Unfortunately the press, characteristic of the class culture they fondly pay more allegiance to, rarely transpose vicariously the narrative; even if pretentiously in tribute to its parent, the public. They bask in the attention of the debate revolving around the media than to altruistically funnel it to public. In the African tradition it is dishonoring for a child to sit in the place of prominence while letting his father warm the dust. It seems the press has disowned its roots and has an adopted parenthood in the political class, after all it is even listed as one of the occupants of the *realm*: fourth estate.

Apart from the superlative adulations of the press as agents of change and democracy, it has also been responsible for compromising the common man. In some cases journalists are forced or bribed to be a mere conduit of the messages.

Political leaders and other partisan forces in many democracies—including the United States, Poland, the Philippines, and South Africa—attack the credibility of the independent and mainstream media through alarmingly hostile rhetoric, personalized abuse online, and indirect editorial pressure. They often delegitimize critical or impartial sources of information and reshape news coverage to their advantage, apparently rejecting the traditional watchdog role of a free press in democratic societies.

At other times the media sensationalize reports just because they can, a trail they have left for non-professionals who generally tag themselves as citizen journalists to follow. The argument remains that the media have not explicated themselves from economic and political interferences. Their owners are either core politicians or businessmen. In Nigeria, from Moshod Abiola (MKO) to Raymond Dokpesi, Dele Momodu, the Awolowos, Urji Uzo Kalu and a host of their ilk; the story of conflict of interests tint media allegiance. Hence, the relationships between the press and politics can be telescoped within a frame to denote, more often than not, mutual contradictions between the two or submission of the media as vassals to politics and politicians (Ztunç & PÉerre, 2021).

What it implies is that since the framework of mutual interdependence is frosted and hazily reflects a variable that shows that power relations between antagonistic forces make up an obstacle to press freedom worldwide one can only be certain: the political economy of communication ought to be cast in a mold that reveals a relationship between politics and the economy with communication. In this light the neoclassical approach to the political economy regards communication as a technical tool that serves the political and economic power. Therefore the critical political economy sees it as a complex process (Başaran & Geray, 2005). Scholars like Herman and Chomsky emphasize the weight of the owners' group in the production of media content. As a result, the editorial line of the media is determined by these structural forces consequently deflating the credibility of the media as independent representatives of society.

According to Ztunç and PÉerre (2021), McQuail (2005) identifies seven basic assumptions related to the political economy of the media. The first assumption emphasizes the importance of logic and economic control. Economic control of the media hampers the possibility of citizen

participation in the production of media content. The second assumption stresses that the media structure tends to intensify. In the third assumption, McQuail states that the global integration of the media tends to develop ceaselessly. The fourth assumption highlights the commodification of media content and audiences. The fifth assumption emphasizes the decrease in media diversity. The lack of diversity in the media landscape maintains the logic of single thought imposed by the ruling class. In the sixth assumption, McQuail claims that the dissenting and alternative voices have been neglected. Finally, he stresses that private interests override public opinion.

#### 4 A TREE WITH FOUR BRANCHES: NORMATIVE THEORIES IN PERSPECTIVE

The two theories, Libertarian and Social Responsibility theories of the Press are part of a pack, we choose to call the “normative compass” that allegedly gave direction and spring to the question of why the media of mass communication exist in different forms and serve different purposes around the world. Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm developed a typology in 1956.

The summary of Libertarian or free press theory—is simply that publication should be free from any prior censorship by any third party. Extremists Libertarian ideals believe that there should be no laws governing media operations. Such proponents according to Baran and Davis (2010, p. 100) are “First Amendment absolutists, who take the notion of ‘free press’ quite literally to mean that all forms of media must be totally unregulated.” They have a mental fixation to literalizing the First Amendment, implying that even the act of publication and distribution should be open to a person or group without permit or license. Attack on any government, official or political party should be seen as distinct from attacks on private individuals or treason and breaches of security. There should be no compulsion to publish anything. In the shades of Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black’s interpretation “No law means, no law” (Baran & Davis, 2010, p. 100). The publication of error should enjoy equal protection as that of truth in matters of opinion and belief. No restriction should be placed on the collection by legal means of information for publication.

The Social Responsibility media theory that came as a result of perceived ineffectiveness and failings of the Libertarian theory was a prescription by the Hutchins Commission. It submits that—media should accept

and fulfill certain obligations to society. These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informative communication threaded on truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance. In accepting and applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions. Media should avoid whatever might lead to crime, violence or civil disorder or give offence to minority groups. The media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various viewpoints and to rights of reply. Journalists should be accountable to society, employers as well as the market.

Authoritarian theory—media should do nothing that could undermine established authority or disturb it. Media should always or ultimately be subordinate to established authority. Unacceptable attacks on authority; deviations from official policy or offences against moral codes should be criminal offences. Journalists or other media professionals have no independence within their media organization. On the other hand Soviet media theory—media should serve the interests of, and be in control of the working class. Media should not be privately owned, media should serve positive functions for society by socialization to desired norms, education, information, motivation, mobilization, within their overall task for society. The media should respond to wishes and needs of their audiences. Society has a right to use censorship and other legal measures to prevent or punish after the event, anti social publication. Media should provide a complete and objective view of society and the world, according to Marxist-Leninist principles.

Although the spectacle of the theories are framed around objectifying, in every case, the unique functions of the Press in a milieu; for which it received a deafening accolades by scholars, there are many scathing remarks as well that almost rank the commendations. A fundamental observation is that the thrust and operational module of the theories are not cast in concrete as even the propounders of the theory agreed.

Theorists (like Nerone, 1995; Ostini & Ostini, 2002; Curran & Park, 2000) point to the inadequacies inherent in the four theories of the press as a normative framework, particularly in today's changing social economic context. These scholars particularly Nerone (1995) remonstrate that the projection of four theories may be empirically traducing. Many of the scholars believe that a more apt way of presenting the thesis is to look at four types of media guided by their circumstantial principles of operation and legitimation (Nordenstreng, 1997; Christians et al., 2009). It

particularly cast doubt and shadow on the near axiomatic position of the universality of the normative assumption.

Beating a somewhat fresh outlook for normative theory of the media, Christians et al. (2009: xi) admits the fallacy of pretending to offer a universal typology, as was the case with the four theories of the press. Instead, they suggest a framework that prioritizes dialogue between different traditions. In doing this, they acknowledge the fact that each tradition has its roots in different civilizations and religio-philosophical systems. Ultimately, this has a bearing on the way different societies will view the roles of media.

## 5 PERSPECTIVE ON LEGISLATIVE, GOVERNMENT CONTROL AND MEDIA EXPERIENCES IN AFRICA

Harrowing ordeals scar the media in Africa. These occur as the operatives do their jobs. At least 100 Burundian journalists, it is reported, have fled the country since 2015 when President Pierre Nkurunziza's bid for a third term in office touched off political violence and a fierce government crack-down on critical news media. Several outlets were forcibly closed that year, and reporters continue to face attacks and arbitrary detentions. Prominent journalists like Salvador Nahimana of Radio Maria and Jean Bigirimana of the *Iwacu* newspaper were targeted for speaking out against Nkurunziza in 2016. Nahimana was arrested and held without charges; Bigirimana went missing. The journalist may have been either arrested or killed after receiving a call from intelligence services. The government also closed the Burundian Union of Journalists, depriving local reporters of an important source of advocacy and support.

The situation in Egypt is not interestingly different. President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi regime's attempt to assert more direct control over the private media, suppressing criticism of the government's performance. What that translates to is cast in shades akin to the Burundian tactics: highhandedness, more arrest, abductions, rapes and possible extrajudicial killings of media workers. Egyptian authorities routinely restrict journalistic freedom in part through gag orders and censorship practices that suppressed criticism of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and other high-ranking officials.

The Ethiopian government—already one of the world's worst press freedom offenders—intensified its crackdown on independent media in 2016, both before and after an October emergency declaration designed to suppress massive antigovernment protests. According to CPJ, Ethiopia holds at least 16 journalists in detention—the second highest number in

sub-Saharan Africa. Journalists continue to be arrested under the country's Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and other restrictive laws, and are also held for their coverage of the protests. The state of emergency banned people from accessing exile media or using social media to share information. Localized Internet and phone blackouts were regularly reported in connection with mass assemblies. Social media and messaging applications including WhatsApp and Twitter were mostly inaccessible in parts of Oromia starting in March 2016, and sporadic cuts to those and other social media services were reported in larger areas on numerous occasions later in 2016.

Tunisia's case is like Egypt's, Burundi and Ethiopia. Freedom of the press, a precursor for stable democracy is kwashiorkor by so called recurrent security concerns which provide a nifty cover for incessant police interference with journalists' work that make the profession unattractive. This is exacerbated by the president's rhetorical attacks on the media over alleged incitement in the nation wide protests.

Security forces in South Sudan often find reason to intensify scrutiny of the media especially during when the civil conflict wore on, arresting journalists that dared to put their searchlight on the government or reported on rights abuses. Newspaper proscription is a common phenomenon. The combination of such direct censorship and self-censorship motivated by harassment and fear of arrest has left citizens with a growing information vacuum. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where President Joseph Kabila's attempts to force himself on a wangled extra time beyond the limits of the constitutionally stipulated time triggered a political crisis, authorities found excuse to interfere with the operations of independent and foreign media outlets including the UN-operated Radio Okapi and Radio France Internationale. Security forces arrested or assaulted journalists covering opposition protests and citizen-led brutal murder of Marcel Lubala Kalala, a journalist with the state-owned Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise, shocked the country in November; press freedom advocates reported that his killers had been dressed in military uniforms.

Is this pattern of repression consistent with the Nigerian expression of executive fuss with the media? Hardly, it seems. After the introduction of Global System of Global Communications (GSM) in Nigeria at the turn of the millennium and specifically with the growth of the Internet sector, Nigeria's Legislature began to enact legislation to govern the sector. Similarly, policies of the Federal Government of Nigeria, particularly the Nigerian Communications Commission's (NCC) had "Draft Lawful

Interception of Communications Regulation” that provides a legal framework for the lawful interception of communications in Nigeria. The regulation gives unsupervised powers to the NCC for the interception and storage of data from Telecommunications companies. Recently, on the crest of that, Nigeria’s Cybercrime Act has been used as the basis for the arrest of bloggers—eight bloggers on record have been arrested using the Cybercrime Act.

The Nigerian government also has a history of mass surveillance of communications, and was one of the numerous African governments who were clients of Elbit Systems, a leading manufacturer of Communications surveillance equipment. The legislative arm of government have also demonstrated overzealousness and insensitivity. In November 2015, a Senator presented a Bill for consideration and passage into law titled, “Frivolous Petitions Bill 2015”. The bill contained clauses that violated freedom of expression on social media, prompting many people to dub it “anti-social media” bill.

Nigeria like other African countries are plagued with the malaise of feeling their way and fighting for everything, including the right to be oneself, to express one’s thought, disagree and be a non-conformist. The hope is diming on the press as the last bastion of the common man. The reasons run anywhere from depression to technological eclipse on the firmament of its dominance.

While illiberal co-optation does not eradicate independent journalism, it harnesses institutional weaknesses and market conditions to severely limit its reach and impact. Media consumers can still access quality journalism produced by small, public-minded teams of reporters, but in light of increasing government control of the media landscape these outlets are fighting an uphill battle. The illiberal toolbox works because it discourages and obscures independent reporting, funnels limitless resources into the creation and maintenance of a loyal media juggernaut, and makes sure journalists know their place in the new system (Zselyke, 2019).

## 6 SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES OF FREEDOM AND THE PLATFORM OF SHIFTING REALITIES

It is clear that several agreements, treaties and constitutional provisions in Africa have widely guaranteed the freedom of Communication diversely expressed. The right to receive, seek and impart information or ideas regardless of the medium used is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights (UDHR). It is also guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and indeed in the constitutions of various African countries.

The proliferation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) holds much promise for enhancing democracy and citizen participation in governance in Africa. Digital technologies expand the breadth of possibilities for people to enjoy freedoms of expression and association, and can be an enabler for enjoying the right of access to information. However, many state and non-state actors are veritably inclined to regulate downward what individuals may do online, thereby inhibiting freedom of expression and the right to privacy, and undermining the potential of ICT to contribute to democratic governance and the enjoyment of citizens' rights (Castells, 2009).

Various African governments, over the years, have gone to great lengths to devise mechanisms of controlling the ecstasy of peoples' right to freedom of expression. The dawn of the Internet has, however, complicated matters for such states given the difficulty of controlling the spread of information, the availability of digital encryption, the worldwide nature of the Internet, and the difficulty of determining the originator of information that is anonymous or pseudonymous.

Bereft of wits many African governments have simply resorted to dusting up provisions from within the existing draconian communications laws and policies in their shelves to censor and control online communications. The first official act of Internet censorship in Africa is believed to have occurred in February 1996 when the Zambian government succeeded in removing a banned edition of *The Post* from the newspaper's website by threatening to prosecute the country's main Internet Service Provider (ISP), Zamnet. The offending edition of *The Post* was banned under the Preservation of Public Security Act because it allegedly contained a report based on leaked documents that revealed secret government plans for a referendum on the adoption of a new constitution. A presidential decree warned the public that anyone caught with the banned edition, including the electronic version, would be liable to prosecution. The mute question then is, is government wire-tapping communication to know who has the electronic copy or it was simply an empty threat?

Generally there are some disturbing mutual, yet triadic relationships that best describe the African media conflagration whose flames glow in the argument fostered in all the discussions and typologies. Roberts and Ali (2021, 10) submit a cat-and-mouse scenario; noting that it is like,



“When civic space closes offline citizens often respond by opening civic space online. When civic space opens online governments often take measures to close online space. The resulting reduction in digital rights makes it impossible to achieve the kind of inclusive governance defined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

The five tactics used most often to close online civic space in Africa are digital surveillance, disinformation, Internet shutdowns, legislation, and arrests for online speech (Roberts & Ali, 2021). For the benefit of doubt, citizens’ digital rights are breached if they are the subject of digital surveillance—like the American government does and the Nigerian government is investing heavily in the research to achieve. If governments feel they are covertly targeted they respond sometimes with disinformation to manipulate public’s beliefs and behavior. Other times they resort simply to restricting mobile or internet connection, or they out rightly arrest or attack citizens for expressing political opinion online (Jorgensen, 2006; GISWatch, 2014, 2019; Zuboff, 2019).

Of particular interest among such actions are legislations that are capable of stifling free speech, especially on digital communication technologies. For example, the Protection from Internet Falsehoods and Manipulation and Other Related Matters Bill criminalizes sharing information that can ‘diminish’ public confidence in the performance of any duty or function of, or in the exercise of any power of, the Nigerian government. This is a problematic provision whose lack of specificity can be taken advantage of to silence voices that are critical of government.

The same bill also criminalizes the operation of parody accounts on social media and stipulates a fine and/or a prison term for its violation. In spite of the fact that the bill has not been passed into law, the Nigerian police arrested Babatunde Olusola, a Nigerian university student, for operating on Twitter a parody account in the name of former President Goodluck Jonathan (Akinkuotu, 2020). The bill poses a danger to activists that may employ creative devices for communicating their critique of government. The Hate Speech Bill also prescribes a life sentence or a death sentence for propagating hate speech (Abdulrauf, 2019). Journalists from media companies that are perceived to be in opposition to the government are at greater risk of falling victim to the provisions of these legislations. For example, Nigeria’s Department of State Services (DSS) arrested a student journalist Ayoola Babalola for criticising President Muhammadu Buhari and another member of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC), Bola Tinubu. The court later granted him bail on a bond of N150,000.

Activists and civil society organizations (CSOs) that are often critical of government are equally at risk. The chilling effects of legislations such as these ones are capable of closing the civic space. So how do African netizens dodge, and continue to remain chameleonic to the censorship radar spread by crafty and repressive governments?

## 7 METAPHORICAL DISGUISE OF NETIZENS IN DIGITAL SPACE

Social media space is at the risk of mob action. Granted, there are excesses that slues through, which are reprehensible like the so-called fake news, disinformation and mis-information. Many elites and politicians emphasis and strong signals are coming from these mild symptoms not the real subterranean disease in remission that is ‘genetically’ engineered, enabled, nurtured and cultured in the ideological labs of their ilk. Arguably, the discoloring appellations (fake news, disinformation, mis-information), are often possible reactions to class ‘diseases’ to describe the reaction of other stressors; malignancies that ‘economicalizers’ of truth and labellers prefer to use such as mild euphemism to describe. When a commoner is involved, slipshod is described with full-bared fangs, characterizing the falsehood as nefarious and malicious. If the peddler of the falsehood is the financially rich and politically wealthy in society, then it is a ‘sincere’ humanistic wrongdoing worth being dismissed with the wave of the hand not a punitive legislation, except the person in question is an ‘opposition’ of substance that must be dealt with.

The picture embosses the concept of how information and communication narratives are politically polarized by the elites first for territorial hegemony and propaganda reasons. In these dockets, there is the victim complex and the villain; propagandists often employ a swart of reverse psychology to hoodwink society into thinking the manipulation is machinated by the opposition, terrorists, elements of political destabilization and parents of economic woes. This strategy relives itself and evolves with time and society. Many literature characterize this misdemeanor within the philosophical ambit of variant concept of truth—your truth, my truth and their truth (Bufacchi, 2021; Godler, 2020; Cibaroglu, 2019; Monod, 2017).

The personalization of truth reveals that the absence of political, economic or both clots is a dependent variable in criminalization or acquaintance of a citizen from blame of holding and peddling falsehood. The underdogs in the equation are the commoners in society, many who have

migrated to become Netizens leveraging on an alias ecosystem and sphere of virtual communalism. Survive, they most and that instinct kicks in. The social media platforms as ligaments hold out the potentials and elasticity of overarching resiliency, just like the bamboo—in Eastern thoughts of philosophy thought to be able to spring back, when bent to the ground, healthy, strong and unchanged.

In many ecological systems, therefore, resilience involves transformation: the system responds to a challenge not simply by restoring its usual form but by changing in ways that better fit the new environmental constraints. This notion of resilience as adaptation and transformation is crucial for psychological and social resilience relevance in the survival schema of social media users in Nigeria. A hub of that is the use of native metaphors in making meaning common.

According to Eagleton (2007) meaning in interactional sense could be said to fall into three categories. One is to do with intending something or having it in mind; in fact, the word meaning is etymologically related to the word mind. Another category concerns the idea of signifying, while the third runs the first two categories together by indicating the act of intending or having it in mind to signify something. The context of meaning can be language. And language is more than alphabetical signs. It encompasses symbols as well as long as meaning can be derived, not necessarily in formal lingo.

Language can be gorgeously rich or simplistically shallow depending on how it is nurtured in speech and the context of the vocabulary. It is reason, for example that poetic language has the exclusivity of appealing to the elites. The reason is because of the structural fluidity, labyrinthine connotation and metaphorical adornments. In Africa the forest of metaphorical language was lush and brilliant in its cultural dotage and vintages from which instructional modules are often drawn in speeches and teachings. Every language has a chest full of it and meanings are deep when ever they are employed. They are the magic in rhymes, the invisible arrows that convey meanings and messages in deep conversations; they characterized euphemistic renditions shot silently, yet lethally from pained heart to recalcitrant leaders. They are metaphysical grounds for mobilizing protest quickly and widely.

They are witty, shot and always pungent. They are adages, cuter than tweets; and why can't they be adapted on such platforms? Their precisions are guided by proficient usage facilitated by traditional citizens enamored and conversant with the language of communication at every instance.

Because of their multi-coloration, they are fluid enough to look benign and unassumingly harmless. They exhale more interpretations, layered over each other with diffusive implants to demobilize overzealous reactions against their use. Today a parchment of them survived even the days of autocratic regimes like those of President Ibrahim Babangida. Fela Anipola Kuti, the Maestro of Afro beat used it in his songs and coasted free without roughening many feathers in authority. When founding Editor of the *NewsWatch* magazine was killed by a letter bomb, Mr. Kuti employed the wit of metaphor to put the blame where it allegedly belonged, when no one else could, in his song. A line in his song is: “Who kill Dele Giwa? Na Baba, if you say ‘gida’ na you sabi” is one apt case in point.

When Idris Abubakar a Contemporary artist sang “Nigeria jagajaga” it was a quasi metaphor on its own right of the sorry state of the nation. The most ire that drew for his brashness was a vituperative rejoinder from the President at the time, but not a legislative smack down. Poetic verses, laced with native metaphors that are closed-ended, that even lampoon authorities for the wrong they do are very unlikely to attract punitive sanctions. Poems enjoy a license and permit because of their tattiness and breeziness, plus their coastal-wide vista of interpretation. That and other technical alibi are their defenses.

The problem is that the culture, language, history and tradition that should provide enough shrubberies for Nigerians and lots of other Africans have been mowed down by trans-acculturation and replacement tendencies of western language, values and culture. Thus, there is language impoverishment in the sphere. For example, most youth in Nigeria, especially, are unable to fluently speak their native languages, swim deep in the currents of their metaphors to bring out adages that depict their thoughts. The older generation is alienated from their wards and younger generation generally. In so-called Francophone countries the problem is worst. Many Africans there have literally no language to lean on and native metaphors to recall.

In all, there is a dearth for language mentorship. The thickets of deep meanings are weak in the idiolects of most Netizens in Nigeria and sampled African countries. Language is and has always been a haven, a sanctuary, for those that cherish its sheltering. Its renaissance is good for development of cultural relativism in narrative interpretation. The beauty and strength of metaphors are venerated by minds like George Orwell, the author of *Animal Farm* and *1984*; Wole Soyinka and his *And the Man Died* and a host of others. The opportunities are more robust with

technology to weave thoughts in native metaphors than in time past with platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, TiKTok etc.

The frameworks of liberal theories are decorative models. Beyond their aesthetics they have to be modified within the context of local appropriation in many African milieu for any derived significance to be appreciated. Voltmer (2013, p. 28) avers that what the media across board requires is probably a “minimum of regulation and a maximum of rights”. Clearly in developing nations that appears to be a wishful thinking. It is high time an Afro-centric theory of media operations and appropriation is conceived.

## 8 CONCLUSION

The tactics of government in managing its mirror image is reactionary. Often it predictably comes down to smashing the mirror. Society that holds out the mirror, which is a feedback opinion on what government activity, inactivity and how its mannerism has affected society, bears the brunt of their rage. Although the public’s last possession is probably their number that legitimized the authority figure expressing tyranny, the contest is now for popularity and personality. The politicians want all, the mentality of making vassals all on whose crest they rode. This has been the struggle. If the dynamism in technology is an equalizer, it ought to be retooled to strengthen the collectivism of communal autonomy. The power of speech is proportional to anatomical influence that can tip the balance of political power. In Africa, its trigger must be the wealth of culture and language, which regrettably is loosing grip and fulcrum. No language is worth its name if it is denuded of cultural metaphors. Netizens must see strength and invisibility in metaphors if they must hold their own and maintain their space. Native metaphors, definitely not a playground for minors and unschooled, gives invisibility to those that can be adept in their usage.

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# Understanding Critical and Cultural Theories: An African Perspective

*Moses Ofome Asak*

## I INTRODUCTION

Critical and cultural theories are not mutually exclusive; yet, they can be distinctive depending on the focus of enquiry. For this reason, the consensus among scholars is that the critical and cultural theories are not one unified theory of reality (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). The theories draw from several disciplines that include economics, philosophy, politics, psychology, psychoanalysis, culture and a host of others. However, there is no doubt that the basis for any critical theoretical framework is grounded in the works of Karl Heinrich Marx, the German philosopher and economist. Karl Marx's writings concern the economic sphere where the control of factors of production (land, capital and labour) is in the hands of a few that breed class structure and inequality in societies (Boyer, 2018). Marx's perspective stands against capitalism which he labelled as exploitative in nature and detrimental to the masses. Students of Marxism are basically regarded

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as advocates of socialism. Similarly, neo-marxism is based on the same principles as Marxism, but with different undertones as Marx ‘disciples,’ Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse demonstrate in the Frankfurt School of thought, by extending Karl Marx’s ideas to the political and social realms (Birrell, 2019).

Although the Frankfurt School became synonymous with critical theories, later, many scholars (including a host of African scholars like W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James, Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Reiland Rabaka and others) continued with different shades of the critical theory tradition. The works of these critical theorists remain relevant and point to a diagnosis of a broad and encompassing culture in the current realities of contemporary societies. The engagement of critical theoretical endeavour is therefore ubiquitous in all analyses of meaning which makes such theories simultaneously critical and cultural (Threadgold, 2003). This implies that theorizing is always situated in the context of a culture. Consequently, global socio-economic and political realities cannot be divorced from the cultural milieu of societies. The African society is not an exception to this rule which explains why eminent Africans have explored their socio-political and cultural state in relation to the West in particular. For example, W.E.B. Du Bois, in many ways, developed the field of philosophy and race. His contributions to social philosophy, political philosophy, and philosophical art have had a significant impact on our understanding of race and the race issue. He delved deeper than anyone else into the race issue in all of its facets. However, only a few African scholars appear to be expanding on Du Bois’ philosophical ideas and reasoning about the Negro or race problem today particularly in the context of dominion over African culture.

The project of British cultural studies, as expressed in the works of Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), is directly or indirectly tied to the intellectual establishment of cultural studies. Cultural Studies theory maintains that culture cannot be understood without reference to politics, and cultural studies’ practitioners are often concerned with issues of power, attempting to engage in analysis or theory that will contribute to counter-hegemonic struggle, generally in a Marxist manner (Zachariah, 2019).

Critical cultural theories from an African perspective seek to uncover the preconceptions and assumptions that prevent Africans from appreciating the full scope of how the world operates, particularly in a digital and cultural age and how it affects the cultures in Africa, both positively and

negatively. Such engagement, involving an African's construction of his reality, is inextricably linked to cultural studies, which rejects the notion that humans are constantly duped by agents of cultural production and are unaware of their own subjugation. Understanding critical and cultural theories from an African perspective is important because it broadens consciousness and aids in shedding the cloak of neocolonialism and imperialism by being cautious in the consumption of forms of contents and accoutrements that Western media has to offer through new media forms (Langmia, 2016).

This chapter is organized into five major sections: first, to capture new and current understandings of assumptions and concepts of the critical cultural theories; second, to identify major theories under the umbrella of the critical cultural theory; third, to establish the link between global media systems and cultural realities in Africa; fourth, to discuss specific cases in Nigeria and Tanzania; and fifth, to present a fair constructive criticism of current administration in one African country as a typical example of what obtains in other African countries.

### *1.1 Understanding Assumptions and Concepts of the Critical Cultural Theories*

To gain a deeper understanding of critical cultural ideas, we must gain, in addition to the historical foundations, an understanding of their features. Fuchs (2016), for example, examines the nature of critical theory and refers to a dialectical approach to studying society that examines political economics, dominance, exploitation, and ideology. He emphasized a normative approach based on the belief that dominance is a problem that requires a domination-free society. This is a move that advocates any social philosophy approach that prioritizes a critical and reflective study of society and culture in order to reveal and question power structures (King, 2016). The nature of this theory is such that it is concerned with averting the loss of truth that purveyors of previous knowledge have worked so hard to achieve. It strives to contextualize philosophical claims to truth and moral universality, with a focus on human emancipation.

As a social theory, critical theory is concerned with critiquing and improving society as a whole. It seeks to uncover the preconceptions and assumptions that restrict individuals from appreciating the full scope of how the world operates underneath the surface of social life (Crossman, 2020). Theories like these, Crossman notes, unpacks and critiques

assumptions that certain individuals in society are oppressed and require empowerment; that all fundamental classifications in all fields should be questioned in order to achieve independence; that individual human capacities must be developed and linked to democracy in order for society to improve; and that technology is not always bad, but only when it takes precedence over people's values and interests, and becomes unethical (see also Livingstone & Das, 2013; Langmia, 2016).

Cultural studies, like a number of other often overlapping bodies of intellectual and academic work that have emerged since World War II (feminism, critical race theory, postcolonial theory, and queer theory, among others), is politically motivated; it is dedicated to understanding power—or, more precisely, the relationships between culture, power, and context—and to producing knowledge that can help people understand happenings in the world or in specific contexts (Giroux, 2004; Giroux & McLaren, 2014). Cultural studies are thus methods of politicizing philosophy and theorizing politics. It is always concerned with how power infiltrates, contaminates, inhibits, and empowers people's ability to live in dignity and security (Mecheril, 2018). Because if one wants to change power relations—if one wants to influence people even a little—one must start where people are, from where and how they live their lives. Cultural studies try to use theory (and empirical study) strategically to gather the knowledge needed to redescribe the context in ways that allow for the formulation of new or better political strategies.

Power and politics are also approached as multifaceted, situational, and contextual phenomena in cultural studies, which refuse to reduce power to a single dimension or axis, or to presuppose in advance what the relevant sites, purposes, and forms of power and struggle are. As a result, it promotes a flexible, pragmatic or strategic, and frequently modest approach to political plans and options (Zhao, 2016).

Two of cultural studies' most essential political assumptions are also two of its most contentious. Cultural studies reject the idea that humans are dupes, continuously duped by cultural producers and unaware of their own subjugation. And it does not presume that people are always in command, always resisting, or always working with a thorough grasp of the situation (Hall, 2005; Mambrol, 2020). This is not to say that cultural studies do not acknowledge that individuals are frequently fooled by contemporary culture, that they are lied to, and that they either do not realize it or refuse to confess it for a variety of reasons. Cultural studies, however,

oppose the vanguardism that characterizes so much of today's political and intellectual discourse (Giroux et al., 2013).

Furthermore, contestation is central to cultural studies, sometimes as a fact of life, but always as a potential that must be pursued. Contestation can also be used to describe cultural studies' strategy, which sees the world as a battleground and a balance of power (Ross, 2007; Fiske, 2010). Deep thinking is required to comprehend the balance and identify strategies to question and modify it. Of course, cultural studies realizes that the relationships between survival, change, struggle, resistance, and opposition are not always predictable, and that each can take many different forms and settings, ranging from ordinary life and social connections to economic and political institutions (Haferkamp & Smelser, 1992; Cerna, 2013). It is an attempt to generate knowledge about the context that will strengthen current struggles and constituencies, seek knowledge that will assist to make the present predicament visible, and offer up opportunities for making the world a better, more humane place. It tends to make politics respond to the authority of knowledge while simultaneously attempting to place knowledge at the service of politics.

## 2 WHAT ARE CRITICAL CULTURAL THEORIES?

Scholars analyze texts, artifacts, and practices in the field of communication to better understand how they shape and are shaped by the cultural settings and social formations from which they originate. Critical cultural studies strive to intervene against social and political causes that promote injustice or inequality, rather than simply researching culture. It is a broad phrase that refers to a variety of interdisciplinary theories intended towards social critique. Such theories argue that historical contexts and social processes always impact understanding, posing a challenge to the concept of objective knowledge (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). The phrase 'critical cultural studies' highlights the intricate interaction between critical theory and cultural studies, which are both wide and diverse areas (Steinmetz, 2018). The complexity of this relationship can be seen in the various ways in which scholars annotate the phrase *critical cultural studies*, sometimes using punctuation marks like a hyphen (critical-cultural studies) or a slash (critical/cultural studies), or using a conjunction (critical and cultural studies) to emphasize the productive tensions between these fields of study.

Critical theory emerged from the Frankfurt and New York-based Marxist Institute for Social Research. It places social justice and the link

between knowledge, power, and ideology at the center of pedagogy (Fletcher, 2018). The theory is crucial because it strives to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them and according to Horkheimer, it is adequate only if it meets the explanatory, practical, and normative criteria at the same time (Bouwel, 2009). In this way, it is a powerful force in tertiary education, and it has become an essential aspect of the pursuit of knowledge. As a result, competing ideas have become standard bearers, with critical theory serving as a yardstick for full comprehension. Any approach to social philosophy that focuses on reflecting on and criticizing society and culture in order to reveal and challenge power structures is known as critical theory (Fuchs & Qiu, 2018).

Critical theory seeks to expose any ideology that is wrongly justifying some sort of social or economic oppression. It contends that the so-called oppressed even obstruct revolution by adhering to their oppressors' socio-cultural belief systems. In this lies the theory's poignant link to culture and its fundamental goal to emphasize the intrinsic connection between politics, values, and knowledge in order to maintain that politics and values are the foundations that lead to scientific knowledge (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). While the theory separates everyone in society into the oppressed and oppressors in conventional Marxist form, it contributes to the process of eliminating that oppression.

Critical theory is not far-fetched because it involves questioning society's dominant viewpoint and provides an understanding and opportunity for disadvantaged individuals of a society to express their critical opinions (Mirra et al., 2018). As a result, it promotes the notion that education is the most important tool for social transformation and because of its emphasis on social justice and empowerment, critical theory is extremely important, with its core concepts focusing on the entire society in its historical context of how it came to be configured at a specific point in time (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019).

The foregoing implies that critical theory is intertwined with culture and cultural theories which serve as a foundation for cultural enquiry. However, because cultural studies are used in so many different ways, it can be difficult to come up with a single definition to know exactly what individuals are opposing or supporting (Hall, 2016). Cultural theories have been used to describe: any progressive cultural criticism and theory replacing 'critical theory,' that served as an umbrella term in the 1980s. For example, while it deals with the politics of textuality as it applies to social life, with a focus on poststructuralist theories of ideology, discourse,

and subjectivity, it also encompasses digital popular culture, particularly in relation to the political dilemma of identity and difference in cultural studies. The project of British cultural studies, as expressed in the work of Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), is directly or indirectly tied to the intellectual establishment of cultural studies. Cultural studies as a theory maintains that culture cannot be understood without reference to politics, and its practitioners are often concerned with issues of power, attempting to engage in analysis or theory that will contribute to counter-hegemonic struggle, generally in a Marxist manner (Zachariah, 2019).

### *2.1 Critical Cultural Theory: A Variety of Theories*

Theories that fall under critical cultural theory are numerous and they are also part of the media literacy movement which is the ability to access, understand, evaluate, and communicate message literacy based on research from a variety of sources. From this perspective, critical theory holds that access to media and media content limits the audience's requirements, possibilities, and choices while cultural theory maintains that media content can serve as guidance for action, either implicitly or overtly. So, people must consider how their interactions with media texts affect the objectives that such interactions can serve in their contexts. The following are a few of these important theories: symbolic interaction, social construction of reality, media intrusion, cultivation, framing, and social cognitive and social semiotic theories.

### *2.2 Symbolic Interaction Theory*

Symbolic interaction theory postulates that culture is the complex set of symbols that guides and shapes our experiences, and it is created and propagated by communities. This was one of the earliest social science ideas to address how communication plays a role in how we learn culture. The social behaviourists' school of thought were certain that the cognitive processes that mediate learning needed to be given more attention. They also felt that the social context in which learning occurs should be taken into account. Traditional behaviourists typically undertake laboratory trials in which animals for example are exposed to certain stimuli and trained to act in a specific manner. These experiments are deemed overly simplistic by social behaviourists who argued that human existence was simply too

complicated to be comprehended through animal behaviour programming (Heyes, 2012).

Pragmatism and the Chicago school see symbols as abstract representations of invisible phenomena. When a part of culture loses its usefulness, it stops structuring experience and becomes a collection of meaningless words. Idealists claimed that culture dominated people, while behaviourists claimed human behaviour is a conditioned response to environmental circumstances. Interactionism using symbols means individuals give symbols meaning, and those meanings come to govern those people (Guyer, 2015).

The application of symbolic interactionism is relevant despite the fact that Meads' initially proposed concept in the 1930s did not attract attention until the 1970s and 1980s. Media theorists were hesitant to appreciate the relevance of George Herbert Mead's views, given his strong emphasis on interpersonal connection. The strengths of the theory lie in its rejection of the simple stimulus-response models of human behaviour. The weaknesses of this theory are that media content is given too much authority and attention is paid to social institutions' role in shaping people's behaviour (Scott, 2013).

### 2.3 *Social Construction of Reality Theory*

Social constructionism as a school of social philosophy holds that individuals' potential to reject or reconstruct significant phenomena and social institutions is restricted. It relates to the belief that our relationships with others, as well as our life experiences, influence how we present ourselves to others. For example, the notion that pink is for girls and blue is for boys is a social construct based on gender and object color, since gender refers to the socially built traits of women, men, girls, and boys. Similarly, because people's perceptions of age differ around the world, age is socially constructed (Jonaukaite et al., 2019).

The Thomas theorem is also an example of the social construction of reality, because our conduct is based on our subjective perception of reality rather than the actual fact of a situation. A teenager who is labeled as deviant, for example, may begin to act deviant. He gives his label substance. In 1928, William Isaac Thomas and Dorothy Swaine Thomas proposed the notion that if men characterize situations as real, the consequences will be real as well. In other words, the action is triggered by the interpretation of a scenario. Essentially, it indicates that the result of a situation is



determined by how an individual perceives it rather than the situation itself. In essence, the social construction of reality maintains that everything is a social fabrication, as virtually every aspect of our society is. This theory is particularly essential since it aims to better understand the processes that lead to racialized, gendered, or sexualized differentiations so that power relations might be untangled (Friedman, 2016).

#### *2.4 Media Intrusion Theory*

The media intrusion theory claims that the media has taken over politics to the extent that it has rendered politics ineffective. As a result, there is proof that the political system is broken. Thus, the argument that the media has intruded into and taken over politics to the point where politics has been subverted is known as media intrusion theory. The strength of this theory lies in the fact that it establishes a foundation for social transformation; and it raises serious concerns about the way news organizations operate. The weaknesses include its focus on the operation of the news media when no actual or empirical evidence of its effects has been provided; a cynical attitude on the news media and their social role; it is overly concerned about political interference; and it is predicated on the notion of elite plurality (Gibson, 2010).

#### *2.5 Culture Industries: Media and the Commodification of Culture*

The study of what happens when culture is mass-produced and marketed in direct rivalry with locally based cultures is one of the most exciting and challenging viewpoints to emerge from critical cultural studies. Such a study is referred to as commoditization of culture. Media, in this view, are industries that specialize in the production and dissemination of cultural goods. They have developed at the expense of small local producers, as have other modern sectors, and the repercussions of this displacement have been and continue to be disruptive to people's lives. The strengths of this theory include an established foundation for social transformation; an identification of issues caused by cultural content re-pack. Its weaknesses include making a case for something without demonstrating it empirically and having a gloomy attitude on media influence and ordinary people (Tsing, 2013).

Advertising: The Ultimate Cultural Commodity presupposes that most individuals have little interest in and no real need for most of the marketed products or services, thus advertising bundles of promotional messages such that they would be noticed and acted on by those who have little interest in and no genuine need for them. Marketers frequently depict product consumption as the best method to build a meaningful personal identity, have fun, make friends, and influence others, or solve issues (often ones we never knew we had). Advertising, when compared to other forms of mass media content, is the most closely aligned with older Marxist ideologies. Its goal is to encourage consumption that benefits product makers but may not be in the best interests of individual customers (Nelson, January 11, 2021).

### 3 GLOBALIZATION, MEDIA AND CULTURE

Globalization refers to a process in which geographical constraints on social and cultural structures are reduced, increased social and cultural interconnectivity across time and space is created, and a greater awareness of this separation of social and cultural interaction from geographical constraints is developed. The media have a significant impact on cultural globalization in two ways that are mutually interdependent: first, they facilitate the widespread transnational transmission of cultural products, and second, they aid in the establishment of communication networks and social structures (Matos, 2012). Existing local and national cultures are being challenged by the constantly rising supply of media products from an international media culture. The amount of supply, as well as the massive technological infrastructure and financial resources that propel it has a significant impact on local cultural consumption patterns and the viability of independent cultural creation. Global media cultures foster a constant cultural exchange in which important concepts like identity, nationality; religion, social standards, and way of life are constantly questioned and challenged.

Global media, by their very nature, encourage the reorganization of cultural and social networks; and help the construction of new communities in the same way that traditional media have aided the formation of national communities. The Internet, for example, not only allows people to communicate across borders, but it also allows them to build new social networks in which they can interact with one another (Matos, 2012).

### 3.1 *The Link Between Global Media Systems and Cultural Realities in Africa*

This section examines the link between global media systems and cultural realities in Africa through the lens of critical cultural theory because the media and culture interact and are intertwined. A mass communication infrastructure that permits the flow of media materials to generate a broadly based popular culture for a worldwide mass audience is at the heart of these interactions (Muswede & Lubinga, 2018; see also Okorie, 2010). This infrastructure is basically the Internet and the interaction is inclusive since media reflects a people's customs, culture, and values, and it can lead to mental and emotional evolution and revolution in those who receive information. Culture is primarily spread through the media in the developed world and it is formed in part by messages in the media, just as society is developed in part by messages in the media. The popularity of cultural products can influence which media channels individuals favour in their selective perception.

On the other side, media globalization is the worldwide integration of media through cross-cultural exchange of ideas. As a result, worldwide news broadcasts, television programming, new technology, movies, and music are now considered as having a vital role in boosting globalization and allowing cultural interaction and numerous flows of information and images between countries. Because they inform, educate, and entertain people, the press, radio, and television play an important role and they have an impact on how people perceive the world and modify their perspectives (Wang, 2008; Matos, 2012).

Since various kinds of mass communication have had numerous positive and negative effects on society, the importance and effects of such global media technologies that extend across the globe cannot be overstated because they have aided in the dissemination of cultural products as well as democratic and human rights messages beyond borders. In today's globalizing culture, new social media on the Internet have become increasingly prominent components of our daily lives. In the twenty-first century, social media has changed the way individuals communicate. Because social media provide a context where people from all over the world can communicate, exchange messages, share knowledge, and interact with one another regardless of the distance that separates them, this occurrence has transformed society in a globalized world by impacting social interactions and indigenous or traditional cultures. In some ways, this transforms

globalization into a social concept that denotes increasing and frequent communication. People's perceptions of themselves and how they communicate are changing as a result of constant communication via media technologies. As more individuals opt to engage online rather than in person, the ease of connecting through technology and conversing online has an impact on culture both locally and globally (Anderson & Rainie, 2018).

As a result, we have a media culture, particularly in African countries, that has been highly influenced by mass media, in which communication occurs continually and quickly across vast populations. A collection of cultural values and concepts that emerge from a population's shared exposure to cultural activities; communication mediums, music and art, and so on can be observed. It is now possible to create mass culture. Only with modern communications and electronic media are we able to achieve this. Individuals are not infected with mass culture; rather, this is a significant and recent transition from traditional cultures that were established through person-to-person connection (Edelstein, 2013; Landsberg, 2018).

Langmia (2016) is concerned about the ease with which electronic media has transcended national borders, as it has bolstered imperialism and cultural invasion capacities. As a result, "attitudes and values" in developing countries have been harmed, and African culture has been obliterated, undervalued, degraded, and twisted. In most rising countries, for example, Western media have entered native language forums. To correct this, Langmia says traditional cultures and cyber cultures must be hybridized in order to re-establish individual human liberty in a specific cultural framework. He reminds us that a people's culture is their identity, and that once that identity is lost, the people become irrelevant. He emphasizes that a new culture does not obliterate the previous one. Rather, it adapts, hybridizes, and accommodates it in order to achieve harmony and develop a balance that can withstand foreign control (Langmia, 2016). Although cultural hybridization is the breeding of cultures that have arisen through global mass media, the localized global media form cuts across borders and takes on a life of its own. Langmia further argues that since the introduction of digital communication in the early 1990s, Western culture, and by extension African culture, has entered a new phase of virtual reality because we no longer speak of a single identity, but of several identities shared by a single person: one in cyberspace and another in an airplane or space rocket (Langmia, 2016).

Africans are now compelled to communicate and live in a cyberculture, cyber-subculture, and cyberspace virtual environment. According to

Langmia, cyberculture is the dominating, hegemonic function of Western ways of life observable in cyberspace, and all other subcultures must copy. Outside the frontiers of Europe and the United States, it has become a new reality for the fragile, consumer-driven populous, continuing and perfecting imperialism or neocolonialism in Africa (Langmia, 2016). The media's participation in the globalization process is based mostly on media technologies that are designed to reach a large audience through mass communication, and this activity is critical in facilitating information flow between countries. Because individuals can obtain information nearly instantly through new media like cell phones and the Internet, this is one of the most powerful ways to influence people around the world.

The preceding suggests that the link between media globalization and culture is self-evident, owing to media's significant impact on cultural globalization in two mutually dependent ways: the media facilitate widespread international transmission of cultural products, and they also aid in the establishment of communication networks and social structures.

### 3.2 *Global Media and African Culture: The Good, the Bad*

Global media cultures explores the relationship between the media, culture and globalization. The idea of cultural globalization promotes the flow and blending of cultural values between countries. This affects the full amount of shared attitudinal tendencies and talents, art, beliefs, moral norms, and activities that characterize Africans, which has been termed as African culture. On the other hand, the process by which national cultures are overrun by the inflow of news and entertainment from other countries—primarily the United States and other industrialized nations—is known as cultural imperialism. This hypothesis is nearly always linked to media imperialism because they both postulate the same thesis of America's dominance of most countries' media, particularly in developing countries (see Opoku et al., 2018).

Cultural imperialism has been defined as the imposition of many features of one's own culture on another by a dominating community, usually politically or economically (Weynand, 2020, May 26). Arowolo (2010) opines that the process of cultural westernisation in Africa has become ubiquitous and widespread, to the point where Western civilisation has surpassed African values and culture, with the latter seen as inferior; and that the impact of Western civilisation on Africa, as it has on other communities and cultures in the so-called Third World, has resulted

in a discontinuity of life styles across the continent. This has resulted in a cultural dualism that frequently manifests as a genuine issue in real-life situations. Cultural imperialism thesis asserts that media messages emerging from Western developed countries have a significant impact on audiences all over the world, according to international communication theory and research (García & Birkinbine, 2018; Kraidy, 2002).

The debate over media imperialism began in the 1970s, when developing countries began to criticize wealthy countries' influence over the media. Cultural imperialism today displays itself mostly through media, particularly mainstream and social media, in global communication. Thus, contends that media flows are inextricably linked to economic power; the more open markets are, the more able firms from economically powerful countries are to control global marketplaces. Furthermore, unlike Marx, who believed that the world's workers would eventually unite and overturn capitalism Gramsci argued that culture and the media were more important than ever (Liulevicius, 2020).

Many social theorists continue to contend that today's society is organized by growing globalization, which is bolstering the dominance of a global capitalist economic system, displacing companies, and undermining local cultures and traditions (see Okorie, 2010). Daramola and Oyinade (2015), citing Kura notes that 'globalization has actually made the ill-educated Nigerians to know their rights through the international prints and electronic media which government cannot control (especially the BBC, CNN, VOA, RFI).' p. 41. Without a doubt, media has had a positive or negative impact on African civilizations; in fact, the elimination of various negative practices, including the wicked act of killing of twins, the caste system, and the burying of people alive in the forest, are examples of positive effects from the past. Today, the global media has aided global information transmission, allowing African countries to "leapfrog" to new technology and thereby enhance their living conditions (Cilliers, 2021).

The impact of international media on African marriages is equally significant. In all African traditions, marriage is a vital component of life since it bestows respect and is the environment within which family lines are extended. This is one area where we are seeing a significant growth in the influence of western media. Through Africa's exposure to western culture perpetuated via television shows, movies, and other digital platforms, global media may have affected the African tradition of polygamy, or marrying numerous women who cannot be catered for in many circumstances. This has influenced many Africans, particularly the

youth, to choose monogamy, or a marriage arrangement in which one man has only one wife and a small number of children to care for. Nwaegbu et al. (2011) identify what they consider the beneficial effects of globalisation on African culture as: (a) the blending of African culture with other cultures. (b) Internet-based access to African culture; (c) digitalization and preservation of African cultural artefacts; and (d) global access to Africa's cultural heritage.

Although foreign cultural policy is crucial in and of itself for developing long-term and deep relationships between countries in international relations, we must also remember that in our efforts to promote global cultural communication, we conserve the variety and diversity of cultures. In this respect, there is also the negative impact of global media on African culture. Foreign cultures that are introduced and propagated through global media have been cited as sources of detrimental sociocultural shifts in places like Africa. Such media globalization's influence on African culture suggests that Africa's integration through globalization has already destroyed several African countries' cultural sovereignty and infused western culture and the democratic system of governance. Destruction of custom, belief, and traditions; increase in the rate of immorality; increase in the rate of violence, and so on are some of the downsides of foreign media that have been advanced. Furthermore, foreign media dilutes our cultural values and broadcasts a variety of programs that teach children about disobedience, and unnecessary freedom. Foreign media is seen to have a significant part in destroying African culture and moral standards, as well as pushing African adolescents to imitate western culture in the guise of modernization (Arowolo, 2010).

According to the cultural imperialism notion, Western nations control the media around the world, which has a powerful effect on Third World cultures by pushing Western views on them, resulting in the destruction of their national and indigenous cultures. The thesis, according to Croteau and Hoynes, is that the media goods originating from the West affect the cultures of other nations so profoundly that they amount to a cultural form of dominant products (see Opoku et al., 2018). Western society's values and images are entrenched in media items offered by Western firms. Individualism and consumerism are pervasive in western media products, and they frequently clash with traditional values in the countries where they are promoted. This is because local traditions and values are eroded as a result of the influx of media products (Opoku et al., 2018).

## 4 MEDIA IMPERIALISM ACROSS AFRICA

A continent's media should be infused with certain cultural sensibilities as a strategy to preserve its culture and values. This is because all acts of transmitting messages to channels that connect people are included in the communication process. The use of language and other cultural objects exemplifies this. Consequently, African scholars particularly have begun to be critical and raise issues about what would happen to Africa's rich culture as the globe becomes a global village due to continuous flow of global media and free trade forces into the continent (UNCTAD, 2019). For example, a study by Maikaba and Msughter (2019) suggests that digital media and globalization are exerting significant influence on the production and consumption of media products and acculturation and that globalization represents a continuation and expansion of western imperialism; new phase of African nations' recolonization, in which the promotion of western linguistic heritage and literacy canons take precedence over African indigenous languages and literature.

This section looks at how global media has influenced African culture in Tanzania and Nigeria. For the purposes of this chapter, areas that have been negatively impacted by media globalization, such as language, food, drinks, dances, and songs, women's beauty (hair style), fashion (clothing style), respect for elders, and exposure to global media of newspapers, television, and the Internet are highlighted (Rwegelera, 2012). In all of these, language is the most significant instrument that connects all of the above elements of culture.

### 4.1 *Tanzania*

The advent of commercial media and the Internet has exacerbated popular anxiety about the consequences on Tanzanian culture and morality. A few of these effects are highlighted here.

#### 4.1.1 *Use of Language*

Each country or nation has its own way of doing things which is its culture that distinguishes it from other countries. But when culture is perverted, the nation loses its identity over time. At the end of the day, it loses its voice which is the language that binds the culture of a people. The word 'language' derives from the Latin word *lingua*, which means tongue. Human speech, whether spoken or written, is defined as language. It



allows people to communicate with one another as well as write their thoughts and ideas. Killing a language is also killing a culture because culture is learnt and passed on from generation to generation through language (Rwegelera, 2012).

The English language is viewed as a language of prosperity and development by most governments, lost scholars, and the general public, who associate it with the British and American people. For this reason, in many countries of the world, all key advertisements, job opportunity details, and product labels are written in English. This in itself is a form of media intrusion. In Tanzania, the use of English in schools and the media could have a significant impact on educational and employment opportunities because all of the textbooks used in university and secondary school programs are written in English. It is the language of conferences, academic journals, and the national assembly, while some papers are delivered in English in the national assembly and members of parliament have the choice of using both English and Kiswahili at the same time because they are both official languages. However, because they do not speak English, the majority of Tanzanians do not understand anything said in the national legislature (Rwegelera, 2012).

From the Internet to television (TV) to print media, youths are internalizing every aspect of the English language. They replicate the American English song, despite the fact that they frequently speak terrible English. They strike a position that is similar to that of Americans or British people; the pose is also utilized in Kiswahili. Wang (2008), quoting Cairncross, notes that 'In countries other than the United States, people fear a future in which everybody speaks English and thinks like an American, with cultural diversity engulfed in a tidal wave of crass Hollywood values' (p. 205). English medium schools are preferred by both parents and children in Tanzania. They see these schools as a step in the right direction for their children's future success and children are proud of their ability to speak English in front of their peers in conventional government elementary schools where English is not emphasized. They do not consider Kiswahili to be a significant language for achieving greater success in life (Rwegelera, 2012). What they learn from television emphasizes this. In fact, English is seen as modernity and a means to acquire better standards of living and to be associated with the 'Joneses'. Consequently, for many Tanzanians, English is a language of power.

Despite the fact that Kiswahili is utilized for the majority of social work and government purposes in Tanzania, English is still preferred in

secondary and higher education. Tanzanians, for example, regard English as a language of prosperity and growth. Even the emphasis placed on English in schools reflects this. The following samples from one of Tanzania's secondary schools in Dar es Salaam capture the situation: "SPEAK ENGLISH," is a sign on each classroom entrance, highlighting the importance of children speaking English. 'WHERE THERE IS NO ENGLISH, THERE IS NO SERVICE'. Kiswahili is undervalued, despite the fact that it has all the potential to replace English and lead the country to growth (Rwegelera, 2012).

Mahatma Gandhi also blamed English for distorting education, claiming that the amount of time spent learning English and the standards achieved in other disciplines were woefully inadequate (Rwegelera, 2012). In Tanzania, this is the case. As a child begins learning Kiswahili in nursery school and continues until standard seven, he or she must re-learn all subjects in English when entering a secondary school. Switching from Kiswahili to English becomes quite tough for students. It is difficult for them to learn language and subjects while being taught in a foreign language. In this regard, the role of language is to cause colonized people to internalize norms of the colonizer, which lead to cultural declination. Kisukuma, Kisambaa, Kinyamwezi, Kigogo, Kijaluo and so on are not languages of prestige anymore for some Tanzanians unlike the English Language. This serves to uphold the domination of small elite and of the foreign interest. Rwegelera (2012) points out that since English is Tanzania's second language, it is not a terrible idea to learn it. However, he maintains that it is the usage of English in places where it does not belong, or it is use to address the country's majority Kiswahili speakers that is worrisome. These 'deviant' behaviours are termed modern culture and it is an ambiguity linked to the emergence of the global media and global community. Modernity, according to Bell disrupts culture's 'unity' and 'coherence' (Rwegelera, 2012).

The foregoing foregrounds how language transmits culture and how culture is assimilated to other people's beliefs and philosophies through language, with recipients assuming that a new language is superior to their own. It is self-evident to emphasize the point that a lost language entails a lost culture, and a lost culture entails the loss of priceless knowledge and values. Global media is further reflected in songs and dances.

#### 4.1.2 *Songs, Music and Dances*

According to Johannessen (2006), the introduction of commercial television and private commercial media has heightened public concern about the impact of global media on Tanzanian culture and morality. Tanzanian songs and dances have been Westernized and Americanized in recent years. With seductive phrases of modernization, cultural globalization (Neo-colonialism) has arrived, finding its way into songs and dances. The Tanzanian culture is diluted and gradually disappearing as a result of youngsters preserving foreign traditions. American/western melodies are what we hear on the radio today. Modern trends, such as kizazi (younger generation) music and dances, are becoming more Americanized and Westernized. Hip hop, Bongo flavor, and Zouk are among the so-called songs and dances of the younger generation. Tanzanian youth performers imitate all they see on TV, film, print etc. and on Tanzanian soil, there are American and western dancers and singers. When it comes to music and songs, there are no longer signs of originality from indigenes. This cultural distortion is pleasing to both young and old. Tanzanian hip-hop is a part of a global hip-hop culture, and the artists frequently adopt global hip-hop identities to connect them (Clark, 2014). Music producers have moved to love songs with foreign tunes. As a result, songs and dances no longer lead to moral principles. The songs no longer teach indigenous cultural norms and values; instead, they are largely market-oriented love songs with a focus on youth. Many of the songs, in general, have few or no social lessons to impart even though songs are part of the literary canon that are expected to educate, correct wrongdoings, promote good activities, and honour heroes in society. Today's songs in Tanzania, like many countries in Africa are guiding the youth into sexual promiscuity (Rwegelera, 2012).

Wasukuma and Wahaya women, for example, dance with their breasts and waists covered, as well as their hips up to the knees, in Tanzania's traditional culture. They don't wear miniskirts, tight dresses, or men's shorts. The young females today now move around and dance half-naked. A respectable individual would not be able to look at those dreadful dances. However, as a result of globalization, some of the society's elderly admire what they refer to as "contemporary dances." The fast shift in information technology has propagated all of these dancing styles and its main goal is to achieve worldwide cultural homogenization, which includes life patterns.

### 4.1.3 *Foods and Drinks*

Tanzania as part of a globalized village has opened market for foreign food and drink. A developing country like Tanzania cannot run away from the trendy effects of global media on fast moving foods and drinks advertised in the media. Such goods sold at the supermarkets are seen as a symbol of development. In a community where “togwa” is available, for example, it is not equivalent to Coca-Cola or Pepsi products. Since then, “Togwa” has lost market share because the local markets are no longer valued and are looked down upon by some people. The makers of “Togwa” have little advertising control over their beverage. As a result, they can’t compete with the famed Coca-Cola and Pepsi corporations’ loud echoing commercial rhythms, which can be heard across city, town, and rural distant places where even potable water is scarce.

### 4.1.4 *Fast Foods*

These are huge stores where you can self-serve food and items. Tanzania is seeing an increase in the number of these fast-food supermarkets. People are eating more junk food from these establishments, which is having a negative influence on their health. This is so because food can stay longer and surpass expired date. There is also a problem of power cuts in Tanzania which affects food quality and could lead to food poisoning.

### 4.1.5 *Clothing*

Tanzanian dress nowadays is a combination of traditional and modern. The people are affected strongly by current American and Western dress trends. Young people and some older people are drawn to alien fashions, despite the fact that they have detrimental effects on the indigenous culture.

## 4.2 *Nigeria*

Nigeria’s socio-cultural and political economy, like that of many other emerging countries, is ‘booming’ at the price of cultural values, beliefs, and traditions. Globalisation is unconcerned about cultural values in different parts of the world. As a result, native or indigenous cultural values of countries are sometimes pushed to the background (Nwaolikpe, 2013). For example, in Nigeria, the youth are increasingly relying on the Internet for entertainment, and are losing interest in their cultural traditions. According to Nwagbu et al. (2011), Nigerians use and read foreign

language books faster and more fluently than native language books. Furthermore, the quantity of movies produced by Nigerian Nollywood has been impacted by cultural globalization. However, movies produced in English have a substantially higher production value than those made in Nigerian languages. Folklore is gradually dying out; there are no longer any stories from previous generations that may be used to teach a community's cultural values. Nigerians prefer to listen to a diverse range of Western music and watch foreign films produced in English till late at night or on weekends.

Consequently, in many Nigerian homes, English is favoured over the native tongue as a means of communication. When Nigerian families are observed communicating entirely in English, this is generally perceived as a symbol of status associated with the West by others. All of this is a result of global media because the more Nigerians are exposed to foreign content in the media, the more likely they are to internalize the cultures of those civilizations. Salawu (2006) writes that "Globalisation is considered as the agenda of the United States—led Western world. It is an ideology that seeks to promote the United States' thought—driven west—as the world's ultimate wisdom." Indeed, the western world's economic, political, and cultural lifestyles may influence the opinions of other countries, either indirectly or directly.

Again, in Nigeria, western food, music, art, and language are preferred; even in word pronunciation, an American or British accent is preferred. When Nigerians pronounce words with an indigenous language accent and link themselves with indigenous food and music, some Nigerians consider themselves to be derogatorily local. Africans are famed for their communal lifestyles; they dine together, share their troubles together, and relate collectively. This community lifestyle is quickly disintegrating in the face of global media culture, which has an impact on traditional values, leading to an increase in individualism among Nigerians. Global media spreads the cultural patterns of industrialized countries to Nigeria, causing many Nigerians, for example, to prefer viewing western programs for entertainment, and as a result, they embrace western culture. Nigerians are now copying the western way of life, including their food and modes of transportation with little regard for their own cultural norms. Language, marriage rites, burial rites, birth rites, dressing, greeting, music, folklore, religion, medicine, and other tangible cultural monuments, natural places, and cultural landscapes are some Nigeria's cultural heritages. Some of these cultures are now extinct as a result of western cultural influence and

should be revived (Nwegbu et al., 2011). Without a doubt, Western domination of the country's items presents a threat to its cultural identity.

#### 4.2.1 *Commodification of Culture*

The commodification of culture is perhaps the most significant and far-reaching result of cultural globalization. Along with the necessities of existence, the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural goods and services have become commodities. Music, food, clothing, fashion, art, sports, photos, and other items are now sold on the domestic and international market. A typical example of such cultural traditions is the 'aso ebi' practice in Nigeria. The Yoruba people of Nigeria use this practice to symbolize solidarity and identity among family and friends. 'Aso ebi' originally refers to a uniformed dress worn by family members during social events in Nigeria. However, this practice now includes a larger network of unfamiliarity which transcends the Yoruba ethnic group and is gradually becoming an integral part of a national culture (Ajani, 2012). More crucially, the materials used for aso ebi are now viewed as a business enterprise, with the price rising after it is chosen to be used for a particular occasion. These Nigerian traditional hand-woven fabrics are now being sold to the highest bidder outside of Nigeria's borders. Many Nigerians, on the other hand, have lost interest in these materials based on their exposure to Western fabrics and fashion; instead, they prefer to wear the traditional 'aso ebi' only once for an occasion and then discard it. The same applies to major traditional attires that cut across over three hundred ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The commercialization of culture has a negative impact on Nigerians. What was previously a part of Nigeria's cultural way of life has now become a product, rather than something distinctive that they created to suit their own wants and circumstances. New pictures, new music, new outfits, and new ideals are constantly bombarding Nigerian media and marketplace. As a result, traditional and familiar products have become "alien" to Nigerians and are being rejected, whilst alien or foreign items have grown familiar and acceptable to many Nigerians. Nigeria's cultural items are being lost simply because many Nigerians who are exposed to foreign culture no longer value them, and global markets have devalued them as well. The undermining of a people's existing beliefs and customs corrodes their sense of who they are, what they desire, and what they respect. Thus, the cumulative consequence is a crisis of cultural confidence, mixed with

economic uncertainty and crime that global integration frequently brings (see Nwaegbu et al., 2011).

#### 4.2.2 *Religion*

The impact of globalization on religion cannot be overlooked. Some scholars, for example, find that Islamic fundamentalism has served as a bulwark against modernity in many ways, with Muslims usually viewing the secular influence of western science and technology as antithetical to traditional Islamic principles. However, most non-Muslim experts ascribe Muslim women's underdevelopment and underprivileged status to Islamic tradition. Furthermore, some Nigerian scholars believe that this notion is at the root of terrorist sects like Boko Haram (which loosely translates to "everything Western is forbidden") in Nigeria.

Also, as a result of cultural globalization, the migration of youths from rural to urban settings has resulted in a considerable decrease in the number of youths attending prayer houses in rural areas. In many places of Nigeria, the entrance of Christianity has resulted in the depopulation of African traditional religious practitioners. In addition, the influence of information and communication technologies on religious evangelism has spread to high heavens in Nigeria. This is in terms of the areas and methods that religious societies around the world employ for teaching, preaching, and influencing cultural beliefs. Any religion can now disseminate their beliefs outside national lines, allowing even small religious groupings to engage in global religious indoctrination efforts.

#### 4.2.3 *Family*

Globalization has had an impact on cultural norms, socialization processes, and values in Nigeria. Some parents are no longer offended by what their children wear. When greeting an older person, the traditional practice of subordinating has been replaced by "hello." Furthermore, the use of a foreign language, such as English, has always been a significant component of Nigeria's official language. Many wealthy families want their children to learn English better than their native tongue.

Nigerians today use and read books written in foreign languages more quickly and fluently than those produced in their own tongues. The quantity of movies produced by Nigerian Nollywood has been impacted by cultural globalization as movies made in English are far more popular than those made in Nigeria's local languages.

## 5 CRITICAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES' ASSESSMENT OF BUHARI'S ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is a democratic republic and a democratic government is answerable to the people. While public officials are social servants, it is their job to fulfil their end of the social contract. Governance, according to the United Nations, refers to the official and informal procedures that control how public choices are made and actions are carried out. The public sector in Nigeria is divided into two tiers. These are the political leaders and technocrats in the tenure-track civil service. Despite the fact that the former formulates laws and policies in the best interests of the people they represent, these policies are implemented by the latter for the same public benefit.

However, the Nigerian state has failed in three areas: security, rule of law, and creative leadership. The emphasis is on the inherent challenges of maintaining a state in a weak society. According to Bayart (2009), the failures of an African state like Nigeria can be traced to the country's historical legacy of weak political leadership, corruption, conflicts, and wars. Furthermore, self-interest has supplanted public interest as the dominant attitude in Nigeria, as it has in most African countries.

### 5.1 *Nigeria: An Overview of Governance*

Throughout history, the African continent has faced numerous issues such as insecurity, poverty, injustice, and underdevelopment. Civil conflicts (Liberia and Sierra Leone), post-election violence (Cote d'Ivoire, 2010; Nigeria, 2011), and the expanding concerns of transnational crime, violent extremism, and terrorism are just a few examples. During Nigeria's First Republic, the country used a parliamentary system modelled after that of the United Kingdom. The politicization of multi-ethnic groups has proven a scourge to Nigeria's unity, good governance, and progress since the 1946 Richards Constitution was enacted. The Nigerian government has been more civil than democratic in the 17 years of the Fourth Republic, with the reinstatement of civil rule in 1999. Given the increasingly lavish and flamboyant lifestyles of many public officials, the expense of government has continued to climb unnecessarily.



## 5.2 *The Issue of Leadership*

Leadership failure is widely blamed for Nigeria's lack of capacity in terms of achieving efficient government. The state is supposed to carry out service-delivery tasks, including infrastructure construction. Surprisingly, the Buhari administration like previous ones, has failed to meet these expectations. Nigeria is still Africa's and the world's sixth largest oil producer. It has the fifth greatest natural gas reserves in the world. It exported an average of 2 million barrels of crude oil per day in 2016, but it was unable to bring its refineries up to '10.4% capacity utilization.' One major reason for this abysmal performance has been adjudged to be the high level of corruption in leadership and government. The majority of Nigerians remain impoverished, which explains their outspoken hostility to any type of hike in fuel price.

Nigeria's impoverishment has been governed by a succession of political leaders who lacked vision for good governance and saw politics as a means to retain their economic domination and commercial empires. The Buhari administration has proved to be no exception. The state's vulnerability was exacerbated by institutional flaws, ethnic tensions, insecurity, historical realities, and Nigeria's progress towards an unnegotiated statehood. Its ability to uphold the rule of law is severely harmed as the military intrusion was one of the most significant barriers to good government but not an excuse for gross impunity in successive governments and the current Buhari administration. The military, lacking in leadership and governance skills, subjugated government institutions to an autocratic chain of command just like the current leadership which has only changed its garb from military to civilian while maintaining the same principle of dictatorship.

The Buhari administration has maintained lopsided federal structures, with centralization of authority rather than rapid post-independence regional autonomy which exacerbated Nigeria's leadership difficulty and governance problems (1960–1966). Although the military's entry into politics profoundly altered Nigeria's federal structures and set the groundwork for individuals to be promoted above state institutions, successive civilian and so-called democratic governments like that of Buhari have only made the situation worse by all indices. The masses are politically, socially and economically oppressed. This has been the norm since the country's independence in 1960 and is still what obtains, to a higher degree, in the Buhari administration.

## 6 CURRENT TRENDS AND UNCHARTED TERRITORY

Much study of critical cultural studies in the field of communication has focused on new media and digital technologies, including video games, smart phones, and social media sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Much critical cultural scholarship that expressly addresses the study of global media and culture has been led by the emphasis on media technology. Analyses of depictions on the Internet and social media platforms have been part of this chapter. The chapter has also looked at global media and the cultural aspects that influence how Africans interact with digital technology and media at both the production and reception levels. The chapter looks at not only how global media influences the cultural identities of Africans—not to mention African media companies and institutions—that regularly import and employ new media technologies, but also how the technologies' logics and designs influence African culture.

Recent interest in the concept of cultural convergence, which explores how many types of mediation have become intertwined through technological, economic, and social networks, has also altered this field of study. Conjunctural analysis has been a recent focus in the field of critical cultural studies. Conjuncture analysis coined by Stuart Hall to describe social formations as being formed by a range of intersecting and opposing factors that frequently cause periods of crisis and uncertainty. It is sometimes used to describe the core activity and goal of cultural studies. Gilbert (2019) defines conjuncture analysis as the study of the convergent and divergent tendencies that shape the totality of power relations within a given social field over time. From this vantage point, 'cultural studies' may be best understood as a subset of political sociology, with an analytical emphasis on semiotic practices and a strong preference for qualitative modes of analysis. The study of conjunctures draws attention to how economic, political, and cultural factors cross and interact in complicated, contingent, and often contradictory ways.

The monopoly of textual analysis within critical cultural studies is challenged by this perspective, which refuses to disaggregate the economic, political, and cultural. Conjunctural analysis should consider not only concerns of representation and signification but also production, distribution, and reception, as the way forward for cultural studies. Critical cultural researchers should investigate texts and artefacts, industries and structures, as well as interpretative work and labour practices. As a result, conjunctural analyses of global media would consider how such categories of

identity shape and are shaped by a variety of symbolic and material factors, as well as the complex interrelationships of subjectivity, embodiment, and social roles as they align, conflict, and intersect with various registers of identification, such as class, race, gender, sex, sexuality, and ability (Kraidy, 2006).

## 7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter investigates critical cultural theories from an African standpoint and through the lens of global media and foreign dominance on African culture. It established that critical and cultural theories are related and cannot be wholly separated. This explains why they are often considered as a unified theory of reality. The theories have their basis in the historical works of Karl Heinrich Marx which was later extended in the Frankfurt School of thought and the British cultural studies project at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

Critical cultural theories from an African perspective seek to uncover the preconceptions and assumptions that prevent Africans from appreciating the full scope of how the world operates particularly in a digital cultural age and how it affects the culture of African continent, both positively and negatively. Understanding critical and cultural theories from an African perspective is important because it broadens the African consciousness and aids perceptive Africans in shedding the cloak of neocolonialism and imperialism, by being cautious in the consumption of all forms of contents and accoutrements that Western media has to offer through new media forms.

Critical studies employ theory as a means of critiquing and confronting oppressive or domineering structures while cultural studies are concerned with social formations, with a special focus on media texts and audience reception processes. The importance of the interaction between ideology, or belief structures, and the material conditions in which people live is emphasized in both critical theory and cultural studies. Discourse and representation, including language and visual culture, as well as social relations, institutional structures, material practices, economic pressures, and many types of embodiments, are all investigated in critical cultural study. In addition, critical cultural study places a premium on the production, control, and contestation of identity categories such as race, ethnicity, class etc.

The question is not whether new media is beneficial to Africans; rather the concern is the extent to which they are deliberately and intentionally eroding the African identity. And this is clearly because capitalist 'owners' and manufacturers of new media infrastructures manipulate processes and algorithms to suit their purposes. And in many cases, the African whose right is unprotected is helpless and unconscious of the continual consumption of global media content. Furthermore, the western software manufacturers have the monopoly in collecting Africans' data on digital platforms to do whatever they please with it. The argument that the advantages of a global media, especially as crystallised on the Internet, outweigh the cry for preservation or hybridization of the African culture dims in the face of the effects and dysfunctions that western media and culture is having on African value system and culture as highlighted in this chapter.

The import of critical cultural theories through the lens of Africa's socio-cultural realities reaffirms the notion that when a people lose their culture represented as unique symbols they attach meanings to, a part of that people dies because that is their way of life from generation to generation. Ideally and without a doubt, exposure to foreign culture through global media in cyberspace over time, serves the risk of domination by the foreign culture on the indigenous culture of Africans. Many Africans now live their lives in cyberspace, particularly the youths. For some, this is the only environment that matters to them. It is not surprising therefore that their behaviours are now conditioned by western media content they are forever exposed to, evident in the way they dress, talk, and in their values and belief systems. All of these agree with the ideology of symbolic interaction by Africans on media infrastructures like the Internet, because significant meanings attached to symbols in the African context are now meaningless to many Africans. This is because such meanings have been replaced by symbolic cues in western culture. For example, fifty years ago in Nigeria, the chastity of a woman is regarded as sacred such that a virgin is regarded with much respect and dignity; and seen to be well bred by her family but today, it is more of a taboo amongst youths for a girl to be seen as a virgin because such a girl will be regarded as backward and not civilized according to their perception of western standards. This clearly buttresses the point that interactionism gives meanings to the symbolic and those meanings come to govern those people exposed to such symbolic stimuli.

The above notion is further strengthened by the African's social construction of his reality. The African's situation today is also partly determined by his perceptions rather than the situation itself. Many Africans today see only the worst things about themselves because they tend to construct their realities through a western lens. Therefore, if the West can portray consistently through representations and stereotyping in global media that Africans are animals and savages, it is accepted and this becomes the reality of many Africans. If the West tells the African that Western culture is the best of civilization or modernism then it is acceptable even if this is not true. Africa's situation today is determined by how Africans perceive their socio-cultural environment rather than the situation itself but it is not as bad as they are made to believe. The Africa's reality in a digital age is a social fabrication prompted by western artefacts and accoutrements disseminated largely through the media. The social construction of reality as a critical cultural theory will help Africans to understand the processes that lead to their construction of realities so that power relations might be untangled.

The Media Intrusion theory helps to unpack the hegemonic activities of global media that is akin to the agenda setting function of the media in society. Western media tend to set the agenda of what other continents like Africa should be thinking about even if the outcome may be to their detriment. While the theory is good if the agenda is towards a positive change in the society, the agenda may also be that of die-hard capitalists and media owners whose fundamental goal is to maximise profit from the system. There is no need to argue against a cynical attitude on the news media and their role as there are ample evidences that the global media today are more interested in profiteering, a case of he who pays the piper dictates the tune, than in upholding their professional responsibilities to the masses. This is seen especially in the skewed manner politics is presented in the media to favour the highest bidder or group-interest locally and in the global space.

The mass production and marketing of culture on global media platforms is doing more harm to Africa's culture and development. For example, cell phone and its ear-piece accessory are mass produced to replace the interpersonal communication culture of Africans. We find situations today amongst Africans where it is good to be 'speaking and laughing to oneself' on a cell phone and in transit. In a traditional African setting, such behaviours will be considered meaningless and indeed madness; but today in many African countries as in the West, it is simply the norm. There have been recorded

instances where Africans have had fatal accidents because they were talking on a cell phone while driving or commuting as pedestrians.

As more individuals opt to engage online rather than in person, the ease of connecting through technology and conversing online has an impact on the economy as well both locally and globally. Many Africans now prefer these foreign gadgets. Consequently, African countries can no longer produce goods of their own because foreign commodities have ‘killed’ the manufacturing industries. The average African prefers the western goods he has been exposed to overtime via advertisement in the media; he prefers not to buy locally made goods, even if it is produced in his country. Besides, the foreign products are often cheaper as a result of mass production and economies of scale enjoyed by foreign producers. In the end, such consumption of foreign goods by Africans benefits more the foreign producers and not Africans in the long haul.

Based on the foregoing, the overarching recommendation is obvious to the discerning eyes. African countries should unite to regulate access to global media like the Internet for posterity to ‘safeguard’ our children and youths. The governments should formulate policies that will engage the youths other than spending endless hours on the Internet, exposing them to dysfunctional content that teaches and orients them to foreign cultures. Consistent access to the Internet is part of what breeds and embraces popular culture amongst Africans. This can be curtailed if African leaders have the political will to preserve their culture and values for future generations.

Critical and cultural studies have ignited renewed interest in the field of global media scholarship since the inception of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). More research in this field, particularly from an African viewpoint, is expected to be undertaken by African scholars in order to demonstrate the information imbalance and cultural disruption that global digital media has generated as crystallized in the Internet.

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# Towards an Alternative Model: Theorising Newspaper Reviews as Secondary Gatekeeping by Broadcast Stations in Africa

*Babatunde Raphael Ojebuyi* 

## 1 INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS AND RATIONALE

The process of gathering, processing and presenting information to the mass audience by the mass media is complex. It involves different matrixes and actors. One such means of making news available to the mass audience is gatekeeping. Within the framework of mass communication, gatekeeping is simply conceptualised as the process by which competing news items are sieved, shaped, and reduced into a few items that eventually make it through the media gate as the news stories for the day. The concept of gatekeeping explains that in a media organisation, there are individuals who control the selection, reshaping and flow of information that forms the media content (Donohew, 2001; Haselmayer et al., 2017; Aruguete

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et al., 2020). As described by McKain (2005:416), gatekeeping is a process of deciding what events would be allowed to go into a broadcast (or media content); a “process of deciding what news is or what will become news.” Gatekeeping in mass communication is a complex systemic process. It involves manifold activities, different actors, dynamic forces, and many stages that define how media organisations select, reshape, construct, and present the social reality to the mass audience. “It is opening and closing the channels of communication; it is about accessing or refusing access” (Watson, 2003:123); the process of determining what news items, information or entertainment get to the mass audience (Gondwe, 2021; Grygiel & Lysak, 2021; Meyer, 2021; Pearson et al., 2006). The gatekeepers, according to McKain (2005), are the individuals with some level of professional training and orientations who decide what information items are to be selected, what is to be discarded, what is to be reported, how it is to be reported.

The proliferation of media organisations, intense competition, and the profit-driven approach engendered by the liberal economy (Lyons, 2002) have changed the media landscape, and by extension the gatekeeping process, across the world. The audience now has multiple sources of information. If a media organization fails to report breaking news or expose official corruption as the case may be, the audience has the option of switching to another media outfit (Thorburn & Jenkins, 2003). Given these multiple sources of information and the democratization of the information space by the Internet, the trend in the information dissemination process by the mass media has changed. Now, to satisfy their audience and remain relevant in the news market, some media genres and organisations constantly monitors and reports the content of other media. This practice is termed *secondary gatekeeping*—that is, secondary or second-level selection of information. In most cases, the print media—newspapers especially—serve as the primary gatekeepers, while the broadcast media, in addition to their primary gatekeeping and agenda-setting functions, serve as the secondary gatekeeper by monitoring, selecting and broadcasting some portions of the content of the print media. By definition, secondary gatekeeping is a recycled, second-level selection and dissemination of information. It is a process where a media genre selects, repackages and reports fragments of the content of other media (Ojebuyi et al., 2022; Ojebuyi, 2012; Ojebuyi & Ojebode, 2012).

While primary gatekeeping is an old practice, secondary gatekeeping is a relatively new phenomenon that has, however, become popular in some

African countries with the emergence of newspaper review programmes by broadcast stations on the continent. For example, most broadcast stations in some African nations, especially Nigeria and Ghana, now review newspaper content—which have already been published—and broadcast them to the mass audience using the English language and other indigenous languages. Some broadcast stations paraphrase the reviewed content and conceal the names of the newspapers being reviewed, while some stations present the contents verbatim and mention the names of the newspapers. Since 1947 when Kurt Lewin first coined the theoretical concept of gatekeeping, it has attracted the attention of different media scholars some of whom have propounded models and frameworks for explicating or analyzing the gatekeeping process in the media. Two popular examples of these models that have been extensively used by media scholars to explain the gatekeeping process in mass communication are White's (1950) Simple Gatekeeping Model and Westley and Maclean's (1957) Model of gatekeeping in mass communication. However, despite being a prevalent practice in some African broadcasting stations, secondary gatekeeping has not received adequate scholarly attention in terms of the development of analytical or theoretical models that could be adopted by scholars to explain or analyse the process. Therefore, this chapter is a novel contribution aimed at suggesting a model for analyzing secondary gatekeeping. To do this, the Gatekeeping Theory, focusing on White's (1950) Simple Gatekeeping Model and Westley and Maclean's (1957) Model of gatekeeping, is adopted as the baseline framework. With cases from Nigeria and Ghana providing the context, these models are reframed to generate a new model for secondary gatekeeping. The new model explains the secondary gatekeeping process and demonstrates how, as in the case of primary gatekeeping, different variables interact to produce the outcome and implications of secondary gatekeeping practice in African broadcast stations. By using the African context for the theorization of secondary gatekeeping, this chapter is a significant contribution to the study of secondary gatekeeping as an emerging discourse in media and communication studies.

### *1.1 Newspaper Reviews as Secondary GateKeeping*

Newspaper is one of the most important parts of the print media and it comes either through the traditional hardcopy or online format. It is the main source for written information that conveys timely information at

regular intervals of time and provides immediate and contemporary news coverage, editorial and public opinion and literary works (Apuke & Omar, 2020; Ola & Ojo, 2006). It enjoys a reasonable level of information permanence that might not be found in radio and Television that convey relatively transient auditory and visual messages. As observed by Oyekunle and Tihamiyu (2010), newspapers convey signs and messages that the readers can consume and interpret at their leisure without a real-time mental constraints. This means that the newspaper audience decides to wait for a convenient time to decode newspaper messages. Given the nature of newspapers and their relevance to socio-economic growth, socio-political awareness and cultural correlation among others (Amadu et al., 2018), it is not surprising that other media genres, especially the broadcast media, now review and broadcast news content that have been published by newspapers.

This practice of newspaper reviews is secondary gatekeeping because it has to do with another level of the editorial process (gatekeeping) including selection, screening, editing and publication (broadcasting) of fragments of content already published, especially by the newspapers. It is a practice where radio and television stations broadcast, in part or in full, news contents of newspapers, news magazines or other news media. In some cases, the broadcast stations directly and fully acknowledge the newspapers whose news content they review. However, some broadcast stations do not fully acknowledge the newspapers as the primary gatekeepers that provide the contents being reviewed (Ojebuyi, 2012). Newspaper review practice has been given different names by different broadcast stations in different African countries. For instance, in Nigeria and Ghana, names such as *Headliner*, *Newspaper Review Show*, *Kokrokoo*, *News File*, *Good Morning Ghana*, *New Day*, *From the Dailies*, *Press Review*, *Koko inu Iwe Irohin*, *O Gbenu tan*, *Newspaper Headlines*, *Day-Break Gist*, *Review*, *Have You Heard?*, *Inside-out*, *Top Stories*, *Gbe e Si Mi L'eti*, *Eti Oba N'ile*, *Tifun-Tedo*, and *News Update* are used to tag the practice by different broadcast stations.

The practice of newspaper reviews is a collaborative process involving careful selection, analysis, interpretation and presentation of newspaper content by editorial, reportorial and on-air personnel such as producers, editors, news programmes presenters, and in-studio or out-of-studio participants. Nyarko (2016) explains that newspaper reviews may be conceptualized as a broadcast programme during which major headlines published in specific dailies and weeklies are fully discussed as topical issues of the day

with or without studio panellists. The discussion that goes into newspaper reviews is an important factor that brings out the saliency in the issues, topics and events that are covered in the immediate environment. Consequently, it is clear that through newspaper reviews, social realities already represented in the media space are further conferred with significance when they are subjected to another level of media amplification.

Unlike in the past when the audience had limited access to information, the digital age has abolished the barrier and online readers now have access to any information from anywhere and anytime in the world. This reality has compelled most newspaper outlets to also invest more in the online version of their newspapers. However, irrespective of the formats through which newspapers are presented, they remain one of the most viable sources of information and their content are seen as a verifiable and dependable corpus for news reviews, especially by broadcast media. Indeed, one of the reasons for the reviews is to make the broadcast stations competitive and fulfil the responsibility of the media to inform the audience and set the agenda (Nyarko, 2016).

Another important fact to note is that newspaper review programme has encouraged a synergy between the print and broadcast media. This synergy can be seen in the way broadcast media are being used as the secondary platform for projecting newspaper content through the news review programmes. Newspaper reviews are either done on radio or television. Concerning this, Nyarko (2016) observes that the majority of the television and independent radio firms in Ghana run the review of newspaper programmes during which they announce studio phone-in line(s) for the listening public to participate in debates on society. This is also the case in Nigeria where news reviews have become popular programmes on radio and television stations. In essence, audience participation through phone-in is one of the ways through which newspaper reviews have been made appealing to the audience.

As stated by Odiegwu-Enwerem et al. (2020), audience participation in news review programmes is one of the ways through which people can have a voice in policymaking. Therefore, it could be inferred that without the media, through different programmes such as newspaper reviews that give room for audience participation and engagement, the citizens would largely be deprived of the privilege to have a voice in the discourse of socio-political issues that affect them. It is on this note that Ette (2017) submits that the media provide the space for the electorate to engage in politics and set an agenda for public discourse. Although the media do not

have a monopoly over political communication, they have the power to influence political agendas (Ette, 2017). Overall, newspaper reviews encourage audience participation which may come through phone-in or other means. The relevance of newspaper reviews in today's information landscape can never be downplayed because of how the programmes have enabled the audience to have access to current information and contribute to public discourse.

As opined by King et al. (2019), since high-circulation newspapers also influence the agenda of other media, including national television and web-based news, newspapers are increasingly being recognized for their pivotal influence on public perception by determining the quantity and nature of the information that reaches the public. It could, therefore, be argued that newspaper review is a programme that broadcast stations cannot afford to expunge from their daily programme schedules. This point of view is substantiated by Guanah (2018, p. 309) that "in most broadcast organisations today the "review of newspapers' headlines" is the in-thing; even the broadcast stations that cannot get hard copies to review daily substitute with the online versions of the newspapers. There is rarely any contemporary radio or television station that do not have this programme on their schedules daily".

The relevance of newspaper reviews is also echoed by Guanah (2018) that it has become an important programme that makes a functional broadcast organisation because it daily draws viewers and listeners to broadcast houses, especially now that most people cannot afford to buy newspapers daily. From the submission of Guanah (2018), it could be deduced that newspaper review is one of the programmes that determine organizational commitment, social responsibility level, business mindedness, and audience consciousness of broadcast organisations. In other words, without newspaper review programmes, broadcast organisations in today's media ecosystem might not be adequately functional and serve their primary purpose as expected of them. This, therefore, validates the need for broadcast and print media to have an alignment that will make them share information easily.

In addition, media organisations, especially TV and radio, have found a new way of making a profit through newspaper review programmes and this is a result of the high rate of listenership and viewership that the news review programme attracts, which in turn generates advertising revenue. In this regard, Ojebuyi and Ojebode (2012) aver that for media organisations to last and effectively cope in the extremely competitive media and



communication industries in Nigeria, they must formulate another means of winning more audience and increasing their profit margins. This, perhaps, is what the radio stations intended to achieve through their news review programmes (Ojebuyi, 2012; Ojebuyi & Ojebode, 2012).

Moreover, newspaper review programmes have been found to have some kinds of dual, ambivalent effects: As broadcast stations are relying on newspapers for content for their newspaper review programme, the review programmes also encourage some listeners to be interested in buying newspapers to have access to the whole news story that might have been summarized in the review programme of TV or radio (Guanah, 2018). It has, however, also been established by scholars (e.g. Nyarko, 2016; Ojebuyi, 2012) that newspaper review programmes by broadcast stations, especially in Ghana and Nigeria, are killing the survival of newspapers. Through news reviews, the attention of the audience is likely to be diverted from the real source of the news to the secondary sources that have repackaged the original version of the news and broadcast them to the audience.

One of the ways through which broadcast stations repackage news content in their review programmes is the use of indigenous language. Some of these broadcast stations make use of indigenous languages (Adedeji, 2015) to present the newspaper reviews purposely to appeal to different segments of the audience, especially those with a low literacy level. Guanah (2018), support this position by asserting that the decision by some broadcast stations to run newspapers review programmes in the indigenous languages is because some people do not understand English which is the language of most of the newspapers, and they tend to lean on the broadcast media for information. Similarly, Ojebuyi and Ojebode (2012) state that news review programmes' presenters make use of indigenous language and some rhetorical strategies such as mimicking, dramatization, proverbial translation, voice modulation, suspense, humour, and paraphrasing that produce some imaginative effect and enable the listeners not only to understand the content of the news stories being reviewed but also to visualise the action, actor(s), time and setting of the story being reviewed. All of the foregoing instances have shown that news review practice is a secondary gatekeeping process that usually passes through different editorial procedures and it has become a genre of programme that audience cannot ignore. Newspaper review as a secondary gatekeeping, especially by African broadcast media, has assumed a status that could not be ignored by media and communication scholars. Therefore, as there are models for interpreting primary secondary gatekeeping, there is a need for

the proposition of an alternative model for theorizing and explaining secondary gatekeeping. This is the focus of this chapter.

## 2 THE GATEKEEPING THEORY

As a theoretical concept, gatekeeping was first coined by Kurt Lewin in 1947. A social psychologist, Lewin proposed a gatekeeping process to explain the effect of social change dynamism on food consumption. He presented a model that explained how food items from different channels had to go through many “gates” controlled by “gatekeepers” before the food could be ready for consumption by the family members. The “gatekeepers” are the individuals who are engaged in the chains of manipulation including buying, transporting, and preparing the food items for the final consumers (Shoemaker et al., 2001:234). Lewin described as “gatekeepers” the housewives that established behavioural barriers and incentives to control the pattern of the decision-making process in terms of food habits and activities in the family (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008; Shoemaker et al., 2001; Clayman & Reisner, 1998). He likened the “gatekeepers” to influential individuals, who control the flow of goods, services, thoughts and ideas through the societal system. Since 1947, Lewin’s concept of gatekeeping has been employed by scholars in different fields of Communication Studies, Information Science, Political Science, Law, Management, and Sociology. In the framework of communication, gatekeeping means the process that explains how competing news items are sieved, shaped and reduced into a few ones that are published, broadcast or transmitted (Salonen et al., 2022; Gondwe, 2021; Aruguete et al., 2020). In other words, there are personnel in any media organization who control the selection, processing and flow of information (Donohew, 2001). As explained by McKain (2005), gatekeeping is the process of deciding what events would be allowed to pass through the media gates and become available as the news of the day. White (1950) developed a simple gatekeeping model to explain the gatekeeping process in the mass media. Similarly, Wesley and Maclean, cited by Shoemaker et al. (2001), present a metaphorical model to explain Lewin’s concept of gatekeeping in the context of mass communication (see Figs. 1 and 2). In this chapter, the two models are used as the baseline to develop an alternative model for explaining secondary gatekeeping (see Fig. 3).

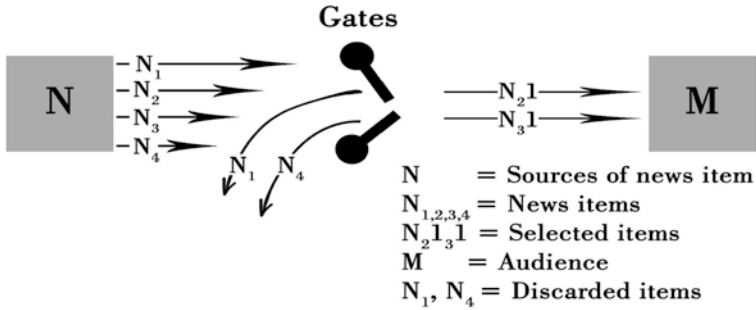


Fig. 1 White's Simple Gatekeeping Model (1950). Source: Watson, J. (2003). Mass communication: An introduction to theory and process. 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

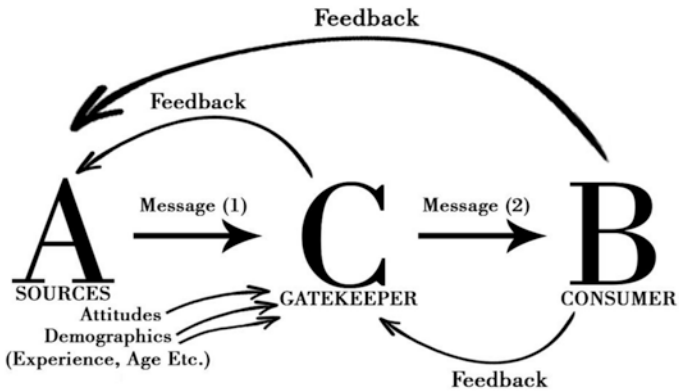


Fig. 2 Westley and Mclean's (1957) model of gatekeeping in mass communication. Source: Cartmell, D.D.; Dyer, J.E. Birkenholz, R.J. (2001). Attitudes of Arkansas daily newspaper editors towards agriculture. Proceedings of 28th Annual National Agriculture Research Conference, Vol. XXVII

### 2.1 White's (1950) Simple Gatekeeping Model

David Manning White was the first scholar to apply Lewin's gatekeeping concept to mass communication. In 1950, White conducted a case study on the news selection process. He investigated the reason 'Mr Gate' selected some stories and discarded others (Watson, 2003). He coined 'Mr Gate' to represent a telegraph wire editor on an American

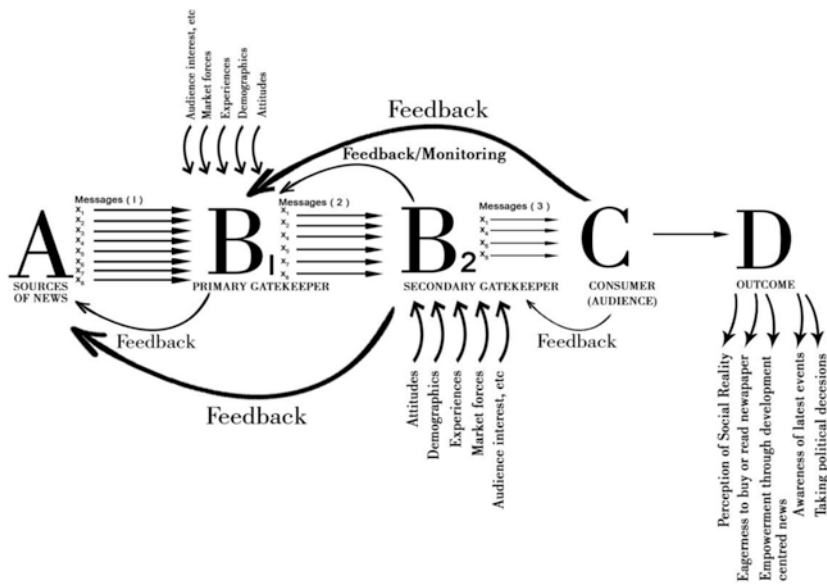


Fig. 3 Secondary Gatekeeping Model. Source: (B. R. Ojebuyi)

non-metropolitan newspaper—*Peoria Star*, a morning newspaper (Ojebuyi, 2012). By the end of the study, White came up with a simple model to explain the gatekeeping process in mass communication as presented in Fig. 1 below.

White’s model in Fig. 1 shows that in the gatekeeping process, there are many potential news items (represented as  $N_{1, 2, 3, 4}$ ) coming from different sources (N). The sub-editor (**Mr Gate**) is the media gate to decide what items would be selected or discarded. In the process, some information items ( $N_2$  and  $N_3$ ) are selected as part of the news items for the day. On the other hand, some items ( $N_1$  and  $N_4$ ) are discarded. After going through modification,  $N_2I$  and  $N_3I$  become mediated information eventually communicated to the mass audience (M). White’s model is simple and explanatory, however, it gives much emphasis to Mr. Gate’s individual force or discretion in the news selection process at the expense of other forces such as media routines, socio-cultural influences and other criteria for selection or rejection of news items. It also fails to appreciate the fact that in news gatekeeping, there are various gates, and at each level of

gatekeeping, modification to the selected news items occurs (Ojebuyi, 2012; Watson, 2003; Shoemaker et al., 2001) with different forces or variables influencing what information items are discarded or selected and how they are reconstructed to communicate the social reality.

## 2.2 *Westley and Maclean's (1957) Model of Gatekeeping*

This model by Wesley and Maclean (Shoemaker et al., 2001) presents a metaphorical model to explain Lewin's concept of gatekeeping in the context of mass communication. As presented in Fig. 2, the channels are the gates controlled by Cs, who in different ways, manipulate information items. The model describes "Cs" as the individuals or organisations in the communication process, who select items that are communicated to the mass audience. These individuals could be the reporters and editors, or the media outlets they work for. This simple model describes the elements in the gatekeeping process through which information travels from news gathering and processing to transmission to the audience. Channels, in the news selection process, refer to communication linkages such as passages in the source-journalist relationship or the editorial personnel within media organisations. Sections are the points where events or activities such as selection, sieving or editing process occur within each channel, while gates are decision points at which items may be stopped or be allowed progress to the public space as news. Gatekeepers are either the individuals or the sets of routine procedures that determine whether items are stopped or allowed to pass through the gates (Shoemaker et al., 2001).

As shown in Fig. 2, through the reporter, information moves from the source (A) to the editor (C). The editor performs the role of the gatekeeper by deciding which of the competing information items are to be selected as news, and which items are to be discarded. While making these decisions, the editor (gatekeeper) is always likely to be influenced by some forces or factors such as attitude, interest, demographics, age, and experiences. In some cases, the editor (C) may give feedback to the sources (A). When the selected news items are published, they get to the consumer/audience (B), who may interpret the message in different ways and provide feedback to the gatekeeper (C) or the source (A).

As gatekeepers, editors' news selection decisions are always influenced by many forces. For instance, the news values, also labelled as newsworthiness criteria, are among the forces that influence journalists' decisions as to what becomes news (Meyer, 2021). News values are measured based on

some criteria such as timeliness, interest and clarity, consequence, proximity, conflict, magnitude, human interest, novelty and prominence (Shoemaker et al., 2001). Often, editors' decisions on what should be selected as the news may be influenced by what is perceived as audience preferences. To determine such preferences, the news editor could use demographic variables such as age, sex, religion, and educational status of the target audience. As McManus (2005) explains, the ideological inclination of a media organization and the cultural values of its social context could determine what the editor would consider as suitable news content, and to a large extent, this would influence what items are selected as the news. The influence of competitors is also a significant factor. This is because most times, editors monitor the news focus of other media organisations to select items that make news. Unless the gatekeepers are well abreast of what other news organisations broadcast, they may not be in tune with the topical issues.

The Gatekeeping Theory has been applied in media studies by scholars (e.g. Gondwe, 2021; Grygiel & Lysak, 2021; Meyer, 2021; Aruguete et al., 2020; Haselmayer et al., 2017; Pearson & Kosicki, 2016; Cuillier, 2012; Enli, 2007). A Zambian study by Gondwe (2021) provides a good example of how the gatekeeping theory has been applied by scholars. To contribute to the literature on gatekeeping, gate-watching and crowd-sourcing in African contexts, Gondwe analysed a total of 2418 stories from social media users and surveyed 314 journalists. The study demonstrated that journalists and the political elites are the main creators of the news media agenda. The study also confirmed that, in most cases, journalists use their gatekeeping role to validate their pre-conceived agenda that serves the social system.

Another study by Aruguete et al. (2020) connect theories of news sharing and gatekeeping to explain how and when social media polarization would increase polarization among news organizations. The study employed a model that allowed the researchers to study the relationship between news sharing behaviour and gatekeeping in political communication. The findings of the study show that the more polarized readership we have, the more polarized news organizations would remain. The study, however, adds that polarization would be higher for organizations with lower reputations.

Through an experimental design, Cuillier's (2012) study also contributes to the Gatekeeping Theory by examining the importance of individual-level subconscious psychological factors in the news selection process. The

study specifically investigated whether the thought of death increases biased writing toward outgroups. The study established that “college journalists primed to think about death injected into their news stories 66% more negative facts toward a rival university than those in a control condition” (p. 4). Cuillier submits that although routine forces, such as professional norms, organizational norms and work processes are certainly important factors that shape day-to-day news decisions by the journalists (gatekeepers), in some cases such as when the gatekeepers are thinking about death, individual-level values and worldviews (e.g. bias toward outgroups) may become foregrounded and override professional norms of objectivity that should guide the gatekeeping decisions.

### 3 TOWARDS A MODEL FOR THEORISING NEWSPAPER REVIEWS AS A SECONDARY GATEKEEPING PROCESS

The two models presented in Figs. 2 and 3 are too simple to accommodate all the elements inherent in secondary gatekeeping. Therefore, there is a need for a more accommodating and sophisticated model for theorizing secondary gatekeeping that newspaper review programme exemplifies. The proposed secondary gatekeeping model, as presented in Fig. 3, is inspired by White’s (1950) and Westley and McLean’s (1957) models of gatekeeping. It captures all other components, variables and levels that are not present in Lwin’s primary gatekeeping that White and Wesley and Maclean have further used their models to theorize.

As shown in Fig. 3, sources (A) are the individuals that provide the raw information for the mass media. The reporters and correspondents interact with the sources of news stories to get information that serves as the raw materials for the media. They pass the information to  $B_1$ , which comprises the editorial teams and other personnel. The  $B_1$  serves as the Primary gatekeeper, who collect the pieces of information from the sources (A). They perform their gatekeeping function by first sieving the raw information from the sources. After that, the gatekeepers process and reconstruct the selected items that would escape the gate regions and get to the mass audience, while they discard other items. The gatekeepers (editorial personnel) constantly provide feedback to the sources. As the primary gatekeepers perform their news selection duty, their editorial decisions are always influenced by some criteria and forces, which subsequently determine the composition of the media content.

The secondary gatekeepers (**B<sub>2</sub>**) operate on the other stratum of gatekeeping terrain. This stratum also comprises the editorial teams and other personnel (reporters, editors, producers and presenters) in the newsroom of the media organisation, especially the broadcast stations. At this level, the secondary gatekeepers may not get raw information directly from the sources (**A**). Instead, they monitor the media content already screened, processed and published by primary gatekeepers (**B<sub>1</sub>**). At this stage, the secondary gatekeepers further screen the media content they get from the primary gatekeepers by selecting some news items for mass communication and discarding the rest. Those few items selected for mass communication are further repackaged before they are finally reported as news stories to the consumer/mass audience (**C**). But the secondary gatekeepers may also provide feedback to both the primary gatekeepers and the sources. In the context of a newspaper review, the primary gatekeepers (**B<sub>1</sub>**) represent the newspapers, while the secondary gatekeepers (**B<sub>2</sub>**) represent broadcast stations. As the messages (**X**) move in a linear direction from the sources (**A**) through the primary gatekeepers (**B<sub>1</sub>**) and the secondary gatekeepers (**B<sub>2</sub>**), to the consumer (**C**), their quantity, and probably their quality, continue to reduce and mutate, while their nature also becomes modified because of the gatekeeping activities at the different gate regions. When the news items from the secondary gatekeepers (**B<sub>2</sub>**) eventually get to the consumer (**C**), such news items are likely to produce some impact or outcomes (**D**).

#### 4 DISCUSSION

In all, both gatekeeping models by White and Wesley and Maclean describe Lewin's gatekeeping in the context of mass media as involving actors such as the sources, the editor/gatekeeper and the consumer/audience (Shoemaker et al., 2001). What makes the difference, however, is that Wesley and Maclean's model is a bit advanced as it recognizes feedback and the editor's demographic and psychographic attributes as constituting some controlling forces in the gatekeeping process. Yet, both models are rather simple; they do not account for the second layer of gatekeeping that occurs in newspaper reviews and they are not adequate for explaining or analyzing news reviews as a secondary gatekeeping process. Both the primary and the secondary gatekeeping procedures are similar: The two are screening exercises whereby a fragment of the competing news items are selected and packaged for mass communication



whereas a huge volume of such competing information items are discarded by the editors. This phenomenon is called “massive facts, massive omission” (Paul & Elder, 2006, p. 4). Also, as applicable at the primary stratum of gatekeeping, the secondary gatekeepers’ decisions to select certain news items at the expense of the others are always influenced by some forces such as the editors/reporters’ experiences, news values, backgrounds, demographic variables, roles conception and evaluation, internal values, political alliances of the media organisation, market forces, influence of competitors, audience interest, the impact of ideology and culture (Meyer, 2021; McManus, 2005).

The major difference between primary and secondary gatekeeping procedures is that the items discarded by primary gatekeepers are not likely to get to the mass audience as news stories because the items have been “killed” by the editorial personnel. On the other hand, the items discarded by secondary gatekeepers during newspaper reviews may still reach the mass audience through other outlets because the items have been published as news by other news media.

As suggested by Salonen et al. (2022), gatekeeping is one of the foundational theories in journalism studies that should be modernized to remain up to date and relevant to the current realities and development. The Secondary Gatekeeping Model proposed in this chapter accommodates the sections and variables not present in primary gatekeeping models by White, Wesley and Maclean (Shoemaker et al., 2001). For instance, the current model takes care of the primary and secondary levels of gatekeeping. While the primary level represents the news selection process by one media genre (e.g. newspaper), the secondary level connotes further screening and selection of some fragments of media content that had already gone through a gatekeeping process. As applicable to newspaper reviews as secondary gatekeeping, the newspapers are the primary gatekeepers, while the broadcast media are the secondary gatekeepers. At the primary level, the newspapers have screened and processed competing news items before publishing those that escaped through the media gates. At the secondary level, radio and television stations, during their newspaper review programmes, further screen content of newspapers and transmit fragments of such content to the mass audience (Nyarko, 2016; Ojebuyi, 2012).

Furthermore, the Secondary Gatekeeping Model proposed in this chapter accounts for multiple layers of feedback and the possible outcome of secondary gatekeeping (i.e. newspaper reviews). These outcomes may manifest in terms of consumers’ perception/interpretation of social reality, eagerness to buy or read newspapers, empowerment through exposure

to development-centred news, awareness of the latest events in the immediate and remote environments, taking political decisions, and loss of appetite to buy or read newspapers. Studies have confirmed that audience exposure to newspaper reviews by broadcast stations have an influence on the nature of citizens' consciousness about general public affairs including politics, education, health, agriculture, sports and tourism as well as the level of their patronage of newspapers as the primary sources of the content of the news review programmes. For instance, as already confirmed by Ojebuyi (2012) and Nyarko (2016), even though newspaper reviews in Nigeria and Ghana respectively are powerful platforms for agenda-setting, the programmes have caused low patronage of newspapers by the audience who have already been exposed to the news of the day through the newspaper review programmes. This has implications for the survival of the newspapers in the profit-driven media ecosystem.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The overarching objective of this chapter is to propose a model as a theoretical premise for explaining secondary gatekeeping which is an emerging practice through newspaper reviews by broadcast stations, especially in most African countries. To achieve this objective, the author used the Gatekeeping Theory as the baseline framework to reframe White's (1950) Simple Gatekeeping Model and Westley and Maclean's (1957) Model of gatekeeping. Consequently, the author presented a new framework tagged *Secondary Gatekeeping Model* to expound newspaper review programmes as secondary gatekeeping. Cases of newspaper reviews from Nigeria and Ghana provided the context. The new model accounts for some variables (e.g. second level of gatekeeping, multiple layers of feedback and possible outcome of newspaper reviews as secondary gatekeeping) not captured by the primary gatekeeping models. The new model also demonstrates how such variables interact to produce the outcome of secondary gatekeeping. Since the existing gatekeeping models do not account for these critical variables, this chapter is a significant contribution to the study of secondary gatekeeping which is an emerging discourse in media and communication studies. The new model presented in this chapter provides a modest attempt to theorize secondary gatekeeping. It is, therefore, suggested that media studies scholars employ this model to carry out further analyses and explication of newspaper reviews as secondary gatekeeping in broadcast stations, especially in Africa where the practice is prevalent.

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# Theories from the Communication Field: A Family Communication Perspective

*Amarachi Dooshima Simon and Olugbenga Elegbe*

## I INTRODUCTION

Although discourse around families has spanned human history and has been investigated across many disciplines, the study of the family in the communication discipline is relatively young (Braithwaite et al., 2018) globally, and especially in Africa. Family communication scholars belong to a vibrant interdisciplinary field with strong commitments to theory-building and theory-based research. While our goal in writing this chapter focuses on family scholarship from the communication field, we acknowledge that scholars across several disciplines, such as family studies, human development, psychology, and sociology, have also examined communication questions related to families. For example, diverse communication researchers have conceptualized the family through socio-legal and biogenetic and role lenses (Floyd et al., 2006; Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014), but for most communication scholars, families are constituted in interaction and talked into, and out of being via interaction (Turner & West, 2018).

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Previous surveys of the literature have taken multidisciplinary approaches to family communication (Stamp & Shue, 2013); however, in this chapter, we discuss the contributions of a family communication perspective to communication studies including the following aspects: (a) the history of the family communication field; (b) the theories of family communication, (c) theoretical perspectives on family communication in Africa, and (d) existing trends and future directions in family communication scholarship in Africa.

## 2 HISTORY OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Enquiry into family communication as an academic endeavor emerged from the broader discipline of communication in the 1970s (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014). Thus, for more than 40 years, family communication as a field of study represented a rapidly expanding scholarly area in communication studies. The major factors that contributed to its development include: expanding research on interpersonal communication, advances in the field of family therapy and the self-improvement movement, and increased scholarly attention to functional family interactions (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014).

Emerging from the group dynamics and general semantics movement of the 1930s and 1940s, much of interpersonal communication's enquiry have centered on dating and friendship dyads. However, the call for studies centering on long-term, committed relationships moved its focus beyond dyadic relationships to scholarly engagement on communication in family systems (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014). These included marital communication, sibling communication and parent-child dyads. Marital communication research thus expanded its dimensions to include marital typologies, decision-making styles and relational control (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014) appearing in communication and psychology journals. Thus, succeeding works on family communication relied heavily on concepts and research from psychology, sociology, and counselling (Galvin & Brommel, 1982).

Family communication thus metamorphosed into a full Commission at the National Communication Association in the early 1980s, bringing together scholars from the broader study of interpersonal communication with special interests in the family. This produced an explosion of research on the family beyond the initial marital interactions to interests in the constitutive function of communication (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014)

which examined communication across the life course, family communication processes and contexts (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014).

### 3 THE THEORIES OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Family communication scholars engage a wide variety of theories developed in communication studies and allied disciplines. We highlight three out of the many robust theories of family communication: Family Communication Patterns Theory, Systems Theory and Social Constructionist Theory. While Family Communication Patterns Theory originated in family communication, the other two theories though originating in interpersonal communication, have been applied widely to the family contexts by several family communication scholars. These three theories are of special interest to us in this chapter because of their focus on the interaction patterns and processes that influence the overall family communication atmosphere. Our focus on the constitutive role of communication in family communication research explains our preference for these three theories.

#### 3.1 *Family Communication Patterns Theory*

Family Communication Patterns Theory emerged from mass media research. It explores how parents socialize their children to process mediated information and is adapted by scholars interested in general family communication patterns (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). The Family Communication Patterns (RFCP) instrument is developed and revised by family communication scholars (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006) and it establishes two dimensions of family communication: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. The interaction of these two dimensions creates four family types that are different from each other in quality: consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Each orientation ranges from high to low. First, conversation orientation describes the degree to which family members are encouraged to participate in unrestrained interaction about a wide array of topics. A high conversation orientation suggests that family members are allowed to express themselves freely without any limitations on the frequency of interaction or in topics of discussion. Low conversation orientation prescribes less frequent interaction and limits topics that are openly discussed with an emphasis on conformity. In the conformity



orientation, family members are expected to function within a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs. Families operating a high conformity orientation are characterized by interactions emphasizing uniformity of beliefs and attitudes, harmony, and conflict avoidance (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014).

On the other hand, families that operate the low conformity orientation emphasize interactions that display diverse attitudes and beliefs that reflect independence and individuality. Imagining the family styles on a vertical axis that runs from high conversation orientation to low conversation orientation, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006) opine that consensual families rate high in conversation and conformity. In such families, some members experience the pressure to agree as well as the encouragement to communicate openly and explore new ideas. Parents in consensual families listen to children and then explain their decisions. Members here avoid strong conflicts and decision-making rests with the parent(s) with an allowance for members to express their respective opinions. Pluralistic families, on the other axis, are high in conversation and low in conformity. Members in pluralistic families engage in open and unrestrained discussions across a wide range of topics. Decision-making here, do not rest solely with parents because children wield some form of power that enables them to contribute to decision-making. Such power-sharing in decision-making makes way for conflicts, which is evidence of disagreements in the decision-making process.

These conflicts, however, are resolved by members using positive conflict resolution strategies (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014). Protective families are characterized by interaction patterns that are low on conversation and high on conformity. Parents in protective families require from children complete submission to their authority without negotiations. Thus, little open communication occurs in such families because of parents' intolerance for discussions and negotiations. Finally, laissez-faire families are low in both conversation and conformity. There is a lot of passivity in their communication orientation. This is characterized by members' disinterest in raising topics and a consequent declension in active discourses in the family. Thus, children in such families suffer emotional detachment from their parents as everyone—both adults and children—are left to their own decisions. These patterns, however, serve to limit conflict in the family (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014).

### 3.2 *Systems Theory*

The Systems Theory was originally propounded by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1968. It is a theoretical perspective developed for explaining how elements of a system work together to produce outputs from the various inputs they are given (Segrin & Flora, 2011). General Systems Theory assumes that a system is characterised by the interaction of its interdependent elements, with each element mutually influencing every component in the system (Thomas-Maddox & Blau, 2013). So, a change in one element brings about a change in all other components of the entire system. Family systems theory was derived from the general systems theory (GST). A family from the systems perspective is therefore viewed as a dynamic, interactive, interdependent system with all members contributing to patterns of behaviour (Bavelas & Segal, 1982; Purves & Phinney, 2013; Cross & Barnes, 2014). From this notion, a study of the family system is insufficient if it looks at individual parts in isolation. This is because all the members of the family engage one another in unique ways thus constructing the family system (Thomas-Maddox & Blau, 2013). Proposing the appropriateness of the study of families and family relationships within the system perspective, Vangelisti (2013) posits that:

families are systems. Family members and family relationships are interdependent. They simultaneously influence, and are influenced by, each other. Change in one component of the system affects all other components. Because the various parts of family systems are interconnected, families are best conceived as “wholes” and should be studied with regard to the inter-relationship of their parts (p. ix).

Systems theory has been classified into three groups: general systems theory, family systems theory and interpersonal systems theory. From this grouping, general systems theory is the theoretical origin of systems thinking developed to apply to everything that lives, while family systems theory applies systems’ thinking to family dynamics, problems and therapy. Interpersonal systems theory on the other hand uses systems’ thinking to understand relationships and groups as living systems. This suggests that the interpersonal relationships at the various sub-systems within the family system are allocated such system properties which qualify them to be studied in isolation as whole systems.

Interpersonal systems theory posits that “in addition to families, all relationships and groups of people are systems with similar properties and

dynamics” (Connors, 2011, p. 4) operational in all other systems. Interpersonal systems theory thus provides the lens for the understanding of the living processes and patterns of relationships between people and groups and how these patterns and processes mutually influence the relationships under scrutiny. Connors (2011) adds that this theory explains “the commonalities between relationships and groups with systems aspects of all life forms” (p. 5), thus bringing about a radical change in the way interpersonal relationships are viewed. This further suggests that the principles that guide the study of systems can equally be applied to the study of interpersonal relationships.

### 3.3 *Social Constructionist Theory*

Social constructionism is a theory used to explain man’s attempt to come to terms with the nature of reality (Andrews, 2012). Traced to the works of sociologists, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman in 1966 whose ideas were inspired by the thinking of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and George Herbert Mead, social constructionism asserts that all meanings are socially constructed. It proposes that people make sense of the world by constructing their own model of the social world and how it works through social interactions and language.

Three separate intellectual movements came together in the 1960s to form the foundation of social constructionism. The first was an ideological movement that questioned social realities and put a spotlight on the political agenda behind such realities. The second was a literary/rhetorical drive to deconstruct language and the way it impacts our knowledge of reality. And the third was a critique of scientific practice, led by Thomas Kuhn, who argued that scientific findings are influenced by, and thus representative of, the specific communities where they’re produced—rather than objective reality.

These three movements birthed the three central assumptions of social constructionism:

- knowledge is socially constructed because it arises out of human relationships
- language is central to social construction because it shapes how we understand the world

- and that knowledge construction is politically driven, knowledge being a product of socially constructed ideas accepted and sustained by people in specific social contexts.

From the foregoing, social constructionism emphasizes the influence of environmental factors on human behaviour (Andrews, 2012) and suggests that relationships among people, enacted by the interaction among them, create reality. Conversation is therefore central and is utilized by people in their social settings to create and maintain their own reality.

Scholars (Andrews, 2012; Galvin et al., 2015) support this with the claim that social constructionism's focus rests on how meanings are created and negotiated in specific contexts with an emphasis on everyday interactions between people and how they use language to construct their reality. This makes the social practices people engage in the focus of enquiry for scholars in this tradition. According to these scholars, meanings are not just products of societal norms or expectations. Rather, they are constructed as people in specific social contexts make efforts to understand the world around them and the processes that ensue. In attempting to make sense of the social world, social constructionists therefore view knowledge as *constructed* and not just *created* (Andrews, 2012). Turner and West (2018) summarizes the above with this thought:

social constructionism assumes that people make sense of their experiences and their social world by talking about them—by offering descriptions, explanations, and accounts. In doing this, people actually construct their worlds by the shape they put on them through their talk (p. 73).

Emphasizing the dominant role of language in the construction of social realities, Puig et al. (2008) posit that the meaning-making and knowledge production processes in social constructionism are guided by the conventions of language.

Harach and Kuczynski (2005) in their study identified the role of language in the construction of parent-child relationships. By asking parents to describe the relationship with their children within a framework of questions concerning the nature of the relationship, questions such as how parents and children strengthen the relationship, how they damage the relationship, and how they make repairs to the relationship after interactional missteps, they sought to discover the categories and concepts that

parents use to *talk* (emphasis ours) about their relationships with children, thus gaining insight into the insider's views (meanings) of the parent-child relationships through the language of interaction. So, from the communication in parent-child relationships, both parties are able to derive meanings that give rise to whatever knowledge of each other and of the relationship they possess. These derived meanings and knowledge determine each other's response to the relationship.

Dunkeley (2013), citing Vygotsky in her phenomenological study of parenting adolescents from both parents' and adolescents' perspectives, also identifies language as not just a vehicle for the expression of or for representation. Rather, she reiterates that without language, higher functions of thought and imagination cannot develop. According to her, it is from language that children build concepts that make it possible for them to begin to direct their own actions thus shaping the course of their own, and others' lives. While not sharing the perspectives of some contemporary postmodernists that 'language is all there is', Dunkeley (2013) shares Vygotsky's view which encourages the idea that "personalities are constituted by language from an early age in a process which continues throughout life allowing continual change and growth to take place at a higher cognitive level" (p. 44). From the foregoing, children and adolescents through the use of language can be seen as active agents, intimately involved in constructing meanings about events in their lives especially from the interactions that go on between them and their parents.

#### 4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY COMMUNICATION IN AFRICA

The family in Africa is the basic social unit that derives its description from concepts such as kinship, marriage, adoption and other relational aspects (Mwaura, 2015). The family usually consists of a husband, wife and children in its simplest form, and grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other immediate relatives, in its complex and most common form in Africa (Mwaura, 2015). The extended family provided and still provides the platform for the socialization of individual family members in Africa. Thus, the individual existed in connection to a larger group, including his or her wider family. Thus, a member of the family acquired his or her identity from the group and depended on the group for physical and social survival (Mwaura, 2015).

Communication's role in the socialization of family members, through various rites of passage, that enables them to take on roles that ensure the group's survival cannot be ignored. We go ahead to identify and appropriate the family communication theories deployed in this socialization processes in family systems in Africa.

#### *4.1 Family Communication Patterns Theory and Parenting in Nigeria, Cameroun and South Africa*

Parenting strategies have been categorized in Baumrind's (1971) work into three groups namely, the authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles. The authoritarian parenting style has been described by scholars (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006) as being restrictive and punitive with a lot of emphasis on control. This leaves children in the parent-child relationship with little opportunity to freely express themselves. This omission usually gives rise to social incompetence and interactional problems. The authoritative parenting style utilizes both controls and some form of freedom of expression in relating with children. This promotes "parental responsiveness, encourages independence, social and cognitive competence, self-reliance and social responsibility in the children". Permissive parenting, on the other hand, utilizes few or no rules and puts little or no controls in place in relating with children. The children under this parenting style are free to express themselves and make life's decisions without any supervision from their parents or significant adults. Scholars (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014) have associated this parenting style with social incompetence and lack of self-control.

Baumrind's (1971) parenting styles and Fitzpatrick and Ritchie's (1994) family communication patterns theory interface at the levels of communication utilized within the parent-child relationship. Families that operate the authoritarian parenting style tend towards the conformity communication orientation while families within the authoritative parenting domain tend towards the conversation communication orientation. Authoritarian parenting style's emphasis on restriction and control predisposes it to employ a communication pattern that limits freedom of expression with a lot of emphasis on conformity to attitudes, beliefs and values. Thus children within such relationships, are bound to obey parents' instructions without opportunities for negotiations or verbal disagreements. The communication climate in such relationships does not create

room for emotional intelligence or interactional competence. The authoritative parenting style, on the other hand, is favorably disposed to a communication climate with the conversation orientation. This is because of its preoccupation with a parenting atmosphere that encourages independence and both social and cognitive competence.

Parenting in Nigeria is a blend of the properties of both the authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles with a little dose of the permissive parenting style in exceptional cases. Nigeria, being a predominantly hierarchical and patriarchal nation (Amos, 2013), boasts of a traditional society that emphasizes respect for elders and parental authority. Thus children in Nigerian families are compelled by societal expectations to submit to parental authority and to adhere strictly to parents' instructions (Babatunde & Setiloane, 2014). The advent of civilization, however, is prevailing on Nigerian parents to intersperse their demand for obedience and adherence to instructions with mutual dialogue and explanations for disciplinary actions. With this, Nigerian children locate their parents within the borderline between authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles. This douses the tension in the parent-child relational atmosphere thus making way for a supportive parent-child relationship. Scholars (Akinsola, 2010, 2011) therefore posit that the Nigerian parenting climate is a hybrid of both the authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles. In Akinsola's study of the cultural variations in parenting styles of some ethnic groups in Nigeria, focusing on the Yoruba and the Efik tribes, she establishes this blend of both the authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles.

From her study, the Yoruba ethnic group combines in their parenting style a demand for unalloyed respect for and submission to authority figures and at the same time, a demonstration of parental responsiveness and warmth interspersed with behavioral and monitoring controls. This notwithstanding, children are not given the luxury of dialoguing or negotiating with parents over instructions. The parents only explain or give reasons behind certain instructions or disciplinary measures. The communication environment in such parent-child relationships is a combination of high conformity-orientation with low conversation orientation since the children are expected to obey without questioning the authority of their parents. This demonstrates the Yoruba tribe's appreciation for homogeneity of values such as family integrity and dignity, a feature of the communication pattern in the conformity orientation. On the contrary, the parenting climate of the Efik tribal group is more authoritarian with a high

conformity communication orientation. From Akinsola's study, the Efiks of Nigeria "tend to be more community-oriented by organizing themselves into community associations and ensuring regular and frequent meetings for cohesion and bonding, and punishment of defaulters" (p. 85). This enforcement of community bonding and involvement portrays them as authoritarian. With this enforcement, the young people of Efik descent perceive their parental upbringing as being more authoritarian than authoritative.

The South African nation cannot boast of any definitive parenting style because of the paucity of parenting research in the region. Deeply entrenched in their apartheid history is parents' and families' resilience as a coping strategy acquired from their socio-political challenging context. Providing support, warmth and care becomes parents' panacea for shielding their children from a harsh socio-political environment. Like in the Efik tribe of Nigeria, cultural traditions intertwined with socio-economic status and religion are the mechanisms of transferring beliefs and values, and the mechanisms through which children are raised in South Africa. The experience of modernization in the event of the apartheid gave rise to the disintegration of traditions. Kinship networks thereby became the only sources through which families could achieve social control and a sense of collectivity. Today, the emphasis has moved more towards individualism; there are more social problems and families are more challenged. In order to examine parenting in South Africa, as a developing country, Norman posits that there is often a dependency on Western theoretical perspectives.

Studies in South Africa utilizing the parenting styles' constructs (authoritarian, authoritative and permissive) mostly use children in early childhood (Latouf, 2005), adolescents (Kritzas & Grobler, 2005) and young adults (Makwakwa, 2011) as participants. While the study conducted by Latouf (2005) showed that the authoritative parenting style resulted in more acceptable behaviour, Moremi's (2002) study had inconsistent findings to previous relationships and found no direct relationships with children's socio-emotional adjustment at school. Additionally, fathers' authoritarian styles are linked to the emotion-focused coping strategies of adolescents. This is an outlier among the findings of previous research. Makwakwa's (2011) study of the relationship between perceived parenting styles and current decision-making styles of university students suggested that an authoritative parenting style was associated with thoughtful decision-making of young adults.



This finding establishes a link between parents' parenting style preferences and adolescent outcomes. The parents of these students had used more authoritative parenting approaches than authoritarian or permissive. Norman observes some similarities and inconsistencies for parenting styles in South Africa different from the findings of research in other countries. He concludes on the note that it could be a herculean task to describe parenting in South Africa. This is because the South African community has become so diverse that what may be prominent in one culture may not be found in another. Historically, South Africa has evolved from an oppressive patriarchal society into a democratic society. The constitutive function of communication in the chosen parenting styles directs attention to the differences in the outcomes since communication is the currency of family relationships (Turner & West, 2018) to which parenting belongs.

Cameroon is a multicultural society with multi-ethnic groups having their own languages, values and traditional practices (Yovsi, 2014). Their colonization by the British and French bequeathed them English and French as their two official administrative languages. Thus, as a bilingual country, their cultural values are demarcated along the Anglophone and Francophone lines. Yovsi (2014) thus submits that "any generalization about parenting in Cameroon will be questionable due to the cultural distinctiveness of the numerous Cameroonian cultures" (p. 253). Cameroon's patrilineal and extended family pattern (Ngale, 2009) promotes interdependence with a collectivistic and communal cultural orientation (Triandis, 2001). Much as childbearing is valued in the country, beliefs and practices concerning child-rearing vary by ethnic group. However certain values are commonly held by ethnic groups. These include Cameroonians' emphasis on learning by example and learning through play. The Cameroon parents engage in relationship supporting practices that involve monitoring of children's health, the impartation of life skills and stimulation of growth and development. Thus, good parenting to the Cameroonians consists parental monitoring, supervision, and controlling of children's activities. Attaching importance to observational learning, children are taught to observe and imitate tasks performed by adults and to remain reserved and prudent in reporting the lessons learnt in the process. This suggests an authoritarian parenting style constituted by a communication pattern in the conformity orientation. Emphasizing the homogeneity of values and attitudes, this parenting pattern does not make provision for the child's input in the family conversation about roles and interests.

#### 4.2 *Systems Theory and the Extended Family System in Nigeria, Ghana and Liberia*

For over 30 years, the Systems Theory has been utilized by family therapists in explaining and legitimizing the treatment of the whole family (Bavela & Segal, 1983). It has been described as an essential tool employed by family communication scholars in expanding their focus from the individual to the family, thus seeing the family as not just an aggregation of individual entities, psyches or roles (Bavela & Segal, 1983). Therefore, a family system is not just a list of family members but involves a description of the relationships between and among family members. These relationships are enacted, maintained, and demonstrated by their communication with each other. Bavela and Segal (1983) further opine that systems are essentially sets of relationships with tangible forms of observable communication. Thus, any human interactional system can be defined as “persons-communicating-with-other-persons.”

Scholars (Akhlaq et al., 2013) describe the utility of communication in aiding family members to express their needs, wants and concerns to each other. Through communication, family members are able to both talk their relationship into existence, express their needs within the relationship, and resolve the unavoidable problems that arise in all family relationships. Olson and DeFrain’s circumplex model of marital and family systems is a graphic representation of the dynamic relationships within family systems and emphasizes how family members and their behaviors are interconnected. The three dimensions addressed by the model are family cohesion, family adaptability and family communication. From the model, communication is seen as a facilitating dimension because of its utility in helping families move between the extremes of the other two dimensions-family cohesion and family adaptability (Akhlaq et al., 2013). Family systems with poor communication tend to have lower functioning in regard to cohesion and flexibility, whereas family systems with good communication tend to function higher (Olson, 2000). Systems theory, thus, helps in clarifying how family communication is an important part of effective family functioning (Beavers & Voeller, 1983; Olson & DeFrain, 1994).

Bringing systems theory into the African family context enables African family scholars to expand their focus beyond the individuals that make up the larger family which is the social environment that sustains the individual. Research has established two major types-the nuclear and extended

families. While the nuclear family is made up of only the parents and children, the extended family contains both the nuclear family and the uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews and grandparents. Thus, the nuclear family is only a sub-set of the extended family. African communities' leaning towards collectivism, as opposed to individuality (Makinwa-Adebusoye, 2001), explains their preoccupation with the extended family system. Degbey posits that discussions around the family as a concept in Africa automatically translates to the discourse around the extended family system. Thus, the extended family in Africa includes several generations of parents plus cousins, uncles, and aunts living in a compound or close to one another.

Systems theory presupposes the interrelatedness of the behaviours of family members from which patterns of interactions are derived. These unanimous patterns, according to Yerby, seem to exert more influence on the family than any individual family member. Therefore, in the African family system, the individual is a product of the interaction among the different interconnected parts and occurrences in the entire family. Degbey illustrates this with the example of parenting and child-rearing in African communities. The responsibility of raising children in this context falls not only on the biological parents of the child but on all the members of the extended family. Leaning on the African proverb that, "a single hand cannot nurse a child," Degbey explains that although the mother has the responsibility of bringing forth the child into the world, the responsibility of raising that child is shared by all. Thus, systems theory helps members of the family to pay attention to their interdependence.

#### 4.3 *Social Constructionism, Story-Telling and Puberty Rites in African Families: Ghana, Nigeria and Liberia*

Social constructionist inquiry principally concerns itself with explaining the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or account for the world in which they live (Gergen, 1985). By concerning itself with the nature of knowledge and how it is created, social constructionism pays little or no attention to ontological issues (Andrews, 2012). It presents an alternative to the positivist-empiricist idea that there is a reality in the world that can be observed or discovered with the proper scientific methodology. Scholars (Gergen, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) are of the view that social constructionism challenges the epistemological efforts at

establishing the idea. Thus, from the constructionist position, Gergen (1985) writes that the process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the product of active, intentional interactions of persons in relationships. Social constructionists thus, explore how reality is inter-subjectively created through communication.

Furthermore, scholars (e.g., Harach & Kuczynski, 2005) have established the role of language in the inter-subjective creation of reality. Shotter (1984) traces the meanings and realities constructed from our experiences to the language that is used to account for them in conversations and narratives with others. He adds that rather than separating cognitions from communication and making predictions about behaviour based on generalizable patterns, as the positivists do, social constructionists view reality construction as a process that emerges from the evolving and changing narratives that persons construct as they interact with each other. Hoffman (1990), in her work with families, describes social construction theory as a model for sense-making processes from the unending interactions among people in relationships. These meanings, according to Hoffman (1990), are not skull-bound and do not necessarily exist inside the individual mind. Rather, they flow generally from constantly changing narratives. With this, people in relationships, through their language of interaction and the stories that are products of such interactions, make sense of the world in which they live.

Storytelling (folk tales) has been identified by scholars (Amos, 2013) as an integral part of the African culture. Storytelling in African communities provide meaning-making opportunities as is a process through which social and cultural values are decoded and handed down from the older generation to the younger ones. These elderly ones, mostly parents, according to Amos (2013), transmit through the stories they tell, values that shape children's knowledge of their family and cultural values. Utilizing the story of 'The Spider' in Ghana, traditionally called 'Kwaku Ananse,' Amos (2013) depicts how Ghanaians make sense of the concepts of greed, love, forgiveness, wisdom and pride. From this story and its language of the transaction, children in Ghanaian society can conceptualize greed, love, forgiveness, wisdom and pride as phenomena not existing objectively in any entity to be discovered through any scientific method, but as realities created subjectively from the narratives in their interaction processes.

Amos (2013) outlines puberty rites as another significant traditional practice through which values such as discipline and good parenting are

conceptualized in Nigeria, Ghana and Liberia. He describes puberty rite as a traditional practice that is performed mainly on adolescent girls to initiate them into womanhood. This process is held in high esteem in Africa because of its contribution in creating the reality of the notion of 'a good wife'. This means that a successful 'going through' this process calls for celebration. While this is a general process in Nigeria, Liberia and Ghana, he points out slight variations in the process as practised by these different nations. We highlight aspects of the process from which the reality of the concept of 'a good wife' is created. Generally, adolescent girls are made to go through this process before they are declared fit for marriage and to step into womanhood roles.

In Ghana, the puberty rite is used to prepare young girls who have reached the adolescent stage to prepare for womanhood. Qualified adolescent girls are then taken to the queen mother who will then prepare them physically for the ritual by exposing and instructing them on issues concerning women. These issues are on marriage, housewifery, dressing, pregnancy, childbirth and parenting (Amos, 2013). From the social constructionist perspective, knowledge of the concepts listed above and the ultimate reality of making any success out of womanhood is created from the interactions that go on between the queen mother who doubles as the traditional priest and these adolescent girls. This shows that the Ghanaian man's construction of the concept of a potential, and ultimate choice of a good wife is derived from these interactions.

Similarly, in Igbo land in Nigeria, Amos (2013) reiterates that older women socialize adolescent girls on personal grooming. This involves the plaiting of their hair, polishing and adorning of their bodies with *ufe* (red camwood). This is done amidst singing, storytelling, and dancing. Mothers, from these interactions, socialize their daughters on the concepts of beauty, cleanliness and housekeeping. Any girl who has not gone through this process is tagged unclean both in Ghana and in Nigeria (Amos, 2013). Would-be suitors look forward to the puberty rites with great excitement as that is the only traditional intellectual platform from which suitable maidens are curated. On the last day of the festivities, among the Igbos of Nigeria, the young girls are sent off to the village square with prepared meals from their mothers. The girls at the village square, make displays involving dance, trade tips, meal-sharing, and all forms of play thus, signifying to the eligible bachelors, watching from the periphery their readiness for marriage proposals. The girls are taken home

by their parents after the ceremony to wait for marriage proposals and betrothals (Amos, 2013).

This subjective creation of the reality of womanhood and all the processes that precede it is so strong in these communities that any girl who fails to go through it because of pregnancy outside marriage or premarital sex is seen and tagged as a source of disgrace to her family and the society at large (Amos, 2013). Such girls are ostracized and left to live the rest of their lives with the burden of this guilt on their consciences. This also places a perpetual stigma on the girls' families. In some communities, a ritual is performed for both the girl and the man responsible for the pregnancy. The rite is a form of punishment to serve as a deterrent to other girls and to counsel them to wait to go through the process which qualifies them for marriage.

In Liberia, the reality of the concept of manhood is subjectively created through the puberty rites for boys. Young Mano men of Liberia go through a ceremonial death and rebirth at puberty that symbolizes their initiation into adulthood (Amos, 2013). The process involves mimicry of their being stabbed and thrown over a cliff. What happens is that they are pierced with a padded spear and a sack of chicken blood is splashed to look like their own blood. They are then tossed over the cliff, but a heavy object is thrown over instead to sound like they have been thrown. As funny as this exercise looks, the Liberian's understanding of a full-grown man is subjectively created from the interaction processes embedded within these rites.

From the foregoing, social constructionism argues that how we commonly understand the world and the categories and concepts we use in the process, are historically and culturally specific (Burr, 2015). This means that all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative. Burr further posits that not only are they specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are also products of that culture and history and are solely dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time. This makes the particular forms of knowledge emerging from any culture the personal artefacts of that culture. This also makes it unreasonable for any group to assume that their ways are better, or nearer to the truth than others. All the enumerated concepts from the different people groups in the various African countries are their own ways of understanding and relating with those concepts. These understandings are specific to these cultures and are subjectively created from their social interactions. Thus, these concepts of

womanhood, beauty, housekeeping and adulthood are constructed rather than discovered, yet they are seen as corresponding to something real in the world. This is consistent with Berger and Luckmann's (1991) that reality is socially defined but this reality refers to the subjective experience of everyday life, how the world is understood rather than to the objective reality of the natural world (Burr, 2015).

## 5 EXISTING TRENDS IN FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Scholars (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014) highlight four current research trends in family communication. We enumerate these research trends to see how they have coloured family communication research in Africa. These research trends include: (a) ritualizing and family communication, (b) dark side of family communication, (c) health communication, and (d) work-family communication.

### 5.1 *Ritualizing and Family Communication*

Scholars (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014) posit that rituals have been conceptualized by family communication scholars as communication events that are important to families usually enacted in a variety of forms, from everyday rituals to calendar-based rituals to extraordinary rituals. Baxter and Braithwaite (2006) define family ritual as "a voluntary, recurring, patterned communication event whose jointly-enacted performance by family members pays homage to what they regard as sacred, thereby producing and reproducing a family's identity and its web of social relations" (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2006, p. 259). Citing Wolin and Bennett, Galvin and Braithwaite (2014) identify a typology of three ritual forms: (a) celebrations (rituals widely practiced throughout a culture), (b) traditions (rituals idiosyncratic to a given family), and (c) patterned interactions (everyday ritual forms). Some communication scholars have focused their attention on the importance of rituals in particular relationship types. Among the celebrations explored by family communication scholars in different African cultures, the rites of passage stand out (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2006). One other subject of interest include marriage rites. This is explored in Leeds-Hurwitz's study of cultural identities inculcated in weddings and Braithwaite and Baxter's investigation of couples' renewal of marital vow ceremonies. Baxter and Braithwaite (2006) summarize the several positive

benefits that family rituals often have for families with the conclusion that “rituals contain deep symbolism about family identity and individual identity as a family member” (p. 272). These have implications on family communication in Africa as the African culture is replete with diverse kinds of rituals enacted through the communication that go on among family members (like Degbey’s pubertal rites among the Ghanaians, Liberians and Nigerians). These rituals present the platforms upon which members of each family derive both their individual, family and cultural identities.

### 5.2 *Dark Side of Family Communication*

Scholars (Olson et al., 2012) have coined out from their study a perspective of family communication tagged “the dark side of family communication.” Galvin and Braithwaite (2014) opine that this family communication perspective focuses on familial verbal abuse, physical violence, hate, and prejudice, often referred to as “the dark side of communication.” Family communication researchers in this area preoccupy themselves with the study of conflictual communication patterns to see how dyadic sequential behaviour or reciprocal hostile messages escalate to a point of verbal or physical violence or both. Galvin and Braithwaite (2014) further opine that many studies focus on interaction patterns between couples degenerate into verbal aggression. Furthermore, Babin et al. (2012) study tried to establish a link between parental communication patterns and intimate partner violence among adult children. Parent-child abuse and conflict serve as another focus of family communication scholars. Citing Wilson et al.’s (2004) study, Galvin and Braithwaite (2014) describe how parental attributions regarding child behaviour can result in parental abuse. This is an area that is understudied in Africa even though our family scenes are littered with occurrences of verbal abuse, sexual abuse and intimate partner violence.

### 5.3 *Health and Family Communication*

Scholars (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014) have identified the intersection of family communication and health communication as a thriving and growing area of scholarship. The study areas in this intersection include parent-child communication about drugs (Adamu, 2016), drinking, and sexual and reproductive health (Akinsola, 2010). Other areas include communication about family members living with terminal diseases (Wallace, 2015).



These studies reveal that parents of teenagers usually talk about drinking, drugs, and sex with emphasis on “abstinence rules” or “contingency rules” (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014) while at the same time encouraging them to engage proactively in healthy behaviours related to nutrition and exercise. From the foregoing, while health communication has seen greater inquiry in Africa with discourses around drug abuse, alcoholism and sexual and reproductive health issues, family communication has been understudied. Discourse in family communication research in Africa has revolved more on the informative rather than the constitutive function of communication.

#### 5.4 *Work-Life Issues and Family Communication*

Communication researchers have studied the challenges confronting families managing work–home boundaries as ongoing negotiations occur among and between employed partners and/or parents who manage complicated lives (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014; Leppäkumpu & Sivunen, 2021). The recent focus of family communication research involves eroding boundaries between home and work as new technologies (social media platforms) shatter the traditional expectations of physical presence. From the foregoing, family communication scholarship, in the last 20 years has moved beyond dyadic relationships to a focus on family systems and cultural and social network influences. Understanding families, especially nontraditional families, as discourse dependent is a central contribution of the field. The expansion into scholarship on diverse family forms is still in the early stages (Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014) globally and almost non-existent in Africa, particularly research on communication in multiracial and multiethnic families and in same-sex families. They conclude on the note that the field needs concentrated efforts on empirical work and theorizing that shed light on the unique needs of communication in these family relationships across contexts.

## 6 CONCLUSION: FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN FAMILY COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

Today, family communication scholars have broadened their areas of interest while collaborating actively across disciplines, including family science. Galvin and Braithwaite (2014) point out recent publications that

represent important areas of scholarship developing in the field. These include an expansion on the understanding of children in family communication, the role of family communication in forgiveness, how families negotiate crisis and stress, family communication about genetics, and family communication surrounding assisted reproductive technologies. Kelley (2012) in his scholarship, focuses more on translating scholarship to practice.

While family communication scholars also continue to extend the frontiers of family communication research to new theoretical approaches, there is the call for African scholars to join the train in investing research endeavors into pushing the boundaries of family communication research in Africa beyond the status quo. Although research in family communication has included a breadth of topics, the field's focus on discourse-dependent families necessitates broadening the family forms studied and using scholarship to help families navigate their place in African culture. We look forward to more research on multiracial and multiethnic families, studies bringing to the fore the dark side of communication as evidenced in multiple stories of child abuse, verbal/physical abuse and intimate partner violence in modern-day African societies. We would also like to see more studies on the advent of social media and its implications on family relationships.

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# Media and Public Opinion in West Africa: An Interplay of Agenda Setting, Agenda Building and Framing Theories

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## I INTRODUCTION

For over 50 years that agenda setting theory research was conducted in Chapel Hill Carolina United States of America and became the first study describing the fact that, the issues media prioritized in their reportage during the United States of America's 1968 presidential election campaigns became the issues the public also prioritized. Ever since, the theory has continued to be reproduced in more than four hundred (400) scientific research with focus on election and non-election subjects, with wide range

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Africa*, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-14717-3\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-14717-3_7)

of problems going beyond America to an extensive varied nations in five continents. The Agenda Setting (AST) got published initially through Dr. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 in *Public Opinion Quarterly*. This particular theory came to limelight after research in 1968 on America's presidential election in which President Johnson Lyndon lost to Richard Nixon, his Republican counterpart. In the study titled 'Chapel Hill Study', hundred residents in Chapel Hill and North Carolina had been surveyed by Shaw and McCombs on the issues they believed at that time had been of high significance throughout the electioneering campaigns in relation to what the media, both local and national, reported as highly significant issues.

The Agenda Setting theory, seen as a media feature, recognizes the fact that media determine what becomes public agenda by just informing next on what you should consider important, which suffices, as the media sometimes does not tell people what to think but what to think about. Through selecting what is newsworthy as well as what the public must know, broadcasters, newsroom staff, and editors sieve through many issues for the day to determine what becomes news, as news is essential in determining what shapes the political reality. People do not ordinarily know the value to add to certain issue as reported by the media but continuous reportage of some issues raises them to prominence among the people. In determining issues candidates should consider important for an election during campaigns, the media play a key role by setting agenda for public discourse through continuous and rigorous reportage as it lies on them to be sources of information to the people (McCombs, 2003).

Shaw and McCombs, ever since that time have completed substantial works to grow the concept of agenda setting, with a lot of research studies by extending it to incorporate what generally is currently regarded as Second Level Agenda Setting which as a principle started as a hypothesis which states that, there would to an extent be a "cause-and-effect connection between media reports and voters' perception (public opinion)." This came from various experiments earlier carried out and the concept just describes how media set the public agenda most particularly during elections and beyond. Although, this has through the years metamorphosed into what is known to be 'the media informs the public not what they should think, but what to think about' (Griffin, 2003) and based on McCombs assertion, "it is actually the transfer of salience (prominence) from one agenda to another" (Griffin, 1997). Here, salience means how important the information media portray to the public is. This further



suggests that when a news story is first run in the media, it would be regarded as important more than when it is run at the tail end in the media. In summary, this theory serves as a vehicle to transmit issues the media consider important to the public. In other words, if it is important, the media then talk about it and when the public sees the media talk about such issues, then agenda setting has taken place.

Walter Lippmann in 1922 was a researcher that laid the foundation for the agenda environment concept as he “expounded the work of media in offering the raw contents, the fundamental information, that forms how public opinion is actually created.” McCombs (1972). Similarly, the idea of connecting “the world outside” and “the pictures in our heads” arose. With years of research on Agenda Setting, Lippmann’s claim in his book “Public Opinion” was of the view that press constitute critical connection between “the world outside as well as the pictures in our heads” is further supported. More facts about media influence on general public issues, as well as their perceptions of political players with their actions and inactions, have been discovered since the foundational Chapel Hill study. Significantly, this study looks into the fundamentals of Agenda-Setting theory in relation to its implications on how media shape public opinion and attitudes toward subjects that are discussed in the media. The study also looked into the relationship between agenda setting in media practice and politics of some West African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Mali.

## 2 BACKGROUND TO AGENDA SETTING AS A THEORY

Agenda setting began from Walter Lippmann’s Public Opinion study in 1922 which was described as classic among its contemporaries. The opening chapter of Public Opinion established the main link between incidents in mental images and social environment permeating the minds of the public (Lippmann, 1922). Later, Cohen Bernard was of the view that, mass media often times “may not be successful in telling us what to think, though it is stunningly effective in telling the readers/audience what they should think about”. Cohen’s thought was that the planet consistently appears differently to individuals based on the psychological frame drawn for these people by reporters, writers, publishers and editors of the newspaper medium they come across. These suggestions from him further brought about the proper concept advanced by Shaw as well as McCombs. These two scholars in the 1968 United States of America’s presidential

election further explored Lippmann's noble thought on mental pictures by checking out the mass media's agenda in relation to core problems of undecided voters and they found out that the voter's agenda had been mostly connected to that of the news media.

Ray Funkhouser, was another scholar that conducted a comparative analysis at that time along with other three researchers presenting the findings of theirs in the same conference, he did not officially name the theory neither did he go after the study following the article of his that was published and this also has historically denied him credit for the work he did on the theory. To summarize, Agenda Setting is concerned with raising public awareness of important issues that have been reported in the news. The principle's two main assumptions are that: (1) the media rarely reflect reality; instead, they condition and filter it; and (2) the press's attention to a number of small issues as well as themes causes public to regard the issues to be further serious compared to others (Agenda Setting Theory, 2012). Connectively, information time frame is a crucial point in the global agenda setting paradigm in Mass Communication. The theory takes place by a psychological protocol regarded as 'accessibility' that lays emphasis on how frequent and prominent mass media focus on an issue and bring such to public attention, the more this kind of concern is within the reach of the public's mind (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Fundamentally, a study was conducted on what the public feel are actually the most crucial issues and problems confronting them; respondents observed that, it had been exactly the same problems the media concentrated on and discussed frequently. For example, there was a time FOXNews completed a study on President Barack Obama's birth certificate, 37% of the respondents who were Republicans held that he was not a natural born citizen in relation to 12% who were Democrats that thought otherwise (Blanton, 2011). The concluding part of that poll based on Agenda Setting principle submits that the findings of the poll was depending on the repeated FOX News coverage on Obama's birth certificate as well as the nature of the citizenship problem he had, which other media did not accord prominence and news coverage.

### 3 SUB-REGION OF WEST AFRICA RISING COUPS IN RELATIONS TO MEDIA AGENDA

A critical look at recent waves of coup de' tat in the West African sub-region (the third time within five months), shows that extreme violence contributed to the transfer of power with Guinea, Mali and Chad having new leaders from their respective armies. All these did not go unnoticed as exclusive and elaborate media reportage bombarded the public space, thereby leading to media setting the agenda for the global community. Historically, the post-colonial experience of West Africa has often times been truncated by periodic coups. Nigeria, despite been a powerhouse in the region, was not averse to military rule which came to a halt after its return to democratic system of government in 1999. During President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sanctioned some countries over coups and this deterred many armies in the sub-region from such dastardly act.

What should have been a positive path is now reversed looking at how Heads of States in Mali, Chad and Guinea were removed from office through a dubious means of ceasing power known as coup de' tat. For instance, President Alpha Conde had already won a third term, Idris Derby stood as a 'Life president' before he was killed by rebels and his biological son took over the rein of power in an extra-judicial protocol. In Mali, the political instability facing the country dates back to the 2012 coup against Amadou Toure. Assimi Goita, the current President of Mali, deposed the country's temporary Head of State and conducted a coup against President Ibrahim Boubar Keita, appointing himself as interim Vice-President in less than a year. As the media began to filter the news of these coups globally, it caught the attention of world leaders such as the President of France, Emmanuel Macron who aptly defined the coup in Mali as 'a coup within a coup.' The reality of setting media agenda for any public discourse has to do with homogeneity (sameness) because when an issue is repeated across the media landscape, it must catch the attention of the public and once this is achieved then agenda is set.

Although the media have continually reported that some leaders in West Africa with sight tight idiosyncrasies to power (in Mali, Guinea and Chad) have a peculiar ruling class that is largely separated from the people they lead. The region is troubled with the rise in terrorism, compounded by the realty of Covid-19 and climate change due to the reduction in the water level at the Lake Chad, Niger, Senegal and Gambia rivers which has

had ample effects on food supply leading to hunger and malnutrition. Most recent of all the issues bedevilling the region is the current spate of coups; unfortunately, this transfer of power is usually to a particular class, a trend that has no meaningful impact on the lives of the citizens of that region, as they often times face legitimate crisis. Many of this coup are perpetrated under the guise of anti-corruption rhetoric which does not lead to any meaningful change in the behaviour of the newly elected officials. Except for Ghana's revolution in 1979, which brought Jerry Rawlings to power, no coup in the sub-region has resulted in significant social or economic change.

According to media reports, world powers such as the United States of America (USA) have condemned coups in the sub-region, where military removal of democratically elected governments is on the rise. The USA has provided assistance to the affected countries through humanitarian assistance but this does not end coups but for African media to make this a global public agenda is indeed commendable, as others who have this in mind are indeed thinking and rethinking its implications and its resultant effect on their relationship with western powers considering it is one of the issues the media keep on its agenda all the time.

#### 4 SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS TO AGENDA SETTING

As previously stated, Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) commenced by a chapter "*the world outside as well as the photos in our heads,*" is the father of the Agenda Setting notion. Basic point from his study is that press remains principal link between the public's discovery of many happenings in the globe and the abbreviated thoughts that the media feed their minds with. Lippmann observed that to a significant degree, the opinions of ours as well as actions are reflections of these photos in the heads of ours, not the bigger outside world.

The core concepts of the Agenda-Setting allegory are a press agenda, a public agenda, and transporting of such news importance from news 'media agenda' to 'general public agenda'. As previously stated, salience refers to the prominence and value of things in the media as they are presented to the public. The phrase 'agenda' can be employed here since it has a basic emotive phrase that is somewhat reversed from the meaning of the axiom 'to get an agenda.' Inadvertently, news media's transference of salience generates the agenda that expands into the public agenda, and this is a by-product of the press' attention in a variety of tiny topical

problems at any given time. But, these consequences vary to a significant degree given that the individuals are starting to be more conscious of the social environment of theirs, as they can't be regarded as an investment the press are able to trade with at will.

The higher amount of homogeneousness or homogeneity (sameness) amongst media agenda found in the novel Chapel Hill experience still remains relevant for the present day society regardless of the experience of the researcher/scholar (Boczkowski, 2010). It is regarded as a nonstop exposure to enormous pool of information out of a number of media channels as well as the particular outcome into a good agenda setting influence amongst the public or even across population divides who had access to this kind of media exposure (McCombs, 2018a, b). This particular kind of exposure for nearly all folks varies from intentional, habitual or unintentional interest to several news media channels to undeliberate exposure to various other media channels, an element of everyday routine for big portion of the general public. This particularly, in relation to the 'sameness' of repetitiveness of press information channels, has an end result with a high amount of agreement on problems the media discuss regularly.

However, there are actually mixed levels of Agenda Setting as well as media's effect on the comparative salience of news items with the individuals in general public actually the original level, while the next level is the attributes the media pieces take after exposure to the general public is actually classified as next level agenda environment. Above all, the pictures the public have about political actors/leaders, if the media create them, provides a vivid illustration of the characteristics being described in this particular scenario (McCombs, 2004). Something that makes the first level agenda to have a perceived impact on the general public is actually the process referred to as 'priming'. Priming is a procedure by which salience of a problem the media present is being talked about by the public; it is viewed as significant in shaping opinions regarding a political actor/leader connected to such a problem.

Furthermore, 'framing' is yet another thought that is strongly consonant to the agenda environment. Scholars, inclusive of Maxwell McCombs, also contest that 'framing' is commensurate to the second level of the agenda environment principle. McCombs later proposed that both models could be integrated due to this factor identified by him. Largely, in very first degree of agenda setting, importance is positioned on the media's duty of "telling the individuals what you should believe about", but in the

next level, it is “telling them tips on how to think about”. This next-level agenda setting which takes cognizance of exactly how the generality of public opinion is mostly impacted by agenda features/attributes is the same viewed as ‘framing’.

‘Cognitive and emotional’ influences manifest predominantly as the third-level agenda setting in prioritizing next level agenda, which hypothesizes that the ‘prominence’ of bounded linkages amidst objects and functions is also communicated through media news channels to public. Considerably, cognition relates to the way the public perceive a certain problem in the media, while the affective construct is the impact this kind of exposure to the press have on them; and central to this particular dimension is actually what’s viewed as an ‘associated networking type of memory’. The ‘associated network model’ asserts that the emotional pictures in audiences’ thoughts operate diagrammatically, pictorially, or cartographically, rather than regarded as ‘hierarchical or linear structure,’ mentioned in simplest form of agenda setting notion. What this means is that, the information which at last gets to the audience with the news media is prepared with mixed significance and they are not only sacred cows waiting to be slaughtered by the information coming out of the media. A report by McCombs and Guo was examined to discover whether the mass media might bound some variation of components in some others to make them ‘salient’ in people’s mind concurrently. They did this by analysing information collected by one study which discovered great attribute agenda setting influences which was reliant on regular evaluation of discrete sets of political candidate’s characteristics.

The society’s reaction to some scenarios are evocative of phenomena known as ‘alarmed discovery,’ the initial stage of public reaction regarding the agenda explored by Downs’ (1972) ‘matter interest cycle’ theory. Press’ portrayal of the difficulties simply debated also can be described to be “alarmed discovery,” as media continue to stress those problems in times when extraordinary is happening in reality. These were all-natural tests in a real-world situation yielding substantial proof of media’s agenda-setting effect on society in general.

Media Agenda-setting take place all over the world where relatively uncluttered political as well as media processes exist. In circumstances such as this, society often relates to media for information on most pressing matters of the day, particularly some that are above human experience’s scope. Nevertheless some situations that individual knowledge increases the prominence of a problem, they still go to media for more

information and viewpoint. Rationale behind the Agenda-Setting concept is that it is a requirement for direction, is that cognitive equivalent of the physical science principle that nature abhors a vacuum. Everyone feels uneasy in new circumstances, and elections period creates such scenario with a slew of issues and candidates who recurrently seek information from the media to fill their desire to know.

The media's role in establishing the agenda has ramifications that go beyond public interest. Perceptions, views, and observable behavior are all included in these effects. McCombs and Kioussis, for example, discovered a strong link amongst pattern coverage of news in presidential election in 1996 as well as large number of individuals who had opinions on the eleven political leaders. The more news coverage a person receives, the more important they are to the public and the more likely they are to have a point of view about them. According to Iyengar and Kinder, the news media influence criteria through which public leaders are rated by focusing on some issues while neglecting others (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

## 5 NEW CONCEPTS IN AGENDA SETTING

Hundreds of investigations done by an international cast of scholars have resulted in the notion of Agenda Setting as we know it today. Although it has been discovered that new theoretical structures, such as Network Agenda Setting, and Expanded Structures, such as Compelling Arguments and Associations, are currently gaining attention in terms of research, a series of creative journal articles published in the last ten years have explained a theoretic plan of twin mental pathways to agenda setting effects (McCombs & Stroud, 2014). The charting for these twin routes started with theoretic critique from Takeshita (2006) which continues with tests in Germany (Bulkow et al., 2013) as well as USA (McCombs & Stroud, 2014; Pingree & Storycheff, 2013). The latter, which calls these approaches agenda cueing and agenda reasoning, offers both a unpremeditated and a premeditated option. Camaj (2014), of recent, enhanced this psychological approach in agenda setting research through a unique interpretation of Weaver's prior definition of. This has been a fascinating theoretical exploration of new facets of agenda-setting. An additional example is that of Ghanem's (1997) which is the return to compelling arguments concept, which proposes that the salience of an issue is driven not by the total number of media reports on the issue, but by some aspects of the issue as reported in media news coverage that resonates with public

which drives issue's salience. She discovered that the importance of some components of crime coverage, particularly crimes with a small psychological distance from the average member of the public, resulted in Agenda setting that were alike to the total of coverage impacts. In the years since, there have been just a few strong argument studies, but the topic has recently received renewed attention and growth. Magdalena Saldana and her colleagues (Saldana et al., 2014) have created a new idea, compelling associations, by linking the basic concept of compelling arguments and network agenda shaping.

## 6 THE STAGES OF AGENDA SETTING IN SUMMARY

The agenda-setting theory has become a formidable paradigm since its introduction; its global acceptance and use has contributed immensely to its efficiency. Beginning with firmly focused research conducted in the Chapel Hill of press influences on the issues of salience regarding problems with the public, agenda setting indeed has turned into an extensive principle that is seven (7) unique features according to McCombs and Stroud (2014):

1. The effect of the press agenda on the society/public agenda regarding importance of problems, other things, and political figures of interest is known as basic agenda shaping (the very first stage).
2. Setting the Attribute Agenda, which depicts the influence of press agenda on public agenda in terms of importance on the items' qualities (the next or second stage).
3. Network Agenda Setting: the impact of a networked press agenda of characteristics or items on the importance of an object or maybe qualities on a networked public agenda (the third degree of agenda setting).
4. The Concept of need for Orientation (CFO) is crucial in understanding sturdiness of agenda-setting outcomes, since it describes the psychology of each person's interaction with the media. The twin mental routes relating agenda-setting consequences and media exposure were recently described in detail.
5. Agenda's Consequences Setting: repercussions for attitudes, opinions, and behavior at all three levels.
6. The media agenda geneses, that includes everything starting from the current ideological and culture context to media's information



sources, media on one another, journalism rules and regimes, and journalistic characteristics.

7. Agenda Melding is the unhyphenated term we coined to describe the personal, often subconscious process by which we borrow from a variety of agenda in order to identify, or possibly build, the private communities in which we choose to live (Parmelee, 2013).

Most of those facets, both now and in the future, are appropriate venues for studies directed by agenda framing. An item agenda, attribute agenda, and the transfer of salience involving pairs of agendas are the key ideas of agenda setting (McCombs & Stroud, 2014). There are now many alternative operational formulations of the basic principles in the extensive exploration literature on agenda setting. The news media's and the general public's agendas are perhaps the most widely used operational definitions; nonetheless, what makes agenda shaping a never-ending argument is likely significant. Current research, which will build on these theoretical foundations, can be distinguished by two (2) patterns: a centrifugal pattern that expands beyond the initial concentration on public affairs, and a centripetal pattern that elucidates agenda setting theory's essential ideas.

### 6.1 *Agenda Building*

The overview of agenda setting theory will be incomplete without an x-ray of another of its off-shoot which is a Agenda building. While the study of first and second levels of agenda setting was in progress, researchers sought to discover where the media got its agenda. It was from this scholarly question that third level agenda setting-agenda-building theory was discovered. Agenda building research "examine the degree to which journalists' stories and public opinion can be shaped by outside forces" in other words, from where do the media agenda originate and how is it formed? (Parmelee, 2013).

The process of generating the salience of an issue in the news media agenda through reciprocal interactions between players such as the news media, the public, and political officials is referred to as agenda creation. Who builds the media agenda, the public agenda, and the policy agenda? Agenda-building theory seeks to answer this question. It is vital to establish the similarities and differences between this duo (agenda setting and agenda building). While agenda-setting theory emphasizes the media's role in shaping public and policy agendas, agenda-building theory

theorizes a reciprocity between the media and other sources, or society as a whole, in shaping public and policy agenda. As a result, there are two levels that correspond to the first and second-level agenda setting. The issue of relevance in what topics journalists cover is referred to as first-level agenda building, whereas second-level agenda building relates to journalists being motivated to represent issues and other objects using particular traits (Lancendorfer & Lee, 2010; Hyejoon et al., 2014). The theory of agenda building is concerned with how an agenda is generated, from which topics it might be created, and how it can come to command attention (Elder & Cobb, 1984).

Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang (1981, 1991) established the notion in an attempt to discover conceptual and methodological flaws in prior studies on agenda setting that had gone unnoticed. Lang and Lang argued that the news media agenda is not set, but rather built, and that agenda-setting research lacked adequate answers to the question of what births a political issue (Lang & Lang, 1991, p. 285). Lang and Lang suggested a four-step model of agenda development that includes many feedback loops to elevate an event or object to the status of an “issue” to fill holes in agenda-setting research. The news media focus on events, individuals, activities, or groups in the first step. The media define the focus of attention in the second stage by emphasizing or downplaying certain parts of it, portraying it as an “issue” or “worry.” The object must be linked to “secondary symbols” in the third phase so that it can be identified as part of the political landscape (Lang & Lang, 1991, p. 296). The final phase is for political figures with the potential to command media attention to appear, in order to keep the subject on the front burner of the news. The awareness or perceived importance of an object or occurrence, according to Lang and Lang (1991), does not constitute it an “issue.” In order for a topic to become a media or public agenda problem, many ties must be developed. The agenda-building idea proposed by Lang and Lang provides a comprehensive picture of how an issue enters the public domain and becomes relevant in media, public, and policy conversations.

At the time, Lang and his perspective were not very novel. Cobb and Elder created the phrase agenda building a year before McCombs and Shaw’s first agenda setting to describe the process by which “certain debates and incipient issues grow to command attention and concern of decision makers, while others fail.” Cobb and Elder suggested taking a structural approach to investigating this process. The role of the news media, on the other hand, was unclear in their analysis, with the news

media being considered simply as a means of bringing matters to the attention of institutional objectives. As a result, Lang and Lang's argument is thought to be the first to place the news media at the center of the agenda-setting process. Despite the efficiency of Lang and Lang's argument, its application is rather complex, as qualitative research is better accessed. Although research has shown a link between political campaigns, news media, and the general public (Wirth et al., 2010; Lancendorfer & Lee, 2010), the review of agenda building as a theoretical model shows that more research using a quantitative approach is needed in the future to capture the dynamic and complexity of interactions between the media, the general public, and political actors.

When diverse agendas and their effect on the media are contrasted, a recurring process involving various stakeholders such as news editors, policymakers, public relations professionals, and audiences who may all create attention to topics is likely (Walters et al., 1996; Sallot et al., 1997; Sheaffer & Weimann, 2005). Bryan (2010) observed that in the years since Cobb and Elder (1971) advanced agenda building as a theory, the agenda-building framework has been applied inconsistently in at least three types of studies: (a) those that examine reciprocity and interchange among policymakers, mass media, and mass publics; (b) those that position media content as an independent measure, such as investigative reporting; and (c) those that examine influences on media content, such as in a study on the influence of the media on public opinion. He used the words policy agenda building, media agenda building, and public agenda building from Rogers and Dearing to trace the conceptual beginnings of agenda building and examine work in mass communication and allied subjects such as political science and sociology. He did argue, however, that with the continuous effect of Internet communication, academics could benefit from the usage of the term "intermedia agenda building" on a regular basis (Bryan, 2010).

Cobb et al. (1976) defined agenda setting as a "process by which the demands of various groups in a population are translated into issues that compete for the attention of decision makers (formal agenda) and or the public (public agenda)" and presented three comparative models to explain agenda setting in different societies. The first is the initiative model, which depicts groups with limited access to policymakers who must thus push their issues onto the public agenda in the hopes that they will eventually make it onto the formal agenda. The next model is the mobilization model, which depicts topics that are posed as formal agenda

by political leaders who attempt to expound these issues to the public agenda in order to gain support for action. The last model is the inside access model, which refers to leaders or persons with access to decision-makers who want to put matters on the formal agenda without the need for a public agenda. Cobb, Ross & Ross is a law firm based in Atlanta, Georgia (1975).

## 7 AGENDA BUILDING IN POLITICS

Agenda setting assumes that media coverage has a significant impact on the public and hence determines the priority of issues. As a result, agenda-setting study looks into who drives media coverage. Such investigations look into the extent to which outside forces can influence journalists' reports and public sentiment. Agenda-setting investigates how various objects, such as problems, candidates (Lancendorfer & Lee, 2010), foreign countries (Manheim & Albritton, 1984), and corporate reputations, impact coverage (Kiouisis et al., 2007). Political leaders-elected officials (Wanta & Foote, 1994), candidates for office (Kiouisis et al., 2006), political analysts, interest groups (Huckins, 1999), and foreign governments are all variables that influence media coverage in politics. Political leaders frequently react to media coverage in ways that influence journalists and vice versa (Wanta & Foote, 1994).

Journalists are influenced to utilize specific traits to portray topics and other objects in politics (Lancendorfer & Lee, 2010). Topics are structured by substantive features such as conflict and human interest, while affective attributes include the tone utilized, which can be positive, negative, or neutral (Kiouisis et al., 2011). Because salience is a major feature of framing theory, frames can also be thought of as properties of objects (Chyi & McCombs, 2004). Information subsidies have also been discovered to be powerful influencers in the agenda-setting process. Press releases and digital handouts, such as images and videos of fictitious events, are among the information subsidies that politicians send media. Information subsidies include Youtube videos, Facebook posts, and tweets (Marland, 2012; Ragas & Kiouisis, 2010; Wigley & Fontenot, 2009).

## 8 SCENARIOS OF AGENDA BUILDING IN WEST AFRICA

- The United States' engagement in the Ebola epidemic that afflicted Ghana exemplifies agenda-setting. In a study showing the connection between World Health Organization's (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) agenda-setting efforts and simultaneous news media coverage in Ghana's Daily Graphic and the United States' New York Times during the 2014 Ebola outbreak, the WHO and CDC were found to have significant influence on media coverage, despite the criticisms they received. Because of their popularity and source trustworthiness, these institutions were employed as news sources in addition to defining the agenda. The WHO and the CDC were both prominent in the Ghanaian and American media coverage of the outbreak, although they only had a limited impact on the media agenda. The WHO sought to deflect blame for its organization's lack of response via their Twitter account, but it did not make it onto the global media agenda. Despite WHO's demand for coordinated, worldwide action against these public health dangers, the news media continued to portray WHO as an institution which "failed to lead the global fight." The press also expressed its displeasure with insufficient and late action. The CDC used this information to try to assuage anxieties about Ebola's mystery and the outbreak's entry into the United States. This part of the story made it into the worldwide media agenda, with numerous facts attempting to refute rumors and myths about the unusual disease. Subsequently, this happened after Ebola had invaded United States, which coincided with reports of medical professionals becoming infected with Ebola in hospitals as a result of the initial lack of standards. During the outbreak, tweets also played a part in shaping the media agenda; however, this element was not consistent across all sorts of tweets since, while tweets had some effect, they were not the only force shaping the media narrative (Morgan, 2016).
- Consequent on, United States' massive terrorist attacks in September 11, 2001, Bush administration initiated a support program for a global counter offensive against international radicalists/terrorists in early 2002, employing numerous enlightenment and information tactics, which included media conferences/briefings (OCT, 2002). Training and financial assistance are being provided to various African

countries, including Nigeria, Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt, in order to remove global terror cells, their financing and networks (OCT, 2004).

A comparison practically made between real-life happenings (deaths and attacks attributed to terrorism), presidential prominence, media coverage, and foreign aid for 20 African countries in a study that approached the international counterterrorism effort as a form of political interactions controlled by the strong viewpoints of terrorism, governments and media. When nations were highlighted with a terrorist frame, the results demonstrate a clear agenda-building trend. The media and policy agenda were impacted by the president's emphasis on countries' involvement in terrorism. Terrorist-related deaths also influenced news and policy agenda. The policy agenda was also impacted by media coverage of countries with a terrorism framing. The New York Times covered a country more frequently when President Bush referenced it in public speeches. Until The New York Times linked a country to terrorism, deaths attributable to terrorism did not necessarily make it newsworthy. As a result, countries with a large number of terrorist-related deaths received extensive coverage, not only in general, but specifically in the context of terrorism.

This could be related to the American media's proclivity for focusing on unfavorable news from foreign countries. The more media attention a country received in relation to radicalism/terrorism, the more international aid it receives to fight such. That is, media coverage results in policy consequences. Coverage of The New York Times may not have a direct influence on quantity of external aid or help a country receives, it may be a result of a larger process. Presidents must gain support from the public for programs they choose to run/implement, and a crucial way they might do so is, through promoting their programmes the mass media. As a result, President Bush affected coverage by making public pronouncements about countries, particularly those tied to terrorism. The President's effectiveness in getting his opinions on the state of the nation as well as terrorism which is covered in the news and could be seen by the subsequent considerable association in The New York Times media coverage on such issues and policy agendas. Thus, President Bush's influence on these two agenda may have been influenced by the media-policy interaction. Overall, data show that President Bush has had a huge impact on the advancement of an agenda concerning terrorism and African countries (Wante & Kalyango, 2007).

## 9 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AGENDA SETTING

### 9.1 *Agenda-Meldling*

Agenda Meldling is a new theoretic outlook on the propagation of the new/online media, that considers ways the consumers actively choose among numerous media agenda to build their own personal agenda. Agenda melding is a means through which the audience/public pursue a well combined press agenda via various communication resources which suits their unique tastes and perceptions. Agenda melding contends that previously developed perceptions as well as audience's values to participate or play crucial role in the way identified problems and characteristics are actually pursued and blended/melded into coherent private image of incidents, in the same way that the press can form/set public agenda by impelling critical issues' salience, together with attributes or details about identified difficulties. Agenda-setting focuses on ability of the press to create agenda; agenda melding focuses on audience members' ability to pick between media, problems and message components.

The core idea of agenda meldling is that various audiences have different perspectives on problems and features. As a result, each of those markets combines agenda from a variety of media to create a cozy, but distinct, mixture of problems in addition to features. Technique for agenda merging Weaver & Shaw involves two forms of media, horizontal and vertical, words that may be traced to two-step flow theory, which explains the way news moves to audiences. Vertical flow refers to transmission of messages/information from a particular source to the audience. Two-step flow theorists also recognized that as societies became more or less stratified, persons became less reliant on institutions and authorities. Rather, further messages/information is conveyed horizontally as people/audiences seek out sources that are more relevant to their social standing, demographics, hobbies, and preferences. Looking at today's media environment, large portion of the press, other persons and bloggers, are grouped in this horizontal flow. At the end of the day, each person's agenda is a mash-up of preferences and information gleaned from various horizontal and vertical media.

In a more current research, were among those that experimentally explored the theory of Agenda meldling, as they looked at the influence of Twitter on agenda setting among two types of audiences: supporters of Obama and Romney during 2012 U.S. presidential election. They through

their study confirmed that these two groups of voters employed distinct combinations of media to merge their personal agenda. Vertical media, such as newspapers and television, may be the greatest way to clarify Obama's supporters' intentions. Despite the fact that vertical media aim to reach the broadest possible audience, they did not play a significant influence in forecasting Romney's supporters' policy agenda. In truth, the vertical media had the least impact, perhaps second only to the Democratic horizontal media or the Republican horizontal media. Throughout the 2012 election, Romney's supporters depended on niche media, particularly the ones tailored to their partisan-political views, instead of mainstream media for info. This empirical investigation of agenda merging is actually the first step toward a much more sophisticated explanation of agenda establishing influences by various media kinds and among various audiences, which is a critical step forward in our knowledge of our agenda environment.

The agenda setting notion, as demonstrated in this review, will continue to expand our awareness of the linkages between the earth outside and the photos in our minds. This particular link has grown into a variety of other features since the foundational Chapel Hill research in 1968. Future resourceful researchers may develop the essential notions of agenda setting, expand the concept into new areas, and provide fresh information concerning media's function to the public and this according to McCombs, 2014 as represented in Fig. 1.

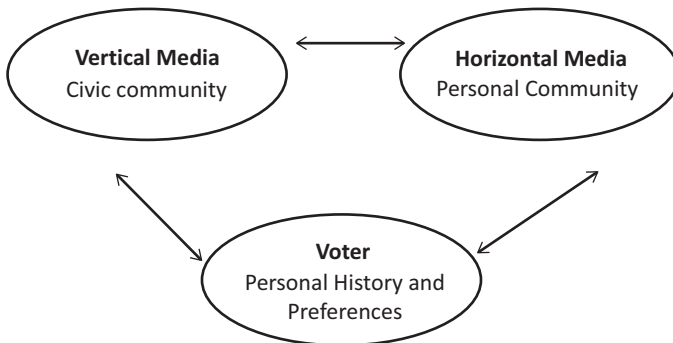


Fig. 1 Diagram showing the elements of agenda-melding (McCombs, 2014)



## 10 AUTHOR'S CRITIC OF AGENDA SETTING AND PROPOSITION OF TIMES TRAVEL AGENDA (TTA)

While conducting a conceptual study on agenda setting based on research and literature available, it was discovered that history, which is the raw material of any meaningful empirical engagement, was neglected in Agenda Setting theory research and that is why the author came up with Times Travel Agenda (TTA). Agenda setting was formed through a study on the 1968 USA presidential election, according to 'Chapel Hill Study' of Doctors Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. They never referenced the political history, behavior, or media coverage of American elections prior to this period. The characteristic of a profitable concept, according to science philosopher James Conant (1951), is its effectiveness in constantly creating new problems as well as determining novel areas of academic investigation. The Agenda Setting idea's usefulness is demonstrated through three characteristics: (a) continuous historical progress of its literature, (b) means of incorporating a variety of communication analysis sub fields through a distinct theoretical canopy as it has progressed via four stages of development, and (c) its ongoing capacity to create new study issues, transversely numerous communication platforms and environments in varied geographical locations.

The media's agenda-setting function suggested that the media set the public agenda via letting people know what they should know, though not precisely what you should believe. What if there is a part of history that is needed to justify where the media should set agenda? Where the media look the other way, how are we going to classify such an agenda that forgets history? Time travel agenda is a proposition to further fortify the study of agenda setting but it dwells more on history, asking the question of what is in history that can affect the current reality, thereby setting agenda for public discourse. The second question is: what is the current reality that can affect history in the future and set later agenda for the media? Finally, who determines what part of history is unforgettable and must always be mentioned until attended to, thence, it will remain a public or media agenda? (Fig. 2).

According to this proposed model of Times Travel Agenda (TTA), any society will always be a source of history which they regard as their past and would want to ordinarily break away from it but reference would always be made to history most especially by the media. Although the society would always want to focus on the present, as a way of envisioning

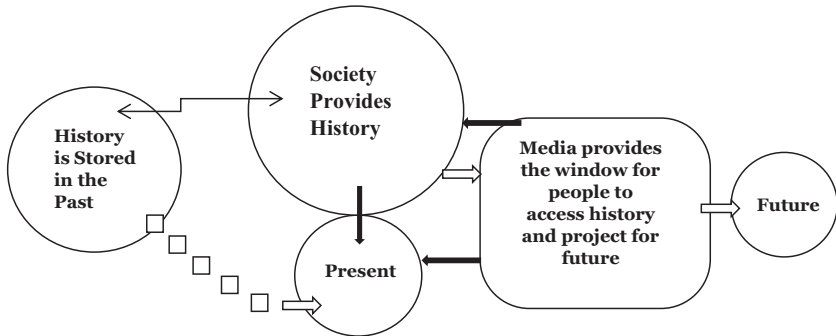


Fig. 2 Diagram showing the proposed times travel agenda model (TTA)

a better future, the media always provide the window for the people in a particular society to access their history (past) and set agenda on why they need to project such for a better tomorrow. As the society grows, it connects to parts of her history that can affect the present and the future.

For example, President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) altered the nation's Democracy Day from May 29 to June 12 on Wednesday, June 6, 2018. It was held in memory of Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola (late), winner of the June 12, 1994 Presidential election, whose result was negated by the Military president of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) (Vanguard Newspaper, 2018).

Indeed, it was a call to 'honor an illustrious son of Nigeria, who won a presidential election but was prevented from taking office as the results were annulled,' as explained by Mr. Garba Shehu, Senior Special Assistant to the President on media and publicity, and described by numerous Nigerian media, most notably Vanguard Newspaper. In the Nigerian context, June 12, 1993 was supplementarily an emblem of democracy than May 29 or possibly October 1st, as PMB himself defined it. That was the day when millions of Nigerians exercised their democratic rights in the freest, fairest, and most peaceful election since independence (Vanguard Newspaper, 2018). The fact that the election's results were not accepted by the military at that time does not negate the election's democratic credentials. 'As a result,' PMB declared, "this government has decided that June 12 would be honored as Democracy Day from now on." (Vanguard Newspaper, 2018).

On this issue, President Buhari similarly bestowed posthumously on Chief MKO Abiola titles of Grand Commander of the Federal Republic (GCFR) of Nigeria, nation's greatest honor, usually bestowed on a sitting President of Nigeria, and Grand Commander of the Order of Niger (GCON), country's second greatest national honor, on his then running mate, Babagana Kingibe. It is important to note that Chief Abiola's honor is relevant for a variety of reasons. To begin with, all efforts over 25 years for Chief MKO Abiola to be recognized as well as honored on a national level had failed. He was officially elected, but his mission could not be carried out. Also, the national honor and the statute declaring June 12 every year as nation's Democracy Day has over the years sparked heated debate and popular attention. 'June 12' acceptance as the nation's current Democracy Day is nearing national consensus, but the need for the National Assembly to amend Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, in order to give the government leeway to act in acceptable stipulated framework, as the rule of law relics a source of contention, lots of questions posed about legality of bestowing the GCFR on deceased person (Vanguard Newspaper, 2018). Because history was examined, the election took place 25 years ago under military government, and it became an agenda item in 2018.

### *10.1 Levels in the Proposed Times Travel Agenda (TTA)*

**First Level** = The Society has history that must be recognized.

**Second Level** = What part of this history connects to the present and that can jeopardize the future?

**Third Level** = How does the media connect the society to their history, set agenda on how it affects their present and how such a theory can jeopardize their future?

## 11 CRITICISMS OF AGENDA SETTING

One of the most prominent objections leveled towards Agenda-Setting hypothesis is that, the theory is far complex for quantification. Reviews of media contents as well as public reactions are frequently classified into wide-range groupings, and the outcomes are sometimes exaggerated, making them unfit for use. The theory is integrally haphazard, in terms of its surveying approach and the total amount of variables that influence its outcome (Rogers & Dearing, 1988). For instance, if one is researching effects of mass media on violence in a given society, one would need to

analyze distinction between real and fictional violence, as this may or may not affect the viewer. Then one would have to keep note of how often violence is depicted through the media as well as try to figure out number of times an individual can or will be exposed to violence. However, afore drawing any conclusions, overall rates of violence must be examined as well as particular incidences of violence to see if indeed there is a link. No issues raised addresses issues that surround such an individual that perpetrated the violence. The question of what it was growing up in their family? Were they abused or subjected to other forms of violence? What effect has this had on them? How much media violence contents they were exposed to? Are any additional factors which could influence an individual's proclivity to be violent? Considering all of these factors, it is easy to see how impossible it is to come to any firm conclusions or provide clear evidence to sustain the agenda setting idea.

## 12 FUTURE OF AGENDA SETTING THEORY

With technological improvements, we now have a lot more media types and possibly a lot more ways for the press to have effect on the populace. At the beginning of the theory, media was clearly one directional medium, with print, radio, film, television and resources all pushing their products into mass market. From the afore thought, it is quite direct to see agenda-setting principle became widely popular. Now we live in a time when the press is mostly a two-way conversation. The internet, as well as many online media, to allow the general people to participate in open debate via media resources, a notion that was not heard of during early days of the agenda environment as a framework. Consequently, what does this imply? Numerous notions exist that the agenda-setting paradigm would ultimately expire since the media no longer has the clout it once did. Not merely do we have to pick media contents, we are able to additionally speak with sources and drive our ideas as well as agenda back at the media, the public, as well as the best policy manufacturers. And also, this suggests that the public agenda is going to grow in response today that people are able to pick their own media resources, access them at any time, and assist in creating policy and public opinion. To put it briefly, the agenda setting concept could have a shorter shelf life compared to what Shaw and McCombs initially anticipated.

### 13 THE NEXUS OF THIS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO NIGERIAN POLITICS

The agenda setting is a charter for analysing the workings of the mass media in relation to politics because whatever is presented in the media becomes issues of importance to the public. Irrespective of bias that the media is often accused of, the fundamental truth is that they establish the agenda for public discussion. Public depend on media for information, entertainment, education, news, instruction, sensitisation, selling, and sometimes mobilization, Therefore, the media through this avenue influence them, whether positively or negatively. Any political arrangement without democratic values will yield no meaningful benefit to any nation and the media can be maximally utilised to achieve this. The media can contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's nascent democracy by remaining the watchdog of the society that they are meant to be and not lapdogs for the political elite, who only use them to threaten their opposition at will. What do you expect from a media that is largely owned by the so-called political elites that they are meant to hold accountable to the people? It becomes a tale of "he that pays the piper, calls the tune," as this makes the media another emblem of the politicians' stomach infrastructure campaign.

Insecurity of lives and property has now characterised Nigeria as a nation where poverty, malnutrition, unemployment, illiteracy etc. are on the rise, the health sector is now in comatose as the government has narrowed the nation's economy to a borrowing show of parade with no meaningful development in sight. These are some of the issues the media must put on the front burner of public discourse until there are meaningful changes. Parading politicians on the pages of newspapers or giving them substantial coverage on Television and Radio is tantamount to a misplacement of priority. The media must remind itself that anything short of public agenda is no agenda at all and only a united front can defeat any monster no matter how giant it is. The continuous yearly media personality award to these politically exposed persons is an aberration to the practice of good journalism in Nigeria. Despite the gains of Barrack Obama's administration, he still kept on receiving backlash from the media till he finished his two-term tenure as the US President. President Donald Trump did not find it funny with the American media in the one-term he used as US President, at a point, he practically stopped listening to the American media and he had to switch to the social media to get through to the public. This is the beauty of liberal democracy in developed

countries. But ours has become a charade of comedy skits, instead of tangible proof of genuine journalistic engagement.

Sometimes, you wonder the kind of training those who run the media received when you read the newspapers, watch or listen to some programmes on air. Some news items that should not have passed serious scrutiny if there is a true gatekeeping process in place, often times make it to the front pages of the newspaper or a major news item on television or radio. Many of the agenda that the media push out to the public end up as their owner's agenda. No wonder stories are been retracted now and then, most especially when the person involved threatens a court action. In our opinion, a real soldier worths its salt does not retreat or surrender, why have the media become a laughing stock or a puppet to political actors whose heavy pockets are their legacy and gods? Setting agenda for public discourse is the only power left of the Nigerian media and if they trade away this birth right on the altar of a portion of porridge, then the nation is not only doomed but promoting its doom day. The media needs to be reminded that there would have been no need for the whistle blower's policy of the APC led-government, if the nation has a vibrant media that is alive and kicking in its investigative journalism responsibilities to the nation. It is shameful for untrained citizen journalists sometimes bloggers to take the lead in breaking an important news of the day, while the traditional or mainstream media just follow like a shp been led to the slaughter's sludge.

The media need to do more than make news or other issues available for public consumption, they should be alive and kicking in their watchdog roles. First, they must ensure that the citizens know their rights and how they can enforce such when the state or the political class encroach on them. Public opinion is the raw material to achieve this seamlessly. The media performs the function of public interest through the articulation of public opinion and that is why they are tagged the voice to the voiceless, because the media is duly empowered to perform this function as enshrined in section 22 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended states "the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people."

## 14 CONCLUSION

Succinctly, McCombs' original agenda setting inquiry raised a slew of concerns, as well as the fact that many scholars jumped at the chance to tap the vein of agenda setting and then investigate its intellectual strata. This is a clear evidence of how successful McCombs was in both the formulation and execution of the idea. Others measured the link between public and press agenda, but he wanted to figure out the agenda environment system. Furthermore, he was willing to devote his life to the agenda setting research and nurture its advancement only as the number of scholars grew. He consulted on dozens of dissertations on the subject, talked about it on schools throughout the world, and urged other scholars to improve the Agenda-Setting tools he and Shaw developed at Chapel Hill in 1968. As Agenda Framing is perhaps the most investigated subject in Mass Communication, there is no dominating paradigm of media studies, no single principle to which most scholars pay fealty these days. Instead, there's a plethora of intellectual regions to consider: the nurturing notion, the spiral of quiet, framing, gratifications and uses, and so on. And, just as there is a news agenda and a public agenda, there is also an academic agenda, which is a type of great struggle among these provinces, each seeking for sovereignty. McCombs has spent more than fifty years developing Agenda Setting from a bold but incredibly effective theory into a comprehensive philosophy of how news affects public opinion. He investigated salience and developed what is arguably one of the most significant theories in media world, because this demonstrates the never-ending circle that prevails in Agenda-Setting studies.

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# Exploring ‘Omniscience Theory’ as a Theoretical Framework in Journalism Practice

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## I INTRODUCTION

Generally, most communication activities of human beings are dotted by certain occurrences that are obviously complicated and could not be easily captured clearly through a cursory examination or observation. This is

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perhaps why Okoro and Agbo (2000, p. 12) observe that, “in a way, man’s existence is ordered by occurrence of series of events, the understanding of some of which are beyond his immediate comprehension. It is this situation that leads to inquiry.” This kind of envisaged inquiry is usually deployed to explain complicated assumptions and validated knowledge in a discipline. That is why Ohaja (2003, p. 63) posits that, “knowledge does not exist in a vacuum. In every discipline, there is a body of theories that provides (sic) the explanation for observable phenomena in that field.”

With its chequered history over the years, journalism has been growing in every part of Africa, Nigeria inclusive. However, one observable negative development among journalists in African countries was the dearth of ideological framework guiding journalism practice. Perhaps, it stemmed from the absence of a national ideology in virtually all the developing nations of West Africa which have been chiefly dependent on the ideologies of their colonialists. This could be better gleaned from the views of Folarin (2002), who argues that, prior to the advent of development journalism, the Nigerian journalists and mass media might be said to “have oscillated between the operating ideals of Western and Eastern Europe as well as those of North America, with of course a tilt toward the West, largely because of the colonial connection,” (Folarin, 2002, p. 41). Also, there is scarcity of such an inquiry that concentrates on journalism practice that largely reflects some aboriginal phenomena in African continent generally.

There is a rapid growth in the vogue of prediction or forecast through the barrels of the mass media in Nigeria nay the world. Available facts have shown that the trend has been an existential phenomenon in journalism practice for decades in Africa. However, it is only recently that some mass media and journalism researchers started giving scholarly attention to the idea. Technically, Edogor (2018) studied the concept of predictive journalism and christened the trend ‘oracular journalism.’ He explained the concept as the mass media’s practice of making predictions in their reportage. Nigerian journalists have shown their prowess in predicting socio-political matters, but virtually little or no direct scholarly attention has been given as a theoretical expression of the phenomenon before now in Nigeria, nay, Africa. Thus, the practice of making forecasts in the media requires a theoretical interpretation to strictly underpin the idea in journalism context. In this regard, it has become expedient for Nigerian media scholars to complement the efforts of journalists by giving the African

theoretical view of the idea of prediction of social phenomena in mass media.

As social scientists, media scholars should offer good interpretation to the emergent tradition of forecasts in mass media reportage. This submission corroborates Hughes’ (2012, p. 32) notion that, “the typical scientist [social scientists inclusive] seemed to be a person who knew one small corner of the natural world and knew it very well, better than most other human beings living and better even more than most who had ever lived.” The criterion for that includes obtaining academic degree in the social sciences. Hughes (2012) avers that, it has been accepted by scientists without question, that an advanced degree in some area of the natural or social science confers the ability to pontificate wisely on any and all subjects. To this end, this chapter concentrates on the following subheadings:

1. Overview of working theory
2. Theories and predictions in mass media
3. Prediction as a concept
4. Prediction in journalism practice
5. ‘Omniscience theory’ as a working theory
6. Selected relevant theories and ‘omniscience theory’
7. Evidences foregrounding omniscience theory
8. The need for omniscience theory in journalism studies
9. Agreement of scholars on ‘omniscience theory’ as a working theory
10. Practical examples from African continent
11. Criticism of current theories

Those points are discussed one by one below:

### *1.1 Overview of Working Theory*

The term ‘working or operational theory’ by a mere cursory examination gives the impression of a theory used to explain working experience. Such an experience must have been gained over time from a given work. Thus, working theories are simply the conjectures that those working in a given field have accepted as what explains certain happenings in their practice over a time. The conjectures are developed from practical experiences of working in a field of human endeavour for a considerable length of time.

It implies that, an assumption or a conjecture that could be taken as a working theory should not just be guesstimates, but rather experiential

inferences. That is evident in the submission of the Ministry of Education, New Zealand (2021, para. 2), which posits that, “working theories are developed through our experiences and interactions with the world.” So, working theories in journalism or media practice are basically the conjectures which journalists developed from their experiences to explain certain occurrences in the field for a considerable period of time.

Folarin (2002, p. 23), citing the words of the famous mass communication theorist, McQuail (2010), notes that a working theory “consists mainly of guidelines, techniques, traditions and conventions that guide the work of media production and “give it consistency over time.” This simple explanation of the term ‘working theory’ provides the basic understanding that easily differentiates it from the class of social scientific theories and normative theories of the press. The former are generalisations obtained from methodical observations of empirical works of media scholars about certain occurrences in the mass media, while, the latter explains how the media operate in a nation vis-à-vis the societal communication laws. “Working theories tend to be more general among media professionals sharing the same or similar journalistic orientations and ideologies, are less geographically and/or politically or even culturally circumscribed than normative theories,” (Folarin, 2002, p. 23).

## 1.2 *Theories and Predictions in Mass Media*

In mass media and journalism studies just like other areas of academic endeavours, theories are used to explain situations and practices. This is why the researchers explored the use of ‘omniscience theory,’ to give an explanation to the idea of prediction in journalism. The effort will enable media scholars and practitioners to have broader understanding of the social significance of prediction vis-à-vis African culture. According to Baran (2010, p. 360), mass communication theories give explanations... of social phenomena that attempt to relate mass communication to various aspects of our personal and cultural lives or social system.” This submission presents mass communication theories as means to explain parts of the socio-cultural systems. In communication particularly, Morah and Okunna (2020, p. 702) note that, “the nature of alterations in the nature of communication is the essence of examining the understanding and application of communication theories... because the process of examining communication is systematic...” The scholars also observe that, “communication theory is, therefore, an attempt to understand and explain

these effects of various forms of communication on society, the individual and media” (Morah & Okunna, 2020, p. 702).

The inherent challenges in the contemporary world have made human society more complicated and compelled journalists to devise measures to explain the intricacies of some occurrences. The term ‘prediction’ is steadily gaining impetus in the Nigerian mass media reportage. This is observable from the efforts of predicting or making forecasts about daily weather to prediction of the rate of annual rainfall. Weather forecast presentation in mass media is a recent innovation which journalists brought in reportage with the aid of science and technology; this could be seen in the media’s use of data from the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET). However, beyond the efforts in media forecast, Nigerian journalists deliberately apply reportorial skills to forecast certain socio-political trends as those who survey the social environments. The contemporary media’s attempt to predict certain social phenomena most probably stems from the recurring observed social vicissitude globally evident in climatic changes and unstable political as well as economic activities. Perhaps, the above submissions about the nature of the world today prompted Edogor (2018, p. 30) to explain that:

By the rising slyness of the contemporary human beings and the vagaries of the climate, journalists are envisaged to go beyond the mere routine reportage of events. In addition, the volatility of the dynamics of the global politics, economy, defence as well as the unruliness of some humans portray an unlimited measure of uncertainty...This height of instability brings more yokes to journalists who have to go extra mile to offer credible information that would provide succour for the audience immersed in the natural and artificial uncertainties.

In a bid to explain to the audience the import of some existential cultural and socio-political trends, some Nigerian journalists have adopted the idea of making predictions on matters of societal importance. In addition to the routine education, entertainment and information functions which the mass media play in any society, Nigerian journalists have noted that the institution could make predictions for the people. The former Editor-in-Chief of *The News* magazine, Onanuga (2006, p. 19) avers that, “apart from what is popularly referred to as reporting history in hurry and setting agenda, the media sometimes accurately predict events.” This act of prediction in reporting, which is a vogue in Nigerian mass media practice, is



in tandem with the observation of a media scholar who argues that, “journalists are the traditional sources that readers consult for an explanation and guidance on what will or can happen given the current checks on reality,” (Loo, 2013, cited in Edogor, 2018, p. 242).

The study of complex human communication activity vis-à-vis the modus operandi of mass media necessitates the use of theories for better comprehension of the complicated interaction processes. It has been observed that, “the effects of communication are overwhelming (Morah, 2019) and cannot be over-emphasised—thereby necessitating the increasing application of theory to facilitate the understanding of the complexities of the communication process,” (Morah & Okunna, 2020, p. 703). This observation captures the relevance of theories towards understanding the composite implications of human mediated communication process. The dynamics of mass media audience and the mechanics of media operations give human communication a variegated nuance which easily differentiates it from interactions among lower beings.

In a nutshell, the nature of the audience of nowadays has made media practitioners to move beyond mere chronicling of epochal matters to forecasting or predicting social trends for the audience. Nigerian journalists have laid claims to doing such in their reportage and it is not less required in African countries with substantial political uncertainties and exceptional instabilities in socio-economic activities. Communication theories are also applied to forecast trajectories and dimensions of societal incidents; thus, with communication theories, scholars make efforts to give intellectual explanations to social happenings and their causes or what they do.

### *1.3 Prediction as a Concept in Journalism Practice*

It is important to state that prediction used interchangeably here with forecast is a socio-religious term which is not strange in the world-view of many societies in the world. For instance, in the Judeo-Christian religion, it is simply known as ‘prophecy,’ undertaken by prophets who are spiritually inspired persons. In the Greek mythology, Pythia the oracle of Delphi make predictions (Orrell, 2007), albeit with doublespeak in some cases. In African cosmology, prediction among ‘seers or priests’ is used to communicate the fate of the people in preparation for cultivation, war, and the future of the society with regard to the consequences of some actions or inactions. Predictions largely in African milieu are reportedly products of

extra-mundane process, nevertheless, it does not make the process entirely none means of human communication in virtually all parts of the continent.

Generally, it is an important subject in many essential aspects of human endeavour globally. This is better captured in the books of social scientists Friedman (2007) and Orrell (2007). In his book, '*The Future of Everything*,' Orrell (2007, p. 3) posits that, the book is about:

Scientific prediction in the areas of weather, health, and wealth—how we foresee storms or fair weather, sickness or health, booms or crashes. It might seem that forecasts of the atmosphere have little to do with prediction of diseases or the economy, but in fact these three areas are closely linked. For one thing, they often affect each other, so prediction is an intrinsically holistic business. As shown above, a storm's impact depends on the conditions on the ground, and can have huge economic consequences.

It is worthwhile to note that, the efforts to predict through the mass media have been in vogue among Nigerian journalists since many years ago. For instance, the likes of Mr. Nduka Uzuakpundu ex-journalist of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN); Mr. Simon Kolawole erst-while columnist of the *This Day* newspaper; and Mr. Dele Momodu, publisher of *Ovation* magazine, have shown skills for predictive reportage in some of their reporting.

The foregoing arguments have more or less foreshadowed the fact that prediction is not an extra-mundane phenomenon, especially in journalism context which social scientists have studied. This is unlike the perception of prediction as a concept in some cultural settings, African communities inclusive. Be it as it may, the concept is treated here as a social phenomenon currently seen in journalism practice, which is a secular affair in all human societies across the world.

#### *1.4 Prediction as a Multidimensional Concept*

It is possible that journalists embrace prediction or forecast in media reportage because of its multi-faceted implications for the audiences all over the world. This is evident as forecasts are relevant in the daily activities of people who work in aviation, agriculture, religion, et cetera. The way it criss-crosses the economy, weather, and other areas has made it necessary that journalism practitioners adopt scientific measures to make forecasts in reportage. The idea of prediction in journalism toes the

social-scientific line and not the Judeo-Christian or Greek oracle, or African seers' pattern of forecasts. This could be seen in the opinion of a Nigerian journalist who argues that, to be able to foretell the future, a journalist does not need to be a peripatetic gypsy, a star gazer or a necromancer. The power to predict on many occasions depends on the ability to use the past to judge the present and say accurately what would happen in the future (Adegbamigbe, 2007).

In a content analytical study, Edogor (2018) reported series of predictive reporting credited to some Nigerian news magazines. According to the researcher, such media reportage was manifest in the headlines, cartoons and news stories published in the country from 2006 to 2011. In one of the magazines used for the study, a reporter reveals that the mass media could make reliable predictions and the *The News* magazine "demonstrated this capability when, for eight months, it published stories predicting that however hard he tried, General Ibrahim Babangida's presidential ambition would hit a dead end," (Olaosebikan, 2006, p. 24). Similarly, before Chief James Ibori's imprisonment in the United Kingdom, a reporter of *Tell* magazine had predicted that he would be jailed there. The prosecution and imprisonment of three associates of Ibori in the UK means that, he would be jailed, "as soon as his extradition to the UK is completed," (Adewuyi, 2010, p. 44). Thus, apart from weather forecast where technological devices are reportedly applied to predict for the audiences, Nigerian journalists use their skills as social scientists to predict economic and socio-political occurrences.

The notion of prediction in mass media more or less reveals the intrinsic powers of journalists as observed by Eric Loo, emeritus Professor of Wollongong University, Australia who notes that journalists are the traditional sources that readers consult for an explanation of the past and guidance on what will or can happen given the current checks on reality. Essentially, they are sources of 'wise,' authoritative accounts of the interplay between shifting social, economic and political forces. Journalists are the 'oracles' of the day (Loo, 2013, cited in Edogor, 2018). It implies that through the application of their intuitions in reportorial assignments, journalists widen the audiences' knowledge of certain possible future events. While presenting the category of 'prediction by hunch,' in mass media, Edogor (2018, p. 103) described perceptions among journalists particularly in Nigeria, noting that they apply their perceptions to "interpret phenomena or a phenomenon and forecast the possibilities to emerge. Nigerian journalists discern and predict how certain parts of the society

could respond over an issue. They perceive when a reprisal is imminent owing to what had transpired.” From the submissions, one could easily discern the very hallmark of journalism in the words of Ekpu (2010, p. 37) who describes it (journalism) as “...History on wheels, it is History on the wings of a jet...” The works of journalists in predicting social phenomenon or phenomena better distinguish them clearly from historians.

## 2 ‘OMNISCIENCE THEORY’ AS A WORKING THEORY

The term ‘omniscience theory’ was coined and used by Edogor (2018) as a philosophical expression to elucidate journalists’ fad of reporting impending developments instead of what has taken place. In various socio-cultural milieus as cursorily examined earlier, human societies have their ways of ascertaining information relating to their future. Similarly, journalists with different orientations and distinct ideologies, about news have imbibed the tradition of building their reportage on impending occurrences. For instance, apart from the cited cases in the preceding section showing some predictive reporting in Nigeria, Neiger (2007) studied Israeli newspapers for eighteen years and found that, contemporary journalism does not report only what has already happened, but predict future events (Neiger, 2007, p. 309).

Hence, media scholars have observed journalists’ tradition of putting concerted efforts to report the likely things to happen, it has become necessary to devise theoretical construct to explain the emergent fad. Available recorded facts have shown that predictive reportage is a practice that has been in existence in African journalism for many decades. It is a unique dimension and one of the phenomena in contemporary journalism practice in the continent that requires scholarly efforts to interpret. That is the focal issue which scholars gave deeper and more detailed attention to explain unique dimension or development in journalism. Thus, the points enumerated beneath have been meticulously considered as what constitute the main tenets of omniscience theory including:

- Journalists have at least a little knowledge about everything in all human spheres via their regular societal scrutiny.
- Journalists have repositioned the media to be ‘social scientific oracle,’ with cognitive contents (Edogor, 2018).
- The media extrapolate about future trends and events using the facts from their regular surveying of human society.

- The media are not mere chroniclers, but social dissectors that offer guidance to the audience on, cultural, economic and socio-political trends.
- Through their extrapolations on societal matters, the media could predict possible social reality for the audience.
- From past events, the media construct frameworks for social discourse on the future that could shape the present issues.

The above points are the summations deduced from mass media reportage focusing on the likely shape of certain future happenings. The consistency of the genre of journalism that concentrates on reporting future events in Nigerian media has made the formulation of this term ‘omniscience theory’ a scholarly necessity. This is a methodical attempt to postulate the journalists’ observable experiences into a kind of philosophical expression that overtly underlines the emergent ideology in African journalism. The ideology of media reporting to shape certain future actions is in line with some practices in some African societies albeit replete with certain mundane measures.

## 2.1 *Selected Relevant Theories and ‘Omniscience Theory’*

It has been clearly observed that theories cater for certain notions in a field and every theory covers an ideological perspective thus, “no single theory holds under all circumstances,” (McQuail, 2010, p. 72). This submission is the reason we examined three theories used to explain studies focusing on the mass media and forecasts in reportage. The approach adopted here is to select few theories that have clear bearings on what journalists do and their work.

### 2.1.1 *Agenda-Setting Theory*

The agenda-setting theory belongs to the stable of social scientific theories in mass media studies as outlined by Folarin (2002). In the words of Baran (2010), based on the findings of McCombs and Shaw’s study with regard to mass media’s role in the 1968 presidential poll of the United States of America, the researchers note in 1972 that, “editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality...readers learn not only about a given issue, but how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position...(Baran, 2010, p. 368).” The above submission is one of the major

findings pointing to the role of the media in setting agenda for the audience. Unarguably, agenda-setting as a social scientific theory better validated by the findings of McCombs and Shaw, is still relevant in the contemporary journalism and media studies.

However, presently, it is increasingly becoming clearer that, beyond setting societal agenda, the media use arrays of information to give a picture of future events which may or may not happen. In this case, one could see the antithesis to the regular perception of media practitioners as mere chroniclers of their era, "and thus distinct from poets (according to Aristotle's classical distinction in Chapter. "Application of Theories in Film Techniques and Production in Africa" of the 'Poetics'), we meet journalists in their full might as creators of texts of 'reality' that has not yet occurred and may never come to be," (Neiger, 2007, p. 311). In collaboration with the submission of the cited scholar, Edogor (2018) posits that journalists bring the attention of their audience to ambiguous and non-existent incidents that may or may not happen. The researcher observed that certain intervening variables could alter the projections which the media present as future incidents. This is seen when the mass media use their stupendous knowledge on a subject, event, person, or people to project what they could do or what would happen to them in future; however, certain vicissitudes thereafter might emerge altering partly or utterly the forecast of the mass media.

The correlation between agenda-setting theory and the 'omniscience theory' under review is that both of them focus on what would happen in society. The mass media use the plans of policy makers or actions of the people to set societal agenda. In this regard, the media have definite programmes or matters which they are sure to present for the community or society to follow. So, in agenda-setting, the media must have seen the societal programmes or known certain actions and help the society to prioritise them. But within the prism of 'omniscience theory' the media predict events, trends, or actions that they have knowledge about based on their social surveying of environments. Little wonder, Griffin (2000, p. 377), cited in Anim (2007, p. 1), notes that "the so-called agenda consist of the dominant perspectives, which, in practical terms, translate to the agenda of the ruling elite." Contrarily, the thing(s) that the media projected as what could happen may not happen at all or may not happen exactly owing to certain vicissitudes. Thus, in the context of 'omniscience theory,' the media predict actions, issues, events, or the likely future results of some decisions that have social relevance, but they are unknown to the

audience. On the other hand, in the prism of agenda-setting theory, the media prioritise programmes or matters of societal importance which the audiences are not absolutely oblivious of.

### 2.1.2 *Reflective-Projective Theory*

The reflective-projective theory is the next related theory to be considered. According to Folarin (2002, p. 135), “the theory was proposed by Lee Loevinger, a lawyer, judge and one-time Federal Communications (FCC) Commissioner, in an article entitled “The Ambiguous Mirror: The Reflective-Projective Theory of Broadcasting and Mass Communication.” The media scholar further notes that, Loevinger provides that, “the mass media “mirror” society but the mirror they present is an ambiguous one. While the media themselves reflect the society as an organized group, individual audience members project their own individual reflections into the images presented,” (Folarin, 2002, p. 135). The submission above describes how the mass media present the society in their reportage and how the audiences have their mental images of the media presentation. The whole argument shows the media’s presentation of the human society itself based on existing socio-economic ideologies. The thrust of the theory from the words of its exponent cited by Folarin (2002) appears like the mass media do a sort of ‘public relations’ work for the society. If subjected to further empirical scrutiny, it might also and easily be located in the stable of working theories that explain how the media present their contents vis-à-vis how the society is.

The relationship between the reflective-projective theory and the crux of ‘omniscience theory’ is that both explain in their own ways what the mass media do for the society. The ‘omniscience theory’ goes to explain the predictive works of the media as a social institution and “one of the most important intermediary institutions of the civil society,” (McQuail, 2010, p. 180). On the other hand, the exponents of reflective-projective theory used it to explain how the mass media mirror the society and present an image that is ideologically primed to be appealing. This could be deduced from the description that the media mirror the society as an organised group, a notion that might be divergent to the views known to the members of the public. The ‘omniscience theory’ derives from the African cosmological idea of examining the societal occurrences as well as foretelling what would happen in the future. The two theories have different roles to play in explanation of how the mass media work.

### 2.1.3 *Social Responsibility Theory*

The social responsibility theory is one of the normative theories of the press. The kernel of its provisions gives the mass media some roles to shoulder, just like the institution use their arrays of secular knowledge to make forecasts for the society as could be deciphered in the proposition of 'omniscience theory.' It is used to underscore the fact that the media have to shoulder certain responsibilities apart from their traditional roles. According to Ojobor (2002), social responsibility theory is the brainchild of the United States of America's Hutchins Commission headed by Robert M. Hutchins of 1947. "The social responsibility theory is based on the assumption that media serve essential functions in society," (Hasan, 2013, p. 170). The theory sees it as an obligation for the mass media to carry out certain social obligations for every society where they operate. The correlation between the social responsibility theory and the 'omniscience theory' is that the mass media forecast the result of some action(s), inactions(s) or decisions or the likely import of any social event for the interest of the human community. Social acts of the mass media fall in line with the media delivering social obligations for their audiences as social responsibility theory provides.

### 2.1.4 *Evidences Foregrounding 'Omniscience Theory'*

The various opinions of some Nigerian journalists (cited earlier) that espoused the prowess of the media and journalists in deliberately making forecasts through reportage are clear veritable sources to visualise the evidences of 'omniscience theory.' Also, we obtained the opinions of selected Nigerian journalists who have at least three decades of wealth of experiences cutting across many countries and have published some predictive reportage. Through informed personal interviews earlier in gathering the data used for this work, journalists such as Messrs. Ademola Adegbigbe, Nduka Uzuakpundu, and Simon Kolawole made very salient and useful submissions in line with the theory. They agreed that journalists are furnished with all facts about what may happen virtually in all spheres of human endeavour and that equip them to make predictions for their audiences. So, the interviewees demonstrated that their activities in predicting trends affirm the proposed 'omniscience theory,' as a working philosophical expression in the mass media. Even though the journalists did not use any nomenclature to explicitly capture what they do as a theory, it is very often the role of scholars to propose theories.



It is in the exercise of such powers of scholars that we endeavour in this work to validate the reality of ‘omniscience theory,’ as a philosophical point of view within the stable of working theories in African journalism practice and studies. Essentially, this has become a scholarly necessity in the continent, nay in the world, where more literature are needed with regard to theories specifically on media forecasts. It is that very vacuum in journalism and media studies that this work attempts to bridge.

Some instances of prominent forecasts published in the Nigerian media are cited here to buttress the practical examples of the predictive reportage and how they are beyond mere speculations. In the build up to Nigeria’s 2015 presidential election, Messrs. Simon Kolawole and Dele Momodu made striking predictions pertaining to the results of the election. Apart from the individual journalists’ predictions in Nigeria, *The News* magazine as a body has carved a niche for itself in predictive reportage. With regard to individual journalists’ prediction, Kolawole predicted that one of the two leading candidates in the 2015 presidential election of Nigeria who would lose in the poll would call and congratulate the winner. According to him, “it is very rare for a Nigerian to accept defeat [in elections]. But...I see Jonathan—if he loses—picking up the phone and congratulating Buhari. “Congratulations, General, for a well-deserved victory,” (Kolawole, 2015). This later happened exactly!

Another prediction on the same election was made by Momodu as cited by Olowosagba (2015). In the prediction, Momodu noted that, “those who think an incumbent President cannot be defeated should wake up from their self-induced coma. The mood of the Nigerian nation is very similar to that which swept Obama into power.” Momodu’s prediction about President Buhari’s success in the 2015 general election against Jonathan, the then incumbent President, later became a reality. Given the very usual characteristic view of Nigerian and African politicians on political power, the two predictions were taken with a pinch of salt, but both happened exactly.

Also, in the recent time, *The News* magazine as a media outfit demonstrated a penchant for predictive reportage when they predicted doom for the political ambition of former Nigerian military President, Ibrahim Babangida. Onanuga, the then Editor-in-Chief of the magazine in the year (2007) clearly boasts about their (*The News* magazine’s) skills of prediction particularly and the mass media’s predictive proclivity generally as follows:

Apart from what is referred to as reporting history in a hurry...the media sometimes accurately predict events...In a year in which we hit the bull's eye now and again, we wrote some cover stories, spanning a period of eight months, foretelling that General Ibrahim Babangida would fail in his desperate bid to become Nigeria's elected president come 2007.

The perspective of predictive reportage is evident and made more manifest in Nigeria with the audiences' subtle response to some of *The News* magazines reportorial. Many readers who wrote in the section of the *letters to the editor* published by *The News* in the year 2011 commended it for the accuracy and ability of the magazine to make reliable predictions. For example, Adewale Koiku, one of the readers who contributed in the letters to the editor published on May 9, 2011 edition of the (*The News*, 2011, p. 8) acknowledges the consistency of the magazine's predictions noting inter alia:

*The News* has once again proved beyond doubt its ability to correctly read the mood of the country and hit the nail on the head ('Jonathan: A victory foretold,' *The News*, 24 April 2011). Not only was your prediction that President Goodluck Jonathan would win the presidential election correct, the relative strengths and weaknesses of each of the top four contenders were appropriately analysed (Koiku, 2011).

The *Tell* magazine has a cornucopia of its own predictions and perhaps, their most stunning one is entitled 'Obasanjo's next move.' In the magazine's reportage with that title, it predicted that President Obasanjo was planning to choose his successor in 2007 after the failure of his third term bid. A *Tell* magazine reporter, Aiyetan (2006, pp. 19–23) made the prediction when he revealed that, "yet to recover from the defeat of his third-term ambition, the president ...have set in motion a plan that would see him install a trusted ally." President Obasanjo later decided and chose his favourite successor.

The foregoing gives a bird's eye-view of the existence of predictive reporting in Nigerian media. In the content analysis of some prominent news magazines in Nigeria, Edogor (2018) shows that Nigerian media have been consistent in predicting socio-political actions and events for several years across many areas of human endeavour.

### 2.1.5 *The Need for ‘Omniscience Theory’ in Journalism Studies*

Scholars study the experiences of those in the field of any practice or profession and streamline them into empirical frames to explain some certain observations. Such efforts of scholars help to examine the rate of ideological growth in a given profession or field of study. Journalism in Africa has a clear inconsistent history, regardless of the lofty socio-economic feats it has been used hitherto and even currently to achieve in the continent. The conspicuous growth of journalism practice in Africa from a well-known lilliputian status (Ekpu, 2010) to an Olympian height has provided a vacuum for scholars to examine some phenomena in the field. That is the reason ‘omniscience theory’ was conceived to fill up the observable theoretical chasm which exists in contemporary journalism studies owing to the tradition of making forecasts through the mass media. This has become empirically expedient in Africa where there are some traditional practices that are akin to forecasts.

Most importantly, it is very necessary considering the fact that the existing theories do not clearly and absolutely give good explanation of the trend of prediction in journalism practice. Perhaps, such a scenario in the media field or journalism practice in Africa and the world at large was the reason for the observation that, some of the theories, “available to us are fragmentary and selective, sometimes overlapping or inconsistent, often guided by conflicting ideologies and assumptions about society,” (McQuail, 2010, p. 76). A critical examination of the extant theories used to aerate some studies within the ambit of journalism gives a picture of the need for a more appropriate theory to cater for predictions or forecasts in the mass media as a clear secular entity.

### 2.1.6 *Agreement of Scholars on ‘Omniscience Theory’*

The ‘omniscience theory’ has passed through a litany of scholars who have examined and accepted it as a philosophical expression that is apt in journalism where forecasting of phenomenon is in vogue now. The theory has passed scholarly scrutiny of a team of researchers who examined it in a doctoral dissertation of Edogor (2018). Thus, the internal readers, supervisor as well as the external examiner who examined the doctoral dissertation endorsed the theory as a theoretical frame useful in journalism.

Also, the three authors working on this chapter have scrutinised the theory and accepted that it falls under working theories in journalism and media studies. The independent and collective agreement of the scholars of mass communication and media/journalism studies with experience

from different universities in Nigeria and beyond gives credence to 'omniscience theory,' as a relevant theoretical frame in African journalism. In addition, some well-educated journalists who were interviewed on the subject matter subtly have the same consensus view with regard to what has been christened 'omniscience theory.'

The various views of distinct journalists obtained from interviews as well as the qualitative and quantitative content analysis of their works spurred the original conception or formulation of the theory in question. The various case studies of the observed forecasts or predictions in African media precisely within Nigeria were content analysed and the apt categories developed by Edogor (2018). The work established and defined six categories of predictions in the mass media. All those aspects of forecasts have been accepted with the emergent theory that offers explanation to the phenomena.

### 2.1.7 *Criticism of Current Theories*

The available empirical studies in journalism and media studies that concentrate on forecasts or predictions in mass media often adopt the agenda-setting as the theoretical frame. For instance, Neiger (2007) used it in a study entitled, 'Media oracles: the cultural significance and political import of news referring to future events.' The scholar deployed some tenets of agenda-setting theory to explain how the headlines of some selected Israeli newspapers dwelt on the forecasts of future events as against the tradition of reporting what has happened. Neiger (2007) applied the theory as the only available and closest ideological expression of the phenomenon of prediction through the barrels of the mass media. However, the major flaw that shows the inadequacy or the utter dearth of agenda-settings' strength to give aeration to the study could be seen in the words of Neiger (2007, p. 311) who argues that in the context of predictive journalism, "we meet journalists in their full might as creators of texts of 'reality' that has not yet occurred and may never come to be."

In other words, agenda-setting in its original coinage does not aptly capture the ability of journalists to diagnose social trends and predict what may happen as currently obtains in the media. That attempt to use agenda-setting theory to underpin the very recent phenomenon of forecast in the media amounts to what the Holy Writ describes as 'putting new wine in old-wine skin' which goes with a concomitant imbalance or rather a sharp conspicuous discrepancy. Similar issue occurred in another instance where Edogor (2018) applied both projective-reflective theory and

agenda-setting theory to explain the core research objectives of a doctoral dissertation entitled, ‘Analysis of predictive journalism in Nigerian mass media’s reportorial (2006–2011).’ Though the scholars managed to apply the said theories to subtly offer theoretical pedestal to their studies, with a critical examination of the main crux of the aforementioned theories, their deficiencies could be seen in their tenets vis-a-vis the notion of prediction as a phenomenon becoming more or less a vogue in the African media recently. One can see the very inherent deficiencies of the theories as briefly explained above and as could also be seen in Sect. 2.1.7 of this chapter where some related theories were juxtaposed with ‘omniscience theory.’

### 3 CONCLUSION

This chapter re-examined ‘omniscience theory’ as a philosophical expression that interprets mass media’s penchant for prediction in reportage. Through the instrumentality of forecasts in reporting some issues, Nigerian journalists have demonstrated an ideological stance that portray an advancement in journalism practice. The very process that led to the advancement has been empirically investigated and found to be in line with scientific techniques. That is unlike some African traditional societies’ ‘pseudo-scientific’ means of predictions and fact-finding that are buried in myths. The extant ideology of media reports that pontificate about the future reveals the skills of journalists as social scientists. This is the perspective which this chapter has explored while x-raying the way journalists’ use their reservoir of knowledge to predict what may happen and direct the perception of their audiences.

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# Application of Theories in Film Techniques and Production in Africa

*Lawrence Akande*

## I INTRODUCTION

Before delving into what this chapter is about, it is better to know what it is not about. This chapter is not about African film criticism, neither is it about forming new theories about African films. The knowledge derivable from how theoretical application is executed can be used in African film criticism and African film analysis; it will also be useful to someone who wants to postulate new theories on African film! The production and consumption of African films have gone a long way in defining African films, which has gone beyond the continent in attracting film scholars and critics worldwide (Emwinromwankhoe, 2021). This chapter provides applications of film theories as applied in African films. Films from different African countries will be used to discuss the applications of film theories, such as Structuralism Film Theory, Marxist Film Theory, Psychoanalytical

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Film Theory, Screen Film Theory, Screen Film Theory, Feminist Film Theory, Auteur Film Theory, and Apparatus Film Theory.

Historically, film became established as the new art form by 1930 as a result of several film theory postulations. Louis Feuillade's *Film d'Art's Production* (1908), *Le Film Esthetique* (1910), Ricciotto Canudo's publication titled *The Birth of a Sixth Art* (1911), and Hugo Munsterberg's ideology of cinema were major postulations that established film as an art form with theories backing film studies and analysis. The argument of Louis Feuillade was based on the view that film appeals to sight in order to provide some aesthetic sensations, just as it is in other arts, such as painting, theatre, and dance. His other side of the argument is that, there is a synergy between technology and aesthetic that makes film an economic popular art. Ricciotto Canudo's 1911 argument in *The Birth of a Sixth Art* was centered on the realism, form and rhythm of film, while Hugo Munsterberg, a German-American psychologist in his own argument believes that, film is not reality, rather, it is just a psychological and aesthetic process of mental experiences. Andre Bazin, a French film critic, in post Second World War in his own argument argued that the essence of film should be its ability to mechanically reproduce reality (Braudy & Cohen, 2009, p. 142).

Film contains both explicit and implicit interpretations. The explicit interpretation is more of messages the filmmaker expresses directly through dialogues and actions of the characters. Implicit interpretation comes from deeper understanding, which theories help to discover. Furthermore, explicit interpretation requires character, thematic and technical analyses of coded elements. To fully understand a film, the story behind the film, the filmmaker, the period of the film, the place the film was made, and the people must be understood. According to Christopher Jacob, "this level of interpretation tries to recognize symbolic content, identifying characters and situation as metaphor for something else, or possibly seeing the entire story as an allegory about something else" (Jacobs, 2019, p. 2).

The focus of film theories is to argue on the intrinsic qualities of film that provide the conceptual frameworks needed to understand the film. This will be in relation to individual filmmaker, society, other works of art and science behind the productions. When this argument is done, a proper analysis of a film is produced, which then aids better understanding of a film. The theoretical attempt to define the nature of film comes from different disciplines such as literary arts, psychoanalysis, gender studies, linguistics, economics, politics and technology. The earlier film theories were

basically concentrated on the elements of film from the works of film directors and there were lots of arguments by film directors such as Sergei Eisenstein, Louis Delluc, Paul Rotha, and Lev Kuleshov, and film theorists such as Bela Balazs, Andre Bazin, Rudolf Arnheim, and Siegfried Kracauer. The present day digital revolution is impacting the theoretical framework of film beyond the traditional theories.

Film theories can be classified to two schools of thought: the Holistic and the Imitation. Brian Henderson referred to them as part-whole theories and theories of relation to real (Brian, 1971). The holistic film theories are concerned with the relationship between film elements and the complete impact of the film. Such theories argue that each element of a film contributes to the understanding and the emotion the audience get from the film. This school of thought is mostly favored by film directors. On the other hand, the imitation film theories are concern with film's relation to reality. This school of thought argues from the stand point that a film should reflect reality, by touching the life space of the audience to make sense. This school of thought is mostly favored by film theorists.

The study of film in African institutions of higher learning is relatively new, and most students find it difficult to find and apply film theories for film studies and analysis. This chapter aims is to discuss some established film theories, and how they are applicable to African film studies and analysis with the following key objectives in mind:

- To examine the academization and filmology of African films;
- To discuss film theories and how they help debate the essence of African films and provide deep understanding of African reality, audience, and the society.

The following key film theories will be discussed, looking into the foundation of each theory, the generative premises and assumptions, and the applications of each theory in some African films.

1. Structuralism Film Theory
2. Marxist Film Theory
3. Psychoanalytical Film Theory
4. Screen Film Theory
5. Feminist Film Theory
6. Auteur Film Theory
7. Apparatus Film Theory

Theories that can be applied to film analysis are not limited to those mentioned above as other theories and concepts from other disciplines can also be applied. Such include cultural norm theory, audience theory, reception theory, and many others. In this chapter, focus is mainly on the film theories listed above.

## 2 ACADEMIZATION AND FILMOLOGY OF AFRICAN FILMS

Film as a discipline in the African educational system is at the level it was in Europe and America in the 1960s and 1970s, a period the study of film is being seriously considered by the educational institutions and regulatory bodies. Before now, most people who studied film as a major at higher institutions studied abroad in Europe, America or Asia, because there were really few or no universities with film studies as a major discipline. The situation is changing now as African universities' curricula are being reviewed, and film studies is now considered as academic and professional major, that can be taught within the educational system. For instance, National University Commission is unbundling the study of Mass Communication in Nigeria, and Film study is one of the new major areas.

Presently, film studies has been entrenched in African universities as a major field of study; studying African films within the African cultural context requires a scholarly focus on the elements of film production and techniques. In Nigeria, for example, there are issues that arise from academization of film. Is film art or science? Under which faculty the study should be placed? Must literature or physics be made compulsory as part of the basic qualifications for admission? The answers to these questions will vary according to the academic background of the person asked. The fact is that film is both art and science. The scriptwriting and the acting maybe artistic; capturing the story and the technology used in recording and exhibiting it is more scientific. At various stages of film production, people of different backgrounds contribute their professionalism to make the film what is watched. Accountants, engineers, artists, actors, musicians, colorist, business managers, lawyers and many more professionals contribute to the production of film.

As film departments are springing up across African universities and other higher institutions of learning, resistance from the conservative scholars within the academic hierarchy and individual preferences should be put aside, while curriculum should be developed to accommodate students of both art and science backgrounds. As discussed earlier, the earlier

film theories were adopted from different disciplines, such as linguistics, psychology, economics, politics, sociology, liberal arts, culture and others. Richard Rushton and Gary Bettinson stated, “These assorted theories were assimilated and intermeshed, producing theoretical hybrids” (Richard & Gary, 2010, p. 7).

The academization of film in Africa introduces a new paradigm, which will bring about a substantive shift in African film production with a global understanding and appreciation. Filmmakers in Africa must now find synergy between film production and scholarship, which is what academization of film brings to the development of the African film industry. With better understanding of film through the appreciation and application of theories, films produced locally in Africa can be globally understood beyond the people that own the culture on which the films are produced (Mano et al., 2017).

Africa is a unique continent with variants of skin colors but similar culture. Some of the African cultural beliefs are not different from what is practiced in other parts of the world because culture is humanity. The presentation of culture may be different in various parts of the world, but when properly presented, it can be understood with a universal connotation. Film theories will help as we strive to understand and interpret African culture, leading to a better appreciation of African films. The appreciation of African literature all over the world did not come by writing western stories, but with writing African stories in Africa ways following basic universal principles of writing.

Theorizing African film production within the universal theoretical concept will make for a better understanding of African film culture. This appropriation of African film culture within the global context leads to the globalization of African films. To study African film, one needs to engage (with discernment) between modernity and tradition in African societies, social-economic transformations, changing cultural traditions, binding history, and globalizing influences (Mano et al., 2017). Theories will help in diffusing the tension between tradition and modernity, how African culture has been influenced, and to what extent along the line of history.

Film theories help in the understanding and interpretation of what is revealed and to be unraveled in films. African cultural value can be made known to the global audience through the production of African film. Film audiences, with an understanding of film theories, will see beyond the surface of general knowledge of the films to how the hidden connotation subtly affects the audience. The film theories will be treated along the

African line of thought to make meaning that can be understood by the global audience. The perspective, translations, and applications of theoretical paradigms sometimes differ from place to place, which is because of cultural differences and practices. It could also be as a result of trends of a particular place that make the application differs from one to the other.

Every film is produced for human consumption as quoted by Janet Staiger (1992). This audience centered perspective of film makes every film theory postulates a relationship between the audience and the projected film, to highlight the understanding, interpretation, and comprehension of the narratives. To fully understand African films, African original cultural values and acculturation of the Western culture must be considered, as it is becoming more difficult these days to identify the original African cultural values in African society and films. This is what Ulf Hannerz posits in his theory of creolization that a new culture is created out of the interaction of two or more cultures, which has now become a global phenomenon (Haynes, 2000).

### 3 STRUCTURALISM FILM THEORY

Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistic theory in the early twentieth century provides the basic structure of structuralism. By the 1950s, it became popular by setting out the paradigm that makes all languages orderly and understandable (Richard & Gary, 2010). In Saussure's argument, language as a system and language as utterance were distinguished. Beyond linguistics, structuralism started having an impact on other disciplines. In the 1960s came an intellectual movement with the motive to structurally and logically analyze deep cultural products and practices. Music, fashion, film and other cultural practices were subjected to deep structural analysis, to unravel the hidden meaning of the cultural work. These intellectuals scientifically provide substantial arguments to prove how cultural products and practices make sense to the audience (Richard & Gary, 2010).

Anthropological structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss brought out the significance of the theory in film context. He argued that, all cultures are products of the human brain, and there are features common to all cultures, using the Indian myth's narrative structure. In search of these common features for total structure, film theoreticians, philosophers, and psychoanalysts began their study of film by rethinking film as a structural language art, using a more scientifically based approach to uncover the

underlying structures of film. The film theory uses the linguistic structure form to examine various film elements.

### 3.1 *Film as a Language with Structure*

To comprehend film language structure, let us have some understanding of what language is. According to Edward Sapir, language is a method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires through produced symbols. Furthermore, Bloch and Trager also define language as symbols by which a social group cooperate. For Noam Chomsky, language is a set of sentences with length constructed out of a set of elements. Wayne Weiten argues that language consists of meaningful symbols with the ability to generate a variety of messages. Bruce Goldstein says language is a system of communication using sounds or symbols in expressing feelings, thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Iman Alshami in his own definition says language is “a means of conveying our thoughts, ideas, feelings, and emotions to other people” (Iman, 2019).

Considering the above paragraph definitions of language from different scholars, places and ages, it is clear that all believe that every language has the main purpose of communicating ideas, thoughts, and emotions, constructed into sentences using various elements to pass messages to the audience. This linguistic, structural, theory approach examines all the elements of film, such as the story, cinematography, sound, costume, make up, mise-en-scene, and editing, as they combine together in communicating ideas, thoughts, and emotions to the audience. All these elements have sub-elements that give meaning to individual elements. These syntagmatic relationships of the elements form the grammar of film that can be understood by the film audience. Structuralism as a film theory unravels the hidden messages of the film, as the brain subconsciously interprets them. It emphasizes how the film elements and techniques are constructed as codes and conventions in communicating meanings.

### 3.2 *Structuralism in African Films*

African films are fast developing, and the part-whole relationship of film elements' contribution to the theme of the film, outlining the logical relationship, is the structuralist approach to analyzing the films. African filmmakers use the contemporary film language to deliver their contents in

their own styles. *La vie sur terre (Life on Earth)* (1998 Mali/Mauritania) directed by Abderrahmane Sissako shows his excellent cinematographic sense of framing. The long shot frame of a woman pedaling a bicycle at the end of the film gives a sense of resilience and sadness. Sissako uses single shot movement to create fictions of time, as seen in the scene of men drinking tea and listening to radio under a shade from a wall. As they keep moving against the wall to avoid the sun, it keeps advancing towards them.

Sissako uses film language mastery by creating distinctive long shots that reveal different parts of the town with different life styles, all advancing the story. The framing of the bicycle riders, animals walking the roads, cart-drivers, people drinking tea, radio jockey, the photographer, the tailor, and the entire landscape show a lot about the people and the society where the story is set. This type of scene is mostly used by Sissako to establish scenes and set rhythms for the film. To link up the shots, Sissako makes use of the famous poem of Aime Cesaire's Notes for a *Return to my Native Land* as the voice-over. This decision for the choice of the poem was to make the audience see the present state of the African people.

In Tunde Kelani's films, such as *Arugba*, he uses makeup, costumes, props and music to drive his narratives. Young girls' hairstyles are woven from back to front, depicting they have the best of their years ahead of them in the future. The costumes are according to the age and status of the individuals, no matter the period of the film. *Arugba* is set in the modern-day Yoruba society where the *Arugba*, a virgin from the royal family and costumed in white as a symbol of purity, leads the Osun devotees to the grove for the worship of the Osun deity. The film represents the link between humans and Osun deity, and constitutes the medium through which blessings and healing are delivered to the people.

#### 4 MARXIST FILM THEORY

This theory is propounded based on the economic and political theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. As one of the earliest forms of film theory expressed in the 1920s, the focus of Marxism is built on the relation of theory to practice. Marxist film theory examines how economic and political theories are practiced in the choice of story narrative structure, radical editing and production, to push class consciousness. Russian filmmakers are the pioneers of Marxist film theory and their approach to narrative structure and editing was to oppose the capitalist ideology of Hollywood films. Sergei Eisenstein's works displayed a shift from the story centered

on an individual, but focused on a group of people changing a cause of action (Roshan, n.d.). The Soviet filmmakers also developed an editing style called Montage, where there are clashes of images. In a montage sequence, be it metaphorical, poetic or allegoric montage, the audience is subtly following the story that is connected mostly by sound.

The integration of Marxist economic and political ideology in film production projects the struggle of the masses against class domination in a capitalist society. Marxists are interested in challenging the dominated class to stand up to the oppression of the dominating class to address issues and bring about radical changes (Bob, 2012). In film narrations, Marxist filmmakers reveal the classes, the domination, the antagonism and the changes which come as a result of their action or inaction; and the economic and political ideological dominations of a class against another class. These form the central theme of the story, and they are mostly revealed in materialism as a product of capitalism or dictatorship. Marxists are interested in the power of social relations and determination of people to bring continued transformation beyond the medium of expression.

#### 4.1 *Marxism in African Film Production*

There is a current debate among African film scholars on whether film is art or business. The argument, according to Cecil Blake's Marxist ideology, is that African filmmakers should make films that can make impact and create change in the society, and not solely for making money. Hyginus Ekwuazi in his own explanation of the capitalist ideology argues that film is a business; he stated that you make a film to make profits so that you can make another film. Film is art, science, and business. To be successful in film industry, one needs to understand the place of these three important factors. Africa is rich in art and culture and this gives Africans a wealth of stories to tell. In times past, children grew up listening to the stories from grandparents under the moon light. To Africans, the essence of telling a story is not just for the entertainment; more than that are the lessons to learn from it that can propel changes in the audience.

The history of Africa and the things happening therein are sources of great stories, but the scientific techniques to tell the stories are not employed sufficiently, because of lack of adequate film training on how to use technology and techniques to tell African stories. For a film to make an impact on the society, it must be repeatedly watched. For this to happen, it must be interesting. Technology and techniques are used to



enhance the story so that the audience is not bored. Stories might be available across Africa, but to tell good stories as said earlier, you need technology which is expensive. This realization makes money an important element for continuous film production. Everyone who invests money in the production of films does so to make profit, except art films that something else motivates their investment. The owners of cinemas invested to make money; if a film is not good enough to attract enough viewership, they are not interested. Although the advent of video cameras and recently Digital Single Lens Camera (DSLR) digital technology has made film production more attainable than it used to be under the celluloid era, but not every film is good enough for the cinemas. Today, African home viewers are available to watch on other platforms.

Film production is not easy in Africa because there are no proper structures for the industry to thrive; so, it is survival of the fittest. It is not easy to get grant as a young filmmaker; for you to get grant, you have to play according to the rules of the giver. And the one that pays the piper calls the tune! Several filmmakers used their family fortune to make films and never recouped the money. Some African banks are giving loans to filmmaker, because the industry is seen as a lucrative business. Unfortunately, such loans have difficult requirements and are difficult for young filmmakers to meet. For young filmmakers to grow in the industry, they have to start with low budget films that will minimize risk. Apart from the investment angle into Africa film production, some African film makers have been able to employ Marxist theory in their productions.

The cinematography of the montage framing shots in *La vie sur terre* (*Life on Earth*) (1998, Mali/Mauritania) directed by Abderrahmane Sissako shows the rhythm, movement, and importance of time. The shots were carefully selected and put together in sequence to constitute the fiction in the world of the story. The *mise-en-scene* of the shot of a character riding a bike in a narrow road in the tall grass field and by the pond create the fiction that the character is going through in life. The audience sees the bike as a symbol of modernity with fast-paced life and the loneliness of the individuals, who can only succeed through endurance of the lonely difficult landscape. Sissako's choice of Aime Casaire's poem *Return to my Native Land* and excerpts from *Discourse on Colonialism* was because of their resistance against colonialism and imperialism.

In the film *Il Va Pleuvoir Sur Conakry* (*Clouds over Conakry*) (2006, Guinea) directed by Cheick Fantamady Camara, the conflict of modernism and tradition in African society was the Marxist theme of the film. The

film attempts to show the struggle of the society about the effects of some African traditions and foreign ideologies of religious fundamentalism, as also seen in *October 1* (2014, Nigeria), directed by Kunle Afolayan, where it was the abuse of a religious leader that led to conflict in the film. In *Saworoide* (1999, Nigeria) directed by Tunde Kelani, it is the rich people exploiting the natural resources of the locals, and a military dictator and abusive leaders oppressing the people. In some other films, it is the oppression by those who sell weapons and finance wars in Africa, or the traffickers of human and drugs across African borders and shores.

In all the films focusing African struggle against oppression, someone or a group of people close to the oppressed are always used as an instrument by the oppressor. The problem of African oppression cannot be solved from outside of Africa, but by Africans, identifying the problems and solving them from within, according to the Marxist theory. The struggle by Africans is a class struggle for social development that lies in the unbalanced structural system. It shows a system with a set up by people in position of authority using selfish purpose as a capitalist system to weaken and distort an African order of checks and balances.

## 5 PSYCHOANALYTIC FILM THEORY

Psychoanalysis became prominent in film study in the 1970s, although it has been in existence in other academic disciplines since 1930s (Allen, 2004). This theory is used to analyze film's irrationality of the visual medium, characterizations and the narrative. The visual irrationality looks at film as an irrational thought and dream; it also argues the significance of human understanding through perception. Films leverage on human desire to tell stories that touch people's lives and make them relate to the film they watch. The theory is based on the concepts developed by Jacques Lacan and Sigmund Freud. Freud hypothesized the phenomenon of human irrational behaviour which starts with unconscious wishes in the mind. He used a child sexualized desire for his or her parent or parents and the prohibition associated with the desire. Freud explained this under the three psyches, as uncontrolled desires (Id), acquiring pleasure of fulfilling desires (Ego), and narcissist or selfish ego (Super Ego). He argued that desire starts in a mental state through imagination in the form of fantasies and if not controlled, it turns to dream, and if not checked it manifests in reality.

The medium and the intensification of vision on the film yield immoral pleasure and desires (Allen, 2004). This theory involves the method of investigating the psychology of the filmmaker behind the work, looking at the elements and the chosen techniques used in imposing his ideas on the audience. This theory argues the power of film to suspend reasoning and be very manipulative. Lucan's theory of psychoanalysis focuses on the order of subjectivity of imagination that creates symbolic false self that is later made real. The film turns the audience to be the subject gazing into the world of the film, creating desires in the mind of the audience. This perspective of imposition is presented to the audience when watching the film. Lacanian psychoanalytic film theory argues that identifying with what is being watched on the screen is an illusion, and the virtue of coming into the existence of the object is what determines the influence on the subject (Hayward, 2017).

### 5.1 *Psychoanalysis of African Films*

Although African films are mostly to teach some lessons, they provide a deeper symbolic and psychoanalytical interpretations that have influence on the film audience, especially, the occult genre narratives and the religious angle of their stories. From the opening scene of *Living in Bondage: Breaking Free* (2019, Nigeria), directed by Ramsey Nouah, it introduces the audience to Chief Omego's son, Obinna, who murdered his daughter in the forest for money-making ritual. Though the spirit of the little girl torments him throughout the film leading to his death as what could be said to be the lesson from the film, the increase in the number of youths engaging in money-making rituals has called for concern and research into the influence of such films on the society. Some critics argue, in accordance with psychoanalytical film theory, that the display of wealth acquired through rituals in some African films are behind the surge in money-making rituals. Between the first *Living in Bondage* (1992) directed by Chris Obi Rapu and *Living in Bondage: Breaking Free* (2019), several African films have followed the trend of politics and money-making ritual.

In some other African film, religion has been portrayed as a way of avoiding the consequences of evil. Cities are symbolized as places of corruption, power and greed, where anything is achievable and restitution is made only through religious means. This seems to be an easy and surface solution to every problem in African society as portrayed through films. In some African films, attempts are made to make the audience see religion as

the solution to every social problem in the society. Little by little, the audience accepts this as the only way out of their predicaments and not looking inward for solutions. People seek spiritual solutions to the problems that can be solved through other means.

The psychological impact of film on the audience is subtle. As discussed earlier, according to Freud psychoanalytical theory, human behaviour starts with unconscious wishes in the mind, that become uncontrolled desires that will be fulfilled for selfish ego. If the increase in the desire to get wealth by all means by Africans is fueled by what the filmmakers present to them through the screen according to Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytical theory, it can be correlated with the increase in the number of money-ritual cases within the period of surge in such genre of film. If the correlation is established, African filmmakers should be aware of the impact their films are making on the audience. In like manner, filmmakers should be careful of resolving every conflict in their film through spiritual means only, but also present the legal justice for the perpetrators of evil in their films.

## 6 SCREEN FILM THEORY

Screen theory is an extension of Marxist film theory and Psychoanalysis theory, which is associated with a British journal called *Screen*. *Screen* was first published in 1958 by the Society for Education in Film and Television (SEFT), and was initially known as *The Film Teacher*. Some of the articles then were translations of the writings of non-English scholars and the works of some *Cahiers du cinema* authors. Some of the early works also include the theoretical debates of 1920s and 1930s. Screen theory became popularized through the publication of Colin MacCabe, Laura Mulvey and Stephen Heath in 1970s (Richard & Gary, 2010). Their works examined the conviction of film audience in believing what they watch on the screen. The emotional response from film audience became an academic investigation, on how the audience unconsciously accept what is projected in their minds through a narrative medium of film.

Screen theory's generative premise is that, it is the screen that creates the audience. What is produced in films mirror the society, and the audience can relate with it. This makes it believable and acceptable, as in the Marxist's emancipation basis of universal consciousness. The argument of MacCabe on screen theory is that, film cannot represent reality, but make-beliefs, relations and knowledge similar to the audience's experiences or

expectations. The discourse in film is of someone's point of view trying to make the audience believe that it is real. Filmmakers use the film elements of sound, pictures, and mis-en-scene that offer impression of reality. This is where the discourse of objectivity and subjectivity emerges. Subjective discourses are the opinions and views of specific characters, while objective discourses are the opinions or views of no-one. "Realism is not objective, even if it tricks us into believing it is" (Richard & Gary, 2010, p. 55).

Heath, in his own argument, looks at the screen as a fetish object of belief as against knowledge of the true nature of the subject. Heath argues that "the fetish structure of cinematic representation is something which must be criticized and opposed" (Richard & Gary, 2010, p. 61). The inability of the film audience to separate self from the subject is what screen theory analyses. This is due to what is put in the audiences' minds when watching the film. This makes the audiences react according to the content of the film and its implication. The audiences are seen in the film using various film techniques such as camera angle, camera movement, point of view, dialogue, music, sound effect, point of audition, visual effects, and other techniques.

### 6.1 *African Films as Mirror of the Society*

*Lobola* (2010, Zimbabwe), a comedy film directed by Joe Njagu presented to the audience the rage and despair of the Zimbabwean traumatic circumstances. The film, in a realistic way, presented Harare as a tough urban life, like most big cities in Africa, and gender relationship struggles as the result of the economic collapse of the country. Men are projected throughout the film mostly as drunkard and drug users or jobless. Married women struggle to keep their homes going through farming and women-abuse is seen of the younger brother of the main protagonist vomiting on Christine. It is a reflection of the Zimbabwean society because of the circumstances of the country.

Tunde Kelani's *Saworoide* (1999, Nigeria) was a political drama about leadership decadence and the struggle for power in a typical African society. It reflects the society and presents how the leaders are not trustworthy. *Jogbo* symbolizes Africa where the leaders ought to follow some rituals to ascend office and are not expected to seek after wealth. Politicians know this and scheme the system to get to political offices just for personal gain. The decadence eats so deep that the leaders engage in assassination plan and oppress the press and the youth. In the film, the military coup did not

change the situation, rather, the trend continues. This film is about the happening in Nigerian and other African states, creating an awakening for people to put the right people in the leadership positions.

## 7 FEMINIST FILM THEORY

Women have been part of filmmaking since the 1920s, but feminist film theory was not proposed until 1960s, during the second wave of feminist movement. Feminism became a strong argument in the study of film in the 1970s, arguing stereotype gender representation in films (Dailey, 2016). Feminist theory examines women's social roles, lived experiences and political representation in various fields. As found in other parts of the world, there had been feminist movements in Africa as well. Women such as Queen Amina of Zazzau kingdom, Moremi Ajashoro of Ile-Ife kingdom, Ebele Ejaunu of Igala kingdom, Margaret Ekpo, and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti are examples of women who at one point or the other in African history championed the course of women.

The feminist film theorists argue against the stereotypical roles of women in films. It is seen as discrimination and objectification of women and the patriarchal imbalance of human system (Jacobs, 2019). Marjorie Rosen's *Popcorn Venus* in 1973 wrote *Women, Movies, and the American Dream* to argue feminism as it concerns women's representations in Hollywood. Also, as part of the movement of the second wave feminist movement, Molly Haskell in 1974 wrote *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies*. These two women were at the forefront as feminist film theorists. Feminist Lacanian psychoanalytic theorist, Laura Mulvey argued the ignoble techniques of film subjecting women as visual pleasure in their narratives. Several African film scholars such as Okunna; Kumwenda; Aromona; Omatsola; and Onyenankeya, Onyenankeya & Osunkunle, according to Emwinromwankhoe Osakpolor (2021), have all argued and criticized the norms and portrayal of women in African films as dependent housewives, witches, prostitutes and weak objects of sexploitation by men. Nevertheless, this stereotype is changing in some recent films across Africa.

### 7.1 *Application of Feminist Theory in African Films*

The narrative about feminist stereotypes is changing in African film. Apart from shooting films about African heroines as in *Amina* (2021, Nigeria),

the rise of female directors in African films has given rise to “radical approach” to feminism. John and Paul (2013, p. 1) argue that the approach “requires critical attention by scholars especially because of its social imperative of engendering development at the fundamental level of the family”. The production of feminist films in Africa is actually a wake-up call to the patriarchal abuse. There are now a lot of female film directors in Africa changing the stereotype of feminism in African film production, such as: Kemi Adetiba (Nigeria), Jadesola Osiberu (Nigeria), Wanjiru Kinyanjui (Kenya), Fanta Regina Nacro (Burkina Faso), Katy Lena Ndiaye (Senegal), Jihan el-Tahri (South Africa) and many others.

The Film *Reloaded* (2009, Nigeria) directed by Lancelot O. Imasuen and Ikechukwu Onyeka shows that the story is a follow-up to a show *Games Men Play*. In the film, infidelity, lack of respect and violence against women by male chauvinism are the glaring themes. Osita assaults his wife emotionally and physically to subdue her psychologically, simply because of the wife’s lack of financial power. The abuse of women in *Reloaded* is not just by married men, but also the single men; and it is not limited to full housewives, but also a woman like Chelsea, who is the breadwinner.

*Isoken* (2017, Nigeria) directed by Jadesola Osiberu exposes the way African culture views singlehood of ladies of a certain age bracket. The parents of such ladies are concerned to the point of orchestrating match-making arrangements for their daughters, against the choice of the ladies as it is in *Isoken*. *Isoken*’s family arranges Osaze to marry *Isoken*, while work brings together *Isoken* and Kelvin (a white man) and they fall in love. The African families do not take their children lightly not accepting their choice of a spouse for their children. But in *Isoken*, strangely, *Isoken* is accompanied by her family members to profess her love for Kelvin after disclosing to them that she does not love Osaze, the parents’ arranged match-make. This is a shift in the African feminist stereotype, a move to respect the choice of women.

Another feminist African film is *King of Boys* (2018, Nigeria), a political thriller by Kemi Adetiba. Eniola Salami is a young girl suffering psychological trauma and witnessing domestic abuse of her mother by her father, coupled with herself suffering sexploitation from men where she works in a restaurant. Eniola’s life experiences turn her to become a fearless and ruthless woman between two worlds of good and evil. She uses her philanthropist connections to put people in political offices, and those people turn against her when she wants to pursue a political career, conniving with a male character in the underworld ruled by Eniola to bring her

down. In the battle with her male enemies, she loses her children, her bank account is frozen, and she is imprisoned. She later secures her release and relocates to Brooklyn in the United States. The role given to Eniola, in most African films is usually given to male characters, except in historical films such as *Efunsetan Aniwura* (2020, Nigeria) and *Amina*. This shows the shift in paradigm in the feminist stereotype in African film narration.

## 8 AUTEUR FILM THEORY

Auteur theory is a theoretical concept that changes from one country to the other. In Germany, it is known as Autorenfilm. It started with the film writers claiming their rights as the author of the films they write. They claim that film is the work of the author, not the director. This is different from the French concept of the auteur theory, which argues that the filmmaker is the auteur of the film not the writer of the story. In Africa, film producers, who provide finance and dictate everything concerning the film, could be said to be the auteur of the films. A case where the producer gives the story, hires the director, and appoints the main actors of his choice, pays off every cast and crew, and distributes the film makes him the auteur of the film.

The auteur theory, according to Francois Truffaut in 1954, holds that a film reflects the personal creative vision of the auteur, mostly associated with the director of the film. In law, the creator of a film as a work of art and the copyright owner is regarded as the auteur. The theory is used in analyzing films based on the characteristics of works of the same person that makes him an auteur. It became prominent in the 1950s by the Andre Bazin and Cahiers du cinema group. The Cahiers du cinema group argued that a system of analyzing the work of an auteur is through style. They maintained that through style in filmmaking practice, the auteur signature is seen and the director's point of view is evident continually in all his films as his signature.

### 8.1 *Auteur Theory in African Film Productions*

Two of the foremost film directors in Africa are Tunde Kelani (Nigeria) and Abderrahmane Sissako (Mali/Mauritania). Tunde Kelani is an African filmmaker whose works centered on African culture, most especially the Yoruba culture of the South-Western Nigeria. Looking at some of Kelani's



works such as *Saworoide* (1999); *White Handkerchief* (2000); *Arugba* (2010); and *Ayinla* (2021), the auteur signature of Kelani is African indigenous culture, which defines him as a person and his works. Abderrahmane Sissako is a Mauritanian, who grew up in Mali before moving to Russia to study film. His films, such as *La vie sur terre* (1998); *Heremakono* (2002); *Waiting for Happiness* (2006b); and *Bamako* (2006a) shows his auteur signature of human migration.

Kelani's films use various African cultural elements, such as language, dressing, dance, greetings, rituals, and ceremonies of the Yoruba culture. Some of his films are in Yoruba language, even those that are in English language are embellished with Yoruba proverbs, Yoruba music, prayers and chants in Yoruba language. The costumes are carefully selected according to the culture of the characters and their statuses in the community. In *Thunderbolt* (2001), a film about love relationship fallout between two people of different ethnic groups (Yoruba and Igbo), Kelani used the film to show the deep mistrust between ethnic groups as the nemesis of African society. African language is very deep and sensitive warnings are passed across in parables through spoken words or music. This is very evident in Kelani's films, such as in *Saworoide* (1999), where the old man in the palace sings proverbially to warn the chiefs about their corrupt practices. The musical instruments are also used as instruments as preservers of tradition as it is seen in *Saworoide* (1999) and the sequel *Agogo Ewo* (2002). In African tradition, some musical instruments are specifically made for some rituals, like checks and balance of power, invocation of spiritual forces or ancestral spirits. Costumes are also rich elements of Kelani's films as in any traditional setting, his films show the traditional dressing of the culture involved; with women wearing traditional Iro and Buba with gele, and men are in buba, sokoto and fila if it is a Yoruba setting.

The signature of Abderrahmane Sissako's films is mostly about human migration, which some scholars argue that it is a 'partial memoir or autobiography' of Sissako. In *Heremakono*, the story is about human migration, the risk of migrants' lives at sea, and the politics of human rights. Also, the story of *La vie sur terre* is still about migrants' desire to retune home. Sissako uses the films to show the audience his childhood and his emigration, by creating characters that reveal his experiences on migration. In *La vie sur terre*, Sissako reveals how the people at home depend on the money sent by the migrants to survive. He shows the risk the migrants are taking by crossing the ocean in small boats, trying to pass across a message that, to stop the humanitarian crisis caused by migration,

the solution is that young Africans should learn some crafts. He favours open-ended closing in his films to make the audience decide for themselves what happens at the end. In *Heremakono*, Abdallah's intentions are not made known at the end, so also Khatra's decision on electrician as a profession was not disclosed, whether he becomes an artist or electrical engineer, it was not revealed.

## 9 APPARATUS FILM THEORY

Apparatus film theory came from Marxist's film theory and psychoanalysis film theory. In that, films are shared ideas of individuals in the society. The theory became so prominent in the 1970s, with its argument that the cinematic apparatus or technology has an ideological effect on the audience. Based on the concept of spectatorship, the theory (highly influenced by Althusser's theory of ideology) argues that film is an ideological apparatus that focus on the audience as the subject. It espouses that films persuade the audience to accept what they portray as a reality that touch lives. Jean Louis Baudry in his argument on the ideological effect of film apparatus claims that various components of film apparatus aggregate to persuade the audience. He used the example of the cinematography apparatus, adopting the camera lens to present to the audience the predetermined point of view, in an organized sequence that makes the audience the subject.

Another film apparatus is the speed of film that is achieved through camera works and editing. According to Baudry, the ideological manipulation of the speed in a continuous editing is based on the limitation in human vision to capture everything on the screen within a certain speed (Nitzan, 2007). Baudry and other apparatus film theorists and filmmakers argued that the positioning of the audience is a manipulation of the audience into accepting the film they are watching as an ideological reality. The cinematic ideology is to use cinematography, sound, editing, and other film elements to influence the audience. The more realistic they are, the more influence they have on the audience, and the instrument to do that is technology. The theory advocates the relevance of technical equipment in setting up emotions and transferring them to the audience.

### 9.1 *African Films Ideological Imposition on Audience*

If Tunde Kelani's *Thunderbolt* portrays lack of trust as the cause of crises in African society, Kwam Ansah's film *The Good Old Days: The Love of AA* (2010, Ghana) provides a template to be used in finding a solution to conflicts in African society allegorically. *The Love of AA* is the first of Ansah's series of *The Good Old Days* that treats the complexity in African family life with the implications and consequences on innocent victims. In the film, Abudu Andani and Esaba Mensah were two teenagers caught in the love web which affected their academic performances. Their parents discovered the cause of their poor performance in school and tried to help the teenagers. The conflict started with the name Abudu Andani (AA), which triggers the historical chieftaincy conflict between the two families. Associating name and historical events are common conflicts triggers in many African societies.

In the film *The Good Old Days: The Love of AA*, Ansah shows to the audience the place of the youth in changing the status quo. Although in a traditional African setting, the youth have little or no input in chieftaincy discussion, they are unfortunately the ones sent to fight when conflicts arise. But in the film, the youth in the character of Abudu and Esaba are portrayed to employ positive and productive leadership in changing the society. Also, the two families, instead of continuing the antagonistic stance, choose civility, dialogue and counsel to help their children. Ansah, through the screen, pointed out a peaceful way of resolving conflict through dialogue instead of hostility.

In *Baara* (1978, Mali), Souleymane Cisse also presented an opposition of two young men against clan conflict originated from the traditional caste system of the corrupt traditional leaders. In *Finye* (1982), Cisse presented a similar situation, much similar to Kwam Ansah's film *The Good Old Days: The Love of AA*, in which Ba and Batrou fall in love against their parents' consent amid tradition, modernity, autocracy and corruption. Cisse, used *Finye* to put the issues of traditional belief system and polygamy on the screen to the audience, in which the magical world of the ancestors united with the youth in the world of the film to overthrow the wicked political leader. As stated by Manthia Diawara, "*Finye* comes from this closeness between myth and reality; magic and dystopia, and the positioning of the gods on the side of the young and revolutionary" (Manthia, 2010: 154).

## 10 CONCLUSION

The academization of film in African universities has opened an avenue for more understanding and analysis of African film productions and techniques through the knowledge of film theories. Although the filmmaking process all over the world is the same, an understanding of film theories as they relate to African films helps in debating the essence of African films and provides deep understanding of African reality, audience, and the society. Various film theories can be seen applied in various African films; such as Structuralism and Marxism seen in Abderrahmane Sissako and Tunde Kelani's films. Cheick Fantamady Camara and Kunle Afolayan also applied Marxism theories in their films. Psychoanalysis film theory could be applied to films such as *Living in Bondage* (1992) directed by Chris Obi Rapu. In the works of Joe Njagu and Tunde Kelani, Screen theory is used mirroring the society. Feminist stereotypes is changing as evident in the films of Kemi Adetiba, Jadesola Osiberu, Wanjiru Kinyanjui, Fanta Regina Nacro, Katy Lena Ndiaye, Jihan el-Tahri, and Lancelot O. Imasuen and Ikechukwu Onyeka, and many others. Many African filmmakers can be argued to be auteur because of the styles and signatures in their films, with Tunde Kelani and Abderrahmane Sissako as great examples. Some African films have been able to impose an ideology on film audiences using Apparatus film theory as seen in Kwam Ansah and Souleymane Cisse films.

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# Espousing a *Multi-sieve Model* for *Conflict-Sensitive Reporting* in Africa

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## I INTRODUCTION

The media's importance in any society has been thoroughly documented over time. Over the years, the mass media has remained an important aspect of any society, charged with informing, educating, and entertaining the public. It is not surprising that individuals from all walks of life have embraced the media as an ally in making sense of whatever circumstance may exist at any given time. What the mass media reflects, to a significant level, shapes people's perception when making a decision becomes difficult. For example, how the media portrays a government, a policy, or a scenario may have a substantial impact on people's perceptions. Considering the media's critical role, Kofi Annan, a past Secretary-General of the United Nations, said that "if information and knowledge are central to democracy, they are conditions for development" (Olatunji et al., 2020, p. 1). The media, according to Annan, are drivers and facilitators of good government and development. In agreement, Oso (2016), a professor of mass communication, stated that the mass media is synonymous with a

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country's identity since it serves as a record keeper based on how it reports events daily. The media, in doing so, presents historical, ideological, and political perspectives on important subjects, to the point where democracy suffers every time the media fails.

Given the media's critical role, some countries around the world have attempted to legitimise their operations. For example, the media's role as a surveyor of the polity, an inspector of the system, and a source of solutions to potentially conflict-laden situations in society is enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution. While Section 21 of Chapter II provides that the State shall protect, preserve, and promote Nigerian cultures that enhance human dignity and are consistent with the fundamental objectives, Section 22 states that "the press, radio, television, and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people" (1999 Constitution of Nigeria, LL30).

Society suffers when the media fails to carry out its responsibilities carefully. These responsibilities frequently include the level of sensitivity they exhibit when reporting conflict-sensitive topics. Journalists have had to choose between ethical adherence and their convictions and interests in matters of public concern on several occasions. Ethnic inclinations, religious belief, the established societal construct of a certain phenomenon, and cultural inclinations, among others, are examples of these convictions. du Toit (2019), a research associate at the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership, acknowledged that journalists frequently find themselves in a dilemma when they are tasked with being fair in their reporting while they are members of conflicting communities. As a result, "when the people, places, issues, principles, and beliefs journalists care about are threatened by conflict, they are often called upon to make difficult and sometimes seemingly impossible choices" (p. 6).

To display conflict sensitivity in their reporting, journalists must first cleanse themselves of personal biases and dissonances to have clear viewpoints on ethical issues of societal importance and propose feasible solutions that would benefit society. At the heart of these crucial decisions is societal peace and calm, which has been severely harmed in many African communities as a result of people making decisions based on insensitive media reports. Consequently, when reporting on sensitive and seemingly non-sensitive issues, the media must be conflict-sensitive, beginning with journalists who must be fair in how they gather, process, and report their stories after successfully navigating what Alawode (2011) referred to as

the “nexus of personality.” Traits that must be navigated include authoritarian level, intellectualism, age, gender, income, affiliation/peer group, religion, etc.

In line with this submission, existing researches have looked into the role of the media in conflict and the idea of conflict-sensitive journalism, particularly when covering full-fledged conflicts, such as in a war situation, using conflict analysis models. Other works have looked at the problem that journalists face when gathering reports during the conflict (du Toit, 2019; Nkamnebe, 2011; Nwosu, 2011; Pate & Dauda, 2015; Melone et al., 2002). However, little is known about viewpoints and models that study journalists’ multi-processed intra-personal communication and how they can sieve their personality dissonance to attain an ethical balance that would allow them to deliver feasible solutions in form of conflict-sensitive stories. In essence, this paper seeks to contribute to existing knowledge by examining conflict-sensitive reporting from the point of the story (issue) conceptualization by the journalists and how personal and other external factors impact ethical considerations in their reportage. Therefore, the overarching objective of this paper is to study conflict-sensitive reporting within African societies and propose a personality-based model that could help African journalists navigate personal and ethical issues that may affect how they report conflict-prone and sometimes non-conflict-prone issues on the continent.

### *1.1 Media and Conflict-Sensitive Reporting*

Conflict-sensitive reporting has existed since man began seeking information to assist decision-making. A good illustration of the necessity for caution when reporting conflict or potentially conflict-prone problems may be found in the Bible (the holy book of Christians). Moses sent twelve spies to the land of Canaan when the Israelites were in Kadesh to see if it was suitable for the Israelites to occupy. While two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, conveyed optimism in their findings by providing evidence of how fruitful the land is despite the difficult conditions, the other ten spies caused fear with their bad reports. An uprising erupted as a result of the gloomy assessment of the ten spies. Due to the non-conflict-sensitive report of the ten spies, the Israelites were unable to make an informed decision to place their trust in their God. Hence, the vast majority of them lost out on entering Canaan, the promised land (WatchTower Bible and Tracts Society, 2004).



The twelve spies in this piece could be interpreted as journalists from various media organizations that have gone to cover the same assignment or have the same information about a problem but have decided to report on it differently. Their approach and choice of expression indicated their grasp of conflict sensitivity. Unfortunately, in the case of the Israelites, the people followed the majority's report, resulting in a violent protest. The mass media are a crucial institution of modern society, serving as news packagers and distributors, as well as moral amplifiers and organizers. They are the social mechanism through which the majority experiences the world and constructs meaning, as well as the direction of that creation (Oso, 2017). As a result, conflict-sensitive reporting is required.

Conflict is a perplexing and complex concept by nature, with diverse implications for different groups and situations. According to Pani and Fischer-Butmaloiu (2017), "conflict occurs when two or more parties (individuals or groups) believe their interests, goals, or ambitions are incompatible, express hostile attitudes, or take action that damages other parties' ability to pursue their interests". (p. 11) Different traditions, such as childhood, ethnicity, language, religion, cultural exposure, and political ideology, all contribute to conflict. However, conflict may be a productive process if the persons involved manage their dispute or conflict calmly and constructively (Pani & Fischer-Butmaloiu, 2017).

Jimoh (2014) related the notion of conflict sensitivity to the development efforts of international organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in his analysis. The organizations established that the realities of development programs should be included in the development programme's context, which must be environmentally responsible. In this regard, Pani and Fischer-Butmaloiu (2017) agreed that journalists can make a difference by widening their viewpoints on the problems at hand when reporting conflicts. Journalists must recognize that not all disagreements must end in confrontation or bloodshed with winners and losers, but can instead be resolved peacefully with parties reaching mutually acceptable agreements. As a result, journalists must avoid acting as accelerators of violence, because conflict can occur without the parties being aware of the risk of escalation to levels that are destructive and hurtful to all parties involved. Accordingly, it is vital that journalists, as well as development experts, approach their work with a philosophy of doing no damage as Grim (2017) expressed.

The foregoing reveals that how the media reports conflict-related issues have a substantial impact on the level of peace in society. To achieve this, the following criteria were proposed by Pani and Fischer-Butmaloiu (2017) for determining conflict sensitivity:

- The ability to understand the context and meaning of all socio-economic and political tensions, their root causes, cultural and historical background, as well as structural factors in which you operate, because they all have the potential to become violent.
- The ability to understand the interaction between your intervention and the context in the matter.
- The ability to act upon the understanding of this interaction, to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts (p. 20).

According to a study by Nwankpa (2015), media coverage of a crisis in its early phases can be unclear and confused, with a lot of conflicting information and inaccuracies. As a result of this type of reporting, the issue or crisis is magnified, with the media's desire to portray the viewpoints rapidly rather than correctly. According to Howard (2009), conflict-sensitive reporting reflects a modernisation of the news industry's basic principles, and the news media may be a significant force in minimizing the sources of conflict in society and promoting conflict resolution. Therefore, journalists must be trained to comprehend conflict, know the role of the media in conflict resolution, and how to manage conflict. For example, the media's responsibility includes disseminating information about dispute resolution options while adhering to the ethical guidelines of accuracy, fairness, balance, and responsible behaviour. As a result, journalists should improve their reporting by encouraging more communication among conflict parties to prevent stereotypes and limiting viewpoints on the causes and processes of conflict.

In the discussion over conflict-sensitive reporting, advancements in information and communication technology (ICT), which are supposed to assist journalists to do their jobs better, have not been overlooked. Regrettably, advanced communication technology has produced generations of journalists that simply want to be the first to report the news, leaving their readers with more questions than answers in their reports. These journalists deliver stories that are badly edited and lack proper perspectives and context that would assist their audience in making meaning

that would benefit them, causing more societal harm than good, especially in a conflict situation (Nwankpa, 2015).

Critics (Puddephatt, 2006) of conflict-sensitive reporting have claimed that the concept could compromise journalism's conventional functions and primary principles, which are to simply report the news. Peace journalism or conflict-sensitive journalism, they argue, might mean that journalists are no longer only covering stories, but are actively involved in them. They say that society needs information and the free interchange of ideas and opinions in the public realm and that the media must be free to play any role they deem fit in meeting that need. When the media is asked to promote peace, critics argue that it risks becoming an ideological idea of journalism linked with the defunct Soviet Union, when "peace" was determined by the state.

Conversely, proof of an avoidable and ongoing crisis on the African continent as a result of media insensitivity necessitates a reconsideration and improvement of these traditional duties as identified by the critics towards achieving conflict-sensitive reporting. Ogunyombo (2020) defined conflict-sensitive reporting as:

A form of reporting that either prevents, manages, clarifies, or demystifies issues that may specifically or generally result in conflict in any society, In conflict-sensitive reporting, the media serves as an illuminator where darkness prevails particularly when parties in an issue or potential parties in an issue become mischievous, seeking to garner sentiments in their favour.

By this, journalists must choose between taking an active position in the conflict and becoming accountable for further violence, or remaining independent and contributing to the conflict's resolution. Unfortunately, African conflict coverage and reporting experiences have highlighted the significance of a holistic examination of fairness, particularly from the standpoint of the individual journalist.

### *1.2 Media and Conflict-Sensitive Reporting in Africa*

African media has contributed to the continent's development. They have worked bravely in many countries to remove tyrants, develop health programmes, and combat corruption, among other attributes that could help sustain a cohesive society. However, over time, trends have indicated that Africa's mass media are losing their hold on conflict-sensitive reportage.

There is evidence of prejudice that suggests journalists or their media organizations are leaning towards ethnic, religious, cultural, or personal ideas that undermine professionalism. In an era where objectivity has become a difficult issue, such tendencies are calling into question the norms of fairness.

When looking at conflict sensitivity in Africa through the lens of multiculturalism, Takwa (2017) observed that practically every society is dynamic and growing and that comprehending the unique components of numerous cultural entities is a difficulty. As a result, these societies are faced with the challenge of balancing diversity with the need to define the role of the media and reporters in promoting nation-building and national integration. At any stage of the conflict, the public looks to the media as a reliable source of information that will help them comprehend the conflict rationally, especially when the media asks the correct questions of the conflict's protagonists. Sadly, African media have been accused of being complicit in the creation and execution of disputes that have escalated into crises and widespread violence.

For example, while analyzing media coverage of the Rwanda genocide in 1994, the review committee concluded that poor and misleading reporting by the international media on the genocide itself contributed to international indifference and inaction. Another study on the Rwanda crisis conducted by Hilsum blamed the emotions that created a large number of deaths as well as the misunderstanding of what was happening on journalists covering the crisis. The study concluded that the media was unable to appropriately present the complexity of Rwanda's socioeconomic structure along the ethnic lines of Hutu and Tutsi in a basic, intelligible and respectable form (Nwankpa, 2015).

In another study, Jimoh (2014) stated that media stories on the Jos crisis in Nigeria between 1994 and 2012 were not conflict-sensitive and that such disrespect for conflict-sensitive reporting can alter the conflict trend and conflagrate the already volatile environment. For example, the study discovered that *Sunday Trust*, a Fulani-owned newspaper, played on ethnicity in crafting its headlines and conveyed the idea that the Fulani "settlers" were the only ones targeted in the military operation by the State Task Force (STF). The fact that the then Plateau State Governor, David Jonah Jang, was a Christian and a "native" further infuriated the sentiments. As a result, the study concluded that the press in Nigeria, despite its diversity, still faces challenges, chief among which is "the predication to report from ethnic, religious, and political prisms, " and

therefore “the need to penetrate the structural challenges of (media) practitioners has become imperative” (p. 80). The media must weigh the effects of their stories on society before publishing because they also need a peaceful environment to operate. Nnamdi Ekeanyanwu and Olanrewaju Ajakaiye agreed that the Nigerian media has been polluted by political partisanship, ethnic, racial, and other biases, that are badly affecting their coverage of conflicts (Ekeanyanwu & Ajakaiye, 2020).

At a conference held in Kenya in 2004 by the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE), the congregation noted that the media are partly to blame for the crisis on the African continent because they have failed to be decisive and have succumbed to some external influence in their reporting (Nwankpa, 2015). Analysts have cited the Ivorian crisis as a key example of where the media played a critical role in further igniting the conflict in the country. Between 2010 and 2011, the journalists’ reporting resulted in violence that led to the arrest and imprisonment of Sierra Leone’s President Laurent Gbagbo. The same scenario also occurred during the Kenyan general election in 2007 and 2008, although it was acknowledged that the media could not be blamed alone for the crisis due to the manipulative tendencies of the political elites (Takwa, 2017).

Burundi’s experience offered an intriguing combination. Following the terrible effects of hate broadcasting that prevailed in the early 1990s during the Burundi crisis, Studio Ijambo was founded in Bujumbura in 1995 as an instrument for reconciliation and national cohesion. Hate broadcasting had a big role in the immense destruction and loss of life that happened during that period. The Burundian media then reflected and aggressively promoted the severe ethnic division. While members of opposing ethnic groups threatened to kill each other in the media, they also promoted their “mutually macabre ideologies,” which resulted in “mutual terror and distrust based on historical fears” (Chukwuma et al., 2015, p. 171). In Zimbabwe, the Media Monitoring Project reported that the state media had become a direct instrument used by the ruling government to castigate the opposition, referring to them as the British government’s stooges. The opposition was accused of launching anthrax attacks against Zimbabwean government officials via the media. Violence and intimidation were the results of the continual attacks on the opposition (Chukwuma et al., 2015). Omotoso and Razaq (2015) agreed that “in Africa, corruption has encouraged bias in the coverage of news as well as severe dependence of journalists on government and political paymasters”.

The study by Takwa (2017) identified an artificial divide between the predominantly Muslim north and the predominantly Christian south while analyzing media and conflict sensitivity across countries in the West African region, including Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Ghana, Togo, and Cameroon. The study showed that this divide is often responsible for skewed media reports by some journalists who may be tempted to lean towards their lineage or conviction. Other experts agreed that the media, rather than giving quality information on conflicts, were architects of entrenched conflict and war by their reporting of modern conflict from the Gulf War to the Rwanda genocide (Musa, 2017).

### 1.3 *Ethics and the Dilemma of Conflict-Sensitive Reporting*

Often, journalists have ethical concerns as a result of the issues connected with conflict-sensitive reporting. Weaver et al., as cited by Musa (2017), described journalists as full-time reporters, writers, correspondents, columnists, news people, and editors who have editorial responsibility for the preparation or transmission of news items or other information. In essence, the role of the journalist is to present an accurate, thorough and informed account of an event that provides context to the audience (Owolabi, 2017). Fulfilling these editorial responsibilities, which would lead to truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent accounts aimed at conflict-sensitive reporting, appears improbable because the African journalist has been pulled in various directions as a result of some ancestral biases, and personal beliefs and other factors.

Nwankpa (2015b) identified three features that support the concept of journalistic objectivity in separate studies by Dennis McQuail, Everette Dennis, and John Merrill. According to McQuail, objective journalism entails adopting a detached and neutral attitude toward the subject of reporting; a lack of partisanship, which means not taking sides in disagreements or displaying bias; and strict adherence to accuracy and other truth criteria such as relevance and completeness. Dennis, on the other hand, believes that objectivity is possible and that it requires separating fact from opinion, presenting an emotionally detached view of the news, striving for fairness and balance, and allowing both sides to respond in a way that provides the audience with all relevant information. Objective journalism, according to Melvin Mencher, attempts to offer a complete account that is not coloured by the reporter's views or the necessities of the prevailing government. Journalists will avoid falling into the propaganda trap so long

as they uncover what the true interests of the parties are for reconciliation and settlement, John Pilger remarked (Nwankpa, 2015b).

However, the extent to which journalists may be objective in their reports may be limited. At the 17th African Council for Communication Education (ACCE) conference at the University of Calabar Nigeria in 2015, Idowu Sobowale, a professor of journalism said regarding objectivity in journalism that “no matter how pious you are as a journalist, you can never achieve objectivity but you can aspire to attain fairness” (I. Sobowale, personal communication, October 22, 2015). Christiane Amanpour, former Cable News Network (CNN) Chief International Correspondent, agreed that “objectivity, that great journalistic buzzword, means giving all sides a fair hearing—not treating all sides the same way, particularly when all sides are not the same... There are some situations one cannot be neutral about because when you are neutral, you are an accomplice” (Nwankpa, 2015b, p. 155).

Nonetheless, when journalists are forced to choose between ethics and personal convictions, they must choose conflict-sensitive reporting. Some journalists hide behind the guise of freedom of expression to display a lack of sensitivity in their reports based on feelings rather than facts. This has allowed for manipulation, resulting in greater harm than the right to report and inform. As a result, journalists find it challenging to report on sensitive and sensitive matters that are open to several interpretations since “the lens used to appraise issues depends more on the messenger than the message” (Takwa, 2017, p. 12). Consequently, the thoughts of the messenger who is the journalist must be refined to demonstrate sensitivity that is devoid of sentiments and avoid becoming accomplices to the violent agenda of policymakers and other war-lords (Takwa, 2017; Musa, 2017).

Takwa (2017) argued that stereotypes and perceptions are ingrained in society’s history and cultures, and are socialized across generations. Journalists, who are expected to be arbiters in matters of conflict, are among those who have had these entrenched thoughts passed down through generations, raising the question of whether ordinary training would be enough to rid them of these inherent thoughts. As a result of discriminating and biased reporting bolstered by false and unsubstantiated accusations against a party in a conflict, a journalist can become a conflict instigator, perhaps leading to hate and inflammatory words that fan the flames of the crisis. Simple acts like not providing equal interview opportunities to both parties could build up to the point of violence, especially if they are repeated.

According to Danaan (2017), the treatment of stories is twofold in the framework of media logic. Danaan identified the nature of news framing, which is the process by which journalists shape reality and assign meaning to it. This framing is linked to the plural nature of most African nations, which has resulted in news being cut along ethnic and religious lines, with outputs reflecting the interests of various social groupings. These frames highlight the fact that journalists cannot effectively report stories without preconceived beliefs that guide how they arrange the elements of their stories and the meaning they assign to them. As a result, the fact that news framing is a product of journalistic logic means that the outcome is subjective. Journalists achieve this by choosing frames—words, phrases, and qualifiers that tend to represent certain concepts in specific ways—to impact the attitudes of their viewers. In this process, there is an overall imposition of ideas on audiences, as well as the exclusion of material that the journalists do not want to be known.

Regardless, McQuail (as cited in Owolabi, 2020) maintained that “although journalists must be accountable to their employers, they have a superior loyalty to the public” (p. 174). To attain this goal, Egbon (as cited in Ekeanyanwu & Ajakaiye, 2020) identified six aspects of conflict-sensitive reporting that must be addressed as follows:

1. The collective national interest must supersede parochial ethnic and individual interests.
2. Press freedom should be limited where national survival is threatened or where it conflicts with constitutional provisions and rights.
3. Sensationalism that could blow up a crisis should be seriously avoided.
4. Suppression of the truth should be avoided as it will escalate the crisis and create a false sense of security.
5. Professionalism and ethical considerations must be held in high esteem and sacrosanct in the management and coverage of the crisis.
6. Maintain a healthy scepticism and provide socially responsible criticism and avoid relentless hostility (p. 132).

What Howard (2004) referred to as “conflict analysis for the journalist” would enable a journalist to do a better job in conflict-sensitive reporting. Howard proposed that:

- Journalists should seek out other parties and other points of view. They should not only repeat the old grievances of the old elites.



- Journalists should examine what the parties are seeking and the possibility of withdrawal, compromise, or transcendence. Journalists should write about these possibilities.
- With conflict analysis, journalists can understand what diplomats and negotiators are trying to do, and can report it more reliably.
- With conflict analysis, journalists can identify more sources to go to for information (p. 12).

The main thrust of these propositions and assumptions is that journalists must purge, or in other words, sieve, their thoughts through a filtering process that ensures that what they turn out as reports are refined and safe for consumption by their various audiences. A reporting method riddled with ethnicity, religious bias, and emotional imbalance will do additional harm in an already vulnerable society, just as an unpurified liquid material with high toxicity may constitute a hazard to human health. The need for ‘purified information’ further necessitates the expansion of the multi-sieve model of conflict-sensitive reporting.

## 2 TOWARDS A MULTI-SIEVE MODEL OF CONFLICT-SENSITIVE REPORTING IN AFRICA

So far, studies have revealed significant obstacles in how African journalists cover conflict and conflict-sensitive subjects in their countries. In most situations, they have been unable to separate their personalities from their reporting, especially when such issues are about their ethnic, religious or political groups resulting in skewed reporting. Although scholars have given suggestions about what the media should expect when covering sensitive matters, the majority of the suggestions do not explicitly highlight the refining process of reporting, which begins with the journalists who are the primary source of the information.

Existing conflict analysis models, such as the Interrelated Levels of Conflict Analysis model and Glasl’s Escalation Model (What is Conflict Analysis..., 2014), have largely focused on the elements in a conflict, leaving out the nexus of the journalist’s personality, whose actions or inaction may influence the outcome of the issues. Given these findings, the *multi-sieve model of conflict-sensitive reporting* suggested here would aid journalists in visualizing the process of refining their reports to be conflict-sensitive to better serve the society in which they operate, particularly in Africa. The

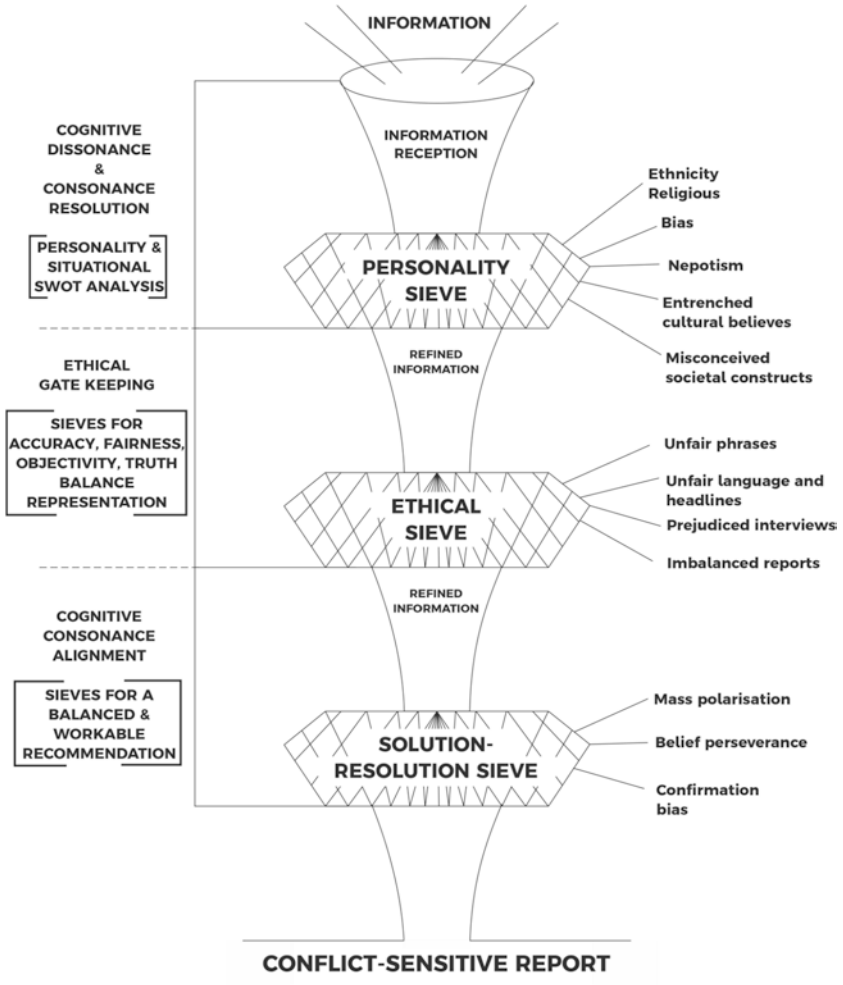


Fig. 1 Diagram of the multi-sieve model for conflict-sensitive reporting

proposal of this model will form part of what Essien Ikpe described as part of the concerted effort to discover, investigate, and customize conflict management and resolution systems on the African continent (Ikpe, 2011). One paradigm for conflict-sensitive reporting is the multi-sieve approach (Fig. 1).

The above diagram has been purposefully designed to make the propositions of the *multi-sieve model of conflict-sensitive reporting* easier to comprehend. In the social and management sciences, modelling aids in the comprehension of complicated phenomena as well as the memory of its use in the resolution of societal, management, communal, and professional challenges. According to Nwosu (2011), “it is an intentionally simplified pictorial or graphic description of a complex phenomenon aimed at facilitating the understanding, recall, and application of the phenomenon” (pp. 16–17).

The multi-sieve model of conflict-sensitive reporting derives its orientation from three existing theories. They are Leon Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory from 1957, Kurt Lewin’s gatekeeping theory from 1943 and Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm’s social responsibility theory from 1956. The cognitive dissonance theory posits that inconsistencies among our ideas, attitudes, knowledge, and/or behaviour can cause cognitive dissonance, which can be triggered by some consonants (compatible) elements, some dissonant (incompatible) elements, or the relevance of each element. People are driven to participate in dissonance reduction methods after encountering dissonance, which may include (a) increasing the number and/or importance of consonant elements and/or (b) decreasing the number and/or importance of discordant elements. This can be accomplished by altering one’s beliefs, attitudes, or behaviours. It can also be achieved by searching out information that is pleasant and avoiding contradictory information because individuals have a predisposition to seek consistency in their cognitions, according to their philosophies. When there is a misalignment of attitudes or behaviours, something must change to make the misalignment go. Journalists are constantly confronted with this process of dissonance reduction, especially when what they are reporting contradicts their convictions. Dissonance reduction is regularly needed among African journalists because people are deeply divided along the lines of ethnic, religious and political ideologies (Naveed, 2017; Stroud et al., 2019).

Dissonance reduction activities frequently necessitate some gatekeeping on the part of the journalist or media organization. The gatekeeping process may entail recognizing compatible and incompatible factors to establish cognitive consonance on the individual’s side, as well as being accurate in providing information that will assist the public in making decisions. It is worth noting that many judgments are made between the

occurrence of an event and its transmission as news, reflecting the gatekeeping process that anyone with information can engage in. Gatekeepers, on the other hand, change information (news) as they digest it and disseminate it to others, whether consciously or unconsciously. Because the gatekeeper's decisions are influenced by a complicated web of influences, interests, motives, and shared values, some information may be suppressed, changed, or left unchanged to manage public understanding of an event. Gatekeeping can be both useful and hazardous, as determining what information to discard and what to let pass can lead to an abuse of authority. Media gatekeeping requires that decisions are made based on news values, organizational processes, input structure, and common sense. That is ethical norms guiding the gatekeeping process assist and decrease the extent to which it is left to the journalist's whims and caprices (Shoemaker et al., 2017).

The requirement for the media to stay socially responsible is within what may be defined as "ethical gatekeeping." Although the social responsibility theory implies a free press, it places a greater emphasis on the media's social obligation and accountability in their reporting. The social responsibility paradigm extends beyond objective or factual reporting to interpretative or investigative reporting, which involves presenting information alongside clear explanations that might assist the audience in making informed judgments. The Hutchins Commission established the fundamental requirements for a socially responsible media, which include: providing a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of events in a context that gives them meaning; serving as a forum for the exchange of comments and criticism; presenting a meaningful representation of society's constituent groups; being in charge of presenting and clarifying society's goals and values; and providing complete access to the intelligent information (Uzuegbunam, 2013). The grounds for advocating the multi-sieve model for conflict-sensitive reporting are provided by cognitive dissonance, gatekeeping, and social responsibility theories.

The multi-sieve model for conflict-sensitive reporting is a three-level-sieve model. These sieves can be found in a descriptive funnel of information processing. The funnel depicts a journalist's thought process from the point of receiving the information through production. When information is poured into the funnel, the model shows how the information is been refined in sync with the journalist's thoughts and goes through the sieves to produce final information that is good for audience consumption.

The *personality sieve* in the first stage of processing in the funnel traps inherent traits that may obstruct what becomes the news. At this level, the assumption is that personality, as a psychological construct, is the most important aspect of human existence and interaction. With attributes like authority, intellectual capacity, age, gender, income, affiliation, peer group, religion, occupation, and experience, it can be argued that communication cannot succeed in conflict management without properly navigating the interconnectedness of personality (Alawode, 2011). These traits are classified into four categories in the structural model as behavioural predisposition, which includes motives, abilities, and personality; social pressure from groups; cultural value system; and rules and procedures arising from decision-making mechanisms such as negotiation rules, arbitration, and settlement, which can shape the behaviour of individuals (Nkamnebe, 2011). By implication, it is incumbent on individuals to screen their personalities for contaminants that may impair their ability to make fair judgments while reporting.

Individuals must undertake a personality and situational SWOT analysis to aid in the sieving process, according to the multi-sieve model. The SWOT analysis examines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of individuals and organisations in a particular situation. Within the context of this approach, the personality SWOT analysis is both a retrospective and introspective analysis conducted by an individual to genuinely analyze to what extent he/she may be suitable for reporting on a particular conflict-sensitive subject. The SWOT analysis approach will assist the individual journalist in learning and unlearning factors that may clarify or hinder good judgment in reporting that is fair and conflict-sensitive. Howard (2004) acknowledged that “no journalist can be totally neutral” (p. 19). Journalists, like everyone else, are bound by the ideals of their homeland, religion, and ethnic group. That is why professional journalists must adhere to strict standards of accuracy, objectivity, and responsibility to avoid prejudices and personal ideals.

The situational SWOT analysis, which seeks to put the issues in context for resolution, would aid the journalist in the personality sieving process. At this stage, the journalist tries to avoid cognitive dissonance by pursuing cognitive consonance—a state in which the journalist determines that reporting the story will not contradict and put him in a state of mental imbalance while also not causing societal instability. When the journalist achieves cognitive consonance, the personality sieve is only completed when ethnicity, nepotism, religious bias, and other traits are successfully

sieved. In essence, when there is cognitive consonance, it is easier to work with ethical issues.

At the second level is the *ethical sieve* that traps unethical behaviours in the information management process. The ethical sieve aids journalists in contextualizing situations within the ethics that govern journalism after filtering the personality sludge. The model implies that the information output from the personality sieve may still be contaminated, hence the need for the ethical sieve to aid in the report's refinement. The ethical sieve will filter the choice of language, expressions, choice of headlines and composition, choice of interviewees, and choice of interview questions, which sometimes may be prejudiced. The ethical sieve supports in what former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan referred to as the media's conflict "negotiation" abilities. According to Annan, if journalists report on conflict-sensitive matters by offering voices and visibility to all parties concerned, the media in Africa will help diffuse conflicts and minimize the development of full-fledged crises driven by inequality, corruption, and ethnic animosity. The ethical sieve will aid in the filtering of the inclination for misinformation, malinformation, and disinformation, all of which are components of fake news. The ethical sieve will aid journalists in not reporting communal squabbles in a way that portrays a winner-take-all situation and further fueling crises. This is critical because, to break the news and attract an audience, journalists sometimes go against all journalistic norms by telling colourful and unexpected stories that may have harmful effects on society (Tejumaiye et al., 2020).

The third sieve is the *resolution/solution sieve*, which traps any issues that may have arisen as a result of the dissonance that was previously experienced. After filtering the ethical concerns, the journalist should be worried about what he suggests as a resolution for the conflict. Output from the resolution/solution sieve should not be a verdict, but rather a practical recommendation that takes into account the dynamics of the situational SWOT analysis performed before.

At this stage, the journalist may be faced with three connected scenarios in constructive debates aimed at proposing conflict resolution alternatives. When studying cognitive dissonance in journalism, Kasey Hullet noted that journalists may face mass polarization, belief perseverance, and confirmation bias, just as any other person in society who has been exposed to information that requires cognitive reasoning. The process of swinging between two extreme customer sentiments as a result of information supplied by the media is known as mass polarization. Belief perseverance is a

psychological phenomenon in which people tend to stick to their views even when the information is incorrect or the evidence contradicts them. This contradictory nature reveals a reluctance to acknowledge that the initial premise may not be correct. Confirmation bias, on the other hand, is the tendency to seek out evidence that confirms preexisting beliefs, usually by emphasizing or pursuing proof that supports those beliefs while dismissing or refusing to seek out evidence that contradicts them. These three cognitive issues must be resolved to avoid illogical arguments that may result in muckraking, name-calling, and extreme views because current perspectives differ from what the journalists may have known before. Such extreme positions, as may be reflected in the journalist's report, will further ignite conflict (Hullet, 2016). Reflections on the information refinement process of the multi-sieve model will help journalists with conflict-sensitive reporting as elements of contamination would have been significantly filtered in the process, delivering a refined report that will be conflict-sensitive.

### 3 CONCLUSION

Scholars' recommendations that journalists should adopt a position of detachment and neutrality, demonstrate a lack of partisanship, and adhere to strict accuracy, relevance and completeness, necessitate that the reporting process goes through a multi-sieve level to be pure. Fairness may still be acceptable as part of the sifting process in conflict-sensitive reporting since objectivity may be far-fetched because the lens used to evaluate issues is more dependent on the messenger than the message. In the midst of it all, African journalists are forced to make difficult decisions in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society to which they are also emotionally attached, especially when covering conflict-related subjects. Adopting the propositions of the multi-sieve model for conflict-sensitive reporting will allow journalists to separate fact from opinion, present an emotionally detached view of the news, and strive for fairness and balance for the audience to have the full and correct information. Journalists must be deliberate and sensitive in their selections while being professional because they have control over the words and phrases that they use in their stories. The outcome therefore will be the reduction of dissonance and ethical gate-keeping that will endear socially responsible reporting as African journalists will be able to give a comprehensive report that is significantly free of bias and endear societal cohesion.

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# Theorizing the Power of Celebrities in the Media Landscape of Africa

*Nelson Okorie*

## I INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, celebrities are regarded as famous individuals, who have the potential influence to redefine consumerism. Scholars agree that celebrities are utilized for marketing communication efforts to influence the purchase decisions of individuals (Madinga et al., 2020; Calvo-Porrall et al., 2021). Okorie and Agbaleke (2017) observed that celebrities serve as symbolic icons to influence the behaviours of individuals in any modern society. In the same vein, Okorie, Akhidenor and Oyedepo (2012) reasoned that celebrities are essential parts for a marketing campaign to promote sales and patronage. In essence, celebrities can be regarded as essential drivers for promotion campaigns in the global society.

In social media spaces, celebrities can serve as influencers, who can create and engage their followers on issues of national and global relevance. Scholars agree that most celebrities are mega influencers, who have more than 100,000 followers on their social media platforms (Kolo & Haumer,

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2018; Madinga et al., 2020). Scholars such as Kolo and Haumer (2018) believed that they have substantial influence because of their significant follower-base on social media platforms. Thus, they can be regarded as influencers, leaders and drivers of public discourse in any modern society. These people have the ability to influence the narratives on social media platforms across the globe.

In Africa, celebrities are regarded as powerful individuals, who use the media to reshape socio-economic and political landscapes (Madinga et al., 2020; Calvo-Porrall et al., 2021). For example, George Weah became the first sport celebrity to become the president of an African country. This feat birthed the in-road for celebrities to pursue political ambitions in African countries. Another classic example is David Adeleke (Davido) who rekindled the campaign to end police brutality in Nigeria. His actions led other celebrities and individuals to participate in the campaign to end police brutality in the country.

Importantly, there are several theories and models that describe the powerful influence of celebrities in the society. Scholars agree that theories can serve as principles and benchmarks to understand the nature of celebrities in the high and low resource countries. The objective of this chapter is to discuss the assumptions of selected theories and models in celebrity studies as well illustrate real life examples of the potential influence of celebrities in the African continent. Furthermore, the chapter explored theories that describe the potential power of celebrities in the African media landscape.

### *1.1 Global Overview of Celebrities*

Across the globe, celebrities are regarded as individuals, who are popular or famous because of their skills, feats or social backgrounds. A major characteristic that defines the concept of celebrity is fame as these individuals must be well-known in the local, national or global environment. Scholars agree that the fame of celebrities is a major factor that determines their influence in the globe (Okorie & Agbaleke, 2017; Madinga et al., 2020; Calvo-Porrall et al., 2021). In essence, celebrities are powerful cultural icons because of their fame in any modern society.

Importantly, there are different types of celebrities and scholars agree that achieved celebrities, ascribed celebrities and attributed celebrities (Hani et al., 2018) are basic. ‘Achieved celebrities’ are individual who are famous because of their skills or talents, while ‘attributed celebrities’ are

famous because of their relationship with multiple celebrities and their ability to attract media attention, and ‘ascribed celebrities’ are individuals who are famous because of their lineage. Thus, the types of celebrities are defined by talent, relationships and lineage. For example, Ayo Balogun also known as Wizkid can be regarded as an achieved celebrity because he has won a Grammy award.

Equally important, there are different forms of celebrities. The forms of celebrities are sport celebrity, entertainment celebrity, religious celebrity, political celebrity and professional celebrity. For example, the Pope is regarded as a religious celebrity, Chioma Ajuwa can be regarded as a sport celebrity because she won the first Olympic gold for Nigeria. Therefore, the classification of celebrities based on forms conforms with the different ramifications of the society. In the same vein, Dino Melaye can be regarded as a political celebrity because he is well-known in the political class and the Nigerian general public.

In film production, celebrities are categorized according to significance. Scholars such as Podolsky (2000) identified four categories of celebrities based on significance, which are A-list celebrities, B-list celebrities, C-list celebrities and D-list celebrities. An A-list celebrity is an individual with a desirable social status, while a B-list celebrity is an individual who has less fame than an A-list celebrity; these individuals are mostly teen stars. A C-list celebrity has an average relevance in skill or talent, while a D-list celebrity is not well-known for their skill or talent but for their appearance in reality TV shows as panel judges or TV anchor host. Thus, the fame and significance of celebrities are categorized in different levels.

Importantly, the influence of a celebrity is interlinked with the power of the media. Scholars agree that the power of celebrities lies in media structures and techniques (Okorie & Agbaleke, 2017; Hani et al., 2018; Schouten et al., 2019). Celebrities utilize different platforms such as blogs, podcasts, radio, television, newspapers, books and social media platforms to create and strengthen their influence in any modern society. In essence, the influence of the celebrity is defined by the usage of the media.

## 2 THEORIES IN CELEBRITY STUDIES

In the realm of media and communication studies, theories help to explain the ordering and the occurrence of various events. In essence, theories describe the ‘why’ and ‘how’ an event occurs in a global community. In addition, they help to manage realities by providing benchmarks for

actionable solutions. Equally important, there are several theories that describe the nature and influence of celebrities across the globe. These theories stipulate principles that define the popularity, attractiveness and credibility of celebrities in the media landscape. Some of these theories are source credibility theory, source attractiveness theory, transfer of meaning model and math-up hypothesis.

### 2.1 *Source Credibility Theory*

The source credibility theory stipulates that the effectiveness of the message depends on the credibility of the source. This simply means the acceptance of the message by individuals depends greatly on the credibility of the source. Individuals are likely to accept information when the source is perceived as credible, trustworthy and in a position of authority (Umeogu, 2012; Gass, 2015). The theory denotes that expertise and bias have influences in the credibility of an information source. In essence, credibility is a feature of perception and it is multidimensional with three aspects which are goodwill, competence and trustworthiness.

This theory can be applied to celebrity advertising, which is the use of celebrities to advertise products, services or ideas. Celebrity advertising has two main types i.e. celebrity endorsement and celebrity licence. Celebrity endorsement is when a celebrity endorses a brand for the purpose of promoting the benefits and features of the brand, while celebrity licence is when the celebrity has a long-term relationship with a company to use his face or his name to promote a brand. The credibility of the celebrity is the perceived values used to promote the brand.

A classic example is Desmond Tutu who was perceived to be credible on issues of apartheid in South Africa. Furthermore, he supported multi-racial democracy and served as a mediator to resolve issues between South African black groups. He was also regarded as a cultural icon for promoting justice, fairness and equity for all in South Africa. Due to his credibility status, his messages were effective in the socio-cultural and political landscapes in South Africa.

Another example is the 2022 Vodafone advert of Mo Sallah in Egypt. Mo Sallah is regarded as the top influencer in Africa and a celebrated striker in the English Football Premiership. The endorsement of Mo Sallah is expected to project Vodafone in an excellent light in Egypt and in other parts of the African continent.

## 2.2 *Source Attractiveness Theory*

The source attractive theory places emphasis on physical appearance and how important it is when relating with an audience. It considers attractive communicators' messages as more persuasive and links similarity, familiarity and likeability of an endorser to the effectiveness of a message. Source attractive theory can be linked directly to good product functionality as physical appearance is important and seldom goes unnoticed.

This theory can be applied to reality TV production and advertising. A celebrity should have an appealing personality to attract the attention of television viewers and consumers, furthermore, the celebrity should be attractive, likeable and popular to persuade individuals to engage in specific actions. In essence, the attractiveness of the celebrity determines the acceptance and effectiveness of the message.

A classic example is the use of young influential celebrities by Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) for electioneering campaigns in South Africa. Attractive celebrities such as Clement Maosa and Uncle Vinny endorsed the EFF political party and participated in their campaign tours in Limpopo, South Africa. It was believed that the attractiveness, familiarity and likeability of these celebrities will win the hearts of the electorates to vote for EFF during the elections.

Another practical case study is Coca-Cola, when introducing their new 1 liter bottle in Nigeria, featured music legend 2Face Idibia with his beautiful wife, Annie and their kids. This was Coca-Cola's way of fostering togetherness, intimacy, sharing and happiness in a typical Nigerian family. This advertisement appealed to a lot of Nigerians not only because of the attractiveness of the family, but also because it was relatable. The attractiveness of the family dynamics of 2face embodied the "togetherness and sharing happiness" theme Coca Cola were trying to portray.

Another example is the ad campaign titled "Naija All the way" which was shot to support the Nigerian team at the 2018 FIFA World Cup that took place in Russia. Pepsi released the theme song to support the Super Eagles as well as create an avenue for the brand to reinforce its image to millions of viewers watching the tournament who were active and potential consumers. Pepsi featured notable brands and celebrities in the various segments of the sports and entertainment industries such as Alex Iwobi, Davido, Wizkid, Tiwa Savage etc., to capture the attention of these groups of consumers. These celebrities have both physical, talent, and energy

attractiveness that makes them appealing to their fans. The use of these celebrities resulted in an increase in the demand for their product and brand patronage.

### 2.3 *Transfer of Meaning Model*

The transfer of meaning model stipulates that the effectiveness of the message depends on the meaning the celebrity is bring to the brand. According to this model, a celebrity is a cultural icon, who can transfer cultural meanings to an endorsed brand (McCracken, 1989). In essence, the effectiveness of celebrities as brand endorsers come from the cultural meanings and symbols they represent. He further explained that these meanings are transferred from the celebrity to the offering (product/service) and from the offering to the final consumers. Hence, we can safely assume that transfer of meaning involves how knowledge, meanings and values are transferred from one entity to another.

According to this model, the success of celebrity endorsements does not depend on the celebrities' traits and qualities as a human being, or the celebrities' fame, but on the qualities the celebrity has created in his or her on-stage persona.

The process of meaning transfer can be divided into three stages; In the first stage, the brand owner identifies the cultural meanings intended for the product. It could be gender, age, lifestyle, ideals, social class, etc. These meanings are usually dependent on the overall marketing strategy. After identifying the meanings, the advertiser then surveys the personalities and objects that give a voice to these meanings. Whomever or whatever the advertiser chooses must be able to translate these meanings into a visible form, e.g., via commercials.

Finally, the consumer identifies these cultural symbols and meanings expressed by the celebrity via advertisements in the product. Here, the celebrity becomes associated with the brand in the consumer's mind. The way meanings are interpreted influences the consumer's decisions and only well-crafted advertisements get it right. For meanings to be successfully transferred, the consumer has to align the meanings emitting from the celebrities with their self-perception and their world view in general.

This theory can be applied to media and communications in the area of marketing communications, especially when it comes to using celebrities to promote a product or service via advertisements. When brands are interested in using a celebrity, an object or a context to publicize their products, it is necessary for them put into consideration the meanings and



symbols that the celebrity represents and how those meanings will be transferred to the product. If the target audience cannot see the relationship between the cultural meanings the celebrity exudes and the product; and is also unable to relate with the meanings based on how they perceive themselves and the world around them, then the endorsement would most likely not have the desired effect.

A classic case study is Afeez Oyetoro, who is a veteran Nigerian actor popularly known as Saka. He is also well known for the clownish and comedy roles he plays in both traditional Yoruba and English Nollywood movies. He rose to more prominence in 2013 after MTN, one of the largest telecommunications companies in Nigeria, made him the face of their then newest feature—the ability to easily switch from other networks to their own. Afeez was formerly associated with a competing telecom brand but the agreement he had with them was not solid nor official and neither was it lucrative enough for him. So MTN's decision to sign Saka as an ambassador was seen as a very smart marketing and business move; considering the narrative they wanted to push was for those who were using the other rival networks to 'port' to MTN. Saka successfully transferred his stage persona, meanings and symbols as a comedian to the product, the consumers recognised the meanings and its attachment to the product and his message; they could relate to it, then they responded to the advert by adding more customers to MTN.

#### 2.4 *Match-Up Theory*

The match-up theory is also referred to as the match-up hypothesis and it was propounded by Michael Kamins, following the observation that the use of attractive celebrities is not entirely effective for all product types. Match-up theory simply stipulates that brand owners should match their celebrity endorsers with the kind of product they want to promote. Ang and Dubelaar (2006) gave more details by saying that the essence of the match up theory was to show how successful an advert would be if the features of the product being endorsed 'matches' the image, values and attributes of the celebrity.

In the same line of thought, Till and Busler (2000) argued that the match-up hypothesis proves that ad campaigns featuring celebrities are more effective when there is a correlation between the celebrity and offering. These studies have shown that to generate more awareness for a product or offering and to gain optimal results in marketing strategies, it is

essential to make sure that all the values and attributes that the endorser espouses 'match up' with the product being marketed.

Some key assumptions of this theory are: (1) Effectiveness of the celebrity endorsers varies from product to product, (2) There must be a similarity between the celebrity and the product for the ad campaign to be successful (3) Several factors are responsible for this 'fit' and they include, but not limited to, expertise and physical attractiveness. The factors are usually reliant on the type of product being promoted.

For instance, it would be more practical to use a physically attractive celebrity to promote a luxury car as opposed to computers because luxury cars are products that enhance one's attractiveness. In the same light, celebrity expertise will be required to also promote products that do not necessarily enhance attractiveness such as computers. This is because while the product needs the celebrity attractiveness to draw the attention of the target audience, it does not always influence purchase decisions, but perceived expertise of the celebrity in relation to the product does (Till & Busler, 2000).

Match-up theory can be applied when gathering due diligence Intel for market research, especially when it is a famous person you are gathering information on. Using match-up theory as the basis of market research will help brand owners in identifying the fittest and most related celebrity to endorse or represent the brand. Applying match-up theory will help researches to properly compare and contrast the qualities of the brand against the personal characteristics of the subject of the research. A classic example is Scanfrost, which is an electrical appliance brand that has been serving Nigerian homes for over 35 years and is popular for its customer-centricity, durability, affordability and homeliness. Recently, Scanfrost extended its portfolio to include a wider range of products and they chose Nigerian actress Omotola Jalade-Ekeinde to promote the brand. There was a fit between Omotola and Scanfrost because Omotola is a very popular and award-winning Nollywood actress, attractive, family-oriented (still married with children), a homemaker known for her integrity and philanthropic activities within the country. Hence, there was a congruence between Omotola and Scanfrost.

### 3 DISCUSSION

Celebrities serve as cultural icons that can influence projects, programmes and policies undertaken by institutions and national governments in any modern society. In Africa, celebrities serve as major stakeholders that can contribute to debates and decisions that affect the sectors of national economies. The locus of the source credibility theory is that the credibility of the celebrity defines the influence in the public sphere. Credibility is a major catalyst for the influence of a celebrity.

Equally important, the influence of the celebrity is linked to attractiveness. Celebrities should be appealing, likable and familiar to the public to generate influence. Some celebrities usually pay more attention to their physical appearance to build attractiveness; it is important for a celebrity to be trustworthy, but more important for the celebrity to be attractive to the public.

Celebrities as cultural icons are expected to be carriers of cultural meanings that are relevant to the general public. Most modern societies are products of diverse cultures, which makes it important for celebrities to be carriers of unique attributes that promote morality, inclusiveness, diversity and equity in the African community.

Interestingly, the influence of a celebrity is linked to the congruence with brands and institutions in the world of business. The unique attributes of a celebrity should interlink with the features and benefits of a brand. In essence, there should be a suitability between the unique attributes of the celebrity and the characteristics of the brand. In sum, the influence of celebrities in the African media landscape is defined by credibility, attractiveness, cultural meaning and brand match-up. It is important that media and communication experts consider the influence of celebrities in line with these benchmarks.

### 4 CONCLUSION

This chapter explored theories that describe the power of celebrities in the African media landscape. In the realm of media and communication studies, celebrities are essential drivers for influencing the behaviour of individuals in the global community. The power of celebrities can be linked to their appearance, credibility and cultural meanings, which can be utilized to reshape consumerism and public opinion. In Africa, celebrities are major content creators and influencers, who define the media landscape.

Theories can be used to understand how celebrities can be utilized for different purposes such as health communication, political communication, marketing communication and intercultural communication. Importantly, companies can use theories to serve as parameters to select and monitor the use of celebrities for brand communication efforts. In addition, the four important benchmarks for selecting a celebrity for any media or communication activity are: attractiveness, credibility, cultural meanings and brand fit.

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# Health Communication Models, Theories and their Applications in Africa

*Charity A. Ben-Enukora*

## I INTRODUCTION

Public health is an area where people do not possess adequate knowledge as health challenges are numerous and they assume various forms based on an individual's physiological composition and lifestyle. Hence, information is crucial in improving human health, and access to health information is paramount to health decision-making at both individual and community levels (Ben-Enukora, Okorie & Amodu, 2019). Therefore, health communication has become a vital constituent of public health practice due to the insufficiency of traditional epidemiological and microbiological interventions in addressing infectious diseases control among high-risk populations across the globe (Würz et al., 2013; Okpoko & Aniwada, 2018). Virtually all facets of public health delivery (disease prevention, treatment, and management) have communication inputs, because the public must be empowered with adequate information to

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facilitate informed decision-making (Sixsmith et al., 2014; Tumpey et al., 2018).

Despite the global acceptance of health communication as an interdisciplinary practice, academics and health organisations efforts to delineate the concept have not yielded a universally acceptable definition (CDC, 2011; Nacinovich & Langdon-Neuner, 2011). For the purpose of this article, two recent definitions have been adopted. The United States Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2011, p. 20) conceptualizes health communication as “the study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that affect health”. Alternatively, Stephenson et al. (2011, p. 7) perceive health communication as “the process through which an individual or an audience engages, either directly or indirectly, information that can influence health-relevant beliefs and behaviours, regardless of whether that information was or was not intended to affect health outcomes”. These definitions underscore that exchange of critical information to raise awareness about high-risk behaviours or lifestyles that predispose people to diseases, shaping of perceptions and beliefs regarding disease prevention and management options, and motivating individuals to adopt or sustain certain behaviours to reduce the risk of diseases, are the central ideas in health communication. Additionally, policymakers could be persuaded to implement programmes that enhance positive changes such as increase of health-care funding, sponsorship of medical research, empowerment of healthcare services, or deployment of healthcare personnel to under-served communities.

Health communication is indispensable in reducing the morbidity and mortality resulting from contagious and non-communicable diseases, and minimizing the socio-economic impacts of such diseases on national economies as well as the public health infrastructures (Infanti et al., 2013). Communication interventions in public health encompass a wide range of initiatives from individual lifestyles and decisions to social and macroeconomic problems (McDaid et al., 2015).

Accordingly, health communication could be delivered through the mass media, interpersonal communication channels, internet mediated platforms, or a combination of approaches, depending on the socio-cultural networks, values, and norms within a social system. It could be a complex enterprise when a mixed-method of interpersonal communication, social marketing, behaviour change communication, and medical anthropology is applied to positively influence health practices among

large populations (Schiavo, 2007). However, no matter the approach adopted, the audience's access to health communication content is paramount as lack of access automatically translates to failure of communication objective.

Unhealthy/risky behaviour is a major facilitator to a majority of leading causes of morbidity and premature mortality in the human race (Keeney, 2008; Jackson et al., 2010; Janowski et al., 2013). This notion necessitates a high level of concentration on human behaviour, as well as why and how people make an informed decision regarding their health. Consequently, interventionists aim at positively influencing knowledge, attitudes, and social norms which may result in the adoption and sustenance of healthy behaviours and lifestyles that improve the health conditions of the people. Thus, behaviour change strategies occupy the centre stage in every communication attempt towards reducing the risk of mortality and morbidity (Govender, 2010). This is why interventionists focus on those factors that could (1) reduce, inhibit, or modify behaviours or social and physical environments considered hazardous or disease-promoting or (2) increase behaviours or enhance social and physical environments considered health-promoting (Kumar & Preetha, 2012).

Therefore, interventionists' ability to identify the best contexts, channels, content, and factors that trigger attention to and use of health information, is a fundamental ingredient for effective health communication (WHO, 2017). To ensure that interventionists are guided in figuring out these elements, experts have developed some communication models and theories as the bedrock of public health promotion, education, and intervention programmes.

The popular axiom "there is nothing more practical than a good theory" (Lewin, 1951, p. 169) describes that applying theories to specific issues is a roadmap to providing tangible solutions to life problems including health-related circumstances.

Similarly, Edgar and Volkman (2012) capture the significance of theories in health communication when they posit that decision-making in health promotion activities would be based on intuition and guesswork, in the absence of theories. The reason for this assumption is clear as health communication models and theories identify a collection of interconnected ideas and propositions that can be used to methodically analyse individuals and community's knowledge, attitude, and behaviour regarding public health. Theories are the foundation of evidence-based practices as they enable practitioners to predict the outcomes of interventions



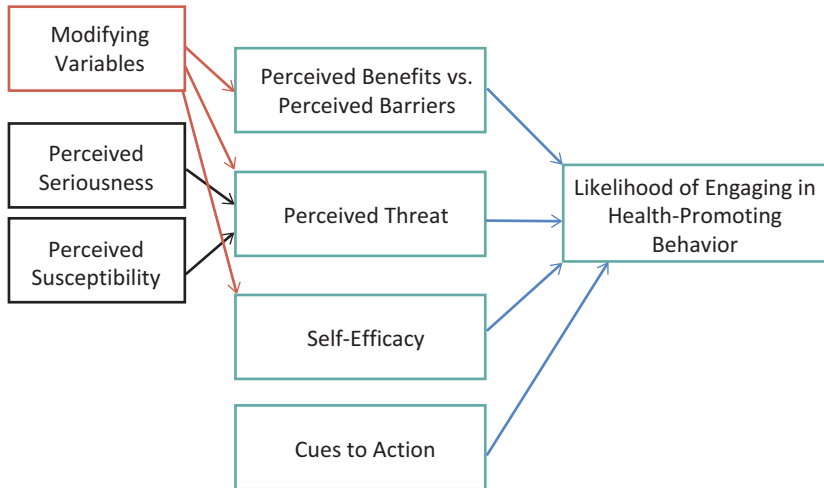
through a vivid understanding of how and why people behave the way they do, the environmental context in which the behaviour occurs, and actions that would facilitate behaviour change (Prager, 2012). Therefore, good knowledge and choice of theories provide a lever for cost-effective health promotion planning, execution and evaluation.

Talking about the usefulness (or not) of theoretical propositions, some scholars argue that some components in health communication propositions are much less relevant in non-Western contexts due to cultural disparity and health care inequalities between the West and non-western nations (Ngodo & Klyueva, 2022). Furthermore, the neglect of cultural effect in such theories could make the ideas culturally insensitive, particularly in societies where individualism thrives more than collectivism. A re-examination of the theoretical constructs is considered significant before the selection of theories and models proposed for application in health communication.

Although theories and models available for use by interventionists in health promotion abound, only seven theoretical perspectives have been selected based on their popularity in understanding and predicting a great deal of health-related behaviours. These theories include; Health Belief Model, Theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behaviour, Diffusion of Innovations Theory, Extended Parallel Processes Model, Trans-theoretical/Stages of Change Model, Social Marketing Theory, and The Ecological Model. All of these models are unique and consist of multiple components. The paper examines the propositions of the selected theories as well as their applicability in African contexts using case studies from different nations and regions in Africa.

### *1.1 Health Belief Model (HBM)*

The health belief model is a social cognitive proposition that describes the process of decision-making and behaviours. This model was conceived by social psychologists, Rosenstock, Hochbaum, Kegeles and Leventhal in reaction to the non-participation of the target population in tuberculosis and cervical cancer screening exercise in the early 1950s (Coulson et al., 2016). Since then, it has remained relevant in the field of health communication, especially in disease awareness and prevention programmes. The original concept suggests that an individual's response towards health prevention depends on four critical psychological variables about individual perceptions which could affect behaviour. These



**Fig. 1** Health belief model. Source: *Methods for Stress Management* (2021)

are; perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, and perceived barriers (Rawlett, 2011, p. 15). Over the years, the HBM has been modified to include modifying factors, cues to action, self-efficacy and others (Fig. 1).

Individual perception about susceptibility and severity of health risks is a set of interrelated elements that affect health-related decisions and behaviours. Perceived susceptibility is someone's conviction about his or her vulnerability to or risk of contracting a disease, while perceived severity is an individual's judgement regarding the seriousness and the consequence of a health concern (Adesina et al., 2021). This suggests that an individual's attitude and behaviour towards disease prevention could be determined by his perception about susceptibility and the severity of a health issue as expressed through communication. Therefore, it could be inferred that an individual's belief in the severity of a health condition in terms of discomfort, pain, loss of job time, financial implications of treatment, and untimely death, together with the perception of vulnerability to such health problems influences decisions making and behaviour (Imoh, 2008). The HBM seeks to increase awareness of disease severity and change perceptions about susceptibility to induce behaviour change.

Perceived threat is established by assessing the chances of contracting a disease or developing a health problem based on existing behaviour. Hence, a perceived threat is felt before recommended preventive actions are considered. However, barriers, as identified by an individual's judgement, could prevent behaviour change (Glasgow, 2020). Barriers may be that the expected behaviour is problematic, time-consuming, or requires some financial commitments. For example, even when COVID-19 disease is perceived to be severe, certain factors could still hinder some individuals from adopting and sustaining recommended risk reduction behaviours such as abstaining from crowded places. Consequently, individuals exposed to behaviour change communication usually weigh the perceived benefits of advocated behaviour and the perceived barriers to behaviour change on a pendulum to determine if it is worth the stress (Champion & Skinner, 2008). Thus, the likelihood to take the desired action depends on the weight of the perceived benefits, which is the belief that a suggested action can reduce or eliminate a health risk (Janz et al., 1995). Hence, the benefits of advocated action must outweigh the barriers for action to occur (Champion & Skinner, 2008). Therefore, knowing exactly what the potential positive results will be provides direction for judgement.

The construct modifying factors consist of external influences that shape individual perceptions. These elements include demography-based variables (like age, gender, race, ethnic and educational backgrounds) as well as psychological factors (such as social class, personality traits, and socioeconomic status) that impact individual judgment about disease severity, threat, and susceptibility (Abraham & Sheeran, 2015). For instance, illiteracy and low economic status tend to influence people's perception of disease susceptibility and threat since those who have little or no education and cannot afford good healthcare may not feel susceptible or threatened by the "rich man's disease".

Self-efficacy relates to confidence in someone's capability to perform an expected behaviour, and the sustenance of such behaviour in event of obstacles or challenges. Self-efficacy could result from past personal accomplishments, experiences of other people, and verbal persuasion from other individuals via demonstration of the desired action (Bandura, 1977).

More so, cues to action are prompts that stimulate preventive practices. These include the mass media contents, information from a reliable relative and illness of a family member and close friends, or advice from health-care workers and reminder messages that serve as catalysts that trigger the

decision to change. However, the cues must be ‘salient or relevant to triggered action’.

Even though the paradigm has been extensively used in health promotion programmes including cancer and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) screening exercises, immunization, vaccination, sexual and dietary behaviours, etc., it has been criticized for its emphasis on the individual, ignoring socioeconomic and emotional factors that affect perception. Also, some authors have indicated that it does not presuppose or imply a strategy for change and should therefore be applied with caution. Likewise, some of the theoretical reviews on HBM have reported that not all the constructs are good predictors of behaviour. These criticisms provoke doubts about the usefulness of some of the model’s constructs. Nevertheless, its emphasis on the importance of knowledge is essential for change to take place. It is, therefore, worthy to note that using the health belief model without a complementary effort to improve access to healthcare services may amount to a waste of resources.

### *1.1.1 Case Study: COVID-19 Awareness*

**Perceived Susceptibility and Severity:** Persons who have other diseases such as asthma, diabetes, and hypertension as well as the early and other immune-compromised individuals have been referred to as the most vulnerable to covid-19 diseases, who perceive that they are at higher risk of covid-19 infection, would go on to consider the severity of the disease that they are vulnerable to as well as its consequences.

**Perceived benefits and barriers:** The benefits of observing the non-pharmaceutical preventive measures for Covid-19 as expressed in communication messages such as “protect yourself to protect others”, and “the weapon to kill Corona Virus is in our hands” are considered alongside the factors that may hinder someone from achieving the recommended behaviours. The barriers may include the difficulty in avoiding public places like markets, public buses, and religious gatherings. Therefore, the benefits of taking recommended actions are emphasized in communication messages to aid positive belief that the suggested behaviours can reduce the risk of Covid-19 infection.

**Cues to action:** In the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cues to action include the mass media jingles, news bulletins, daily updates of confirmed cases and deaths resulting from the disease, SMS messages from NCDC, and information from interpersonal communication networks,

as well as personal experience regarding family members' Covid-19-related illness or death, that can trigger behavioural change.

**Self-efficacy:** Individuals exposed to Covid-19 awareness campaigns based on HBM could ask themselves the following questions: Can I maintain 20 meters distance from other people? Can I avoid handshakes with people? Can I stop hugging my friends? Can I avoid crowded places? Can I wash my hands with soap regularly? Did I succeed in taking similar actions in the past? The results of these personal interrogations and many more determine the perceived self-efficacy to perform the non-pharmaceutical preventive measures against contracting Corona Virus.

**Modifying factors:** Individuals may consider that they are still very young and energetic with a strong immune system. Therefore, they do not need to be bothered about Covid-19. Some persons who do not travel by air or public transport may as well consider themselves unreachable by Corona Virus.

### *1.1.2 Practical Example of HBM-Based Intervention in Africa*

#### **COVID-19 Animation Video for Children in Malawi**

The Ministry of Health in Malawi, with the support from UNICEF, UK Aid, and WHO, created an animated video using dialogue, drama, music, dance, and demonstration to promote the adoption of 5 key Covid-19 prevention actions (frequent handwashing with soap, physical distancing, use of elbow when coughing and sneezing, avoiding touching the face and staying at home) among Malawian children.

The message reads;

(A male child riding on a bicycle to a playground where a female child is seated)

**The male child:** Hello! Chinwenwe!

**The male child:** Hello! Chinwenwe!

**The female child:** No, no, no, stay back

Don't come close to me

I am keeping my distance to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

**The male child:** Oh yes, we have to stay at least two steps to 1 meter apart  
I remember now.

It's good to remember

**The female child:** Let's tell our family and friends about Covid-19 and how to prevent it

**Dance:** Covid-19! Covid-19! It's a new disease that makes you cough  
Covid-19! Covid-19! It's a new disease that gives you fever  
With Covid-19, it's hard to breath  
Covid-19 makes you cough

**The female child:** This is serious! it's a disease that's all over the world

**The male child:** But can we prevent it?

**Dance:** Before you eat! Wash your hands!  
After you sneeze! Wash your hands!  
Whenever you cough! Wash your hands with soap and water!

**The male child:** For how long would I wash my hands with soap and water?

**The female child:** For at least 20 seconds

**Demonstration of handwashing steps**

**The Male Child:** Chinwenwe, how many times do we wash our hands with soap and water?

**Dance:** So many times! So many times! So many many, many times in a day!

**The Male Child:** Well, I can do that. What else do we need to do to avoid the spread of Covid-19, Chinwenwe?

**Dance:** Don't touch your face!

Don't touch your eyes, your mouth, or your nose!

Don't touch your eyes, your mouth, or your nose!

Stay at Home!

**Source:** Ministry of Health Malawi (2020). COVID-19 Animation Video for Children in Malawi. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CecQuh1nGM0>

### *1.2 Theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behaviour*

The theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) but Ajzen (1985) added the construct-Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) to form the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The theories are psychological propositions developed to explain the factors that impact conscious decision-making. The theorist presupposes that human behaviours towards persuasive messages are based on certain variables such as intention, attitude, subjective norm- normative belief, and

motivation to comply with the desired intent of the message source. The TRA holds that intention is the most powerful determinant of human behaviour under volitional control (Ajzen, 1991). Intention is the possible behavioural inclination or desires to engage in an action or not, in the nearest future (Ajzen, 1991; McEachan et al., 2016). However, intention does not guarantee the performance of behaviour. Behavioural intentions could be best described as the precursor to actual behaviour as they precede attitude and are likely to change at any point in time (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009), though, intentions are shaped by attitudes and subjective norm (Ajzen, 1985; WHO, 2012). The formation of intention is, therefore, a result of some thought processes that may be influenced by various factors (Fig. 2).

The construct attitude is described as a predisposition to favourable or unfavourable interaction with an object, person, or situation (Ajzen, 1991; Tommasetti et al., 2018). Attitude formation is a cognitive process demonstrating a broad perspective of behaviour predicted by beliefs and personal evaluations (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). It is determined by identifying some related beliefs and evaluating their strength. For instance, if an individual tenaciously believes that the consumption of rodents can lead to Lassa fever infection and does not want to be infected, the individual will probably develop the intention to withdraw from rodent consumption. This intention is a product of his attitude towards rodents.

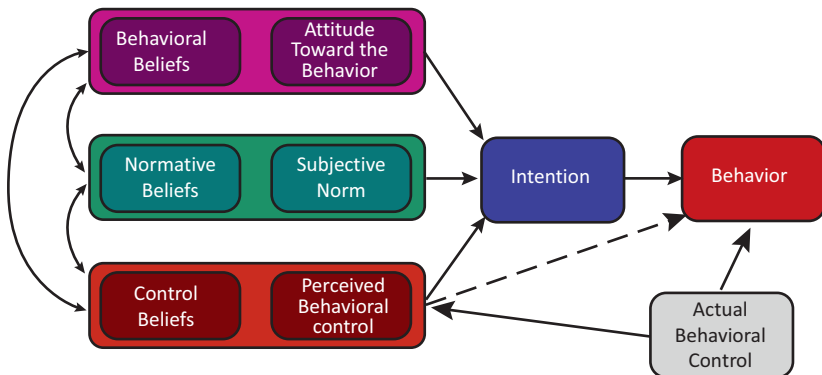


Fig. 2 Theories of reasoned action and planned behaviour. Source: Ajzen (1985)

Another variable that determines human behaviour, according to Ajzen, is subjective norm. Subjective norm refers to the social influences/pressure that impact the performance or non-performance of behaviours (Ajzen, 1991; Nguyen et al., 2020). The theorist assumes that decision-maker's perception of a particular behaviour is more or less influenced by the opinions and behaviour of people considered significant in their social network (Northern Health, 2013). Subjective norm consists of normative beliefs (opinion of other people about a behaviour) and motivation to comply (compulsion to align with or satisfy the "significant others" viewpoints). Normative beliefs refer to the perception of significant others' opinion on whether an action should be carried out or not (Wang, 2018; Xin et al., 2019), while motivation to comply refers to actions taken by other persons in the social ties that inspire the performance of certain behaviours. Subjective norm could either be positive or negative. A positive disposition towards a behaviour held by "relevant others" would yield a positive subjective norm from their loyalists who are motivated to meet their expectations. Alternatively, where the "relevant others" have a negative disposition about an action and their loyalists are motivated to meet their expectations, it results in a negative subjective norm (Oyero & Salawu, 2014). Thus, the relevant others could influence people within their social network to adopt a positive or negative behaviour.

Despite the popularity of the TRA in depicting the link between attitude, intentions, and subjective norm, critics have argued that these factors are insufficient to explain the variance in human behaviours. The theory was also criticized for focusing on voluntary behaviours and excluding impulsive, scripted, or habitual behaviours (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Similarly, Ajzen (1985) maintains that the theory does not apply to behaviours that are compelled or restricted by individual deficiencies and/or external constraints. These criticisms led to the development of the TPB (Ajzen, 1991) to include Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) to improve the predictive power of the TRA (Gomes & Nunes, 2017; Wang, 2018).

Therefore, the underlying premise of the TPB is that behaviours are planned and purposeful (Ajzen, 1991; Xin et al., 2019). Hence, the construct, PBC has a direct impact on behaviour. It reflects the personal capability of accomplishing an action, considering internal and external factors that may impact the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Control is in two dimensions; control beliefs (sufficient control and availability of resources for the effective implementation of an action) and perceived power (the level of



ease or difficulty involved in performing an action) (Madden et al., 1992; Ajzen, 2002; Van Briemen et al., 2019; Wijyaningtyas et al., 2019).

The level of ease or difficulty involved in performing an action is shaped by internal and external factors such as skills and abilities, and time respectively. Thus, a high level of control belief and perceived power translates to a greater perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991).

The construct, PBC as depicted in the TPB, aligns with Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Model. The Self-Efficacy Model presupposes that confidence in performing human behaviour is predicated by the perceived ease or difficulty in performing the behaviour. Therefore, behaviours that are perceived as easy-to-perform are more likely to be accomplished compared to behaviours that are perceived as difficult tasks.

Critics believe that TRA and TPB are no longer relevant (Prager, 2012) and call for the retirement of the proposition (Sniehotta et al., 2014, p. 1). Likewise, some authors claim that changes in intention, subjective norm, and PBC have failed to bring about behavioural changes as many people who develop intentions do not perform the intended action eventually (Coulson et al., 2016). More so, various researchers have attempted to include additional variables to the already existing constructs. However, both theories have been extensively utilized in predicting health-related behaviours and some of their assumptions are still apparent in recently developed behaviour change theories.

### 1.2.1 *Case Study: Lassa Fever in Nigeria*

Lassa fever is a major health concern in Nigeria. Communication messages on disease prevention highlight harmful behaviours such as rodent consumption, consumption of food contaminated by rats' excreta and secretions, sun-drying of farm produce on the roadsides, as well as poor standards of household and environmental hygiene practices as the risk factors for Lassa fever. As Lassa fever vaccine trials have not been approved, behaviour change in these directions would help reduce the threat of the disease in Nigeria.

**Intention:** An individual exposed to communication messages on Lassa fever may develop the intention of abstaining from rodent consumption (one of the preventive measures for Lassa fever) in the nearest future. However, the intention may not lead to action.

**Subjective norm:** Subjective norm demonstrates social influence from people considered significant on an individual's intentions and behaviour.

Normative beliefs (opinion of other people about a behaviour) and motivation to comply (compulsion to satisfy the “significant others” such as trusted family members, relatives, friends, neighbours, religious leaders, and other role models) could influence decision making towards Lassa fever prevention. Therefore, individuals whose significant others demonstrate a positive attitude towards Lassa fever prevention may be motivated to comply with the recommended practices to satisfy their influencers.

**Perceived Behavioural Control:** The recommended practices for Lassa fever prevention include; adequate food storage in rodent-proof containers, rat-proofing of human habitat, avoidance of sun-drying of food items in open places and roadsides, and standard waste disposal practices. The perceived behavioural control will reflect the perceived capability of performing these behaviours in terms of how easy or difficult the risk reduction behaviours are in terms of cost, skill, and time factors. Thus, a strong PBC would stimulate the desired actions.

### 1.2.2 *Practical Example of the Theory of Planned Behaviour-Based Intervention in Africa*

The Theory of Planned Behaviour was utilized in a risk communication jingle created by the National Orientation Agency, Ebonyi State Chapter for Lassa fever prevention

The message reads:

**Ist Female voice:** Wait oohh! Oga, this one you’re carrying hammer, cement and saw, are you a carpenter?

**Male voice:** “If turning to a carpenter means that I will stop these rats from invading my house? Then I will do it oohh! I will close every hole in this house, even church rats will not enter!

**Ist Female voice:** “Heeheehee! I wonder what they did to you like this

**Male voice:** Is it until they do something?

So, you never hear about Lassa fever?

**Ist Female voice:** Heehee! I have heard something small oohh!

**Male voice:** Well! This is what you need to know about Lassa fever

**2nd Female voice:** Lassa fever is a haemorrhagic fever caused by rodents  
Lassa fever can be contracted from rats to man

Or from man to man through the exchange of body fluids

Lassa fever symptoms include sore throat,

Vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, body pain, bleeding etcetera

Treatment of Lassa fever is free at the virology centre in the State Specialist Hospital

Lassa fever is curable when reported early to the teaching hospital or any health centre.

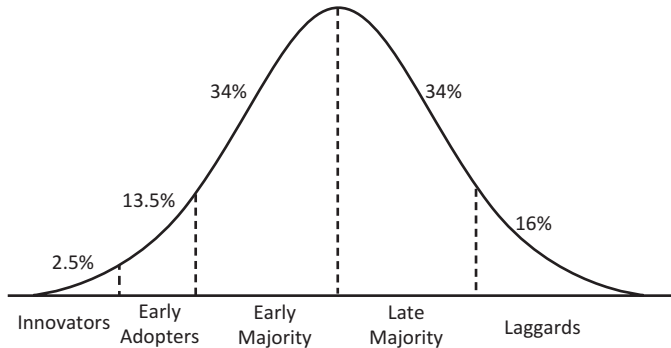
The prevention they say is better than cure  
 Lassa fever is preventable!  
 Avoid eating rats!  
 Close the holes in your house!  
 Stop bush burning!  
 Empty your dustbins far away!  
 Keep your environment clean!  
 Store your food and food items in rodent-proof containers!  
 And for health workers, adhere to infection protection and control  
 guidelines!

### 1.3 *Diffusion of Innovation Theory*

The theory describes how a product or an idea secures acceptance and spreads within a social system over a period. The diffusion of innovation was conceived by Everett Rogers (in 1962) who defines diffusion as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels, over time, among the members of a social system” (Rogers, 2009, p. 4). The result of this process (diffusion) is the adoption of a new idea, behaviour, or product. Therefore, adoption occurs when an individual acts differently from what he/she had previously done. Information is a fundamental element in the diffusion process. The nature of information exchange between change agents and their prospects determines the condition in which an innovation is received and perceived.

According to Rogers, innovation could be grouped into two categories; preventive and incremental (non-preventive). Preventive innovation refers to new ideas which individuals adopt in an attempt to reduce the possibility of certain unwanted future consequences (Rogers, 2003, p. 233). The dissemination of messages about preventive innovations, which could be adopted by individuals to reduce the incidence of the disease, falls under the ambit of health communication. Just like every other innovation, the adoption of preventive innovation does not occur simultaneously in a social system. Rogers described the stages in the adoption process with a bell curve distribution, as well as the elements of an innovation that shape the speed of adoption. He noted that non-adoption and partial adoption were not assessed during his research. Thus, this curve was generated by the evaluation of complete adopters of innovations over time.

Figure 3 represents different categories of innovation adopter dimensions, measured by the length of time it takes individuals to adopt new ideas or



**Fig. 3** Diffusion of innovation curve. Source: Rogers (1995)

behaviours. The curve depicts five ideal categories of adopters; innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and the laggards.

As represented in the curve, Rogers posits that when an innovation is introduced, a greater number of people are within the early or late majority adopters, fewer people tend to become early adopters or laggards, whereas very few people fall within the innovator cadre (the first people to use a new product or implement an idea). Innovators are adventurers who are very eager to try new ideas not minding the outcome of their actions. Rogers maintains that though innovators may not be respected in the social system, they occupy a prominent position in the innovation process as idea launchers.

Early adopters represent opinion leaders. This group of individuals enjoys leadership roles as they express subjective evaluations of the innovation to their peers through various interpersonal networks. Therefore, early adopters tend to become role models as potential adopters seek information and advice about the innovation from them. However, Dearing and Permanente (2012, p. 11), argue that “not all early adopters are opinion leaders”. Likewise, loss of credibility on opinion leaders could be highly detrimental to the adoption of positive behaviours. For example, an opinion leader who marries more than one wife cannot successfully persuade community members to disengage from having multiple sex partners.

The early majority consists of persons who are likely to deliberate for some time or seek evidence concerning the workability of an innovation before they are willing to adopt it. Thus, to capture the interests of this

population, testimonies or proof of the innovation's effectiveness must be established. Their strategic position (between the early adopters and the late majority) provides the interconnectedness of the stages in the adoption process.

The late majority are sceptics who would only try out a new behaviour or idea when the majority of the population had done so. They need motivation to adopt innovation. Hence, information regarding the success of other peoples' attempts in adopting an innovation can stimulate them to action whereas the laggards are usually the last group to adopt a change in the society. This set of people is often bound by tradition and conservatism. Their resistance to change slows down the innovation-decision process. Oftentimes, they eventually adopt an innovation when it may have become old-fashioned and surpassed by another novel idea being tried out by the innovators. To influence these hardest adopters, statistics, fear appeals, and pressure from other adopter-categories are required.

### *1.3.1 Stages of the Adoption-Decision Process*

Innovation adoption is a step-by-step process. The stages at which individuals adopt new ideas or behaviours include;

1. **Awareness/Knowledge acquisition:** This phase begins from exposure to information about the existence of innovation and acquiring knowledge about its functions (Dearing & Permanente, 2012, p. 11).
2. **Persuasion:** At this point, individuals develop a positive or hostile attitude regarding a new product or idea. Rogers (2003, p. 176), explains that positive or negative attitudes towards a new idea do not always result in direct or indirect adoption or rejection. Individuals, therefore, shape their attitudes as soon as they acquire knowledge about an innovation (Sahin, 2006, p. 16).
3. **Decision:** Individuals choose either to adopt or reject the innovation after considering its benefits and weaknesses at the decision stage. Rogers (2003, p. 177) describes adoption as complete utilisation of innovation at the best option available while rejection refers to the failure to adopt an innovation. He also explains that rejection could be active or passive. Active rejection occurs when an individual attempts an innovation, then, considers adopting it, but later changes his/her mind. Thus, a discontinuance decision could be considered as an active rejection. Alternatively, passive rejection happens when the adoption of an innovation is not considered at all.

4. **Implementation:** This is the period an innovation is tried out. Uncertainty about the benefits of the innovation is always an issue at this stage. Implementers depend on practical assistance from change agents for a reduction of uncertainty about the outcome of an innovation (Sahin, 2006, p. 17). Hence, motivation from change agents could propel action.
5. **Confirmation:** Support for innovation decisions is sought at this juncture when exposure to conflicting messages on the subject of an innovation could lead to a reversal of decision (Rogers, 2003, p. 189). However, individuals ordinarily seek messages that support and confirm their decision and disassociate themselves from contrary information. Later adoption or discontinuance may occur in the process, depending on the support for innovation-decision and individual perception. Replacement discontinuance occurs when innovation is rejected and a better option is adopted in place of it, while disenchantment discontinuance refers to a situation where the individual rejects the innovation due to nonsatisfaction with its adoption.

Still, in the process of diffusion, certain factors influence how rapidly and easily an idea is embraced and disseminated. Rogers (2003, p. 219) notes that the speed at which a new product or idea is utilised within a population is determined by individuals' perception of five specific variables; relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability.

Relative advantage describes the extent to which an innovation is perceived as a better option compared to the preceding idea or behaviour. This attribute enables individuals to measure the benefits of adopting novel ideas or behaviours and the consequences of rejecting them. Therefore, where the potential benefits (such as social prestige, economic benefit, and so on) of new ideas are perceived to be greater than current practices, innovations tend to diffuse faster.

Also, perceived compatibility with social patterns, current values, previous experiences, and desires of the potential users increase the prospects of innovation adoption. Alternatively, a complexity, which is the perception of difficulty in trying an innovation, is negatively associated with the speed of adoption. Therefore, a high level of perceived complexity is an obstacle to innovation adoption.

Similarly, trialability of innovation without much commitment or with minimal investment triggers faster adoption and reduces uncertainty about

risks regarding the innovation. In addition, observation of innovation outcomes can inspire its adoption. Thus, increased functionality and better outcomes observed by potential adopters are likely to influence new users (Cain & Mittman, 2002, p. 9).

Besides these traits, the nature of the decision about an innovation (optional, collective, or authority), communication channels (interpersonal and mass-mediated channels), social system (norms or social network), and change agents, all have the potential to predict innovation's adoption (Sahin, 2006, p. 17). More so, Cain and Mittman (2002, p. 5) note that communication channels, opinion leaders, existing infrastructure, characteristics of the target population, social norms and social networks which they termed "critical dynamics of innovation diffusion", affect the pace and pattern of diffusion.

In summary, knowledge of the distinctive attributes of each adopter-category and how fast people can adopt a preventive innovation enable interventionists to successfully develop and execute communication strategies that are tailored to their specific demands (WHO, 2012). However, critics of this theory argue that it failed to provide specific direction on how the social, cultural, and economic barriers related to the contexts could be addressed

### 1.3.2 *Case Study: Covid-19 in Tanzania*

Tanzania under President John Magufuli was popular for her Corona Virus scepticism. The president declared Tanzania "Corona Virus free" and criticized the use of masks or social distancing practices (Dahir, 2020). He accused health officials of exaggerating the health crisis and communicated his disbelief about Corona Virus to Tanzanians. In his words "we need to be careful because some of these donations to fight Corona Virus could be used to transmit the virus (BBC, 2020, June 8).

Also, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health Mabula Mchembe alleged that every death is not necessarily Covid-19-related (BMJ, 2021). Thus, the government downplayed the pandemic resulting in a negative public perception of the Covid-19 pandemic in Tanzania.

After he died in 2020, his predecessor and health officials struggled to combat skepticism and misinformation about the pandemic and the vaccine. The public vaccination of the president was aimed at dispelling fear about Covid-19 vaccine. Although vaccine hesitancy is still high among young persons, some of the elderly have taken giant strides in getting the jab.

These early adopters represent opinion leaders who are likely to influence other adopter-categories to get vaccinated using communication messages to dispel the unbelief, misconceptions and propaganda about the pandemic.

### 1.3.3 *Practical Example of Diffusion of Innovation-Based Intervention in Africa*

#### **Covid-19 Vaccine Acceptance in Côte d'Ivoire**

Covid-19 Vaccine is an innovative idea disseminated through various communication media for acceptance and uptake by the public. The case of Covid-19 vaccine acceptance in Côte d'Ivoire' demonstrates the diffusion of innovation process.

A covid-19 vaccination campaign was launched amidst much excitement in Côte d'Ivoire, as 504,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine were successfully delivered to the nation on February 26, 2021. A month later, the enthusiasm plunged as a result of misinformation and low vaccine acceptance. Only 40,153 doses of the vaccine were administered in the whole of Côte d'Ivoire as of March 30. The National Security Council, chaired by Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara, decided to expand access to the Covid-19 vaccine to all Ivoirians 18 years and above to boost vaccination rate. This initiative failed to yield the desired benefits as vaccine hesitancy persisted especially on social media.

Then, OligaGneppa, a shopkeeper and a mother of five, finally accepted vaccination but only a few persons followed in Olga's footsteps. Although the vaccination centers in the capital, Abidjan, and its environs could serve about 300 people per day, they struggled to vaccinate 20 in a day. This was a far cry from the health authorities' target of vaccinating 10 million people, or 40% of Ivoirians by the end of 2021 and 57% by December 2022. At that rate, many vaccine doses were likely to expire and end up in the garbage.

Consequently, the government embarked on a nationwide awareness-raising campaign, deploying mobile clinics and enlisting the support of influencers and community mobilization campaigns through religious and community leaders, as well as local elected officials. As a result, vaccine demand increased after four weeks from 2000 per day to 20,000 the following week.

**Source:** World Bank (September 6, 2021).

## 1.4 *Social Marketing Theory*

The social marketing concept as developed by Kotler and Zaltman (1971) describes the application of marketing principles used in selling goods and



services to sell ideas, attitudes, and behaviour. The authors defined social marketing as “the design, implementation, and control of programmes calculated to influence the acceptability of the social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communications, and market research” (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971, p. 5). The theory stipulates that social intervention programmes could be achieved via a fusion of six factors; focus on behaviour change, consumer research, audience segmentation, exchange, competitiveness, and the marketing mix (Shams, 2018).

The marketing mix entails the integration of the four marketing principles (the 4 ps—product, price, place, and promotion) in promoting social interventions, to facilitate behaviour change. From its inception, the theory has been successfully applied in promoting modern contraceptives, condom use, and other initiatives. Specifically, it had a positive impact on clients’ knowledge of and access to contraceptive methods and condom use (Sweat et al., 2012, 2020). Also, social marketing interventions could be combined with mass media messages.

#### 1.4.1 *Case Study: HIV Self-Testing*

Despite improved HIV services and awareness programmes in Africa, data suggests that people living with HIV/AIDS face stigma and prejudice, which leads to laxity or refusal in wanting to test. Self-testing was designed to get beyond the limitations of facility-based HIV testing to identify HIV-positive people and connect them to care centres.

Self-testing is a process where people who intend to know their HIV status use a medical kit to collect a specimen, perform the test, and interpret the test results themselves (World Health Organization, 2020). Although self-testing for HIV was first proposed in the 1980s, it remained unexplored in low-income countries in Africa until Star initiative launched a five-year project of large-scale distribution of HIV self-test kits in the continent (Sithole et al., 2021)

**Product:** The HIV self-test kit provides a solution to the social problem by closing the gap in HIV testing. The social marketing methods offer easy and affordable approaches for the distribution of the product to targeted populations.

**Price:** In terms of cost, the affordability of the HIV self-test kit would motivate potential users to take the desired action (demand). The consideration of costs and benefits, as well as ease of use, determines whether the action would be favourable or not. Thus, free self-test kits and demonstration of use within 20 minutes could encourage potential users to try the

product. Communication the price to the beneficiaries is vital for a cost and benefit assessment.

**Place:** Place usually describes the way that the product reaches the consumer. For HIV self-test kits, this refers to facilities where it could be obtained. This includes primary health centres, secondary health facilities, pharmacies, kiosks, etc. Places where the kits could be obtained should be incorporated in communication messages regarding the self-testing option to facilitate action.

**Promotion:** Promotional activities include mass media campaigns through radio, television, and the Internet, billboards, public events, and interpersonal communication such as community outreach in primary health centres, religious and social gatherings, home visitations, and other channels accessible to the intended consumers/beneficiaries of the HIV self-test kits. These media are essential in creating demand for the products.

#### *1.4.2 Practical Example of Social Marketing Theory-Based Intervention in Africa*

The practical example of social marketing-based interventions was demonstrated in HIV self-test kits projects in South and West Africa. Star, together with others; Population Services International (PSI), and Unitaids-funded projects; and ATLAS in collaboration with Solthis, have been promoting the HIV self-testing African initiative.

Over 750,000 self-test kits were provided during the first phase, which lasted two years and included Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. By November 2018, 2.3 million HIV testing kits had been distributed in Eastern and Southern Africa, increasing HIV testing among persons who had never been tested by 28% (The AIDs Free Project, 2021).

In South Africa, UNAID distributed HIV self-test kits with demonstrations on how to use them. In addition, incentives were given out for reporting the test results and the large-scale distribution targeted at men in the rural KwaZulu-Natal district was reported to be very effective (Sithole et al., 2021).

High-risk populations including men having sex with men, female sex workers, and people who use drugs as well as young persons were targeted using the mass media such as radio, MTV Shuga show in addition to social media interaction, peer education, and graphic novel that young people loved.

With a stronger health system, the self-test kits were swiftly distributed to pharmacies. Despite the pandemic, distribution of the test kits remained stable as the products were mailed or sent through Uber during the Covid-19 lockdown

**Source:** Oduro-Bonsrah (2021, April 15). Self-testing kits make strides in fight against HIV in Africa. Geneva Solution. <https://genevasolutions.news/global-health/self-testing-kits-make-strides-in-fight-against-hiv-in-africa>

### 1.5 *Trans-Theoretical/Stages of Change Model*

The Trans-Theoretical Model (TTM) or Stages of Change Model (SCM) proposed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1983), describes how individuals undergo a process of change comprising a series of stages (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). The TTM represents a deliberate change that takes cognizance of the decision-making abilities of individuals (Coulson et al., 2016). The model submits that behaviour change occurs in a five step progression-pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. The original concepts have been modified to include a relapse stage, indicating that someone can move a step or more backwards in the process. The inclusion of this stage illuminates the possibility of achieving change, relapse, and then change again (Northern Health, 2013). Hence, movement through this model is cyclical rather than linear as individuals may progress or regress in the process.

The TTM has been further modified by Kern (2008) to include transcendence, to explain the stage when individuals recovering from addiction are free and have transcended to a new life. This stage could be regarded as the stage of sustaining the maintenance achieved, where the achieved behavioural change has been sustained longer than six months and the change agent has developed a sense of purpose and meaning, and integrated with his/her family, friends and community (Egunjobi, 2020).

Consequently, intervention strategies that suit the specific information needs of individuals at each stage are required to reinforce individuals to make progress to the next stage (WHO, 2012).

The TTM has been successfully applied in several health-related interventions, including tobacco cessation, dietary change, addiction, and other topics, even though some authors argue that the proposed levels are ‘pseudo stages’ that should be neglected

#### 1.5.1 *Case Study: Substance Abuse*

In less than a decade remaining for the actualization of the Sustainable Development Goal in 2030, the use of dangerous psychoactive substances and drugs still constitute a major high-risk behaviour in Africa, as nearly all nations report one or more drug and substance/s being abused by its citi-

zens especially young people (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2020; Campbell, 2019). Besides the social problems such as violence and crimes resulting from substance abuse (UNODC, 2007; Oshodi et al., 2010), it increases the risk of Cardio-Vascular Diseases (CVD), lung cancer, Hepatitis B and C, HIV/AIDS, collapse of the veins, seizures, strokes, migraine, hyperthermia, lung damage and other obstetric complications and sometimes leading to untimely death (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2009). Therefore, substance abuse could lead to public health crises besides the socio-economic and legal implications.

More importantly, 1 in 5 persons who had used drugs in the past is suffering from drug user disorders and requires treatment (UNODC, 2018), as well as communication intervention for behavioural change. Withdrawal from drug or substance use and coping with the effects can be very difficult. In this light, communication intervention based on the trans-theoretical model of change and appropriate channels for disseminating the information is desirable.

The pre-contemplation stage is where an individual who injects, sniffs, or orally takes cocaine, heroin, marijuana, cannabis or regularly uses drugs prescribed by authorized health practitioners after medical diagnosis or not, does not know the health implications of his actions and is not thinking of carrying out any actions towards changing the behaviour.

At this stage, communication interventions based on TTM would consider increasing awareness about the health consequences of drugs and substances abuse and the benefits of behavioural change, using interpersonal communication channels such as community engagements in a town hall and age-grade meetings, social and religious gatherings as well as one-on-one interaction with a drug/substance user.

At the contemplation stage, an illicit drug user or someone who engages in other substances abuse still engages in the behaviour, but he/she is aware of the health implications of the behaviour through exposure to communication intervention messages. Here, motivation and encouragement are required to stimulate action, especially where the person is thinking about a change of behaviour within the next 6 months. Since peer pressure has been identified as a socio-demographic risk factor for illicit drug use, change agents can engage in constant interaction with those in this stage through peer education to provide support for a change.

The preparation stage is where the illicit drug user or someone who abuses other substances is getting ready for a change of behaviour. Readiness to change could be expressed by seeking guidance and assistance from trusted persons or a rehabilitation centre. Thus, it is likely that action can be taken within the next 30 days. Therefore, communication messages should

concentrate on providing vivid reinforcement of the benefits of behaviour change.

When the individual consistently withdraws from drug or substance use for weeks, but less than 6 months, he/she can be said to be in the action stage. At this juncture, follow-up communication would stimulate feedback. This would enable interventionists to respond to problems that may arise in the course of action and provide reinforcement for consistent action through community and gender-based engagements.

The maintenance stage is when the individual consistently withdraws from drug or substance use for at least six months. It is vital to mention that communicating the alternatives to illicit drug use and substance abuse as well as engagement in physical activities would bring about a stable lifestyle.

However, relapse may occur when the person moves back to the abandoned behaviour. Egunjobi (2020) refers to this stage as a recycling stage when a person recovering from addiction returns from either action or maintenance stage to an earlier stage. Then, the individual requires support to sustain the maintenance stage.

Transcendence stage: Where a substance user has remained at the maintenance stage for more than 6 months and has come to terms with reasoning, he/she is regarded as being free and could be integrated with his/her community. At this stage, community engagement with community members would help to discourage stigmatisation.

### *1.5.2 Practical Example of Transtheoretical Model-Based Intervention in Africa*

#### **Substance Abuse Intervention in George, South Africa**

The video of the intervention programme in George (a small town about five hours' drive from Cape Town) shows a network of alcohol, tobacco, and drug addicts, social workers, and health practitioners coming together as activists to fight substance abuse.

Sahara support group trains victims of addiction to engage in peer education to those undergoing the stages of the change process.

Maverick Citizen (2020). Solving substance use in George, South Africa [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFRVa8Rh\\_To](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFRVa8Rh_To)

### *1.6 Extended Parallel Processes Model*

The Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) describes how the development of risk messages using fear appeals and scare tactics could be

accomplished (Edgar & Volkman, 2012). The theory aligns with the health belief hypothesis.

The theory presupposes that people engage in threat appraisal whenever they are exposed to fear appeals by assessing the severity of, and their susceptibility to, the risk issue (Witte et al., 2001). Thus, the outcome of this appraisal determines the line of action, that is, either paying more attention to the message or ignoring it. It is worth noting that a high level of perceived severity and susceptibility implies that the individual feels threatened, and the next thing is to engage in efficacy appraisal.

Efficacy appraisal involves two forms of value evaluation; self-efficacy (trust in personal capability to act) and response efficacy (the chances of the proposed behaviour to yield a positive result) are evaluated. The EPPM explains that fear appeals succeed only when the outcome of both self-efficacy and response-efficacy appraisals are high (Meadows, 2020).

### 1.6.1 Case Study: Diabetes in Africa

According to the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) Africa Region (2019), “19 million adults Africans (20-79) are living with diabetes and 45 million adults (20-79) in the IDF Africa Region have Impaired Glucose Tolerance (IGT) which places them at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Furthermore, 60% of adults living with diabetes do not know they have it and USD 9.5 billion was spent on healthcare for people with diabetes in 2019 alone”.

Complications resulting from diabetes include blindness, kidney failure, heart attacks, stroke, and lower limb amputation. Fortunately, a healthy diet, regular physical activity, maintaining normal body weight, and avoiding tobacco use are ways to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes (WHO Africa, 2021).

Due to the severity of diabetes and its attendant consequences, fear appeals have been used in creating health communication messages for diabetes prevention. Based on the assumptions of the EPPM, audiences engage in threat and efficacy appraisals when they are exposed to such fear-laden messages.

**Threat appraisal:** An individual exposed to the fear-based message of diabetes prevention considers if he or she is susceptible to diabetes (at risk of becoming diabetic) and the severity (seriousness) of the disease by evaluating the complications which could result from the disease. Here, communication messages emphasize the likelihood of people developing diabetes and illustrate its consequences with people who are demographically similar to the target audience.

For efficacy appraisal, the audience considers if healthy eating and physical activity would help them reduce the risk of diabetes. This refers to response efficacy (perceived effectiveness in averting threat). Therefore, communication interventions should emphasize that the recommended response is effective in reducing the threat of diabetes.

**Self-efficacy:** Audiences consider their capability to perform the recommended behaviour. Questions like “can I maintain a health eating habit considering the high cost of food items in Nigeria”? Hence, communication interventions using participant modelling would help to demonstrate performance accomplishments.

### 1.6.2 *Practical Example of Extended Parallel Process-Based Intervention in Africa*

Here is an example of fear-laden communication intervention on diabetes developed by Diabetes South Africa, a Non-Governmental Organisation

The message reads;

I am Adele Swart, a type 1 and I have had diabetes for 40 years.

Did you know that every 6 seconds, a person dies from diabetes; every 10 seconds, two people develop diabetes; and every 30 minutes a lower limb is amputated worldwide?

I have had amputations. I have also had renal failure.

Diabetes is a Tsunami of the 21st century, killing more people in the world than AIDs and Cancer combined....

Accompanying this text is the video of the young lady in a wheelchair who had her limbs amputated.

## 2 APPLICABILITY OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION THEORIES IN AFRICA

Health behaviours vary between the developed nations and the less developed nations in Africa. This variation results from unequal access to social amenities and socio-economic status as well as the information communication infrastructure dichotomy between the west and the developing nations amongst other factors. Therefore, this inequality makes the applicability of communication theories in Africa problematic.

The challenges to health communication interventions in Africa could be critically examined in two dimensions; 1. Those dealing with the development, packaging, and dissemination of health communication interventions 2. Inaccess to health communication messages.

## *2.1 Challenges Associated with Development, Packaging, and Dissemination of Health Communication Interventions Include*

- 1. Poor health budgets and financing:** Poor allocation and appropriation to health budget is a pandemic eating deep into healthcare delivery across many developing nations in Africa. As of 2013, the World Health Organisation report indicated that the total health expenditure in 22 African nations does not reach even the minimal level of US\$ 44 per capita (WHO, 2013). Although, the health organisation reported that while a few lower-income countries allocate more than 15% of their public spending to the sector (Ethiopia, Gambia and Malawi) in 2016, nineteen African countries have been spending less on health than in the early 2000s (WHO, 2016). This critical problem resulting from political corruption and other competing needs (Anugwom, 2020) hampers healthcare delivery as well as health communication interventions.
- 2. Donors Interference:** Major health communication interventions are funded by international donors due to the paucity of funds in many developing nations in Africa. The donors' agenda often dominate the development goals resulting in conflict with what works in African contexts (Govender, 2010). Thus, conflicting power relations between the donor agencies and communication interventionists reduce the efficacy of health communication interventions at the grassroots.
- 3. A wrong approach to message development and delivery:** There is no gainsaying that the efficacy of public health communication is dependent on the effectiveness of the communication strategy deployed (Olubunmi et al., 2016). This implies that health communication would not achieve the desired goal if the approach is faulty. Incapability in developing, implementing, and evaluating health promotion programmes and amplification of risk rather than solution-oriented messages whittle down the effect of many health communication interventions. The effective health communication approach is to identify the optimal contexts, channels, content, and reasons that will motivate people to pay attention to and use health information to better their lives and that of society (WHO, 2017). Oftentimes, African values for community, inclusiveness, and consensus-building (Ngodo & Klyueva, 2022) are neglected in the construction of health interven-



tions messages. Thus, individual health behaviours are targeted more often rather than collective health decision-making.

4. **Lack of complimentary infrastructural interventions:** Schiavo (2007) notes that health communication cannot substitute for limited healthcare infrastructure or incapability of healthcare workers or compensate for the absence of standard medical laboratories for diagnosis, or adequate treatment as well as preventative measures. Infrastructural deficit has been one of the major challenges in the healthcare sector in many low-income nations in Africa. Hence, complimentary infrastructural interventions are required for health communication to be effective.

Therefore, social and geographical inclusion, intentional healthcare financing in addition to skilled content development and delivery considering language preferences and adequacy of language translations are requisite for a paradigm shift in health communication interventions in the African continent.

## *2.2 Challenge Regarding Access to Health Communication Messages*

Geography and social exclusion is a major factor militating against access to health communication interventions in Africa. oftentimes, vulnerable and underserved communities experience communication gaps when their locations are excluded from health promotion activities. Research has shown a disparity between the rural and urban populations in terms of access to healthcare interventions (Mutangadura et al., 2007). Likewise, inequitable distribution of healthcare intervention programmes result in exclusion of ethnic minorities, male gender, migrants, displaced persons and the destitute (Obuaku-Igwe, 2015; Galactionova et al., 2017). Ideally, the efficacy of health communication is determined by its capability to meet the specific needs of all population sub-groups, including the vulnerable and marginalised groups, but persistent inequalities even in seeming egalitarian communities in Africa limits access to health communication interventions. Other issues threatening equitable access to credible health information are socio-economic issues, relating to the digital divide and the varying levels of health literacy (Kubheka et al., 2020). Besides extreme poverty and illiteracy, the absence of electricity and unsteady power supply contribute to limited access to information through the traditional media

(radio, television, newspapers, and magazines) in most rural communities in Africa.

Consequently, oral or interpersonal communication has been the cheapest and preferred source of disseminating health information (Asante, 2017). Songs, storytelling, lecture, dance and drama, and the use of town crying are some forms of oral communication used in disseminating relevant health information (Anasi, 2012; Omogor, 2013; WHO Uganda, 2019).

More so, information is shared through social networks such as family, friends, peer-groups, community, and religious groups (Patrick & Ferdinand, 2016; Sokey et al., 2018), although, information spread through this channel suffers distortion. Likewise, community health workers and self-help groups are sources of interpersonal health communication in different African nations (Anasi, 2012; Naanyu et al., 2013; Almozainy, 2017; Ezeh & Ezeh, 2017).

Alongside oral communication, radio is a key source of information due to its capacity to penetrate the hinterlands with information dissemination in diverse local languages and dialects (Almozainy, 2017; James & Akintunde, 2018; Sokey et al., 2018).

Printed materials are of limited value in Africa, due to low literacy and socio-economic level (Mtega, 2012). However, posters are the most accessible, particularly to rural dwellers due to their ability to draw people's attention with illustrations in pidgin and local languages (Almozainy, 2017; Nwodu, 2007; Ben-Enukora et al., 2021).

Recently, the Internet, mobile phones, and social media platforms are gradually evolving as avenues of health information dissemination to both rural and urban residents (Almozainy, 2017) irrespective of the credibility problem often associated with the new media technology (Jacobs et al., 2017; Thilaka et al., 2019). Information sharing during the recent Covid-19 pandemic in diverse regions of the world is a testament to this fact. Videos shared via digital devices (mobile phones and laptops) are gradually complementing and sometimes recognized as the preferred media for accessing health information (Sokey et al., 2018). Despite these developments, some authors have maintained that digital media could widen the inequality in access to health information between rural and urban settings (Kaur & Marwaha, 2016; Jacobs et al., 2017). Ultimately, demographic, socio-cultural, and economic factors influence health information seeking as well as the choice of information sources through the internet-mediated platforms.

Going further, value systems and cultural factors also play critical roles in shaping individual and community responses to health messages. More so, individual choices are mediated by economic concerns, family habits, personal tastes, cultural preferences, and beliefs. Therefore, a culturally grounded approach to health communication can help in dismantling perceived barriers and facilitate a sense of shared identity around health-promoting choices and behaviours.

More so, it is worthy to note that the contexts in which health behaviours occur are evolving. Some theories have converged over the years while others have uncovered constructs that are central to multiple theories. More importantly, interventionists should be conscious of socio-cultural inequalities within regions, nations, and local communities. Thus, what works in one geographical location may not work in other settings (Anugwom, 2020). Therefore, more than one theory may be applied in addressing a health issue in Africa, given the diversity of culture and the extremely rural and special-needs populations in the continent. These complexities require dynamic communication approaches. More so, drawing from more than one theory is often more effective for planning a comprehensive intervention. This provides the ability to target multiple health behaviours and allows the practitioner to consider individual and environmental influences at the same time (Northern Health, 2013).

### 3 CONCLUSION

The African continent is endowed with peculiar cultural values of collectivism rather than individualism that thrive in the Western World, which is the origin of the health communication theories. As such, utilizing these theories in health interventions with disregard to the inequality in cultural and socio-economic contexts in Africa could prevent such interventions from achieving the desired objectives. No doubt, the environments in which people engage in health behaviours are becoming more dynamic due to urbanization, migration, and globalisation, calling for a more sophisticated approach to behaviour change communications. Therefore, this paper recommends;

- Further modification of health communication theories to align with the communitarian cultural value that is widespread in the African continent.

- Community-based interventions rather than a generalized approach to health communication as interpersonal relations influence decision-making on health issues.
- Mobilization of community people to actively engage in identifying their health challenges and co-creating health communication messages for solving the identified problems.

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# The Role of the Media in the Management of Pandemic Situations in Africa. An Application of Selected Health Communication Theories

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## I INTRODUCTION

The role of the media in health communication is prominent especially when the world is dealing with a pandemic. In December 2019, media channels spread messages about Wuhan in China being struck by corona virus. The rest of the world thought that it was China's problem but in January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned the whole world about the COVID-19 pandemic and between February and March, the world witnessed the power of globalization in the spread of the messages and the Corona virus. At that point, China, Europe (Italy, Spain and U. K), USA and Africa had reported cases.

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This is not the first time the world has been hit by pandemics. Smith and Smith (2016) note that in 20th and 21st centuries, there were previous pandemics such as the Zika virus, SARs, Ebola, H1N1, Spanish Flu, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B spread around the world before this COVID-19 pandemic.

During infectious disease outbreaks, effective communication is critical for efficient response and recovery efforts. Fear, uncertainty, lack of knowledge, and information seeking behavior among the public may increase opportunities for the propagation of misinformation (Sell et al., 2020). The role of the media in communicating messages about the pandemics has been central. The technological innovations and mobile telephony-based technologies have seen global, regional and local media engage in health communication. The availability of the Internet and mobile phones has enabled multiple communicators to create and disseminate information using various mainstream media and social media networks. For examples, both print and electronic media channels were used to communicate messages about Ebola and HIV/AIDS pandemics in Africa and other continents (Sharma, 2021).

This chapter discusses the way many messages of Covid-19 and other viral diseases were communicated both by regional and global media. The different messages from diverse communicators showed how the coronavirus and Ebola pandemics were received and acted on by people in different continents. Studies conducted demonstrate that many communicators used various theories to inform the designing and communication of the message and their impact on treatment, vaccination or following the guidelines laid down by different Ministries of Health in respective countries. That also showed how this impacted the control or the testing and vaccines acceptance for COVID-19 and Ebola pandemics (Lewandowsky et al., 2021; Sell et al., 2020). The application of the following theories will be examined: theory of reasoned action, health belief model (HBM) and the protection motivation theory (Ansari-Moghaddam et al., 2021). The challenges that the media and the receivers of the messages faced are discussed, paying attention to the different mitigation measures the countries employed to make sure that the media messages reached the target audience. Finally, recommendations are made on how communicators can use different media channels to effectively communicate strategies for positive impact on creating awareness, testing and vaccine acceptance when dealing with COVID-19 and other viral pandemics in Africa.

### 1.1 *Global Framing of Pandemics*

Pandemics and other health crises generate concentrated media coverage as the public's desire for information increases. Research on media framing of pandemics highlights similarities and differences in frames as well as common frames associated with pandemics (Kiptinness & Okoye, 2021). Using the 2014–2015 Ebola outbreak as a case study, Pieri (2018) analyses how the risk of contagion in the US, Europe, and the UK has been constructed in UK media and policy discourse. The Ebola outbreak was framed as a localized African crisis, a regional crisis, a global security threat and an outbreak. These frames produced an obsessive fear of contagion spreading to the West. Effective communication is often a central aspect of health crisis response during outbreaks and efforts to communicate with the people can take different shapes and more so emanate from different sources.

**Message:** The information the sender wishes to communicate. The presence of COVID-19 and other attracts many communicators whose intentions to communicate depend on their chosen purpose. How health messages are communicated depends on the best format that can enhance comprehension and reception of the messages. Some COVID-19 messages are communicated in verbal formats depending on the channel that the communicators think are more effective than others. These are face to face or by email, television, radio, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, newspapers, blogs, videos, You Tube and others.

Communication of COVID-19 and other viral diseases has been intense in Africa. The diverse receivers have consumed messages as facts while others have treated the health messages as myths or untrue (Sharma, 2021; Sell et al., 2020; Pieri, 2018). Some receivers up to date have ignored the presence of the viral diseases and this is a result of different ways of decoding the message. How the receiver understands or interprets the message determines whether they will accept the messages or not. For example, in Kenya, some sections of the population rejected COVID-19 messages and the feedback that they provided was shocking, encouraging people to refuse to take the vaccine while those who accepted encouraged positive receiver's response to the message. It is evident that there has been a lot of noise. Noise is anything that might interferes with communication or reduce the chance of successful communication. Social media networks have been active in communicating COVID-19 messages, some of which have generated confusion because of the difficulty in separating truth from misinformation (Kiptinness & Okoye, 2021).

The media play important roles in the communication of messages on Covid-19 and other viral diseases. When it comes to pandemics as observed earlier, messages originate from many senders (web) so there is not one source but many sources. This leads to noise because it is difficult to separate fake messages from genuine ones (Sharma, 2021 and Smith & Smith, 2016).

Noar and Austin (2020: 1735) echoed similar a perspective: “A well-crafted national message has the potential to build unity around the goal of defeating the virus through behaviour change”.

This mass sensitization approach has been used in previous pandemics like the Zika virus, SARs, Ebola, H1N1 and presently in the coronavirus health crisis. Leveraging the power of Public service announcements (PSAs) entails appropriating the media in form of video clips, print contents, radio messages (Manganello et al., 2020), and in some instances, use of town hall communication, to reach wide and diverse members of the society (CIDRAP, 2021; Kiptinness & Okoye, 2021; Manganello et al., 2020).

### *1.2 Communication of COVID-19 and Ebola Pandemic in West Africa*

The 2013–2016 West Africa Ebola epidemic has provided a unique avenue for assessing this issue as misinformation related to Ebola was common. Despite very low case counts within the United States (US), widespread fear and media attention contributed to dissemination of US Ebola-related misinformation (Sell et al., 2020). Coverage from traditional media sources was dispersed on social media, where it joined a mixture of factual and false information. News and social media content during Hepatitis B Virus and the Ebola epidemic have been explored within West African, American and European contexts (Adesina et al., 2020; Jin et al., 2014).

The role of the media in communicating health messages cannot be overestimated. When the Ebola pandemic erupted in 2014, it concerned people in Africa and in other continents. Specifically, people in the US felt as vulnerable as those who were in West Africa. This led researchers to find out what the media were doing about it. Sell et al. (2020) conducted a study on misinformation and the US Ebola communication crisis. The purpose of this study was to describe the content of Ebola-related tweets with a specific focus on misinformation, political content, health related content, risk framing, and rumors. The researchers chose to examine 3113 tweets that people used to communicate about Ebola. This study revealed that 10% of Ebola-related tweets contained false or partially false

information; 42% contained risk elevating messages, and 72% were related to health. The most frequent rumor mentioned focused on government conspiracy and when comparing tweets with true information to tweets with misinformation, a greater percentage of tweets with misinformation were political in nature (36% vs 15%) and contained discord-inducing statements (45% vs 10%).

Results showing high frequency of risk perception elevating tweets align with previously published literature on social media content during the Ebola epidemic (Jin et al., 2014). The study concluded that “While each public health event is different, our findings provide insight into the possible social media environment during a future epidemic and could help optimize potential public health communication strategies” (Sell et al., 2020).

### 1.2.1 *The Ebola Pandemic in Nigeria*

Global, regional and local media reported about the Ebola pandemic in Africa and most of the times it was about West Africa. This is because other areas such as East Africa had no cases of the virus. For example, Sell et al. (2020) decided to examine the way messages about the pandemic were communicated and acted on. The media in West Africa have for years provided valuable information to the people on pandemics such as HIV/AIDS. Later, their attention was focused on the outbreak of the Ebola virus as well as the interventions by the international community to arrest it (Uzuegbunam et al., 2016; Smith & Smith, 2016).

Nigeria woke up to the startling reality of being in danger of the Ebola Virus Disease with the arrival into the country’s largest city, Lagos, of an unsuspected Ebola-infected Liberian diplomat, Patrick Sawyer. Following the death of Sawyer, Nigeria had recorded in the cities of Lagos and Port-Harcourt, 19 cases of infection, with eight deaths and 11 survivors (Uzuegbunam et al., 2016).

Smith and Smith (2016) conducted a study on “Media coverage of the Ebola virus disease in four widely circulated Nigerian newspapers: lessons from Nigeria”. The purpose of the study was to assess the role of media in the Ebola reportage and its implications in creating awareness and stopping the spread amongst the population. They achieved this by examining the nature and extent of media coverage about Ebola in four major national newspapers. These were: The Sun, The Vanguard, The Nation and The Punch newspapers (Smith & Smith, 2016). The findings showed that the most common topic was Ebola cases in Nigeria (17.5%) followed by discrimination due to Ebola (10.8%) and least of all, the use of salt and



or Kola for the cure of Ebola (5.2%). Just like in other studies, though the media did a job in communicating the messages about the deadly pandemic, misinformation about the cure and the spread was present in the Nigeria print media.

Another study by Uzuegbunam et al. (2016) which was conducted in Nigeria also investigated how the media had communicated the Ebola Virus outbreak in Nigeria. The study established that the newspapers published more reports on preventive measures (51.4%) against Ebola than they published on all the other subject matters related to the disease—new infections, death, care of victims, successful cure. However, almost all the reports on the Ebola were either apparently intended to reduce the fear of the disease (17.8%) or neutral (73.15%)—neither inducing fear nor eliminating it. Conversely, just 9.1% were apparently intended to induce such fears. From this data, it could be deduced that the newspapers did not aim to be sensational in their coverage of the Ebola virus. (Uzuegbunam et al., 2016).

The researchers argued that the way the media reported Ebola in Nigeria resulted in intensified awareness/exposure, recall and possible proactive action on the part of the audience. The media may have played a big role in the successful containment of the deadly disease in Nigeria (Uzuegbunam et al., 2016).

### 1.3 *COVID-19 in West Africa (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone)*

Sun et al. (2020) argue that COVID-19 cases in Africa were imported from Europe and America through flights from those countries. When this happened, media reported that there were different types of testing for Covid-19. There were wide variations in testing rates, with South Africa conducting the most tests and Nigeria doing relatively few, according to Our World in Data, a UK-based project which collates Covid-19 information. Nigeria was achieving 0.7 tests per 1000 people, Ghana 10 and Kenya 3 (Mwai and Giles, 7th July, 2020).

According to the media reports communicated during the pandemic in Africa, the reported death rate per capita has been low compared to other parts of the world, despite the poor health infrastructure in many African countries. Even with so much information being communicated through different media channels, the WHO reported that 80% of COVID-19 infections in sub-Saharan Africa were asymptomatic. A study by Seytre

et al. (2021) that was conducted in five African countries from October 16 to November 2020 (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone) to establish the knowledge of the COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) infection and perception of the prevention messages revealed that, there were achievements of communication campaigns on several aspects: almost everybody had heard of the virus or read messages on the protective measures and a large majority of people thought that these measures were effective against COVID-19. The study also showed that “majority of the people were unaware that asymptomatic individuals can transmit the virus. Knowledge of the risk factors for severe disease is not sufficient, and the majority of individuals fear contracting COVID-19” (Seytre et al., 2021).

### *1.3.1 Communication of Covid-19 Messages in Nigeria*

Media reports have indicated that different countries have communicated about the COVID-19 pandemic messages in different ways. In Nigeria, many researchers have conducted research on COVID-19 and different groups chose the communication channels that they deemed would answer the questions about what was happening in their respective states or localities. For example, Obi-Ani et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study in Nigeria which aimed to explore social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, blogs, online newspapers, and YouTube to see how they communicated COVID-19 messages. Specifically, their study interrogated the roles which social media play in either curtailing or aiding the spread of the news on the pandemic across the country.

The above named researchers argued that these platforms have been abused as people hide under their anonymity to spread fake messages and instigate panic amongst members of the general public (Obi-Ani et al., 2020). The study revealed that, through the social media networks, communicators shared useful information about the pandemic and at the same time disseminated information that created doubts about the presence of Corona virus in Nigeria. Most of them were skeptical of government’s intentions and saw measures aimed at controlling the pandemic by the federal government and by state governors as another means to fleece money from the federation account (Obi-Ani et al., 2020).

This echoed what Kenyans on social media said about COVID-19 and the numbers of those who were infected and those who died. Their argument was that during media briefings, the government increased

COVID-19 numbers in order to get money from donors and other funding agencies.

The Internet-based social media networks have been acknowledged as playing a pivotal role in the health information system. These media platforms are said to be effective in the dissemination of health messages to diverse audiences, in the same manner the traditional media do (Adesina et al., 2020).

Though the social media are accessible to many people, they pose many challenges. They conveyed information about the personality, beliefs, and interests of an individual and lack of accuracy and reliability, which is the major drawback of health information found on social media or on other online sources. Furthermore, many users post false descriptive videos on YouTube and Facebook just for getting views and followers (Sahni & Sharma, 2020).

### *1.3.2 Communication of COVID-19 Messages in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania)*

The media in Africa and especially in Kenya can be commended for the roles that they have played during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the first time, the media stopped focusing on politics and politicians and spent time communicating Covid-19 messages. For example, the Ministry of Health made media briefs about the pandemic every day. The tone of the messages also changed. They were supportive, caring sensitive and empathetic. The traditional media followed rules of good journalism. The readers and viewers were not treated to gory images of dying patients. However, the same cannot be said of the social media sites. Many damaging messages were mass communicated.

In East Africa, Kiptinness and Okoye (2021) investigated media framing of the coronavirus in Kenya and Tanzania, using the Daily Nation (Kenya) and The Citizen (Tanzania) newspapers. A quantitative analysis of the Daily Nation and Citizen newspapers showed the following categories of information: context, basic information, preventive information, treatment information, medical research, social context, economic context, political context, personal stories and others. Kiptinness and Okoye's (2021) study revealed that there were different patterns of framing information about COVID-19 pandemic.

As some researchers have pointed out, depending on how the messages are presented and the audiences' ability to see through the contents, fake news or misinformation could feel so real and sway the audience into

believing what they read as authoritative health information (Schwarz & Jalbert, 2021).

It is important to note that even before COVID-19 happened in East Africa, traditional media have been voted as the most trustworthy channels many times. With the pandemic, the same media houses have both print, electronic and social media networks whereby they have been competing with the latter to communicate COVID-19 messages. This is in agreement with Mahon (2021) who asserts that the Covid-19 pandemic generated an increase in news reports, created a lot of untruths, and thus bred a challenge for citizens in search of accurate information in the midst of an unknown threat. Seytre et al. (2021) research in health communication has shown a correlation between media types and audience's trust of the news. Much of these studies found that legacy media, especially television and newspapers, are positively associated with higher level of trust among the people. The same experience is re-enacted with the coronavirus health crisis; as the crisis evolves, not all media types will be trusted equally (Tsai et al., 2020).

In reporting health crises, Sharma (2021) noted that the focus of the media was influenced by several extraneous factors. However, whatever factors determine news selection and positioning, the media's role in framing pandemics has the potential of spawning an (in)direct effect on audience behaviour change and perception. From Kiptinness and Okoye's (2021) study, the findings showed that, the Daily Nation newspaper in Kenya mainly employed the social frame and depicted the COVID-19 pandemic as a national crisis. On the other hand, The Citizen newspaper in Tanzania employed predominantly basic frames and portrayed the challenge as a global problem.

With different views of the pandemic, this explains how different countries have responded to COVID-19 communication and reactions to treatment, protocols and vaccination. In line with this, O'Hair and O'Hair (2021: 9) asserted that "COVID-19 is not a disaster simply because it is a pandemic, its widespread destruction is also due to the world's lack of preparation and ill-advised responses to it".

The two countries sampled in Africa had different reactions. While Kenya gave daily media briefings about COVID-19 in 2020, information provision was scarce in Tanzania a situation that the new president Suluhu Hassan has corrected in 2021. Previously, media reports indicated that different countries had communicated about the Covid-19 pandemic messages sparingly. Equatorial Guinea had a row with the WHO after

accusing its country representative of inflating the number of Covid-19 cases. For a while it held back its data, but it has started sharing it again (Kiptinness & Okoye, 2021).

There is a discrepancy between the way the African media and others have been communicating Covid-19. While those in Africa have been supportive and enthusiastic, others such as BBC have been pessimistic about the African situation. For example, Onyiego (2020) asserted that “Despite efforts to lock down cities and countries, despite donations of protective equipment, testing kits and ventilators from China, one thing is clear: Africa has not yet flattened the curve and the room for manoeuvre is getting smaller” (BBC 11th April, 2020).

Another study conducted by Adebisi et al. (2021) in 13 African countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Algeria, Angola, Cote d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.) aimed to study the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) strategies as well as the challenges facing RCCE in 13 African countries. The researchers’ findings revealed that RCCE strategies in the 13 African countries focused on training and capacity building, risk communication systems, internal and partners’ coordination, community engagement, public communication, contending uncertainty, addressing misperceptions and managing misinformation. The Ministries of Health in countries such as Kenya and South Africa among many others worked tirelessly to address COVID -19 pandemic issues. What the researchers found in those countries could be generalized to other countries in Africa (Adebisi et al., 2021: 382).

Though the countries used diverse media to communicate COVID-19 messages, the studies cited in this chapter found that countries had similar challenges except that the magnitude of the issues was different. These were: distrust in governments, weak healthcare systems due to limited resources, lack of clear roles of partners in RCCE, inclusion--only 54% of the countries had sign language communicators when carrying out COVID-19 media briefings (Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Zambia, among others), resistance and inertia-culture impacted on how countries dealt with COVID-19 measures (Jaja et al., 2020).

There is widespread rumors and misinformation about pandemics. In a cross-sectional survey among some African countries (Kenya, Cameroon, Ghana, Tanzania, Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda), the study revealed that about 19% believed that the pandemic was designed to reduce world’s population. Some people still doubt the existence and nature of the

pandemic and ignore safety precautions. The infodemic continues to undermine COVID-19 RCCE in many African countries which is further worsened by social media (Osugwu et al., 2021).

### 1.3.3 *Communication of COVID-19 Messages in Southern Africa*

Many African countries planned to communicate COVID-19 messages when the pandemic happened. This includes South Africa where the country struggled with the most effective channels for effective communication at a time that researchers on the ground carried out research on the different aspects of the pandemic.

Kunguma et al. (2021) conducted a study in South Africa (Bloemfontein,) to investigate the prevention and mitigatory role of risk communication in the COVID-19 pandemic in Bloemfontein. This research sought to investigate the role risk communication played in mitigating and preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the city (Kunguma et al., 2021).

The researchers were interested in the process of risk communication. That is, when COVID-19 messages were communicated, what were the situation, responses and perceptions of the receivers?

Key to risk communication success is ensuring adequate comprehension, accurate perception of the disseminated information, and compliance with regulations. Questions of trustworthiness, acceptability, effectiveness, and usefulness of messages and strategies communicated sought answers from the Bloemfontein population (Kunguma et al., 2021: 1).

The study's findings established that risk communication as a disaster risk reduction strategy, when it is implemented concurrently with imposed regulations, was found to have played a vital role in mitigating the spread of the virus. As the role of risk communication is essential, the effectiveness thereof in changing behaviour towards risk avoidance is also important, and so is the comprehension of the messages communicated. Significant in all of this are the communication media used, the trustworthiness of the risk communicators, the acceptability and feasibility of strategies implemented, and compliance with the regulations (Kunguma et al., 2021).

About South Africa, Chagutah (2014) postulates that in most cases, communities do not trust the risk communicators and perceive proposed strategies as threats to their livelihoods. As a result, these community

members resist changing their behaviours towards the communicated risk avoidance strategies. The South African study on COVID-19 proved that risk reduction through risk communication is therefore based on a community's perceptions, concerns, and beliefs, their knowledge and practices in identifying rumours and misinformation during an emergency (Kunguma et al., 2021).

The above-mentioned study highlights that the communicators could have planned effective messages and used appropriate channels but the receivers could still demonstrate receptivity resistance to COVID-19. This is when an individual is not able and willing to take in information or an idea. This reaction to COVID-19 messages has been witnessed globally so it was not a South African phenomenon. South Africa used both print, electronic and social media networks to communicate COVID-19 pandemic messages. Social media networks (such as Twitter and Facebook) also have significant number of influential people who explore social media platforms to push a certain agenda and this has worked both positively and negatively (Kunguma et al., 2021) While the government planned the best ways to communicate the COVID-19 risk information, another task was to encourage the population to change behaviours and fight the unwillingness to accept change. Lali et al. (2020) argued that risk messages communicating social distancing might prove difficult amongst communities that are family-oriented and practice a collectivist culture such as those practiced in South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and other African countries.

#### *1.3.4 Communication of COVID-19 in North Africa*

##### *Egypt*

The COVID-19 outbreak emphasized that the most important and effective interventions in public health response to outbreaks is proactive and effective communication. With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, a novel infectious disease, providing accurate and timely information and countering disinformation were essential and immediate (Adebisi et al., 2021). Egypt has a population of 104 million people. She has used various media to communicate COVID-19 messages. While the print and electronic media have been used extensively, some countries and their populations have employed social media networks to communicate COVID-19 messages. The use of social media is truly a worldwide phenomenon; there is a presence on every continent. Worldwide, Internet users have reached nearly 5.66 billion, representing a global penetration of 57%. Active social media users are now at 4.20 billion, while those using

social media through mobile devices are at 4.15 billion. Mobile phone users have increased by 2% since 2018, reaching 5.22 billion in early 2021 (Kemp, 2021). A number of motivations for using social media have been identified. These are: sharing ideas, activities, and events with others; community involvement, education and entertainment among others.

To establish how the COVID-19 messages were communicated using social media in Egypt, Baradei et al. (2021) conducted a study that sought to establish the effectiveness of Facebook messages that the government used to communicate about COVID-19. The government chose this channel because of Facebook's accessibility to majority of the people in Egypt. The study found "that the government of Egypt did well in informing the public, but that transparency was lacking and that more effort must be exerted to encourage appropriate behavior by citizens" (Baradei et al., 2021, May).

While the above researchers were positive about use of social media by the government, Shehata and Abdeldaim's (2021) study aimed to determine the impact of social media on spreading panic about COVID-19 among adults in Egypt. This does not cancel the usefulness of social media use among the population. The findings of the study showed that:

Nearly half of both sexes believed that spreading news about COVID-19 on social media platforms has a major role in spreading fear among people. More than half of the study participants reported that the level of Egyptian pages on social media covering COVID-19 was not good (Shehata & Abdeldaim, 2021: 23376).

Both positive and negative roles had been played by these platforms during the COVID-19 crisis. Good and reasonable use of these platforms helped to disseminate recent information and scientific findings quickly, and share new diagnostic tools and treatment protocols. Social media platforms also played a positive role in maintaining communication between people by interacting with each other through social media sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp) to reduce the negative psychological effect of social isolation with associated anxiety and stress (Shehata & Abdeldaim, 2021; Brooks et al., 2020).

The government of Egypt's risk communication could not establish whether the strategies worked or not if they did not get accurate information about the receivers of the messages. In this connection, Abdelhafz et al. (2020) conducted a cross-sectional survey research to assess the



knowledge, perceptions and attitude of the Egyptian public towards the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings showed that knowledge was gained mainly through social media (66.9%), and the Internet (58.3%). About 73.0% were looking forward to get the vaccine when available. The participants had a good knowledge about the disease and a positive attitude towards protective measures that can prevent the transmission of the disease (Abdelhafz et al., 2020).

## 2 HEALTH COMMUNICATION THEORIES AND COVID-19 COMMUNICATION OF COVID-19 MESSAGES IN AFRICA

### *2.1 Theory of Reasoned Action*

The theory of reasoned action is also referred to as the behavioural intentions model. The theory predicts that behavior is based on seven causal variables—behavioral intention, attitude, subjective norm, belief strength, evaluation, normative belief, and motivation to comply (LittleJohn & Foss, 2012). The theory predicts behavioural change by examining attitudes, beliefs and behavioural intentions. Its focus on voluntary behaviour is practical when targeting behavioural change in interventions because intentions are not independent, but result from underlying attitudes and subjective norms (LittleJohn et al., 2017: 29).

According to this theory, our intention to behave in a certain way is determined by our attitude toward the behaviour and a set of beliefs about how other people would like one to behave. Culture, education level, gender, religion and race are some of the factors that affect people's attitude towards health messages and how their reactions (Schiavo, 2007).

The theory of reasoned action can aptly be used to explain how culture affects peoples' attitude towards Covid-19 screening, preventive measures and treatment. This attitude in turn affects their behaviour response towards the disease. People in both urban and rural Africa tended to perceive COVID-19 as a foreign disease which was imported from abroad (other countries outside Africa). Through social and other traditional media, many Africans watched as thousands of people contracted COVID-19 and died in America, Europe, and other continents before people in Africa also suffered the same fate. The African government made decisions on how to communicate about the pandemic and the appropriate channels to use (Kenya Ministry of Health, 2020).

Nigeria is a good example of how this theory can be applied in relation to COVID-19 communication and vaccine acceptance. It is the most populous country in Africa since Worldometers (2021) shows that its population is 214 million people. Data available indicates that by December, 2021, Nigeria's population that had been vaccinated was 11 million people. This is a small number out of over 200 million people.

When we look at the theory, culture, education level, gender, religion and race affect how people make decisions on a health issue. When Nigeria put lockdowns and other measures such as social distancing, people reacted angrily towards the government. Most African cultures are to a certain extent collectivist whereby activities such as weddings and burials are community affairs. Closing down churches did not go down well with the people. The messages about COVID-19 have been communicated but studies conducted in Nigeria show that people's cultures have played a role in their decision to be tested for COVID-19 or to be vaccinated against the virus. With rumour through social media that the vaccines are meant to reduce Africa's population, decisions have been made not to be vaccinated.

The question from those who are sceptical about COVID-19 which nobody has answered is "Why haven't the people in Africa died the way people have died in USA, Europe and India?" Looking at the population of the Americas (Canada, USA, South America and the Islands) which is 850 million against Africa's 1.3 billion people, then the arguments about COVID-19 being more dangerous than other pandemics does not hold water. In this connection, it is not about the availability of the vaccines because WHO (2021: 1) in her surveillance role found that 20 of Africa's 54 countries have used less than 50% of their COVID-19 vaccines, and 12 countries may have at least 10% of their AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine doses expired at the end of August" while fifteen African countries—nearly a third of the continent's 54 nations—have fully vaccinated 10% of their people against COVID-19 (WHO, 2021).

The above example demonstrates that communication of COVID-19 messages could be done but the feedback from the receivers of the messages may not meet the expectations. The argument in this chapter is that the above theory is applicable in Africa where a decision has been made that went contrary to what the theory posits.

The theory provides very specific information about how to develop the content of a campaign for a target population, which is the most useful application of the theory (message and segmentation about COVID-19).

It is particularly useful in analyzing and identifying reasons for action and messages that can change people's attitudes. It is also a good tool in profiling primary audiences (the people whom the program seeks to influence more directly and who would primarily benefit from change) (LittleJohn & Foss, 2012).

## 2.2 *Health Belief Model (HBM)*

The model was developed by Becker in 1974. It proposes that a person's behaviour can be predicted based on how vulnerable the individual considers themselves to be. 'Vulnerability' is expressed in the HBM through risk (perceived susceptibility) and the seriousness of consequences (severity). These two vulnerability variables need to be considered before a decision can be made (Schiavo, 2007). A person's decision to perform the health-promoting (or damaging) behaviour will be based on the outcome of this 'weighing up' process. Self-efficacy is a person's perceived confidence of his/her ability to perform the behaviour. The HBM additionally suggests that there is a 'cue to action' to prompt the behaviour change process.

### *Core Assumptions of the Theory*

The HBM is based on the understanding that a person will take a health-related action if that person feels that a negative health condition (COVID-19) can be avoided; has a positive expectation that by taking a recommended action, he/she will avoid a negative health condition (wearing masks, washing hands, using sanitizers and getting vaccinated); and believes that he/she can successfully take a recommended health action (i.e., he/she can get vaccinated) (Schiavo, 2007 & University of Twente, 2019).

### 2.2.1 *The Health Belief Model in Practice*

The model can be applied to a variety of health situations. Interventions using this model usually aim to influence the 'perceived threat of disease' variable and hence change the susceptibility/severity balance. The main way of doing this tends to be directing information that has an emotional appeal or contains a strong fear or emotional response. As the health belief model suggests, barriers may be more important than benefits and may also provide a focus for targeting communication.

## **Kenya**

According to Kenya's (2019) census, her population stands at 47.5 million people and 65% of these are the youth (Government of Kenya). The government set up the COVID-19 team to deal with the pandemic (Kenya Covid-19 Emergency Response Project, 2020). Through the use of many media communication channels, the government has carried out risk communication (Ministry of Health, 2020) in which media houses and other organizations joined government to communicate about COVID-19 pandemic. Daily or frequent media briefings have endeared the Ministry of Health to the Kenyans. Though lockdowns were not very good, the social distancing, wearing of masks and using sanitizers have been continuous. Contrary to popular narrative, many countries have donated to Kenya the following vaccines: Astrazeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, Pfizer and the government has bought others. The vaccines are available, there are many vaccination centres, and the government planned to have 10 million Kenya's vaccinated before the end of 2021. When analysing this theory, the messages created awareness about the pandemic and the "perceived threat of the disease". That is why the country prioritised people over 58 years old and those suffering from underlying conditions for vaccination which was later opened up to all adults from 18 years. While the mainstream media have positively supported the country's efforts, social media users have shared messages which caused fear of vaccination. Correct information from the WHO, the Ministries of health, doctors and other credible communicators who discussed the side effects of the various vaccines also caused fear of vaccination. The fear should have propelled people to get vaccinated but due to misinformation, others have stayed away, a situation replicated in other countries such as South Africa (Kunguma et al., 2021).

## **South Africa**

From Worldometers (2021), South Africa's population is 59 million people. Just like other countries, she has communicated COVID-19 messages using various channels. In South Africa, their efforts have produced positive and negative results. Researchers in this country conducted research to find out why vaccine acceptance is lower than that of non-pharmaceutical intervention like wearing facemask in public. They used the Health Belief Model to inform the study (Kollamparambil et al., 2021).

The findings showed that vaccine acceptance was estimated at 70.8% and vaccine hesitancy against COVID19 was estimated at 29.2%. That was a significant proportion of the population and which raised concerns regarding the success of achieving herd immunity through vaccination. However, Sallam (2021) stated that vaccine acceptance in South Africa was lower than what happened in countries such as Ecuador, Malaysia, Indonesia and China; but higher than countries like Kuwait, Jordan, Italy, Russia, Poland, US, and France.

According to the UN (2021), nine African countries, including South Africa, Morocco and Tunisia, had reached the 10% goal at the beginning of September and another six managed to sprint ahead to reach the target immediately after due to rising vaccine deliveries.

In Kollamparambil et al. (2021), the reasons that the participants gave for vaccine hesitancy was primarily due to concerns regarding the side effects and efficacy of the vaccine. This could be because of social media discussions and official communication about the vaccines. Using the health belief model, the study found that perceived risk of infection with the mediating role of efficacy as a key predictor of vaccine intention, higher awareness of COVID19 related information, and higher household income, are correlated with lower vaccine hesitancy and those who are less informed on COVID19 are also found to be those who perceive low-risk (Kollamparambil et al., 2021).

An important note about the COVID-19 situation in South Africa is that 27 million people have been vaccinated. This is the only country in Africa which is in the forefront when it comes to COVID-19 research. That is why the South African scientists were able to detect the Omicron variant of COVID-19 when the world was still talking about the Delta variant. Risk communication in various countries and studies conducted in some African countries reveal that appropriate media contents have been disseminated, then the social network users go online to spread misinformation and other inaccurate messages as the study in Egypt showed. However, there are those who accepted the message and have followed the protective measures available to them (Abdelhafz et al., 2020; Shehata & Abdeldaim, 2021).

### 2.3 *Protection Motivation Theory*

Protection motivation theory was developed by Rogers in 1975 in order to better understand fear appeals and how people cope with them. Protection motivation theory proposes that people protect themselves

based on two factors: threat appraisal and coping appraisal. Threat appraisal assesses the severity of the situation and examines how serious the situation is, while coping appraisal is how one responds to the situation. Threat appraisal consists of the perceived severity of a threatening event and the perceived probability of its occurrence, or vulnerability. Coping appraisal consists of perceived response efficacy, or an individual's expectation that carrying out the recommended action will remove the threat (Schiavo, 2007).

The PMT further stipulates that the emotional state of fear arousal influences attitudes and behavior change indirectly through an appraisal of the severity of the danger and belief in one's capability to execute the recommended course of action successfully. The theory has four constructs named on page 23.

The PMT hypothesizes that the motivation to protect oneself from danger is a function of four cognitive beliefs. These are that the threat is severe; that one is personally vulnerable to the threat; the coping response is effective in averting the threat; and one has the ability to perform the coping response (Chen et al. 2021).

Behavioral change interventions widely use fear appeal to be effective. Fear appeals, when messages contain a description of perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, and expressions of response efficacy, can positively affect individuals' knowledge, attitude, and performance, especially in onetime behaviors (e.g., Covid-19 vaccination) (Ansari-Moghaddam et al., 2021).

### *2.3.1 Examples of the Application of the Theory*

By looking at COVID-19 pandemic, one is able to assess the threat and then prepare for how to cope or protect oneself against the pandemic. People already know COVID-19 messages and this awareness allows one to plan to act. That is why some people have accepted to follow COVID-19 measures such as wearing masks, washing hands with soap, using sanitizers, social distancing and being vaccinated. After using all these measures, the threat of contracting COVID-19 is eliminated.

To demonstrate that this theory can be used in relation to COVID-19 scenario, Tong et al. (2021) in their study looked for efficient strategies to promote vaccination. This study tested whether the protection motivation theory (PMT), a cognitive model based upon threat and coping appraisals, would account for the differences in vaccination intentions. The findings showed that:

The perceived severity of COVID-19 infection and response cost (i.e., the perceived costs of receiving COVID-19 vaccines) were significantly associated with vaccination intention for high-efficacy vaccines, while the response efficacy of lowering the COVID-19 impact with COVID-19 vaccination was positively associated with vaccination intention for general and low-efficacy vaccines (Tong et al., 2021: 8).

Another study conducted in Iran by Ansari-Moghaddam et al. (2021) examined COVID-19 vaccination intention determinants based on the protection motivation theory (PMT). It investigated the interrelationship between COVID-19 vaccination intention and perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived self-efficacy, and perceived response efficacy. The findings of this study found the PMT constructs useful in predicting COVID-19 vaccination intention. This is in agreement with the findings of the study conducted in China (Tong et al., 2021).

Observing that PMT can be applied, Bish et al. suggested that PMT is a useful framework for understanding the cognitive factors underlying vaccination decisions. Subsequent empirical studies have substantiated the predictive effect of the PMT variables on the intention to receive vaccination.

Some people oppose the vaccines for ideological reasons because COVID-19 and the response to it have become politicized in some countries. Countries need to monitor vaccine acceptance or hesitancy to inform appropriate risk communication (Lewandowsky et al., 2021).

What the studies discussed in this chapter show that communication of vital messages to varied and specific audiences has proven to effectively influence the knowledge, attitude, and belief of people towards healthy behavioural choices (Adesina et al., 2020). In essence, the three theories discussed in this chapter are applicable in Africa as they are in other continents. Examples from Africa, China and Iran have supported this.

### 3 MEDIA COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

These challenges have manifested to some extent in previously experienced outbreaks, but in more problematic ways in the present Covid-19 health crisis. The most worrisome of these likely challenges is the ubiquity of disinformation, untruths, and misinformation in our contemporary society. Besides the thriving system of misinformation, there are other problems associated with use of user-generated contents and social media

for health communication, which include the use of conspiracy theory and trolling (Manganello et al., 2020). Adebisi et al.'s (2021) study of 13 African countries concluded that the RCCE response activities were not without challenges, which included distrust in government, cultural, social, and religious resistance, and inertia among others (Adedibisi et al., 2021).

#### 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The discussions and literature reviewed for this chapter led to the following recommendations that can enable the countries and their peoples to benefit from effective communication:

1. To encourage people to get vaccinated against COVID-19, more emphasis should be placed on perceived severity and perceived response efficiency, because vaccination intention and actual vaccination uptake are related.
2. Identifying the factors that influence vaccination intention before the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine can pave the way for community acceptance of the vaccine.
3. Future intervention to increase COVID-19 vaccine acceptance can consider the PMT as a conceptual framework.
4. There is an all-round need to enhance vaccine efficacy related messaging, particularly targeting non-blacks and religious individuals. Concerns regarding the side-effects of vaccines need to be addressed with more transparent scientific information together with the associated risk-benefit analysis.
5. More experts in the area of infectious diseases should be interviewed so as to better educate the general public about infectious diseases and emerging urgent health issues.
6. Ensure the target population has the capability, opportunity and motivation to get vaccinated.
7. Increase public understanding of vaccine safety, benefits, side-effects and requirements for full vaccination. Use mass media campaigns but ensure messages are tested first.
8. The first step in addressing cultural differences in vaccine acceptance is to increase awareness of existing differences.



9. About Ebola in Nigeria, it is recommended that reportage of the Ebola disease for effective awareness, prevention and control of the virus should be continuous.
10. In addition to explaining that one can be asymptomatic and still transmit the coronavirus, as discussed, these messages should call on their responsibility to protect friends and family members who are at risk because of chronic diseases among or old age of some Nigerians.
11. From a communication perspective, it is imperative to continue risk messaging, hand in hand with clearer information on the efficacy of the vaccines (South African study).
12. More studies should be conducted to establish the discrepancies among countries in relation to COVID-19 vaccination, transmission and deaths (e.g., Africa vs Europe).

## 5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the media have played a great role in curbing the spread of both Ebola and COVID-19 pandemics but they need to do continuous and investigative reportage of disease outbreaks so as to better inform, educate, and prepare the population about infectious diseases and emerging urgent public health issues after COVID-19.

The study in 13 African countries showed that enhancing global solidarity in emergency preparedness and response, and the mobilization of science and cooperation can yield ideas and measures for controlling the pandemic. Communication on COVID-19 and other viral diseases has taken place and the studies conducted show that different countries have prepared and handled the pandemic differently. However, most of the COVID-19 reactions have been similar in many countries. This can be attributed to the reach of social media networks globally. Finally, it can be concluded that many theories that are applicable in other parts of the world are also applicable in the African situation.

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# Contextualizing the Technology Acceptance Model for Application in Health Communication in Africa

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## I INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is produced within a cultural, social and economic context, implying that knowledge production differs from one context to the other. A given region could have peculiarities that are unique to her, hence knowledge produced without that region should not be assumed to be fully representative of the region. Consequently, when there are no sufficient theories to explain and present the knowledge produced in and from Africa, there is a possibility that certain unique aspects and peculiarities about the continent could be ignored. In addition, with overreliance on the West for knowledge production about Africa, the role of Africa in communicating about herself could continue being masked and the continent denied the credit for what it produces (Asante & Hanchey, 2021).

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One way of measuring knowledge produced within a given context is by considering the scholarship output from that region. Examining scholarship output from Africa reveals that the continent is underrepresented and possibly misrepresented. For example, Africa is underrepresented in production of scientific papers and other scholarship materials when compared with what is produced from other continents (Dalu et al., 2018). This is evidenced by reports that put Africa's research output at only around 2% of world's output (Kasprowicz et al., 2020). In addition, nearly 90% of the research output from Africa comes from only 10 countries (Ali & Elbadawy, 2021). These countries are South Africa, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Nigeria, Morocco, Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda.

The low output of scholarship from and by Africa means that the inclusion and exclusion of the region's core issues is determined externally and not by Africans (Mare, 2020). This implies that Africa's values and ways could be excluded if theorizing Africa is left to scholars from other regions. In addition, scholars from outside Africa may ignore knowledge sources from Africa or not recognize the agency of the continent in knowledge production (Asante & Hanchey, 2021). The result of this has been the lack of theories developed for and by Africa. This leaves scholarship from the region to be largely guided by theoretical perspectives from the West (Mare, 2020). Such kind of communication scholarship was faulted by Miller et al. (2013) for not accounting for the lived experiences of people based away from the West and more so the over one billion people resident in Africa. Hence, the communication realities and peculiarities of the African people cannot be assumed to be subsets of the communication realities from the West.

In the past, Africa has been labeled as the dark continent, and 'unknown' and 'mysterious' on the matter of communication scholarship (for example Miller et al., 2013). While this labeling could be easily dismissed as harsh and judgmental, statistics on scholarship output from the continent point to a picture that should be of concern to African scholars (Kasprowicz et al., 2020; Ali & Elbadawy, 2021). The result of this low scholarship output is the lack of sufficient theories developed for the continent by African communication scholars. Yet, a seminal publication by Craig (1999), argued that the communication field had too many theories to be taught in one course. Presenting an ironical situation—where Africa is said to be lacking in terms of communication theories in a world that is said to have too many theories.

This begs the question of what is the significance or worth of having theories developed by and for Africa. Part of the answer to this lies in the thinking that communication evolves historically, hence the cultural and intellectual context is of great contribution to communication scholarship (Craig, 1999). This means communities with different cultures and histories are more likely to have differing ideas of communication. Therefore, if a society is not represented in theorizing itself, its communication ideas may not be given the commensurate attention. Secondly, the problems faced in Africa cannot be assumed to be the same as those faced by residents of other continents. Lastly, according to Craig (1999), theories have practical implications to the society. This is especially useful in providing a unifying way of looking at issues related to communication, implying that theories developed from and for a given geographical context could present a good way of considering how to improve what that area contributes in solving its own problems.

## 2 THEORIES IN TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION STUDIES

One of the major problems facing countries in Africa relates to the health sector. It is not a secret that many countries in the developing world lack sufficient health and trained personnel to meet the needs of their citizenry (Lone & Ahmad, 2020; Paintsil, 2020; Vanderpuye et al., 2020). Meaning that access to health facilities and doctors is a major health challenge in many developing countries in Africa. This health burden demands innovative ways to address the challenges that the masses in those countries continue to suffer. One strategy that has been recommended is the right use of information communication technology in addressing health issues (Fayoyin, 2016). There is increased use of digital technology especially in terms of innovations in the health sector. Those technological innovations have had great impact on health communication, particularly increasing use of technologically motivated innovations in screening, assessing, monitoring and treating different kinds of diseases (Marrie et al., 2019). One such technology is mobile applications (apps).

There are apps developed for different kinds of activities. For instance, there are apps for banking, studying, traveling, cooking, and exercising among many others, as the number of health-related apps keeps increasing every day. For example, reports indicate that in the United States of America (USA), there were over 40,000 health related apps in the year



2015 (Verissimo, 2018). This was nearly seven years ago, hence there is high likelihood that the number has gone higher.

There are several apps launched in Africa for use in health communication. For example, some of the common apps in Kenya are *Daktari Popote*, *M-Tiba*, *MedAfrica*, *MyDawa* and *Sema Doc*.

There are many benefits of using apps in the health sector. The apps may facilitate access to relevant and timely information (immediacy), the user may access health information from anywhere in the world using the app (mobility), and the cost of accessing the information is greatly lowered (Cilliers et al., 2018). In addition, the apps create an environment that allows continuous interaction between doctors and patients, making it possible to constantly monitor patients' progress, and enabling review of the patient even when they are not near the hospital (Al-Muhtadi et al., 2019). Hence, the use of mobile phone apps has the potential to increase convenience, efficiency and accessibility in the health sector.

However, despite these expected benefits, it should not be assumed that people are using the apps as expected. For instance, some studies have found that most of the apps are either not being used as expected or are not meeting the needs of the target groups (Marrie et al., 2019). This projects a need for studies to look into the attitudes, perceptions, behavior and practices towards the adoption of apps (innovations) in health communication. For such studies to be done effectively, there is need for them to be guided by well-grounded and contextualized theories. Which raises the question of whether there are theories in Africa that can inform scholarship in the area of use of apps in health communication.

There are several theoretical justifications which scholars rely on when studying adoption of new technologies. The most popular theories in technology adoption related research are Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Diffusion of Innovations (DoI), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Abu-Dalbouh, 2013; Bol et al., 2018).

TPB was proposed by Ajzen in 1985 as an extension of Theory of Reasoned Action (Nganda et al., 2020). The theory hypothesizes individual's intention as the main determinant of performing a given behavior. Intention, according to Ajzen (1985), is a function of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Several studies have confirmed the validity of TPB in predicting behavior. For example, the study by Nganda et al. (2020), found social referents to have significant influence on condom use intentions. Also, a study by Fan et al. (2021) in China

found the theory useful in predicting behavior towards vaccines while Lim and An (2021) found the theory to be applicable in understanding consumers' purchasing behavior.

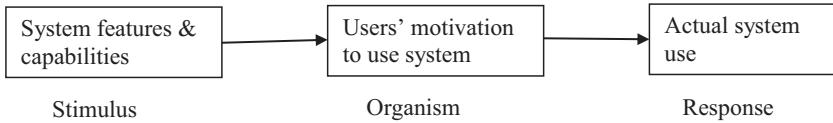
DOI was proposed by Rogers, and the main elements of the theory are innovation, communication channels, time and social systems (Dillette & Ponting, 2021). This theory is useful in explaining how different ideas and technologies are adopted in a given society.

The above theories are useful in studying adoption behavior. However, they are not considered as the best-fit for the studies on adoption of technological innovations in health communication for the following reasons. TPB is not specific to adoption of technology, same as DoI. Secondly, innovations in DoI refer to ideas, practices and technologies, making its application too wide.

Studies on use of health-related apps touch on communication, technology, and even health disciplines. Hence, there is a need for a theory that is applicable across different disciplines. TAM is an interdisciplinary theory. It can be applied in studies in information science, business, management, and communication among many others. Considering the multidisciplinary nature of communication as captured by Craig (1999), communication problems are best studied using theories and models that are also multidisciplinary. Furthermore, TAM is one of the leading theoretical approaches employed by researchers in studying the acceptance of technological innovations (Granic & Marangunic, 2019). Consequently, TAM seems to be more appropriate for studies on adoption of technological innovations such as apps and their use in health communication.

### *2.1 The Origin and Development of TAM*

TAM was proposed by Davis in 1985 and the intention was to provide a mechanism of understanding acceptance or rejection of technologies (Granic & Marangunic, 2019). The Theory of Reasoned Action and the Fishbein Model of 1967 provided the foundation which Davis used to develop his first model (Diop et al., 2019; Alfadda & Mahdi, 2021). That first model (shown below) presented the motivation of a user as the link between a system and actual use of the system. The features and capabilities of an innovation were seen as parts of the system, which created the stimulus to use the innovation (Granic & Marangunic, 2019). This was



**Fig. 1** Diagram of first model by Davis

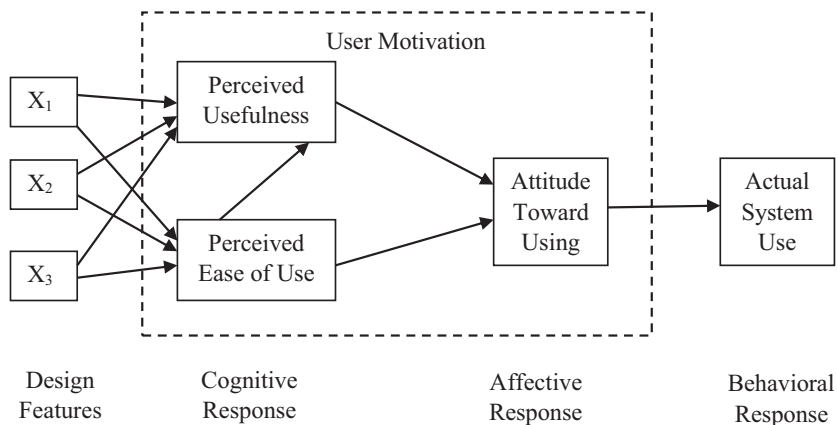
then mediated by the motivation of the targeted user to use the system. This is captured in the diagram above (Fig. 1).

Building on this first model, Davis replaced the key elements of Fishbein Model/TRA with perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, thereby developing a model that could explain the behavior of users towards technologies such as computers (Kwon & Chidambaram, 2000). However, there were two major differences between the Fishbein model/TRA and TAM. The first was the inclusion of subjective norms in the Fishbein model and TRA, and its exclusion in TAM (Davis, 1985). Fishbein hypothesized that subjective norms had some influence on the intention to perform or not perform a given behavior while Davis said that the users he was studying were encountering the innovations for the first time hence no opportunity for influence from referents (1985).

The second key exclusion from the Fishbein model/TRA was behavioral intention (Davis, 1985). His argument was that TAM intended to predict the attitude towards use and not intention, noting that intention (which he acknowledged as a better predictor than attitude) required more time to form, and his focus was on the attitude towards the innovation/system (Davis, 1985, pp. 38–39).

The input from both the Fishbein Model and TRA enabled Davis to modify his earlier suggested model to the one captured in the diagram below. The input of TRA is especially seen in the modification of TAM to include new constructs especially under what he labelled as user's motivation (Granic & Marangunic, 2019). The two constructs, perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEoU) are the core predictors of behavioral attitude (Alfadda & Mahdi, 2021). This means that attitude is dependent on how users perceive the usefulness and ease of using a new technology (Fig. 2).

As depicted in the diagram above, Davis hypothesized that attitude was a key determinant towards using or not using a system (Alfadda & Mahdi, 2021). He further saw that attitude was influenced by PU and PEoU and the influence of PEoU on attitude was seen as both direct and indirect



**Fig. 2** Diagram of final model proposed by Davis in 1985

(through PU). The two constructs, together with attitude, represented the motivation of a user towards using a system. In addition, he proposed that PEOU and PU were influenced by the features of the innovation (represented by  $X_1$ ,  $X_2$  and  $X_3$  in the diagram above) (Granic & Marangunic, 2019).

### 2.1.1 Explaining the Main Constructs of the Model

As highlighted in above, the key elements of TAM are attitude, PU and PEOU. These key constructs are explained in the section below.

#### *Attitude*

Attitude refers to the feelings a user has towards a new technology (Diop et al., 2019); it can be either positive (favorable) or negative (unfavorable). When the attitude of a user towards a technology is positive/favorable, then there is a higher likelihood of adopting the new technology. On the other hand, if the attitude of the user is negative/unfavorable, the likelihood of the new technology being adopted is low.

#### *Perceived Usefulness (PU)*

PU, according to Davis (1985), should be understood as "...the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular system would enhance

his or her job performance” (p. 24). Other scholars have explained PU in their own way as they adapt the model to their studies. For instance, Granic and Marangunic (2019) explained PU as the degree of one’s belief that a given innovation would enhance their performance. Also, Kwon and Chidambaram (2000) labeled PU as “...expectation of external rewards” (p. 1). These definitions point to a common understanding; PU is about the ability of a technology to improve the performance of a user. This variable has been confirmed by scholars to be the strongest determinant in technology adoption (for example, Granic & Marangunic, 2019; Sagnier et al., 2020).

#### *Perceived Ease of Use (PEoU)*

PEoU was defined by Davis (1985) as “...the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular system would be free of physical and mental effort” (p. 24). This, according to Granic and Marangunic (2019) refers to the belief that using an innovation will be free of effort.

#### *2.1.2 Relation Between the Constructs*

As shown in the TAM diagram (Fig. 2), the key determinants of a user’s motivation to adopt a new technology are PEoU, PU, and attitude towards using the technology (Granic & Marangunic, 2019). The PEoU and PU are influenced by the characteristics of the technology being introduced and in turn they influence the attitude towards the technology. Then, the attitude of the user is directly linked to the actual use of the technology. This section highlights how the constructs of TAM relate to each other. This will be based on results from past studies that have employed the model.

To begin with, in a meta-analysis conducted by Ma and Liu (2004), it was confirmed that just as asserted by TAM, there is a strong correlation between PEoU and PU. Also, a study conducted by Dasgupta et al. (2002) among undergraduate students to test the adoption of a software used in delivering coursework in a university found that PEoU had significant effect on PU of the technology being studied. These studies agree with the assumption of Davis (1985) that PEoU has direct influence on PU.

However, there is a possibility that the relationship between PU and PEoU may vary from one study to another. Diop et al. (2019) explained the cause of the inconsistencies as the differences in sample and context of the studies. For instance, an online survey carried out by Chung et al.

(2010) reported that there was no significant relationship between PEOU and PU. They considered this finding to be contrary to both their expectation and the findings of other studies that they had reviewed. In their view, the variance could be explained by the fact the respondents were already familiar with the internet applications they were testing, hence their conclusion that where users are already familiar with the functions of a technological innovations, then PEOU is not an important predictor of PU (Chung et al., 2010). Also, a study by Lee and Lehto (2013) found no significant relationship between PEOU and PU. This underscores the importance of considering the context within which the technology is being introduced. For someone who is already using a given health app, PEOU may not necessarily be important in the perception of how useful the technology is.

Secondly, TAM proposed that PEOU influences attitude towards use of a new innovation. This has been confirmed by several studies (examples are Granic & Marangunic, 2019; Pi & Huang, 2011; Lule et al., 2012). These studies found PEOU to have direct effect on intention to use a new technology. In addition, PEOU was found to have indirect effect on attitude (Liu et al., 2005; Pi & Huang, 2011). The indirect effect of PEOU was mediated through PU.

Nonetheless, not all studies agree with this assertion of TAM. For example, the study by Sagnier et al. (2020) found PEOU to have no significant effect on intention to use virtual reality technology. Also, an earlier study by Dasgupta et al. (2002) among undergraduate students found that PEOU did not have direct significant effect on use of the technology. The difference might have been caused by aspects specific to the software that was studied. Secondly, the level of the user, whether novice or experienced was found to significantly determine actual technology use (Dasgupta et al., 2002).

Thirdly, studies that have applied TAM have returned varied findings on the proposition of TAM that PU has direct effect on intention to use an innovation. For example, studies by Sagnier et al. (2020), and Lee and Lehto (2013) confirmed the assertion of TAM that PU had significant effect on behavioral attitude. On the contrary, a study by Vahdat et al. (2021) found no relationship between PU and attitude towards using mobile apps technology.

The study by Vahdat and others agrees with findings of an earlier study by Dasgupta et al. (2002) showing that PU had insignificant relationship with actual use of the software being studied. However, looking at the

study by Dasgupta et al. (2002), this discrepancy could have emanated from the kind of sample that was studied. Some of the respondents were already using the software, hence their responses were based on actual use and not their perceptions. While for the other respondents who had no prior experience with the software, their responses were based on perceptions and not actual use.

Perhaps, that is why the study reported huge differences in the use of technology by novices when compared to those with prior experience (Dasgupta et al., 2002). While TAM could be useful irrespective of whether one is studying novice or experienced users, it would be recommendable to study each group separately.

Looking at the relationship between the elements of TAM and comparing these with the findings of empirical studies on the use of the model, it becomes evident that there are major differences in findings from studies that applied the model. There are findings that both agree and disagree with the suggestions of TAM. While there is a general agreement that some studies differ on their findings on TAM, the explanations given for some results seem not satisfactory. Perhaps, the differences partly depend on the kind of extensions that the scholars add to the model.

### *2.1.3 Critiques and Shortcomings of TAM*

Nearly every theory or model has its shortcomings. TAM is not an exception. There are several shortcomings of the model that emerge from studies that have tested the model. To start with, TAM has been criticized for limiting researchers to only two principal constructs (PU and PEoU) to explain and predict adoption of technologies. One of these critics is Bagozzi (2007; as cited in Chung et al., 2010), who felt that the use of the two constructs from the original TAM in a way prevented researchers from examining other determinants that could potentially be useful in explaining and predicting adoption of technological innovations. However, the presence of the various extended forms of the model shows that the model allows an inclusion of other constructs. Hence, researchers are not limited to the two constructs of the original TAM.

Secondly, the constructs of TAM are not unique nor exclusive to the model. There is evidence that the constructs had been used earlier before TAM was developed. For instance, an earlier study by Schultz and Slevin reported that perceived usefulness was valuable in a decision model that the study explored (Chuttur, 2009). Another study by Albert Bandura

(1982; as cited in Chuttur, 2009) proved the value of both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of control in behavior prediction. The study by Bandura did not use the exact names of the constructs as labelled by Davis. Instead, he used self-efficacy which represented perceived ease of use and outcome judgement instead of perceived usefulness (Chuttur, 2009). This shows that the constructs of TAM are even older than the model itself. Nonetheless, their uniqueness in TAM is that the model was the first major attempt to bring the constructs together to help in understanding the acceptance of new technologies.

Another weakness of TAM is that it relies on self-reported data. Measuring the usefulness of a technology could be better achieved by testing actual use rather than self-reported expectations on use (Chuttur, 2009). This has the danger of giving subjective responses. Also, the perception of ease of use and usefulness could be different from what users get after real use. While the criticism makes sense, it is important to appreciate that there are decisions that potential users make before the actual use of a technology. There should be a clear understanding of this because it could be helpful in making adjustments to the technology to make it more acceptable and useful. Furthermore, understanding what influences use of new technology can be helpful to developers and communicators in knowing how to introduce new technologies to potential users.

#### *2.1.4 Contextualizing the Model*

Despite the shortcomings discussed in the section above, theories like TAM are necessary, because although there are so many technological innovations being released to users, there is usually no guarantee of adoption (Karahanna & Straub, 1999). Developers spent resources in coming up with innovations that they feel will be useful. However, some of them end up being a waste of resources. Consequently, it is necessary to understand what dictates the adoption or rejection of a new technology. In the absence of health communication theories that have been developed with a consideration of Africa's peculiarities and conditions, contextualizing the available theories seems like one of the most appropriate options.

There have been several suggestions by scholars on extending TAM. Extending a theory or model is useful in contextualizing it to become suitable to the study at hand. In addition to PEOU and PU, several extensions of TAM have been proposed by various scholars. One of the earliest suggestions to extend the model was given by Davis and others (Lee & Chang, 2011). They felt that there was a need for a construct to



explain how users enjoyed their experience of using any new technology. Hence, the inclusion of 'perceived enjoyment' on the model.

In addition, Lee and Lehto (2013), proposed that TAM be extended by including perceptions of fitness of technology for the task at hand and content richness as potential influencers of PU, and user satisfaction as an additional predictor of intention. The findings of their study confirmed that perceptions of fitness of the task and content richness positively influenced PU (Lee & Lehto, 2013).

Other suggestions for extension include the following. Liu et al. (2005) suggested the addition of concentration and the type of presentation material to the model to make it relevant for an academic set up. Lule et al. (2012) extended the model by including perceived credibility, transactional cost and self-efficacy. Pai and Huang (2011) extended TAM by including information quality, service quality and system quality. The proposal on quality by Pai and Huang agrees with recent findings of a study by Diop et al. (2019) who used TAM to understand the adoption of a travel related technology among drivers, and found that the quality of the technology had effects on user's perceived ease of use. Further, a recent study found that trust was a key determinant of intention to use or not use telemedicine (Kamal et al., 2020). The study concluded that trust in systems used for telemedicine was of great significance to users. Where users have high trust towards the technology, they are more likely to use the technology; if the trust is low, then intention to use the technology could be low.

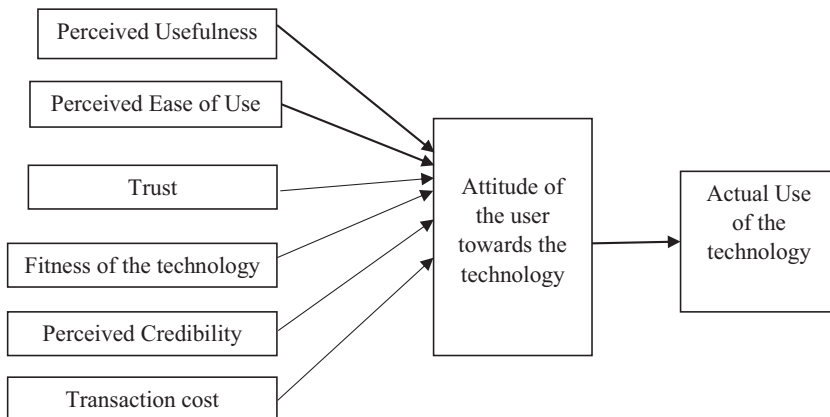
It should however be noted that not all proposed extensions are supported by findings of the studies that proposed them. For instance, Chung et al. (2010) proposed the inclusion of age. Their assumption was that age has a significant positive effect on PU. On the contrary, results from their study revealed that there was a negative relationship between age and PU. Their explanation was that older adults seem to have poor confidence, skills and knowledge of technological innovations. Hence, they are more likely to face challenges in using IT products and also accessing sites that do not give quality information. Older users may not know what to look for as confirmation of the credibility of a source of information. For example, when seeking help online on using a given application, they may not know how to reach out to those who can be considered as experts in the area.

To further illustrate this, the findings of a mail survey that was conducted by Kwon and Chidambaram (2000) are presented. The scholars had

hypothesized that adoption of a new technology is determined by individual characteristics, PEOU, PU, enjoyment, and social pressure. The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant relationship between individual characteristics (in general) on perceptions towards a new technology. However, when age was considered in isolation from the other variables, it had significant relationship with use of technology. Other demographic characteristics such as gender and income level did not report any significant effect. In addition, the findings confirmed a significant positive relationship between PEOU and motivation to use the technology under study.

With all these suggestions for extending the model, it becomes challenging to know which extended format may work or not work for a given study. This, however, should not be assumed to mean that extending a model weakens it. The many extended forms of TAM present both a challenge and an opportunity to scholars. A challenge in that it complicates the model in a way that emerging scholars could struggle on what extended model to use. However, it is also an opportunity for scholars to make the model suitable for their contexts. Priorities could differ based on culture, region, race, religion, and age among many other aspects. Making the model suitable for each context increases the chance for scholars to get more relevant findings. Considering that TAM was developed in USA, there is need to contextualize for its application in Africa.

Considering the studies reviewed above, this chapter proposes an extended model, which borrows from some of the studies, for application in health communication in Africa. This considers some of the attributes that are seen to carry more weight in communication in the continent. For example, aspects of cost are key determinants in the adoption of innovations and decision making in many developing countries. Secondly, whether the innovation is seen as fitting to the problem at hand could contribute to decisions on adoption. Lastly, perceptions of credibility and trust could influence the adoption of technologies in health communication. Where trust towards an innovation and its developers is high, there is higher possibility of users adopting the innovation. Hence, this chapter proposes the inclusion of the following extensions to produce an extended model that can be used in health communication in Africa: perceived enjoyment (Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1992), fitness of technology (Lee & Lehto, 2013), perceived credibility (Lule et al., 2012), transaction cost (Lule et al., 2012), and trust (Kamal et al., 2020). This is in addition to the original constructs of the model (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3** Proposed extended model for health communication technology in Africa

The above diagram shows that perceptions of ease of use, usefulness, trust, fitness, credibility and cost are major determinants in the adoption of technologies. Hence health communicators in Africa should consider this in pushing the adoption of innovations such as apps. In addition, researchers may find this extended model more appropriate for studies on adoption of technologies in Africa.

#### *Why an Extended TAM*

Most of the studies that employed TAM were conducted in the developed countries, including USA (Dasgupta et al., 2002; Karahanna & Straub, 1999; Marrie et al., 2019), China (Diop et al., 2019), and South Korea (Lee & Chang, 2011; Lee & Lehto, 2013). While this is useful in providing a good understanding of what is happening in those countries, the findings may not necessarily be generalizable to the African continent.

Few studies have been conducted in Africa using TAM. Examples of these include South Africa (Cilliers et al., 2018), Uganda (Densmore, 2012), and Kenya (Lule et al., 2012; Ochilo et al., 2019). Furthermore, the studies conducted in Kenya using TAM were done in other disciplines (not communication). The study by Lule et al. (2012) was on mobile-banking in Kenya while the study by Ochilo et al. (2019) was on plant health. Consequently, African scholars need to contextualize TAM for its application in health communication in their respective contexts.

### 3 CONCLUSION

Communication technology, which has advanced greatly in the twenty-first century, has increased opportunities for dissemination of health information. One of these opportunities is in the use of apps in health communication. With concerns raised on the adoption of health apps, there is need to study their adoption especially in the African context. Out of many theories that have been used in studying adoption of technologies, TAM seems to be the most appropriate for studies related to use of technologies in health communication. Many studies have confirmed the validity of TAM and most of them that used TAM were conducted in the developed countries; the few studies that have used TAM in Africa have been in other disciplines and not health communication. Hence, the need to contextualize TAM for its application in health communication in Africa has been the proposition of this chapter. This contextualization of TAM should include additional constructs such as cost, trust, fitness, and credibility.

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