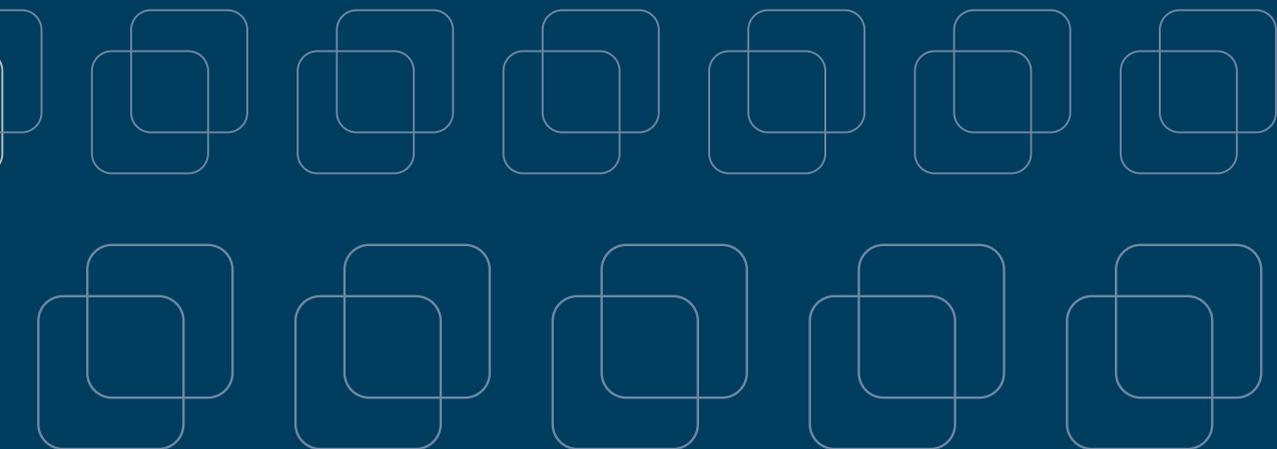


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LEAD ARTICLE

Relationship between press freedom and human development: Evidence from Eastern African countries

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to establish a nexus between the three dimensions of press freedom (economic, political and legal environments) and human development by taking five-year longitudinal data pertaining to six Eastern African countries: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda. The interrogation is theoretically informed by Amartya Sen's Capability Approach which forms the conceptual foundation for the operationalization of the Human Development Index. The empirical examination of the association among the variables of interest employed both correlation and multiple panel linear regression analysis methods. Prior to the analysis, a protocol was followed that included preliminary tests of statistical assumptions underlying the use of the methods to ensure that the statistical chemistry of the data was suitable to the methods selected. The preliminary tests provided evidence that the data was indeed appropriate for the methods selected. Subsequent multiple regression tests indicated that both the political ($p = .000$) and economic ($p = .008$) dimensions of press freedom are important predictors of human development in the Eastern Africa region, lending support to the extant literature. However, the legal environment investigation of the role of press legislation failed to qualify as an explanatory variable ($p = .071$). Recommendations for further research are presented based on the limitations noted.

Keywords

Press freedom, political environment, economic environment, legal environment, regression, estimation, model.

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Introduction

Press freedom is the communication right to self-expression through a variety of modalities in full freedom and independence based on constitutional and legal provisions as may be enjoyed by professional journalists or non-journalists. Press freedom has been historically based on American conceptions of liberal media ecosystems characterized by freedom of competition, diversity, independence and openness and absence of regulatory inhibitions (Merrill, 2000). In recent years the key construct of freedom of the press and its association with human development has attracted growing scholarly attention. Indeed, the idea of a free press has considerable intuitive appeal and rhetorical force as a desideratum for development as it represents a climate of enabling freedom for information generation, dissemination and utilization as an input for advances in human development endeavors in a wide variety of dimensions. Press freedom is a dynamic concept and its horizon has widened following massive technological developments that have inevitably transformed the communication realities of the contemporary world. Therefore, freedoms now necessarily include digital liberties in the receptive and expressive realms.

Human development itself is an important construct which pertains to freedom granted to citizens to take the life courses of their choosing, and to strive freely in their legitimate life pursuits of growth and development as they struggle to prevail over life's constraints. It is a reference to life paths being open and the possibility of reaching goals being left to the individual (UNDP, 1990). Human development is multidimensional as it encompasses resources, capabilities and functions-representing a broader framework of conception of freedoms. Human development is generally assessed by the Human Development Index, which takes into stock: life expectancy; literacy rates; access to education; gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, operationalized as buying power (UNESCO, 2010).

There is a growing body of literature discussing the global association between freedom of the press as a desirable catalyst and the human development level. Indeed, the idea of a free press has a lot of intuitive appeal as a desideratum for development as it represents a climate of freedom for information generation, dissemination and utilization as an input for advances of human development endeavors in a wide variety of dimensions. Freedom also represents enabling conditions for the best ideas to emerge in the market that can then be utilized in the service of humanity and its progress and betterment.

However, the link between press freedom and human development is not unequivocally straightforward and conclusive casualty, or correlation, has not

been established (Gunaratne, 2002). The absence of a universal, definitive empirical nexus is compounded by definitional imprecision of the constructs involved in econometric regression, not to mention the numerous mediating or moderating factors. It is also further compounded by the plethora of variables of relevance and contextual idiosyncrasies that are cultural, ideological or geographical. On the whole, while there is some literature analyzing the association between the freedom of the press and human development and its dimensions (Alam & Shah, 2013), there is still a need for more work involving specific contexts. In fact, there has been a research call for a closer look at the picture examining poor countries as empirical inputs or countries that tend to appear to be a degree different (Burrowes, 1997; Gunaratne, 2002; Islam & Osmani, 2017; Rogers, 1997). The Eastern African countries seem to fit with such categorization. Thus, take Eritrea and its dire state of the media as consistently confirmed by global reports, Ethiopia as a World Bank acclaimed developing nation, despite a government dominated media sector and a weak legal environment coupled with recurrent and often spiraling ethnic unrest, Kenya as a nation with a tradition of vibrant press, and Uganda, Sudan, and Djibouti with their own specific features of relevance in regard to the more descriptive, expository, classificatory and analytical legal, political and economic environments. The kaleidoscope of countries in Eastern Africa region call attention to investigation along the lines of the recommendations for study of a peripheral assemblage of states. Therefore, this study aims at establishing the relationship between press freedom and human development with a particular focus on Eastern African countries. Assisted by the extant literature, this study sets out to test the hypothesized relationships between the three press freedom dimensions (economic environment, political environment and legal environment) and human development in the region of study.

In this study the following hypotheses will be tested:

H1: There is a significant relationship between the legal environment (one of the Press Freedom indices) and human development of Eastern African countries.

H2: There is a significant relationship between the political environment (one of the Press Freedom indices) and human development of Eastern African countries.

H3: There is a significant relationship between the economic environment (one of the Press Freedom indices) and human development of Eastern African countries.

Theoretical framework and related literature

Considering its potential scholars have proposed the use of Amartya Sen's capability approach as a framework for studies in communication for development and social transformation (Jacobson, 2016). The approach has advantages over modernization theory now largely discredited for its linear and oversimplified conceptions of the complexities of development as well as its undue focus on the cultural factor based on its Eurocentric blindfolds (Matunhu, 2011). The core of the line of thinking is that freedom is an enabler of multiple development outcomes. Thus, political (including media and communication) freedoms would have a ripple effect as they would lead to further yields in terms of socio-political betterment. The model addresses in the main the capability framework.

Core concepts in the framework are functionings and capabilities. Functionings are expressed in a binary of 'beings and doings' (Sen, 1999). Functionings address a multiplicity of states of being expressed in such examples as being free, content, frustrated, or informed, connected, left out, etc. Functionings can also mean communicating, sending, posting, protesting, voting, commenting etc. (Fleurbaey, 2002; Kaufman, 2006a).

On the other hand, capabilities refer to liberties that enable performance such as a constitutional framework permitting free self-expression, or a forum to express a political opinion in mediated ways or in person extending the broad framework of life freedoms and choices (Sen, 1999). Thus, while the functionings refer to ends, capabilities address the question of the means. The means and ends are tied by the 'conversion factor'. 'Capability' in context would not solely refer to a citizen's expressive abilities per se but to a receptive or expressive communication opportunity made available through a negotiation of intra-personal and contextual conversion protocols (Robeyns, 2005).

The conversion is important as media structures or media freedom legislation alone is not enough. A free press must be in place for a free flow of ideas from which society can choose the ones with the highest utility and rationality. While in the human development project '...political freedoms and liberties are permissive advantages, their effectiveness would depend on the how they are exercised' (Sen, 1999).

Together these serve to illuminate the press freedom-human development nexus. They are related to information choices available and freedoms of informational access in a national political landscape. The basic tenet is that media and information freedoms help in terms of actualizing human development as expressed in the amount and quality of freedoms available to citizenry. This

postulate further raises the issue of how information and communication freedoms in a polity contribute to human development aspirations (Foster & Handy, 2008) which again leads to the thesis of a media freedom – human development nexus.

Press freedom and human development

Freedom of the press is not a straightforward construct and the definitions do not necessarily converge fully. Yet there appears to be a common denominator in most definitions of the term. For the most part, the definitions involve removing the ‘restraints’ and the ‘role’ of the freedom of the press. Nevertheless, many of the popular definitions of the freedom of the press differ in specifying the source of restraints. Asante (1997) suggests that any serious discussion concerning the conceptual definition of the freedom of the press must include economic, social, cultural, managerial, and political factors. This means enabling contexts should be there for the press to operate freely from political, financial and other pressures. This freedom mainly relates to the absence of government and political restraints (Hachten, 2005).

Further, Hachten (2005) maintains that the role of the freedom of the press is something more. He defines the freedom of the press as ‘the right of the press to report, to comment on, and to criticize its own government without retaliation or threat of retaliation from the authority’, which he calls ‘the right to talk politics’ (Hachten, 2005). He asserts that this type of free and independent press only exists in the Western countries that have the following characteristics: laws protecting civil liberties and property, high income per capita, highly educated citizenry, possession of opposing political parties, financial support of the news media, and established independent journalism (Hachten, 2005). However, Gunaratne (2005) criticized Hachten’s definition of the freedom of the press noting that it only examines the Euro-American (nation-state level) experience and ignores the center-dominated world-system level where government and media operate the system of communication outlets.

Dennis and Merrill (1996) focus on the role of promotion and education in relation to the freedom of the press. They define the freedom of the press as ‘the right to communicate ideas, opinions, and information through the printed word without government restraint’, and state that the main purpose of the freedom of the press ‘is to promote and educate an informed electorate that can make decisions about public affairs’. Both authors agree that there is no existence of an absolute press freedom, but they disagree in regard to whether the press in the USA is free or not. Dennis claims there is no free press in the USA,

and free press is a dream that can hardly be achieved because of the interaction between the interrelated system of rights, principles, practices, and institutions. On the other hand, Merrill disagrees with Dennis believing the press in the U.S. is relatively free in regard to other countries because it has fewer government restraints (Dennis & Merrill, 1996).

On the other hand, Weaver (1977) builds upon Dennis and Merrill's argument stating that an adequate account of the freedom of the press must include all 'other restraints'. He explains that the arguments of free press revolve around two main questions: 1) what is it? and, 2) How much can it be? He defines the freedom of the press as: 1) the relative absence of governmental restraints on the media; 2) the relative absence of governmental and all other restraints on the media; and, 3) not only the absence of restraints on mass media, but also the presence of those conditions necessary to ensure the dissemination of a diversity of ideas and opinions to a relatively large audience, like an enforced right of access to newspapers and radio stations (Weaver, 1977). Other scholars define the freedom of the press from the perspective of its functionality in society. For instance, Nam and Oh (1973) define the freedom of the press as an independent adversary with no fear of arbitrary sanction and free to criticize the policies and personnel of the power elite. Writing from a modern and classical point of view, Kelley and Donway (1990) believe that free press means performing the monitorial function of preventing the state from abusing the rights of its citizens. Put differently, Kelley and Donway seem to suggest that an adequate definition of the freedom of the press should involve the presses' ability to keep a government in check. The differences noted in the definitional and conceptual literature have implications for the evaluation of press freedom.

Although the figure of global institutions measuring press freedom is in excess of 100 (Becker et al., 2007), currently there are four most prominent organizations differently but fairly convergently measuring the freedom of the press internationally: Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), but the first two institutions are the most widely recognized (Abdulsamad, 2008). Since 1980, Freedom House has been collecting data on the freedom of the press around the world. The survey instrument that Freedom House uses (Freedom House Survey) considers analytical reports of regional experts and scholars, as well as numerical ratings for 197 countries and territories on a scale of 0 to 100 with 0 as the highest degree of freedom of the press and 100 as the lowest degree. Based on 23 methodology questions, the survey groups the countries into three categories: 'Free' scoring 0 to 30; 'Partly Free' scoring 31

to 60; and 'Not Free' scoring 61 to 100. The Freedom House Survey uses three broad analytical areas: 1) the legal environment (laws and regulations), which is worth 30 points; 2) the political environment (political control or pressure over the content), worth 40 points; 3) the economic environment (structure of ownership and the effect of corruption on content) that is worth 30 points.

The research and ratings process involves more than 60 analysts, including members of the core research team headquartered in New York along with outside consultants, who prepare the draft ratings and country reports (Freedom House, 2014). The conclusions are reached after gathering information from professional contacts in a variety of countries, staff and consultant travel, international visitors, the findings of human rights and press freedom organizations, specialists in geographic and geopolitical areas, the reports of governments and multilateral bodies, and a variety of domestic and international news media.

The ratings are reviewed individually and on a comparative basis in a set of six regional meetings involving analysts, advisers, and Freedom House staff. The ratings are compared with the previous year's findings, and any major proposed numerical shifts or category changes are subjected to more intensive scrutiny. These reviews are followed by cross-regional assessments in which efforts are made to ensure comparability and consistency in the findings (Freedom House, 2014).

The diverse nature of the methodological questions encompasses the varied ways in which pressure can be placed upon the flow of information and the ability of print, broadcast, and internet-based media and journalists to operate freely and without fear of repercussions. In short, the institution seeks to provide a picture of the entire 'enabling environment' in which the media in each country operates. It seeks to assess the degree of news and information diversity available to the public in any given country, from either local or transnational sources (Freedom House, 2014).

The legal environment (legenv) category encompasses an examination of both the laws and regulations that could influence media content and the government's inclination to use these laws and legal institutions to restrict the media's ability to operate. It assesses the positive impact of legal and constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression; the potentially negative aspects of security legislation, the penal code, and other criminal statutes; penalties for libel and defamation; the existence of and ability to use freedom of information legislation; the independence of the judiciary and of official media regulatory bodies; registration requirements for both media outlets and journalists; and the ability of journalists' groups to operate freely.

Under the political environment (polienv) category is the ability to evaluate the degree of political control over the content of the news media. Issues examined include the editorial independence of both state-owned and privately owned outlets; access to information and sources; official censorship and self-censorship; the vibrancy of the media and the diversity of news available within each country; the ability of both foreign and local reporters to cover the news freely and without harassment; and the intimidation of journalists or bloggers by the state or other actors including arbitrary detention and imprisonment, violent assaults, and other threats.

The category that examines the economic environment (econenv) for the media includes the structure of media ownership; transparency and concentration of ownership; the costs of establishing media as well as any impediments to news production and distribution; the selective withholding of advertising or subsidies by the state or other actors; the impact of corruption and bribery on content; and the extent to which the economic situation in a country impacts the development and sustainability of the media. In other words, it relates to issues of media economics. However, the most commonly used measure comes from Freedom House, but there are other measures evaluating the same but variously understood construct. The extant four measures come from Freedom House, Reporters Sans Frontières (Reporters without Borders), the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). However, they tend to have convergent validity (Becker et al., 2007).

Human development and the Human Development Index

Human development has attracted scholarly attention as a construct of diverse views that have evolved over time. Traditional conceptions of development were economic and financial parameters, but more recent thinking has broadened to focus on the freedoms enjoyed by ordinary people in reference to how much control they have over their life choices (Streeten, 1994). The expansion of locus of control would mean that people have fewer frustrations in the matter of realizing their aspirations expressed in what they are able to do or become. The freedom and actual possibility to reach the top of their hierarch of needs probably explains the core thoughts of Amartya Sen. According to the UN human development is 'the process of enlarging people's choices' to help them 'lead a long and healthy life, to be educated, to enjoy a decent standard of living', as well as 'political freedom, other guaranteed human rights and various ingredients of self-respect' (UN, 1997). These include communication rights and freedoms.

While numerous indices have been developed to measure human development perhaps the most common is the Human Development Index. The index is based on the capabilities approach as a measure of well-being expressed in people's freedom and choices and actual realization of their potential. This measure has broadened economic metrics as measures of human development from the narrow economic perspective. It addresses the fullness of the human condition including the right to civic and life satisfaction (Gasper, 2014). The index is important to show countries where they stand in terms of addressing the wellbeing of their people, not just in matters of earnings. An important communication relevant aspect of measuring human development is human rights in connection with receptive and expressive communication rights and opportunities. This makes the press freedom–human development nexus more logically grounded.

Research methodology

The primary aim of this study is to examine the relationship between press freedom and human development in Eastern African countries. To achieve this objective, an explanatory type of research design was employed. The explanatory type of research design helps to identify and evaluate the causal relationships between variables under consideration, i.e. the explanatory research design is employed to examine the relationship of the stated variables.

Data. The necessary data for this study were collected from secondary sources that included press freedom indices from Freedom House and Human Development Index from UNDP over a period of five years (2011–2015) and presented in *Tables 3 and 4*.

Sample design. The population of the study is Eastern African countries. Countries located in Eastern Africa are included purposively. Thus, the following six countries were taken for the population. However, Somalia was removed from the population due to data insufficiency. Therefore, the sampled countries include Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya and Uganda.

Description of variables and measurements. In this study, the independent variables are components of the Press Freedom Index and the dependent variable is the Human Development Index of the selected countries.

Independent variables. As used in this study, the Freedom House Index refers to three criteria for evaluating press freedom in 197 countries across the world: legal environment (examination of laws and regulations that could influence media content but also the government's inclination to use those laws to restrict the media's ability to operate), political influence (degree of political control over information) and economic pressures (economic barriers to entry

to the media sector, and impact of corruption). The index score allotted to a country ranges from 0 to 100 depending on the extent of the constraints on press freedom. A score of between 0 and 30 indicates that the press is free; a score of between 31 and 60 indicates that it is only partly free and a score above 61 means that it is not free.

Dependent variables. The dependent variable is human development which is measured by the Human Development Index composition of education, life expectancy at birth, and gross national income per capita of countries.

Specifications of the empirical research model. To estimate the impact of press freedom on human development in Eastern African countries, the following general empirical research model was developed.

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \sum \beta_k X_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Where:

- Y_{it} represents the dependent variable, Human Development Index (HDI) of countries i for time period t .
- β_0 is the intercept.
- β_k represents the coefficients of the X_{it} variables.
- X_{it} represents the explanatory variables, press freedom indices like legal environment (LE), political environment (PE) and economic environment (EE) of country i for time period t .
- ε_{it} is the error term.
- The above general empirical research model is changed into the study variables to find out the relationship of human development and press freedom as follows:

$$HDI_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (LE_{it}) + \beta_2 (PE_{it}) + \beta_3 (EE_{it}) + \varepsilon$$

Methods of data analysis

To analyze the collected data, descriptive, correlation and multiple panel linear regression data analysis methods were employed. The descriptive statistics is used to quantitatively describe the important features of the variables using mean, maximum, minimum and standard deviations. The correlation analysis is used to identify the relationships between the independent and dependent variables using Pearson correlation analysis. Multiple panel linear regression analysis is used to test the hypothesis and to explain the relationship between the human development indices and the Press Freedom Index. SPSS 23 version software was used for the analysis.

Results and discussion

This section presents the descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple panel linear regression results of the study's variables presented sequentially.

Below, a statistics summary of each variable in the study is presented. The variables include both predictor and outcome variables. The outcome variable is used in order to measure the Eastern African countries' Human Development Index (HDI), whereas the predictor variables are measures of the countries' economic, legal and political environment components of the Press Freedom Index during the year. Accordingly, the descriptive statistics for all variables are presented below in *Table 1*.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the study variables

variables	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Std.Dev.	observation
HDI	.464	.548	.386	.0474	30
Econenv	19.4333	24.00	14.00	3.60730	30
Legenv	23.9333	30.00	16.00	4.70461	30
Polienv	29.5333	40.00	18.00	6.96659	30

Source: SPSS Summary statistics result based on secondary data

As presented in *Table 1*, the average value of the Human Development Index for the sampled Eastern African countries is 46.4 percent (mean=0.464) with a maximum value of .54 which represents the Kenyan human development index and the minimum value of .38 of Eritrea's Human Development Index respectively. As indicated in the above table, the standard deviation is .0474 which is below one which gives an indication that the values of Eastern African countries' Human Development indices are close to each other and vary from the average value insignificantly as indicated in the table. In other words, the education, life expectancy and gross national income per capita of these countries do not differ significantly as is evident in the values between .54 and .38.

It is confirmed in *Table 1* that the average value of the economic environment for the sampled Eastern African countries is 19 (mean = 19.43) with a maximum of 24 (Eritrea) and a minimum of 14 (Uganda). The standard deviation indicates that for the sampled Eastern African countries, the economic environment deviates by 3.6 from the average value of 19.43. Since the standard deviation is above one, it indicates that there is a wide dispersion in the economic environment value of the sampled Eastern African countries.

This seems to show that the structure of media ownership; transparency and concentration of ownership; the costs of establishing media as well as any impediments to news production and distribution, the corruption and bribery impinging on content; and the character of the economic situation are significantly different among the countries of the region.

The average value for the legal environment of the sampled Eastern African countries is 23.9 with a maximum of 30, which represents Eritrea and 16, which is the value for Kenya. The standard deviation of the legal environment construct is 4.7. As the value is above one, it suggests that the sampled Eastern African countries have dispersed values which deviate from the mean value. This disparity can be explained by the presence of laws and regulations that could influence media content as represented by a significant degree of dispersion of units between 30 and 16. This seems to suggest that there are laws and legal institutions that stand in the way of a more liberal media operation in the studied countries.

It is also shown that the mean value for the political environment of the sampled Eastern African countries is 29.53 with the Eritrean maximum value of 40 and the Kenyan minimum value of 18. The standard deviation of the construct of the political environment is 6.9 implying significant disparity among the sampled countries as may be exemplified by the free and vibrant press in Kenya and the obstructive media climate in Eritrea. The range of values shows that there was a high tendency of political control over the content of the news media in these countries during the study period. The political spectrum showed government actions were characterised by a propensity to thwart media freedoms and institutions.

Further, to identify the relationship among the variables of press freedom and human development, the Pearson's correlation coefficient was used (See *Table 2*) The correlation coefficients show the extent and direction of the linear relationship between press freedom variables and human development indicators of the sampled Eastern African countries. The correlation analysis shows the association between the Human Development Index and press freedom variables. The probability is shown in parenthesis along with the Pearson's R for the correlation matrix in *Table 2*. The significance level is also shown as ***, ** and * for 1%, 5% and 10% levels respectively. In line with statistical protocols, the correlation coefficients are diagnosed for the presence of high collinearity among regressors. Since the correlation analysis shows only the degree of association, it is followed by a multiple regression analysis in search of explanatory significance.

In *Table 2*, the correlation matrix shows the relationship of the Human Development Index with the economic, legal and political environments.

Table 2

**Correlation analysis of Human Development Index
and Press Freedom Indices**

	HDI	Econenv	Legenv	Polienv
HDI	1			
Econenv	.068 0.723	1		
Legenv	-.484** .007	.6813** .000	1	
Polienv	-0.624**	.530**	.959**	1
	.000	.003	.000	

Source: SPSS correlation result based on the data obtained from secondary data.

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 portrays that the legal and political environments are negatively and significantly correlated at a 1 percent significance level with the Human Development Index.

On the other hand, the economic environment shows a positive correlation to the Human Development Index.

Based on the relevant Press Freedom and Human Development Indices figures reported in *Tables 3* and *4*, the Pearson correlation coefficients of the economic, legal and political environments are 6.8 percent, -48.4 percent and -62.4 percent respectively. From this, it can be understood that the economic environment has no strong association with the Human Development Index whereas the legal and political environments have a strong negative association with the Human Development Index. This may be in part a case of spurious association.

Further, the correlation analysis shows only the direction and degree of association between variables, and it does not permit causal inferences regarding the relationship between the identified variables. Thus, we turn to a regression analysis to overcome the shortcomings of the correlation analysis.

A linear regression model was fitted to examine the impact of press freedom variables on the sampled Eastern African countries' Human Development Index.

The method of least squares has some very attractive statistical properties that have made it one of the most powerful and popular methods of regression analysis (Gujarati, 2004). Thus, to conduct the appropriate diagnosis tests, the ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation method was used.

Preliminary tests of the data set. Before running the model, the data sets were tested for the classical linear regression model assumptions. The following critical assumptions must be met before utilizing the OLS estimation in order to test validly the hypothesis and estimate the coefficient (Hoffmann, 2010). The classical linear regression model assumptions and their diagnostic tests are discussed below.

The average value of the errors is zero. If a constant term is included in the regression equation, this assumption will never be violated. In this study, this assumption was not violated.

Normality assumption. This assumption requires the disturbances to be normally distributed. A normality test was run for the model after estimating the regression based on the results shown in *Table* where the p-values for the model are insignificant suggesting failure to reject the null hypothesis, which postulates that the residual value is normally distributed. Therefore, the data are normally distributed.

Table 3

Press Freedom Index

country	2011			2012			2013			2014			2015		
	Leg	Pol	Eco												
Ethiopia	27	33	18	28	35	18	28	35	19	27	35	19	28	36	19
Djibouti	24	26	23	24	27	23	24	27	23	24	28	23	24	28	23
Eritrea	30	40	24	30	40	24	30	40	24	30	40	24	30	40	24
Kenya	19	18	17	16	19	17	16	20	17	17	23	17	17	23	17
Somalia	27	35	22	27	35	22	27	35	22	26	34	22	25	34	20
Sudan	26	30	22	26	31	21	26	32	22	26	33	22	26	33	22
Uganda	19	21	14	19	24	14	19	22	14	19	24	15	19	23	14

Source: Freedom House from 2011-2015

The assumption of homoskedasticity. This assumption requires that the variance of the errors be constant. To check this assumption, the Brusck-Pagan test was conducted for the model. (See *Table 4*). In this model, there was no problem of heteroskedasticity or the error variance is constant since the p-value is not significant.

Table 4

Human Development Index

Country	Year					Average
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Ethiopia	0.423	0.429	0.436	0.442	0.442	0.4344
Kenya	0.535	0.539	0.544	0.548	0.548	0.5428
Eritrea	0.386	0.39	0.39	0.391	0.391	0.3896
Djibouti	0.462	0.465	0.468	0.47	0.47	0.467
Somalia						
Sudan	0.468	0.472	0.473	0.479	0.479	0.4742
Uganda	0.473	0.476	0.478	0.483	0.483	0.4786

Source: UNDP Human Development Index

No autocorrelation between the disturbances. It is assumed that the errors are not correlated with one another. If the errors are correlated with one another, it would be stated that they are ‘serially correlated’. A test of this assumption was therefore conducted. The first test was the Durbin-Watson which is shown separately in the regression output of the model. The value of the Durbin-Watson test is 1.909, which is close to 2, demonstrating that autocorrelation does not exist, i.e. the same value does not auto correlate with its previous value.

As summarized in *Table 5*, the R^2 for the model is 66 percent. This indicates that 66 percent of the variation in the Human Development Index was explained by the independent variables used in this study, and only 38 percent of the variance in the Human Development Index is due to other factors that are not included in this study.

The selected variables explain the proportion of variance in the Human Development Index in an orderly manner. The R^2 indicates the overall goodness-of-fit of the model developed and tested in the present study. After a modification of the explanatory power of the model, the adjusted R^2 value is efficiently lowered to 62 percent. This optimal coefficient of determination indicates that 62 percent of the variation in the Eastern African countries’ Human Development Index is explained by the explanatory variables in the model. The adjusted R^2 measures how well the model fits the data by taking into account the loss of degrees of freedom associated with adding extra variables. Therefore, the model has a high goodness of fit demonstrating a significant degree of predictive accuracy.

Table 5

Summary of regression output

Variables	Coefficient	Stand. Error	t- statistic	Probability
Constant	.485	.033	14.517	.000
Economic	.006	.002	2.852	.008
Legal	.009	.005	1.882	.071
Political	-.011	.003	-3.977	.000
Observations	30			
R ²	.66			
Adjusted- R ²	.62			
F-Statistics	16.56			
Prob.(F-stat)	.000			
Durbin- Watson stat	1.909			
Effect specification	Period fixed			

Source: SPSS regression results based on the data obtained from secondary sources

Note: ***, **, * significant at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels of significance respectively.

In addition, the F-statistic shows the overall significance of variables, or, in other words, the significance of the model slope parameters jointly. The F-statistic of the model is 16.56 and the null hypothesis of the model was rejected at the 1 percent significance level. Therefore, the variables of the model are jointly significant. The model adequately describes the data. Hence one can infer from the R squared and F-statistics that the model fits the dataset demonstrating that Press Freedom variables have a significant effect on the Human Development Index.

Press Freedom variables

Economic environment. As shown in Table 4, the present study found that the economic environment (Econenv) has a positive impact on the Human Development Index ($p = .008$). The finding indicates that the value of the economic environment is positively related with the countries' Human Development Index. As discussed in the literature review, economic environment refers to economic pressures on the media, which include the structure of media ownership, the costs of establishing media outlets as well as production and distribution, the selective withholding of state advertising or subsidies, official bias in licensing, and the impact of corruption and bribery on content. Therefore, based on the regression analysis, the economic pressures have a

strong relationship with or significant impacts on, the Human Development Index of the Eastern African countries. Thus, the hypothesis is supported.

The findings relating to economic pressures support the argument of Novel (2006) that an increase in the value of the economic environment denoting freedom from economic pressure leads to higher Human Development Index. This more succinctly means free press is a crucial factor for the reduction of poverty and enhancement of development. The pertinent findings reported in this study are consistent with prior studies demonstrating that the countries' economic environment has a direct proportional effect on the Human Development Index (Ahrend, 2000). The findings also lend support to the study of Norris (2006) which reports that press freedom especially, and the overall economic environment in particular, has a significant impact on human development. More globally, the associations of the constructs are consistent with those reported in a more recent UNESCO report (Guseva et al., 2008). Bidirectional links are also reported (Alam & Ali Shah, 2013). Based on a study of 186 countries, Hussain and Haque (2016) also demonstrate a robust association between economic contexts and human development.

In fact, both macroeconomic and microeconomic factors have important bearings on human development through an effect on media development and freedom (Ojo, 2018). In the macroeconomic sphere, the level of unemployment, the rate of inflation and the growth of the economy can all mean a weak media market suggesting an impact on the role of the communication industry as an important contributor to human development. At the microeconomic level media competition may be stiff, especially where the government has big media corporations, which compete with small private companies for ad revenue (Ayeni, 2011). The size of the media market is also an important factor as it means limited diversity in terms of information and perspectives that are vital for development. Demand for communication and culture products may also affect the role of the sector in relevant terms. Coupled with low consumer disposable incomes and high inflation, these factors can impact media business growth and expansion limiting the media's role in human development enhancement.

Legal environment. The result shows that the legal environment (Legenv) has a positive and statistically insignificant impact on the Human Development Index of Eastern African countries ($p=.071$). The result seems to show that the laws and regulations that could influence media content do not in this study context exert a significant impact. In addition, the governments' use of press legislation has no significant impact on the Eastern African countries' Human Development Index. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported.

However, it would be considered desirable that the legal framework needs to be enabling monitorial or patrol functions relating to officialdom on the behalf of the electorate or citizenry that need media information to make correct electoral decisions based on information on the integrity, performance and promise of a set of politicians holding public office or asking to replace those in power. The legal terrain needs to be plain in matters of administrative desiderata, press registration, licensing and accreditation, unhindered access to informational requests, freedom from undue use of legislation and law enforcement and freedom from psychological oppression of those working to defend society informationally and discursively. The empirical literature generally seems to demonstrate the important functions of legal empowerment in promoting economic development, socio-economic justice, conflict and crime prevention, raising accountability and, and lowering corruption as well as equitable distribution of services (Haggard & Tiede, 2011; Santos, 2012). More data is needed to show the specific pathways between the legal framework and human development although previous studies have documented mixed results of the association (Berg & Desai, 2013). More work on definition and consideration of contributory context variables is also in place.

Political environment. The political environment (Polienv) has a significant impact on the Eastern African countries' Human Development Index ($p = .000$). The political environment explains the variations of the Human Development Index of Eastern African countries with a coefficient of $-.011$. The result indicates that an increase in the value of the political environment has a negative influence on the Human Development Index of the Eastern African countries and vice versa. This suggests that the degree of political control over the content of news media, which includes access to information and sources, editorial independence, official censorship and self-censorship, the ability of the media to operate freely and without harassment, and the intimidation of journalists by different actors, has a significant impact on the Eastern African countries' Human Development Index. Thus, the hypothesis that there is a relationship between the political environment and the Human Development Index is supported. In further support of the hypothesis there is an evidence base linking respect for civil and political liberties, human rights, and press freedom and a validated inference that journalism is the solution not the problem in political contexts. Journalism can indeed enhance government effectiveness through a forum of transparent communication before official secrecy and repressed issues lead to violence (Guseva et al., 2008).

However, the general relational pattern in regard to the political environment and human development can be far from consistent. Thus, Norris (2006)

mentioned that Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Malaysia have good economic conditions, or a high Human Development Index, but their rank in press freedom is a bit lower. Other factors may be at work explaining outlier cases such as the unorthodox empirical evidence of Islam and Osmani (2017) that there may be no causal link between press freedom and human development as their study of Bangladesh seems to demonstrate. However, despite the anomalous observations in a few countries, the political environment is generally considered and empirically demonstrated to be an essential element in boosting human development. Thus, government policies as political factors can affect media businesses through taxation that can further weaken freedom of the press as business survival can be difficult for many newspapers in the face of a small media market further weakened by unsupportive taxation plans (Cagé, 2014). Political environment can also mean new technologies that the independent media need to stay competitive may not be affordable because of high import tariffs while the state media continue to be treated preferentially in relevant spheres. Relatedly potential investors in the media sector may be discouraged from entering the market in view of the considered business risks.

At the level of theory, the link between press freedom and human development is validated in empirical ways taking Sen's (1999) ideas as well as those of others who advanced debates in relevant terms. Sen says that '...political freedoms and liberties are permissive advantages, and their effectiveness would depend on the how they are exercised' (Sen, 1999) which should include effective media environments inviting and enabling public deliberation of the type advocated by Habermas in his seminal work on the public sphere (Habermas, 1989). The public sphere extends to include public service models of broadcasting that can go a long way in the furtherance of political participation and the betterment of society as singular desiderata the way Sen (1999) sees it fit. The idea of collective capabilities and the liberating effect on the individual are articulated as possibilities of freedom as development.

Contextually the economic and political environments have significant consequences for development as related to communities who can use their expressive capabilities to unleash their potential for emancipatory development. In other words, discursive power in communities can mean better governance outcomes in institutionalized form. It can enhance popular aspirations and lead to progressive societal betterment and civic empowerment bridging the distance between the political elite and the governed. This can mean rejection of regimes that underperform or that have thwarted popular aspirations for freedom and progress. The ideas also relate to economic empowerment as an important base

to claim more political opportunities and more ability to challenge regimes. Economic independence can mean more choices in the political market and therefore more power for the voter or political consumer.

The idea of justice is also relevant as it fits in with the communication environments and whether they are institutionally supported through liberalizing laws because restrictions can quell and frustrate creativity and innovation that are so much vital for development that has emancipative consequences. The role of the media in enhancing capabilities and functionings can be demonstrated through the development of critical literacies (civic, legal, media, etc.) that people need to be full participants of national development and attain the maximization of their wellbeing. With the media as central institutions, more people empowerment and less government are essential for the freedom enabled by total development, what Sen (1999) seems to advocate.

The implication for Eastern African countries is that the state media in the countries studied are not necessarily about empowering people. As the public interest theory (Djankov et al., 2003) would have it the state media model is paternalistic and has self-seeking designs of promoting the state before and above the people despite its dramaturgical face as the prime promoter of public interest. More innately grassroots media would function in empowering and liberating communities in the ways Sen (Zonk, 2015) would consider ideal strategies in the achievement of development as freedom. In addition, from the angle of modernization theory the attainment of modernization and the attendant civic empowerment conceptually validates the thesis that press freedom and human development are logically correlated. In ways consistent with the present study Mahmood et al. (2011) have empirically demonstrated that press freedom predicts development. In fact, political development is logically tied to economic advancement. (Halperin et al., 2009).

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between Press Freedom and the Human Development Index using six Eastern African countries with a data set covering a five-year period from the year 2011 to 2015. Based on the results of the descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Based on the descriptive statistics the average Human Development Index of Eastern African countries is .464. Therefore, the sampled Eastern African countries have a Human Development Index of below 0.5. The sampled Eastern African countries have average values of 19.43, 23.93, and 29.53 of economic,

legal and political environments respectively (components of the Press Freedom Index). Their values range between minimum values of 14, 16, and 18 and maximum values of 24, 30, and 40 respectively.

The correlation analysis indicates that the legal and political environments have a one percent significant negative relationship with the Human Development Index, whereas the economic environment has a positive correlation with the Human Development Index of the sampled Eastern African countries.

The regression result shows that the economic environment has a significant effect on the Human Development Index. Accordingly, inference can be drawn that the economic environment positively influences the sampled Eastern African countries' Human Development Index.

No statistically significant association was found between the legal environment and the Human Development Index. The political environment negatively and significantly influences the Human Development Index of the Eastern African countries such as Eritrea.

In general, the findings suggest that countries having more press freedom could have better human development levels. Two of the Press Freedom variables empirically support the hypothesis although the level of their significance varies. The legal environment has no significant impact on the Human Development Index among the studied countries probably due to the political and contextual heterogeneity in the region.

The Eastern Africa region is characterized by conflict, instability and poverty that have been further fueling political problems for the countries of the region. The media environment which mirrors the political structure is set to improve but not soon enough and not necessarily for all countries in the region that include new polities such as South Sudan and Eritrea. In Ethiopia there is hope but there are considerable threats of breakup and press freedom is serving a transformative purpose but there are also agendas being served that can make the democratic ideals of tolerance to diversity difficult inviting a fresh cycle of humanitarian crises caused by structural disagreement among the political actors. The mass communication climate is plagued by the tension among centrifugal forces and peripheral pressures. The payoffs of press freedom are not reaped by all in the region that is still struggling with itself. Some countries are sliding in terms of social and economic development and others are deeply immersed in unending cycles of instability. This trend has continuing implications for human development.

Further research using more countries and larger data sets may further explore the press freedom – human development binary. Future studies may

also consider culture as a factor and other mediating or moderating variables that help to more diagnostically capture the relevant regional picture.

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CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

Media communication activities of Russian universities: Dynamics of the development and evaluation of social network efficiency

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Abstract

Social networks are now one of the most popular communication channels, occupying the most important position in the modern media system. Universities as centres of science and education, trying to meet modern standards of media promotion, actively use social networks as a platform for communication with all their many target audiences, with young people as the foundation. The study aims to analyze media communication activities of Russian universities in social networks and to identify the main features of their practices: which social network is most actively used, where media communication activities are more effective and which universities are more involved in media promotion. This article presents the results of the study of the activity of official accounts in social networks of three leading universities in Russia for the period 2017-2020. The data obtained show that the most widespread social network is Vkontakte. However, the number of subscribers and the number of daily publications in the account do not always increase the efficiency of communications – qualitative parameters prevail over quantitative ones in evaluating the efficiency of universities' media communication activities in social networks. The active presence and response of subscribers are most clearly reflected by such an indicator as audience involvement, and the users are most actively involved in the Instagram social network.

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Keywords

Media communications, universities, social media, content, engagement rate.

Introduction

Modern society is increasingly dependent on information and communication technologies and digital media – virtually no social sphere exists outside the context of mediatization. The influence of media in science and education is also becoming stronger. As a result, communication activities required by universities and scientific organizations to increase interest in their work, attract funding, and maintain their image are significantly transformed (Bukki & Trench, 2018).

Due to the general digitalization of the media space, the Internet, in particular social networks, is now the most significant part of the media consumption structure. The Russian Internet today as a communication platform is the core of the Russian media system (Vartanova, 2001, 2015; Vartanova & Gladkova, 2019). According to Mediascope research company, the monthly Internet audience in Russia reached 95.8 million people by November 2019². The penetration of social networks in Russia is estimated at 49% and 70 million citizens have accounts in them³. The most popular social networks in Russia are Vkontakte and Instagram⁴. Thus, as one of the most popular communication channels for the target audience, social networks require close examination (Lukina, 2011).

Social networks play a special role in the corporate communications system of the Russian higher school because of the peculiarities of youth media consumption (Gorokhov, 2006). Besides, online media opportunities create a wide range of highly effective communications for higher education institutions (Gureeva et al., 2018). At the same time, the most active segment of the social media audience is students whose personality formation takes place in the context of intensive intellectual development, which, of course, is facilitated by studying at universities (Dunas et al., 2017). The specifics of modern media consumption and the challenges faced by Russian higher education institutions actualize the need to use all possible means of media communications (Gureeva, 2017). The demand for social networks for media communications activities of universities is obvious: today almost all Russian universities have official accounts in the most popular social networks (Gorokhov et al., 2018).

² Available from: <https://webindex.mediascope.net/general-audience>

³ Available from: <https://globlee.ru>

⁴ Available from: <https://br-analytics.ru/blog/social-media-russia-2019/>

However, the boundaries of the media communication system are constantly expanding, both in terms of the amount of digital content available and the increasing duration of media consumption. Whereas researchers used to divide media communications into traditional and digital, it is no longer possible to draw a clear line between these categories. Under these conditions, the need to constantly rethink the system of interrelationships between the scientific and educational sphere and the media space is becoming more and more urgent (Vartanova, 2017).

In this connection, a study of media communication activities of Russian universities in social networks has been conducted. The aim was to analyze the dynamics of media promotion of official accounts in social networks of three leading Russian universities from 2017 to 2020. The objectives of the study also included identification of the main features of media communication practices of universities in social networks: which social network is most actively used and has the largest audience, in which social network media communication activity is more effective, whether the involvement of the audience is determined by the daily frequency of publications on the page and the number of subscribers, and if so, what is the dependence between them.

Since successful media promotion seems to be an important component of universities' competitiveness, the research subject was the accounts in social networks of three leading Russian universities according to QS ranking for 2020: Lomonosov Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University and Novosibirsk State University. The rankings give a clear picture of the prestige and quality of an educational institution (Hazelkorn, 2011; van Vught, 2008), while QS is one of the most cited rankings in the world, evaluating universities on a wide range of issues of interest to potential students: research, teaching, employment and internationalization⁵. Media communication activities were analyzed in the most popular social networks among young people in Russia according to Mediascope⁶, which are Vkontakte, Facebook and Instagram. Odnoklassniki social network was not analyzed, because the age of its active audience is from 25 years old⁷ that does not exactly match the target audience of universities.

⁵ Available from: <https://www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings/methodology>

⁶ Available from: https://mediascope.net/upload/iblock/f97/18.04.2019_Mediascope_%D0%95%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%20%D0%9A%D1%83%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0_%D0%A0%D0%98%D0%A4+%D0%9A%D0%98%D0%91%202019.pdf

⁷ Available from: <https://hiconversion.ru/blog/auditoriya-socialnyh-setej-rune-ta-gde-kto-zaputalsya/>

Quantitative research of the accounts of the top 3 Russian universities allowed to reveal the total audience of the official accounts of the universities in social networks, as well as to track the data dynamics within the media promotion from 2017 to 2020. A comparative analysis was used to identify the main features of media communication practices. Also, in each study period, an average engagement rate (ER) was calculated, which allowed to evaluate the effectiveness of social networks of the universities and to track the dynamics of media promotion in social networks over 4 years. Engagement is both a goal and a means for users to interact with online media (Napoli, 2014). That is why many researchers study engagement rate as an indicator of audience activity (Lagun & Lalmas, 2016; Mersey et al., 2010; O'Brien & Toms, 2008).

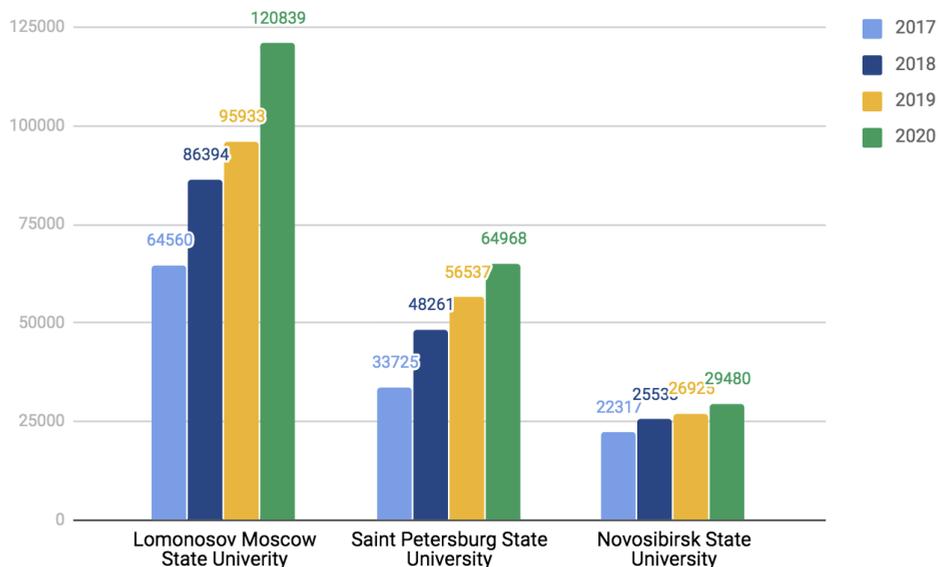
Engagement rate is a key qualitative indicator of social networking success (Niciporuc, 2014), which is displayed by the number of user interactions with the post or profile (likes, reposting, comments, clicking on a link), divided by the total number of subscribers of the page, multiplied by 100%. The indicator less than 1% is considered low, from 1% to 3% – medium, from 3% to 6% – high, over 6% – very high. Among the characteristics that influence audience engagement, researchers note the context, content and identity of the author (Jaakonmäki et al., 2017).

Media communication practices of leading Russian universities on social networks

The study recorded the total audience of official university accounts in social networks in February 2017, May 2018, May 2019, January 2020. The results presented in *Table 1* show a consistent growth of subscribers at all three universities over the 4 years. This is a clear sign that these universities are actively involved in the communication space of social networks, demonstrating a rapid response to changes in media consumption.

Table 1

Total audience of social media accounts of top 3 universities in Russia (VK, Facebook, Instagram)



The highest figure of total audience coverage over the whole period under study is in social networks at Moscow State University (MSU). However, if we analyze the annual growth in the number of subscribers as a percentage, the strongest dynamics of audience growth will be in social networks of St. Petersburg State University. Over the four years from 2017 to 2020, the audience of accounts of this university increased by 25% on average, while the number of subscribers to social networks at MSU increased by 22% annually. The audience growth dynamics at Novosibirsk State University’s social networks is significantly lower: the indicators have increased on average by 9% each year.

It could be assumed that the annual growth of the social media audience can be explained by the annual influx of new students to the university, as well as applicants interested in studying and their parents. In this case, the difference in the number of subscribers may be determined by the size of the university.

For example, the ratio of the total audience of social networks of universities to the number of students in an educational institution can be analyzed. Thus, for 2020 the approximate number of students in the studied universities is 40 thousand at MSU, 30 thousand at St. Petersburg State University, 8 thousand

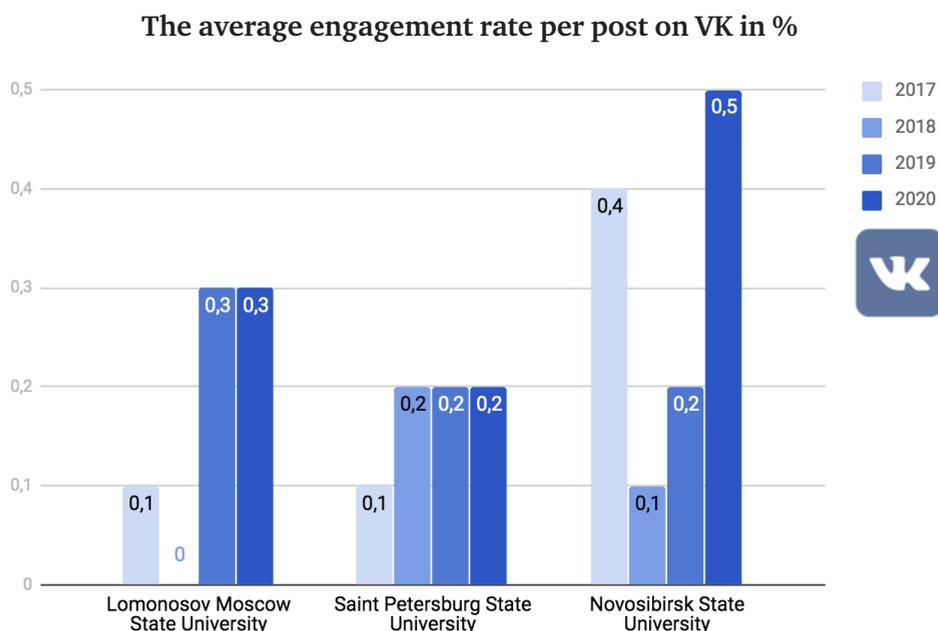
at Novosibirsk State University (NSU). Comparing these figures with the total audience of social networks, we can see that the more students in an educational institution, the more its coverage in social networks: both in terms of the number of students and number of subscribers the MSU is leading.

However, calculating the percentage of the audience of the accounts in social networks to the number of students, it will be seen that the largest indicator will be at NSU, whose audience in social networks relative to the number of students is 368%. The MSU indicator is 302%, while that of St. Petersburg State University is 216%. This may imply that the accounts of NSU in social networks VKontakte, Facebook and Instagram are more popular among its target audience than the accounts of MSU and St. Petersburg State University.

Vkontakte

To assess the effectiveness of the universities' media communication activities, an average post engagement rate was calculated for each period under study. All reactions to the post were divided by the number of subscribers and multiplied by 100%, after which the average monthly indicator was calculated. The results for the VKontakte social network are presented in *Table 2*.

Table 2

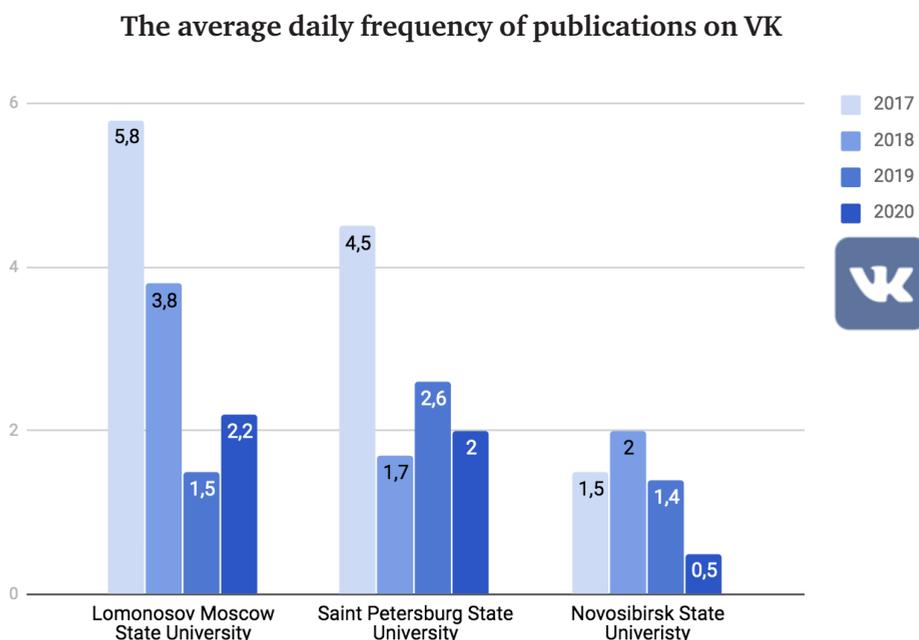


The chart shows that the maximum level of audience involvement in the social network Vkontakte is fixed at NSU – 0.5% in 2020. Moreover, the indicators are quite chaotic: relatively high in 2017 (0.4%) and in 2020 (0.5%) and lower in 2018 (0.1%) and 2019 (0.2%). Figures of MSU and St. Petersburg State University are more stable with consistent dynamics ranging from 0.1% to 0.3%, although with a failure on the page of MSU in 2018 when the value was equal to 0. However, it should be noted that the engagement rate of all the studied universities in all periods are low on generally accepted measures of ER – less than 1%.

To analyze the specifics of universities’ media communication activity in social networks, the average daily frequency of publications in each studied period was estimated. The data on the Vkontakte social network are presented in *Table 3*.

Publications on the official page of MSU were made most often – 5,8 per day in 2017. In St. Petersburg State University, the maximum indicator was also fixed in 2017 – 4,5 per day. Daily posts in the account of NSU were made less often – 0,5 per day or 1 publication for two days in 2020. Thus, it could be noted that there are no certain trends in the frequency of publications. This may mean that universities in their media communication activities do not pay attention to the number of daily posts, not adhering to certain rules regarding the frequency of posts.

Table 3

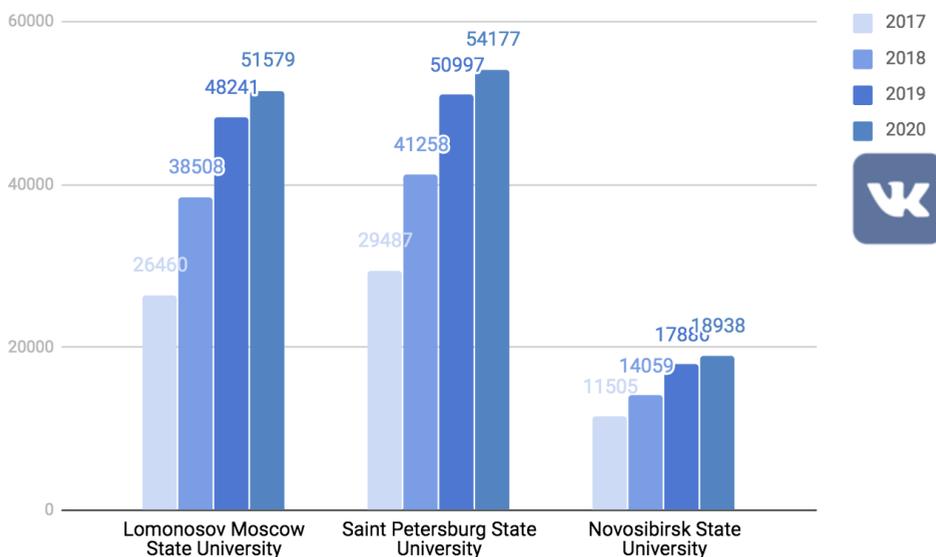


By comparing the frequency of publications with the engagement rate calculated earlier, some correlation between these data could be observed. For instance, the NSU's highest engagement rate among the universities studied (0.5% in 2020) corresponds to the lowest frequency of publications in this period (0.5). At the same time, the lowest ER fixed on the NSU's page in 2018 corresponds to the highest frequency of publications during the study periods (2). The lowest ER in the Vkontakte account of St. Petersburg State University (0.1% in 2017) similarly corresponds to the highest frequency of publications for 4 years (4.5). In MSU Vkontakte account the highest frequency (5.8 in 2017) corresponds not to the lowest ER, but to one of the lowest (0.1%). Thus, we can assume that there is an inverse relationship between the audience engagement rate and the frequency of posts on the page in the social network Vkontakte and conclude that increasing the daily frequency of publications frequently leads to a decrease in the rate of involvement.

Since the denominator in the ER formula is essentially the number of subscribers to the social network, by matching these data we can try to determine whether there is a correlation between them. The data on the audience of the social network Vkontakte in the 3 leading Russian universities, recorded in 4 study periods from 2017 to 2020, are presented in *Table 4*.

Table 4

The audience of 3-top universities on VK



As with the total audience of all the social networks studied, the coverage of Vkontakte social network has consistently increased from 2017 to 2020. St. Petersburg State University has the largest number of subscribers to this social network in each survey period, with a peak value of 54177 subscribers. The maximum MSU's Vkontakte audience is slightly lower, at 51579 followers; the number of subscribers on the NSU page is much lower, at 18938.

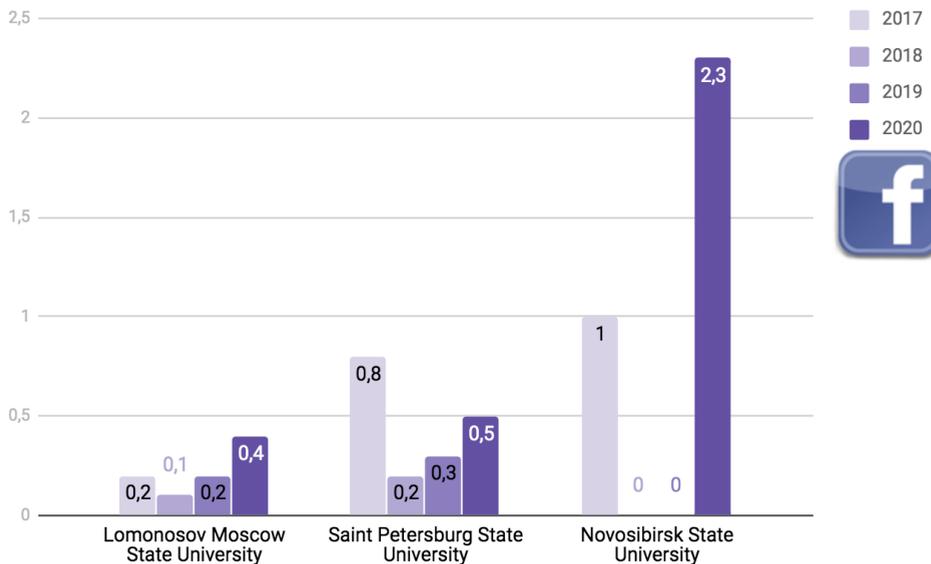
Comparing these data with the data on the engagement rate, we can notice that the universities with a large number of subscribers (MSU and St. Petersburg State University) have on average lower involvement indicators. However, NSU's ER on the Vkontakte page in 2018 (0.1%) was lower than that of St. Petersburg State University in the same year (0.2%), but higher than that of Moscow State University (0), while NSU's audience in 2018 was 2-2.5 times lower. In addition, the number of subscribers gradually increased from 2017 to 2020, whereas the involvement rate did not decrease or increase consistently, but was chaotic. Therefore, regarding the Vkontakte social network, it cannot be said that the larger the audience, the smaller the ER of the social network. Rather, it is more difficult to involve a larger audience than a smaller one, which is shown by averages, but there is no proportional relationship between these data.

Facebook

As for the involvement of the audience of selected universities in the Facebook social network from 2017 to 2020 (*Table 5*), the record figure is again at NSU (2.3% in 2020) and significantly ahead of other universities – the indicators of MSU and St. Petersburg State University do not reach even 1%. At the same time, the highest indicator of NSU is already medium in terms of ER value, but it is only in 2020. In 2018 and 2019 NSU indicators are equal to zero – media promotion in social networks during the study period was not carried out at all. Analyzing ER on Facebook on the pages of Moscow State University and St. Petersburg State University, it can be noted that the last three years the figure has been growing, increasing annually by 0.1-0.2%. The maximum index of St. Petersburg State University was recorded in 2017 (0.8%), while that of Moscow State University – in 2020 (0.4%).

Table 5

The average engagement rate per post on Facebook in %

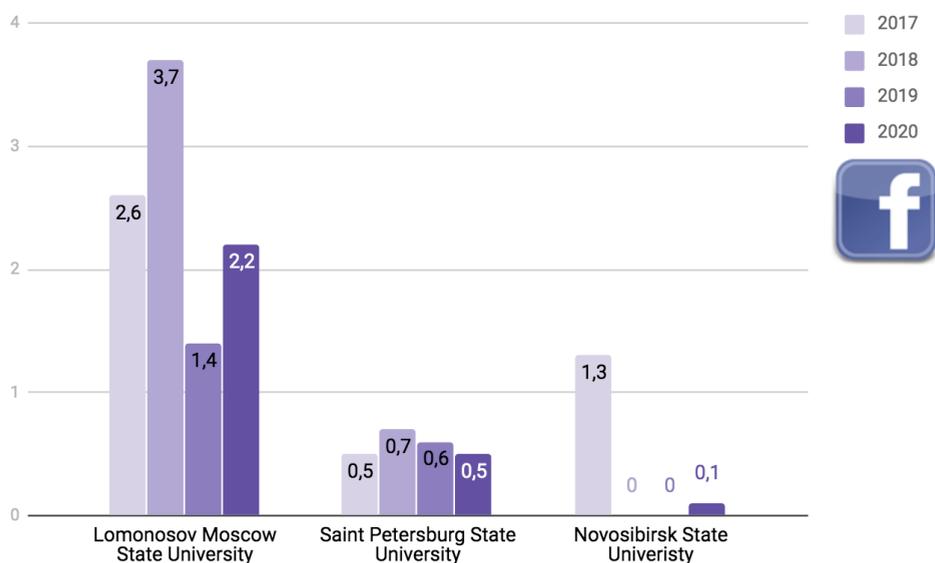


Comparing ER on Facebook (Table 5) with ER on Vkontakte (Table), we can see that the record level of NSU’s engagement rate in Facebook in 2020 stands out significantly from all other indicators of both social networks, reaching the average for the first time. All other figures are low, peaking at a maximum of 1% (NSU’s Facebook page in 2017). For comparison, the average ER for 4 years can be calculated separately for each social network, and on Facebook (0.5%) it is approximately 0.3% higher than in Vkontakte (0.2%).

To analyze media communication practices on Facebook, the average frequency of daily publications was calculated by analogy with Vkontakte (Table 6). It can be seen that this social network is most actively used by MSU, which published from 1.4 to 3.7 posts per day in 2017-2020 – these are the highest rates among all the universities studied. On the Facebook page of St. Petersburg State University more than 1 post per day was never recorded for all 4 studied periods: the indicators vary relatively evenly from 0.5 to 0.7 daily posts. NSU Facebook had the highest index in 2017 (1.3), the next two years there were no publications in the account, and there were only 0.1 posts per day or about 3 publications per month in 2020.

Table 6

The average daily frequency of publications on Facebook



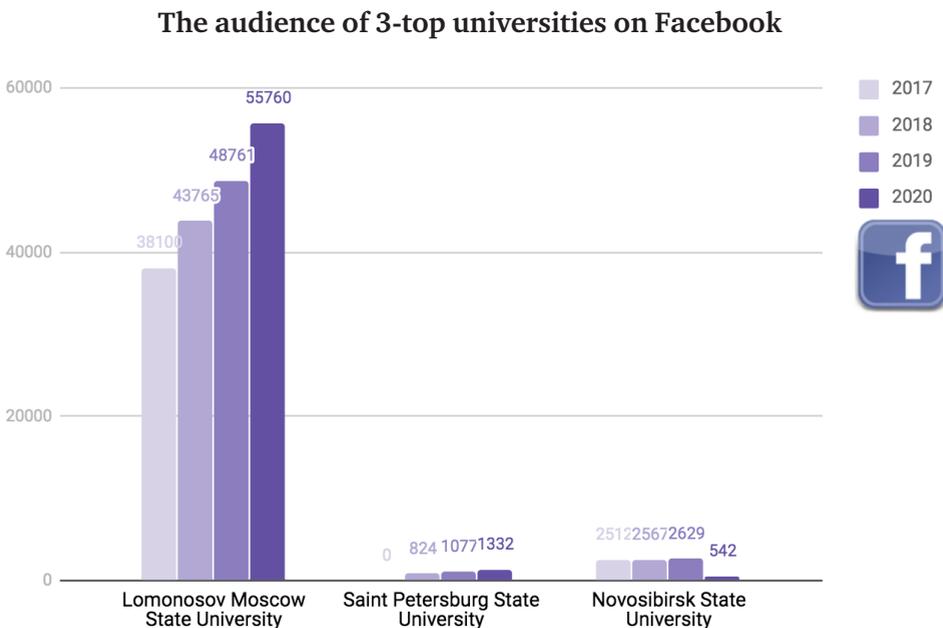
Hence, as well as on Vkontakte, the largest number of publications for all the studied periods on Facebook was made in the account of MSU, followed by the page of St. Petersburg State University. The least number of posts was made in the NSU's account. However, comparing the frequency of daily publications in general on two social networks, it can be noted that the Vkontakte page is more actively used among the universities: there were on average 2.5 publications per day during the study periods, while about 1.1 posts per day were published on Facebook.

If to examine how the Facebook engagement rate depends on the frequency of publications, the highest rate of audience involvement among all those demonstrated at NSU in 2020 (2.3%) corresponds to the lowest frequency of daily publications (0.1), not taking into account those years when there were no publications in the NSU account at all. The lowest ER on NSU's Facebook for 4 years (1% in 2017) corresponds to the highest frequency of publications (1.3). The lowest ER among the universities for the studied periods was shown in the MSU account (0.1% in 2018) and corresponds to the highest frequency of posts per day (3.7). Analyzing separately St. Petersburg State University indicators, one can also see that the highest ER (0.8% in 2017) corresponds to the lowest frequency of daily publications (0.5), and the highest frequency (0.7 in 2018) is equal to the lowest ER (0.2%). However, this correlation is shown

not always. So, the lowest frequency of publications in the MSU Facebook account (1.4 in 2019) corresponds to the second largest ER (0.2%). Nevertheless, as with the social network Vkontakte, it can be said that with increasing frequency of publications it is more difficult to achieve high engagement rate.

Reviewing the audience of the Facebook social network (*Table 7*), in general, it is possible to say that the number of subscribers of universities' official pages has consistently increased. The only exception is the account of NSU, which was created anew in 2020. The clear leader is MSU, the coverage of which has increased over 4 years by about 1.5 times from 38100 to 55760 people. It is interesting that the St. Petersburg State University account was created only in 2017 at the time of the research started and has 1332 subscribers in 4 years. The page of NSU also grew for the first three years, even though there was no media communication activity in 2018 and 2019.

Table 7



Comparing these data with the Facebook engagement rate (*Table 5*), it can be seen again that a university with a larger audience (MSU) has on average lower engagement rates. The highest involvement indicator among all in the NSU's account (2.3% in 2020) corresponds to the lowest number of subscribers among all (542).

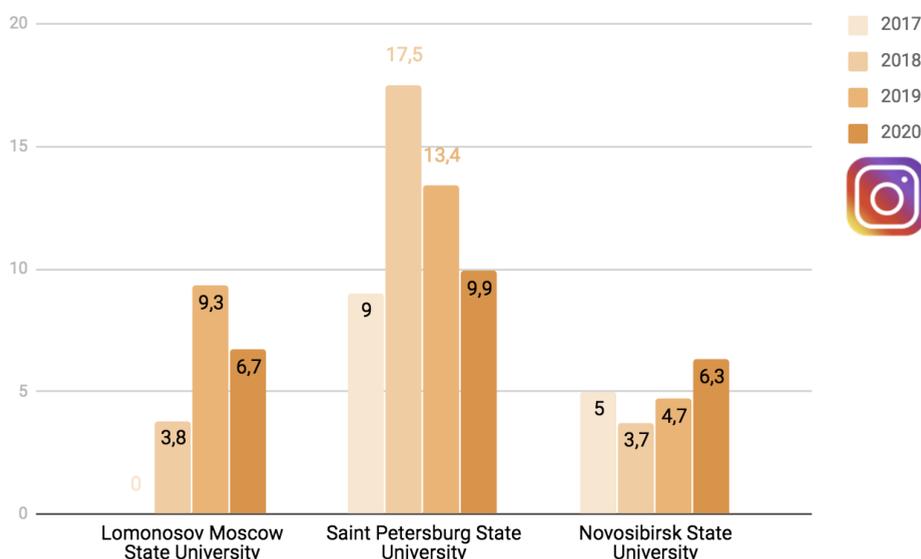
However, as with the Vkontakte social network, the ER figures are distributed chaotically from period to period, unlike the growth dynamics of subscribers, which is mostly consistent. Again, it can be said that there is no direct correlation between ER and the number of the audience. Yet it is more difficult to engage and retain a large audience – this is demonstrated by low ER figures of MSU. Special attention should be paid to the Facebook account of St. Petersburg State University, which for all the periods studied had a growing, but the relatively low audience, low frequency of publications and low engagement rate. This may mean that the media communication activities on the Facebook page of St. Petersburg State University were inactive.

Instagram

The results of calculating the audience engagement in the Instagram social network in the studied periods 2017-2020 are presented in *Table 8* and demonstrate that the audience of this social network was the most active. If we compare Instagram audience engagement with ER on Facebook and Vkontakte, on average Instagram users demonstrated 7.5% engagement, which is 7% more than on Facebook (0.5%) and 7.3% more than on Vkontakte (0.2%).

Table 8

The average engagement rate per post on Instagram in %

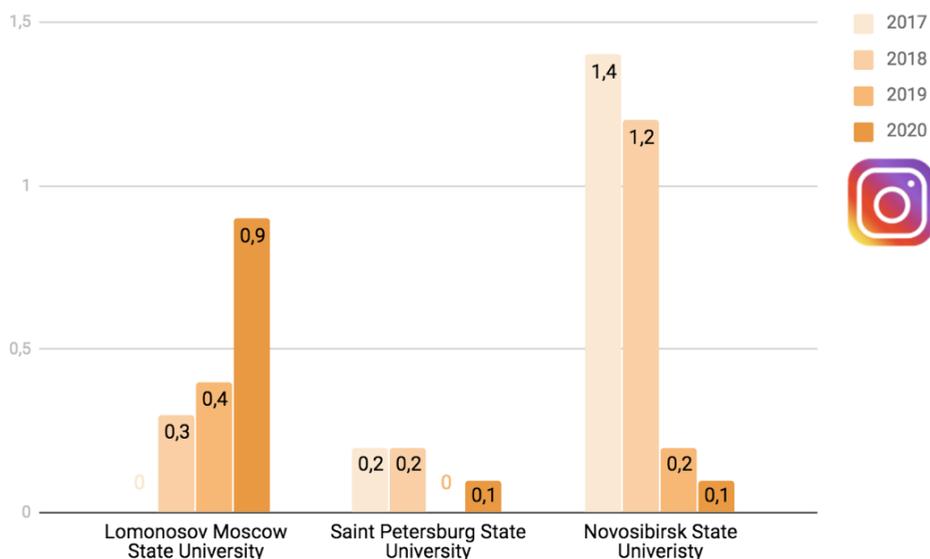


As a whole, all indicators of three higher education institutions for 4 years exceeded 3%, which is a high result, 7 of them are above 6%, which indicates a very high level of audience involvement. The exception is the zero index of MSU in 2017 when the page on Instagram was not available. The highest ER was recorded in the account of St. Petersburg State University in 2018 (17.5%). In general, the St. Petersburg State University page had the highest ER for the periods under study – over 9%.

Having reviewed the data about daily frequency of publications (*Table 9*), we can see that daily posts were made with the highest frequency in the Instagram account of NSU in 2017 (1.4). The index of St. Petersburg State University in 2019 was rounded to zero, which means one publication per month – this is the lowest frequency of daily publications among the universities studied. Compared to the media communication practices of universities in VKontakte and Facebook, publication activity in Instagram was the least frequent – an average of 0.4 posts per day, while in VKontakte and Facebook were on average 2.5 and 1.1 publications, respectively.

Table 9

The average daily frequency of publications on Instagram



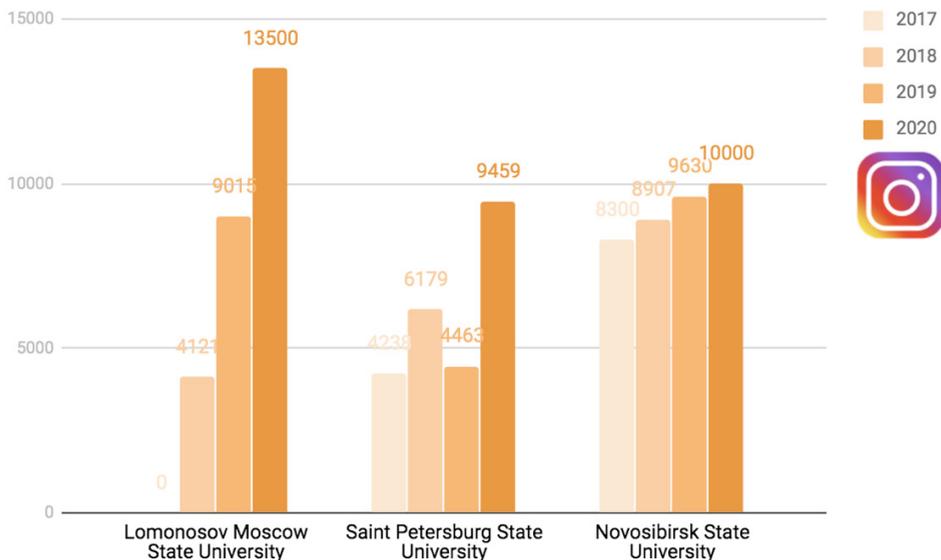
Comparing Instagram engagement rate in the study periods from 2017 to 2020 with the frequency of publications, it is possible to note that the correlation between these data is somewhat different than in Vkontakte and Facebook. Regardless of the number of publications per day, all universities demonstrated high audience involvement in all periods.

For instance, the St. Petersburg State University account was most effective (17,5%) at the lowest frequency of daily publications (0-0.2), but there is no inverse correlation between these data. NSU's account had the highest ER (6.3%) at the lowest frequency of daily publications (0.1). At the same time, the publication of more than 1 post per day in the NSU account did not lead to a clear decrease of ER – the indicators of 2017 (5%), 2018 (3.7%) and 2019 (4.7%) were high, and 2020 – very high (6.3%). In the Instagram account of MSU, there is also no inverse correlation between engagement rate and the frequency of daily publications, while the page did not publish more than 1 post per day, the engagement rate was high in 2018 (3.8%) and very high in 2019 (9.3%) and 2020 (6.7%). Thus, it can be assumed that the Instagram audience of the surveyed universities depends more on other factors than the frequency of publications. In this case, we can determine the optimal frequency of publications for Instagram, in which engagement rate is high – about 1 or fewer publications per day.

Regarding the Instagram social network audience (*Table 10*), today the MSU account has the largest number of subscribers (13500). Besides, it has the highest dynamics of development: over 4 years MSU Instagram account has grown from 0 to 13500 subscribers, increasing by about 4.5 thousand people a year. Interestingly, unlike Vkontakte and Facebook, the Instagram audience at St. Petersburg State University has grown inconsistently – a sharp failure was recorded in 2019 when the number of subscribers fell from 6179 in 2018 to 4463 and then grew again to 9459 in 2020. The growth of Instagram audience at NSU has the lowest dynamics among all of them – the number of subscribers has grown by 1700 people in 4 years.

Table 10

The audience of 3-top universities on Instagram



However, it can be ascertained that among the target audience the Instagram social network is more popular at NSU rather than at other universities, as in relation to the total audience of all social networks the percentage component of NSU audience is the highest: 34% of all NSU subscribers follow the Instagram account, while at MSU and St. Petersburg State University this indicator is 11% and 14.5% respectively.

Comparing the data on the number of subscribers with the audience involvement, we can see that in general, a university with the smallest audience (St. Petersburg State University) has a higher ER. However, this dependence is not clearly observed, the ER indicator is distributed chaotically, while, as in other social networks, the audience increases consistently from year to year, except for one failed period on the St. Petersburg State University page.

For example, the largest number of subscribers to NSU in 2020 (10,000) corresponds to the highest ER (6.3%), while the maximum number of subscribers to MSU in 2020 (1,500) corresponds to the second largest ER (6.7%). Therefore, in the social network Instagram, the engagement rate in the study does not show a clear dependence on the number of subscribers.

Summing up the analysis of media communication activities of the top 3 Russian universities in social networks Facebook, Instagram and Vkontakte from 2017 to 2020, we can say that Vkontakte has the largest audience among subscribers and, therefore, is the most popular platform for media promotion in social networks. At the same time, Vkontakte has the lowest audience engagement, which can be explained both by the large audience and the frequency of daily publications, which is higher in Vkontakte than in other social networks.

Users are most active in the Instagram social network, where their involvement is much higher than in Vkontakte and Facebook. And although in contrast to Vkontakte among the universities studied Instagram has the smallest total audience and publications there are made less often than in other social networks, it cannot be said exactly that the larger the audience and the higher the frequency of publications, the less the engagement rate – the Facebook audience of St. Petersburg State University and NSU was much smaller than in Instagram, and their ER was still much lower. Thus, high involvement in Instagram can be explained by the convenience of the platform, content and other factors and signal that this social network is perfectly suited to attract the target audience in the media communication activities of universities.

Conclusion

Social networks are the leader of the modern media system and represent great opportunities for media promotion of universities. The activities of universities in social networks create possibilities for fast and interactive communication, multimedia and modern familiar interface give the potential for increasing audience loyalty.

The results of the study confirm that the top 3 Russian universities are aware of the need and benefits of media communication in social networks and are actively developing their activities in them. We can note the positive dynamics of growth in the audience of accounts of almost all universities in social networks Facebook, Instagram and Vkontakte for 4 years from 2017 to 2020. MSU has the largest total audience, and the number of its subscribers is greater in all social networks except Vkontakte, where St. Petersburg State University is the leader in terms of audience coverage. From 2017 to 2020, Vkontakte remains the most popular social network among universities' target audience.

To assess the effectiveness of media communication, the study calculated an average engagement rate in each period studied, the values of which indicate the success of media promotion. The results showed that audience involvement was always different – in each study period, the indicators were diverse and distributed chaotically without any particular trends from period to period. It can be noted that in general, the lowest ER was demonstrated on the social networks Vkontakte and Facebook, with the figures being mostly low by ER values. Only Instagram had high ER values, and they were significantly higher than in other social networks. This shows that users are actively involved in this social network and Instagram can be successfully used by universities for media communication activities.

Comparing the dynamics of development and efficiency of media and communication activities of the three leading universities of Russian higher education in the study period (2017-2020), we can say that the most successful media promotion in social networks among the universities studied is conducted by NSU. ER indicators of this university are on average higher than those of MSU and St. Petersburg State University, on Vkontakte and Facebook. Only in Instagram, the engagement rate in the account of NSU is lower than that of other universities, but these are high indicators, which allows us to talk about the successful media promotion of the university in the social network. However, NSU is the smallest university among the surveyed and has the smallest total audience in social networks, which demonstrates that it is more difficult for large universities with a larger audience to effectively conduct media and communication activities.

Having analyzed the frequency of daily publications in the accounts of the universities studied and its connection with the audience involvement, we cannot say that there is always an inverse correlation between these data. Nevertheless, it is obvious that a sharp increase in the number of posts per day often leads to a decrease in engagement rate. Thus, based on the data obtained, one can try to determine the optimal frequency of publications per day for the media communication activities of universities in social networks: it is no more than 2 posts per day.

All in all, the data obtained in the course of the study demonstrate that the volume of media communication in social networks is increasing, while Russian universities are trying to meet the modern features of media consumption and constantly changing standards of promotion in social networks. However, for media communication to be effective, quantitative audience growth is not enough; one should focus on qualitative indicators that most clearly reflect the active presence and response of subscribers.

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ARTICLE

Prevalent news frames in news reports about military operations against Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria

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Abstract

The media have been accused of bias against the military by framing Boko Haram group as being superior thereby making better-armed soldiers afraid of confronting the group in open battle. This accusation was without any empirical underpinning, thus this study objectives were to identify the framing patterns used by Nigerian newspapers in the coverage of military operations against the Boko Haram group in North-East Nigeria. Four national dailies, *Daily Trust*, *Premium Times*, *The Nation* and *Vanguard*, were analyzed to find out the framing patterns in the reportage of military operations against Boko Haram to ascertain if the frames were more pro-military or anti-military. Hinged on the framing theory, the research method was content analysis. Inter-coder reliability was tested using the co-efficient of reliability suggested by Chadwick et al. (1984). Findings showed that the Injured/Arrest/Capture/Death of Boko Haram members frame was predominant across three newspapers (*Daily Trust*, *Premium Times*, *The Nation*) which made up 22% of the frames while *Vanguard* emphasized Cooperation frame with 11% of the total frames. Results also indicated that there was a 24% prevalence of the 17 frame categories used in the study. This shows that Nigerian newspapers reported the military favorably with 80% of the frames. Overall, findings do not support the statement that the media are to be blamed for the shortcomings of the military in the fight against the insurgents. Other factors like corruption, non-motivation of personnel amongst a host of others should be investigated.

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Keywords

Frames, content analysis, newspapers, military, Boko Haram, Nigeria.

Introduction

The Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria has been ongoing since 2009; the protracted nature of the conflict has defied predictions of resolution with millions displaced and thousands killed since it began (Global Terrorism Index, 2018). The media framing of the conflict has been blamed for the continued conflict (Hamid & Baba, 2014; Olagunju & Ajadi, 2014; Shehu, 2015). Some reports have argued that newspaper reports have demoralized troops fighting the insurgents (Audu, 2013; Haruna, 2017). The Director of Information, Defence Headquarters, Major General John Enenche claimed that Nigerian troops were reluctant in the past to engage the Boko Haram terrorists because the media framed the Boko Haram group as superior and winning the battle against the military (Erunke, 2017). When appraising the views of Payne (2005) who stated that the media, in the modern era, are indisputably an instrument of war, what Major General Enenche alludes to is the weaponization of the media by the Boko Haram insurgents putting fear in the psyche of Nigerian military officers on the battlefield. Similar misgivings were raised by the US military and authorities over the press coverage of the Vietnam War and this myth was maintained until the 21st century (McMahon, 2000; Shacochois, 2000).

These unsubstantiated allegations against the press were one of the methods the military employed to get the media to tow the government line when reporting conflicts involving the military. This paper attempts to analyze how news about military operations against Boko Haram insurgents has been framed by four Nigerian newspapers in their reports. The paper aimed to identify frames used and news reports about military operations against Boko Haram and identify the dominant frames contained therein to see if they align with statements that the media frame Boko Haram insurgents as being better equipped and stronger than Nigerian soldiers in battle. The justification for studying the newspapers is that because they are independently-owned, there may be a tendency to present reports critical of the government and military in their handling of the Boko Haram conflict and government policy towards the insurgents. To achieve our objective of investigating the frames adopted by the press in their coverage of the conflict, the following research questions were outlined:

1. What are the types of news frames in newspaper reports about military operations against the Boko Haram group in Nigeria?

2. Which is the dominant frame used in news stories about military operations against Boko Haram whether negative, positive or neutral?

This paper is divided into different headings with the first heading introducing the paper arguments and the research questions. We discuss the newspaper landscape in Nigeria and the newspaper choices for the study. The research is underpinned by the Framing Theory, this is presented and followed by Framing patterns employed to achieve the coding and data collection. Some literature on Framing in Nigeria and how they are intertwined with our research are presented followed by the research methodology. Results, discussion, conclusion, and recommendations follow sequentially to understand the issues and questions raised in the introduction.

Nigerian media landscape

The newspaper industry in Nigeria has been known to be vibrant dating from the pre-colonial era (1859) through independence (1960), and through successive military regimes (1966-1979, 1983-1999), where it stood against dictatorial regimes, culminating in the return to democracy 1999 and still sustained to date (Adebanwi, 2011; Seng & Hunt, 1986). Going back, Sommerlad (1966) highlighted that 'Nigeria has not only made progress in this important aspect of national growth and development; it has been made to adopt the press as a political tool, for economic development, stimulation of change and social function'. In the arena of political involvement, the privately-owned newspapers have been more direct and critical in their reportage, because they are devoid of appendages of being government employees; they are not witting players in government propaganda, hence for this study, only private newspaper outfits are used in the data analysis.

The media forms selected for this study are daily newspapers. Four were purposively selected for this research and they include *Vanguard*, *Premium Times*, *Daily Trust*, and *The Nation*. The primary substance in the choice of newspapers for the study was the prominence of the selected media, as the manifest in their circulation and regional representation. *Vanguard* was the highest-rated Nigerian newspaper; *Premium Times* was the most read online newspaper in Nigeria (Alexa, 2017), *The Nation* was rated as the third-best newspaper in Nigeria (Chigozie, 2013) while *Daily Trust* was the top-rated newspaper in Northern Nigeria (Shehu, 2015). Newspapers are read beyond their news value, they also serve as sources of textual evidence of immense value to researchers, journalists, students and the society at large, they are informative and Ogbiten (2007) views them as institutions developed by modern civilization to inform

and lead public opinion on matters of public concern and government policies with an impact on the citizenry.

Framing theory

Frames according to Reese (2001) 'are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world'. In order to make sense of their output, journalists and media professionals find themselves deconstruct news into frames to make them expressive and comprehensible structures, which earlier authors (Goffman, 1974; Tuchman, 1978) called 'strips'. These denoted 'any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity' (Goffman, 1974). The media achieves this through processes such as selection, omission, and emphasis. Thus, when journalists select, omit and emphasize certain attributes of news over other attributes, they are framing the story (Fleming-Rife & Proffitt, 2004). By so doing, they push the audience towards how to think and assimilate their reports.

Some studies (Entman, 1993; Gandy, 1994; Valkenburg & Semetko, 1999) suggest that media are the definitive news frame producers. The media may achieve this through its ability to influence public thinking and to offer the audience the most crucial topics (Pavelka, 2014). In his 1994 study, Gandy reported that the press preferred to tell audiences to think about the fortunes of Whites and bad news for and about Blacks. Valkenburg & Semetko (1999) stated that news frames give the audience direction on how to conceive of specific issues or events. Entman (1993) states that a frame 'is really the imprint of power – it registers the identity of actors or interests that competed to dominate the text'. News is also framed as a conflict. The conflict frame emphasizes the conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions (Neuman et al., 1992). Valkenburg & Semetko (1999) highlighted that this kind of coverage makes winning and losing the central concern.

Hook & Pu (2006) state that literary studies of news coverage of United States foreign policy reliably reveal patterns of news framing that legitimize the government's perceptions and positions on topical issues as exemplified in the coverage of the Persian Gulf War in 1991 which was characterised by patriotic frames. The media when covering the military operations against Boko Haram insurgents will frame it around whether the Nigerian military is losing or winning the war, words introduced can have a bearing on the readers towards the direction of the conflict. Procurement of new weapons and security agreements with other nations indicate hope for the soldiers fighting such

insurgents. Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007) opined that media interpretation of news influences individual perception of the event, and in this case, if the media blow the trumpet of the defeat of Boko Haram, the public may start thinking the group has been defeated and vice versa.

The claim of biased reporting by the Nigerian military against journalists is one that should not be taken lightly. This is because the press played a significant role in the outcome to turn public opinion against the U.S. military in the Vietnam War, regarded in many circles as the most drawn-out and least popular war in modern American history (McMahon, 2000). He observed that Robert Elegant, a correspondent who covered the conflict for the LA Times, charged in a notorious 1981 essay: 'The press was instinctively "against the Government" – and, at least reflexively, for Saigon's enemies.... For the first time in modern history, the outcome of a war was determined not on the battlefield, but on the printed page and, above all, on the television screen'.

McMahon (2000) claims further that this indictment resonated with conservative critics who lamented the media's malevolent influence on American society. It also found favor with those looking for a culprit for the abysmal failure of the U.S. military in Vietnam. Coupled with the antiwar movement of the late 60s and 70s, the media seemed a very tempting target. Some veteran reporters, defending their craft and professional colleagues, labeled the press coverage of the war as courageous truth-telling-scrupulously honest, tough-minded, yet also highly patriotic and, in hastening the end of a tragically ill-conceived military operation on a foreign soil, which strategically distinguishes it from the Boko Haram conflict and its coverage which is mainly fought within Nigeria, although dimensions of the conflict has spread into the neighboring West African nations of Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon (Omenma, 2020).

The media reporting military operations against the Boko Haram group may choose to highlight pieces of information that portray government forces as victorious; such as pointing out the casualty estimates of the terrorists while downplaying or outrightly omitting such estimates for the government forces thereby making the enemy casualty figures salient in the report. Entman (1993) defines salience as 'making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to the audience'. By applying salience to negative aspects of Boko Haram's shortcomings, while omitting those of the military and government forces, it may discourage other Jihadis from faraway places to join the insurgent group in fighting the government.

Freyenberger (2013) provides more clarity by stating that a surge in salience increases the chances that the public will recollect such reported news. Taking

the cited example of the casualty estimates of Boko Haram from a military operation, the public will tend to remember the figures mentioned, and when such reports are repeated intermittently, it creates an image in the mind of the public that the military is winning the war against the group. Information can be removed or included based on what message the press intends to convey to the audience. The media, therefore, can decide to promote government operations, or the terrorists' agendas, or remain neutral; this is part of our investigation to examine the media agenda if any exists in reporting military operations against the Boko Haram group.

Frame patterns

Different scholars have come up with different schemes for describing frames in research studies (De Vreese, 2005; Obaje, 2017; Okoro & Odoemelum, 2013; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) and these different frame types have been applied in different scenarios of framing research depending on the variables under study from framing government policy, environmental issues, and conflicts ranging from corporate conflicts to armed conflicts. The scholars agree that there is no unitary classification of frames, however, what determines framing patterns for each study depends on what the study hopes to achieve and what it intends to analyze. Most of the framing studies on the Boko Haram conflict by scholars in Nigeria have looked up to the works of Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) and Iyengar (1991) for the frame selection.

Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) outline that there are essentially two procedures of frame selection, either inductive or deductive approaches. In the inductive method, a sample of the data set is examined to reveal apparent frames embedded in the texts, which are then applied to the generality of the study. The advantage is that it unearths a large number of frames within the text. The deductive method is based on a system of predefined frames selected by the researcher before the study that is expected to be found in the media texts. Its strength is that it is useful when comparing frames across different media sources and is also easily replicable by other researchers, unlike the inductive approach. However, the researcher should avoid the risk of overlooking certain frames that may appear during the process of coding by ensuring that the frames are exhaustive to accommodate all possible frames that have the potential of illuminating the research objectives.

Van Gorp (2007) also asserts that the abstract nature of frames implies that it is best approached by combining qualitative and quantitative research methodology. The literature on framing the Boko Haram crises in Nigeria

(Obaje, 2017; Okoro & Odoemelam, 2013) adopted the frames developed in prior studies on framing conflict (De Vreese, 2005; Iyengar, 1991; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The frames are listed as: Response frame, Powerless frame, Political frame, Human interest, Conspiracy frame, Attribution of responsibility frame, Ethnicity frame, Religious frame, Economic frame, and Labeling frame.

Ngwu et al. (2015) modified their approach to include 'rescue efforts frame, hopelessness frame, political frame, religious frame, ethnic frame, conspiracy frame, and economic frame'. Ita & Ita (2016) designed their frames to include 'religion, ideology, politics, tribalism, greed, unemployment and illiteracy frames' in describing types of frames they studied. The fundamental difference between this research and the earlier mentioned studies is that whereas they try to frame the Boko Haram insurgency as a whole as perceived by the press and the public, our study is focused on how the media present stories about the military in their efforts in combating the Boko Haram crisis, as some of the frames may not be suitable for our study, hence the need to deductively create frames that take our research objectives into cognizance.

This research employs the framing pattern where we emphasized one of the major actors in the BH conflict in Nigeria – the military. We principally x-rayed the portrayal of the Nigerian military in newspaper reports about military operations against the Boko Haram group. As such, we deductively developed the frames from the framing devices as advocated by Van Gorp (2007) to put the coverage of military operations into context to account for our research objectives. The frames were deductively developed from a sample of the news stories that were analyzed to ensure representation of all the study population in the frames developed. The cumulative documentation of each frame type will reveal the dominant frame pattern.

The frames deductively drawn up were: the win frame, new weapons/equipment frame, injured/arrest/capture/death of Boko Haram members frame, cooperation frame, rescue frame, mobilization frame, encouragement frame, liberation from, negotiation frame, clarification frame, issues frame, loss frame, helplessness frame, hopelessness frame, tribalism frame, arrest/capture/death of military frame, and objective frame. After combining frames that have similar emphasis, three master frames were generated to put the study into context; they include the positive, negative and neutral frames.

There were 10 positive frames (the win frame, new weapons frame, injured/arrest/capture/death of BH frame, cooperation frame, rescue frame, mobilization frame, encouragement frame, liberation frame, negotiation frame, and clarification frame) and 6 negative ones (issues frame, lose frame,

helplessness frame, hopelessness frame, tribalism frame, arrest/capture/death of military). The neutral frame was made up of the objective frame.

Literature review

Olagunju & Ajadi (2014) in their treatise titled ‘The media and the ideology of insecurity: a critical discourse analysis of two editorials on Federal Government-Boko Haram face-off’, examined the role of the media in framing the Boko haram crisis using content analysis to study the editorial of two newspapers in Nigeria – *The Punch* and *Daily Trust*. Their research revealed that Boko Haram was framed as undefeatable and presented as being more powerful than the government (military) of Nigeria. However, their study was limited to two editorials from the two newspapers. Editorial or personal bias and limiting the study to two editorials could have played a role in their result. Our study explores multiple reports and news stories written over time and is less subjective than editorials which are the newspapers’ points of view, unlike straight news stories that are accounts of events, in this case, military events against the Boko Haram group over an extended period.

The research by Ngwu et al. (2015) titled ‘Nigerian newspapers framing of the Chibok schoolgirls abduction (a study of the *Guardian*, *Daily Sun*, *The Daily Trust* and *Leadership* newspapers)’ investigated how selected Nigerian newspapers framed the Chibok schoolgirls’ abduction of 2014 in two Southern and two Northern Nigerian newspapers (*The Guardian*, *The Sun*, *The Trust* and *Leadership*). The research objectives were to identify the frames used in coverage of the Chibok girls’ abduction and to find out which frame is dominant. Quantitative data for the study were generated with the help of content analysis and survey methods. Content analysis was applied to identify frames types used by journalists in describing the abduction while the survey method was used to measure the influence the frames had on the respondents.

The study established that the selected dailies used rescue efforts frame, hopelessness frame, political frame, religious frame, ethnic frame, conspiracy frame and economic frame with hopelessness frame being the most prevalent. Conclusively, the respondents claimed that the frames adopted by the newspapers have made them believe that the abducted girls were helpless and less likely to be rescued by the government. The frames, however, differ from our study in the sense that the Nigerian military is apolitical with little tolerance for religious or ethnic bias, thus some of the adopted frames do not apply to our study. Our study is also solely content analysis study while they combine the survey method with content analysis.

Obaje (2017) in her study titled 'News frame patterns: An evaluation of newspaper coverage of Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria' investigated the newspaper coverage of Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria using content analysis. Her objectives included finding out the sizing techniques adopted by the selected newspapers in their coverage of the Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria, the nature of the reports on Boko Haram attacks within the study period and the patterns of news frames of Boko Haram activities in the selected Nigerian newspapers. The researcher used a total of 171 stories from 120 editions from *The Nation*, *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian* and *ThisDay* using quantitative analysis. Her findings revealed that *The Nation* published more texts of various genres than the others. She found out that straight news was predominant and stories about Boko Haram attacks occupied the cover pages in lead positions giving them prominence. The government response to the conflict was framed as ineffective because it showcased an uncompromising disposition and its inability to contain the crises.

The research by Okoro & Odoemelam (2013) titled 'Print media framing of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: A content analytical study of *the Guardian*, *Daily Sun*, *Vanguard* and *ThisDay* newspapers', identified the pattern of frames used by the named newsprints in their coverage of BH insurgency using quantitative content analysis. Findings from the study indicated that Nigerian dailies reported the insurgency using the policy response frame predominantly. This highlights that Nigerian newspapers reported government interventions in the conflict positively thereby minimizing the conflict.

A recurring theme among all the reviewed studies is that they all focus on how the media portray the Boko Haram group or their actions against Nigerians or national institutions. The fundamental difference between our research and the reviewed studies is that none of them looked at the specific media portrayal of the military as a very important institution in the fight against Boko Haram. Scholars would rather study the military subsumed under the general term of the Nigerian government which includes the ministries and departments, as well as security units like the Army, Airforce, Department of State Security (DSS), Civil Defense, police, navy, etc. Other hindrances to the war efforts are the corruption of government officials who have used security as a means of enriching themselves at the expense of the lives of the people they swore an oath to protect. The press because of its information provision function has been used to expose such corrupt practices (Aluko, 2017) and in the process have come under attack from the military and other security operatives (Ibekwe, 2017; Ogundipe, 2017). Our study specifically explores the framing of military

operations and whether they have been positive or negative towards the military as an institution in their efforts to combat the scourge of Boko Haram insurgency and terror acts.

Methodology

This study made use of content analysis research design. The research populations consisted of the four daily newspapers which were purposively selected, they include *Vanguard*, *Premium Times*, *Daily Trust*, and *The Nation* and all issues of the selected newspapers from January 1, 2014, to December 31, 2016, including weekend versions amounting to 4384 issues. The sample size of this study was calculated using the algorithm from the website <https://www.statisticssolutions.com/sample-size-for-populations.html> at a confidence level of 95%. This gave us 353 issues as our sample. To make for even distribution, 7 more issues were added to make the sample 360.

To ensure equal representation for each sampled newspaper, we used quota sampling to share the sample across the newspapers into 90 issues for each sampled newspaper, and further divided into 30 issues per year for evenness. Systematic random sampling was applied as proposed by (Macnamara, 2011) with an issue selected every 12th day. To further reduce bias, a straw was drawn and January 10, 2014, was selected as the starting point. The unit of analysis for this study is straight news; this study used both quantitative and qualitative techniques in the analysis of the study data.

Data presentation

Data from the research were collected, analyzed and presented. A total of one hundred and eighty-five (185) stories were coded and analyzed for this study from a sample size of three hundred and sixty (360) issues obtained from the four selected national newspapers in Nigeria between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2016. The analysis presented is based on news reports about military operations against Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Research question 1: What are the types of news frames in newspaper reports about military operations against the Boko Haram group in Nigeria?

The types of news frames discerned from the news stories are presented in Table 4.12. Seventeen (17) frames in total were used to identify the types of frames used by Nigerian newspaper organizations in framing stories about military operations against the Boko Haram group.

The data from *Table 1* show that some frames were more frequently used than others and some frames were not used at all by any of the selected

**Prevalent news frames in news reports about military operations
against Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria**

newspapers. The table shows that of the 17 frames, 4 were prevalent i.e. they were found across all the newspapers while 13 frames were not found to have been used by all the newspapers. The prevalent frames were; rescue frame, mobilization frame, clarification frame, and issues frame. The frames that were not prevalent include: the win frame, new weapons/equipment frame, injured/arrest/capture/death of Boko Haram members frame, cooperation frame, encouragement frame, liberation frame, negotiation frame, loss frame, arrest/capture/death of military frame, and objective frame, while helplessness frame, hopelessness frame, and tribalism frame were not used by any of the selected newspapers in their news framing military campaigns against Boko Haram.

Table 1

Types of frames							
Newspapers							
Types of frames	Daily Trust	Premium Times	The Nation	Vanguard	Total	%	
1	Win frame	0	5	2	0	7	4
2	New weapons/ Equipment frame	1	0	0	3	4	2
3	Injured/arrest/ capture/death of BH	11	15	15	0	41	22
4	Cooperation frame	0	1	1	18	20	11
5	Rescue frame	1	4	3	4	12	7
6	Mobilization frame	3	5	4	5	17	9
7	Encouragement frame	1	0	1	4	6	3
8	Liberation frame	0	4	3	3	10	5
9	Negotiation frame	0	2	0	5	7	4
10	Clarification frame	7	5	11	1	24	13
11	Issues frame	2	8	2	12	24	13
12	Loss frame	0	0	0	6	6	3
13	Helplessness frame	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	Hopelessness frame	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	Tribalism frame	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	Arrest/capture/death of military	0	5	1	0	6	3
17	Objective frame	0	0	0	1	1	1
Total		26	54	43	62	185	100

**BH = Boko Haram*

The four (4) frames, representing (24%), were prevalent (i.e, common) in the coverage by the newspapers, while the other frames accounting for 76% of the frames were not prevalent i.e. were not found in all the newspapers.

Research question 2: Which is the dominant frame used in news stories about military operations against Boko Haram whether negative, positive or neutral?

To determine the dominant frame used in reports for this study, the frame types were separated into the three master frames; positive, negative and neutral frames and presented in *Tables 1, 2, 3* and *4*, and further summarized by *Figure 1*.

Table 2

Positive frames

Newspapers						
Types of frames		Daily Trust	Premium Times	The Nation	Vanguard	Total
1	Win frame	0	5	2	0	7
2	New weapons/Equipment frame	1	0	0	3	4
3	Injured/arrest/capture/death of BH	11	15	15	0	41
4	Cooperation frame	0	1	1	18	20
5	Rescue frame	1	4	3	4	12
6	Mobilization frame	3	5	4	5	17
7	Encouragement frame	1	0	1	4	6
8	Liberation frame	0	4	3	3	10
9	Negotiation frame	0	2	0	5	7
10	Clarification frame	7	5	11	1	24
Total		24	41	40	43	148

Table 3

Negative frames

Newspapers						
Types of frames		Daily Trust	Premium Times	The Nation	Vanguard	Total
1	Issues frame	2	8	2	12	24
2	loss frame	0	0	0	6	6
3	Helplessness frame	0	0	0	0	0
4	Hopelessness frame	0	0	0	0	0
5	Tribalism frame	0	0	0	0	0
6	Arrest/capture/death of military	0	5	1	0	6
Total		2	13	3	18	36

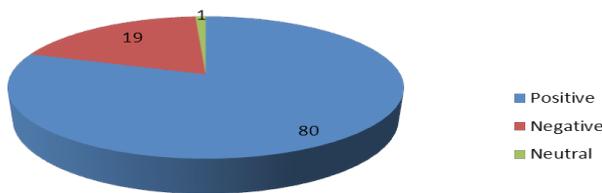
Table 4

Neutral frame

		Newspapers				
Types of frames		Daily Trust	Premium Times	The Nation	Vanguard	Total
1	Objective frame	0	0	0	1	1
Total		0	0	0	1	1

Figure 1

Frames in percentage



The total mentions identified for positive frames were 148 (80%), while 36 (19%) mentions were identified for negative frames and 1 (1%) mention was identified for the neutral frame. *Figure 1* was used to illustrate this information better. From *Figure 1*, we can see that positive frames were dominant making up 80% of the frames used in the study analysis, negative frames were 19% and neutral frames were 1%. Individually, the Injured/arrest/capture/death of the Boko Haram frame had the most entries with 41 (22%) of the total frames coded for the study.

Discussion of findings

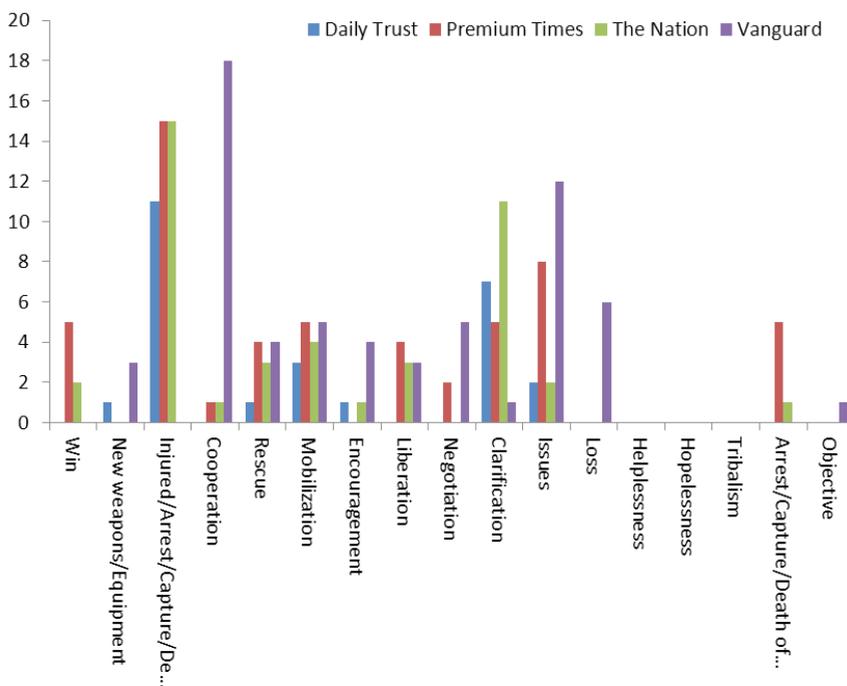
This research was carried out to determine how Nigerian newspapers framed military operations against the BH insurgent group, whether positive, negative or neutral. The study had a sample size of 360 editions of four newspapers that were spread evenly over three years revealed 185 news stories. The lower number for *Daily Trust* could be attributed to the unavailability of some editions from the sample. Some issues of *Daily Trust* were not available in 2014 (January 10, February 27, March 11 and May 10). The research sample is still valid because the four editions constitute about 4.4% of the *Daily Trust* sample and 1.1% of the total sample population. One edition of *The Nation* (June 27, 2014) was also unavailable.

The types of news frames used in stories about military operations against the Boko Haram group in Nigeria

Figure 2 illustrates the frame types used by the selected Nigerian newspapers in their coverage of military campaigns against the BH insurgent group. The Injured/arrest/capture/death of Boko Haram members frame had the most entries across all the sample population 41 (22%), while Helplessness, Hopelessness and Tribalism frames had no entries across the selected newspapers. This implies that Nigerian newspapers are most likely to report about the arrest, capture, injury or death of Boko Haram members in their coverage of military operations against the group while it is highly unlikely that they will describe the military efforts against the group as helpless, hopeless or being plagued by tribalism.

Figure 2

Frame types used by Nigerian newspapers



Comparing frame prevalence, this study produced four prevalent frames compared to Okoro & Odoemelam (2013) that had six prevalent frames and Obaje (2017) that had nine prevalent frames despite the adoption of 17 frames for this research compared to 10 in both studies. The reason could

be attributed to the limited scope of this research where we studied media texts about military operations against Boko Haram compared to the other scholars that studied media coverage of the Boko Haram conflict in its entirety during the study period. In consonance with Freyenberger (2013) who stated that an increase in salience will result in a corresponding increase in the chances that the public will recollect the reported news, casualty estimates of Boko Haram from military operations were frequently mentioned, and as they are repeated intermittently as seen in our findings, it creates an image in the mind of the public that the military is winning the war against the group.

The research findings indicate that *Daily Trust* had 7 out of the total 17 frames used in the analysis. This may be attributed to the fact that the newspaper produced the smallest number of articles for analysis. Some of the issues especially those for 2014 were not available because the paper changed its website from <http://dailytrust.info> to <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng> in 2014. Thus, articles published in the old website were no longer available to the public. News organizations should find a way to keep their old sites up or ensure that they migrate their archive to new websites when they change their domain names. This will be of immense benefit to researchers who will need such information as reference materials.

Vanguard had the most entries with 11 different frames followed by *Premium Times* and *The Nation* with 10 each, while *Daily Trust* has the least – 7 entries. In each of the instances, the newspapers were more likely to report accounts that will enhance military reputation even to the detriment of the journalist’s profession.

The dominant frame used in news stories about military operations against Boko Haram in Nigeria

The dominant frame can be deduced from the totality of the analysis as shown in *Tables 2, 3, 4* and *Figure 1*. For further clarity, the findings are summarized below.

Table 5

Summary of frames

Newspapers							
Frames		Daily Trust	Premium Times	The Nation	Vanguard	Total	%
1	Positive	24	41	40	43	148	80
2	Negative	2	13	3	18	36	19
3	Objective frame	0	0	0	1	1	1
Total		26	54	43	62	185	100

The findings showed that 80% of the frames used depicted the military positively, while 19% highlighted the strength of the Boko Haram insurgents by portraying the military negatively. Military casualties were downplayed and agreeing with the pictures where there were no pictures of military casualties in any of the newspapers. The main sources of information about military operations against Boko Haram were the military with little input from journalists as sources. It comes as no surprise that a majority of the stories were framed to portray the military positively compared to the negative ones against them.

Evidenced from the data analyzed from the selected Nigerian newspapers, the study does not agree with Erunke (2017) where the Director of Information, Defence Headquarters, Major General John Enenche claimed that Nigerian troops were reluctant in the past to engage the Boko Haram terrorists because the media framed the Boko Haram group as superior and winning the battle against the military or with other publications (Audu, 2013; Haruna, 2017) that blamed the media for the challenges encountered by the military in the engagements with Boko Haram. There may have been other problems that the soldiers fighting Boko Haram encountered like corruption in government, poor weapons and equipment, poor and late payments of remunerations and allowances that affect the motivation level of soldiers fighting the insurgents and these have been documented in different publications (Aluko, 2017). Although we agree with Payne (2005) that media in the modern era can be made into an instrument of war, findings suggest that it is the military that has turned the press into a war tool against the insurgents with their brand of reportage. Also, like the debunked allegations against the press in the US for their Vietnam War coverage, as documented in Shacochis (2000) and McMahon (2000), we again encountered another unsubstantiated allegation against the Nigerian press in their coverage of military operations against the Boko Haram insurgents.

The findings, however, agree with the views expressed in some literature (Hamid & Baba, 2014; Olagunju & Ajadi, 2014; Shehu, 2015) where the media have been blamed for not doing enough in helping to solve the Boko Haram crises by the quality of their reporting. Obaje (2017) recommended a critical interpretation and investigation of crisis reports instead of relying mainly on straight news reporting by including some background and future implications of news events. She adds that newspapers have more or less been spoon-fed information concerning happenings in the North-East instead of being guided by investigative journalism. She concluded by saying that Nigerian media have been adopting more of propaganda than factual and objective reporting and more in

terms of weapons of mass deception for ideological and commercial purposes. The research reveals favorable reportage by Nigerian newspapers towards the Nigerian military in their war efforts against the Boko Haram group was seen in all the research questions posed in the study and also as recommended in Okoro (2012). The positive frames dominated the negative frames adopted by all the sampled newspapers.

As earlier seen, the media thus have the power to influence their audience's way of thinking and to offer the audience the most important topics (Pavelka, 2014). Concerning military operations against the Boko haram group, the government has consistently insisted on defeating the insurgents and the media has re-echoed this sentiment to a larger extent. Hook & Pu (2006) earlier stated that research on U.S. foreign policy news coverage consistently reveal patterns that legitimize the government's positions and perceptions of issues. This can be seen from our findings where the majority of the frames reinforce government positions, giving the military agenda some legitimacy, which then becomes the public narrative when the Boko Haram insurgency is in the public purview as seen in news reports.

Moreover, taking into account the views of Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007), who state that media interpretation of news influences individual perception of the event, and in this case, if the media blows the trumpet of the defeat of Boko Haram, the public starts thinking the group has been defeated. The Boko Haram insecurity in the North East was one of the cardinal talking points of President Buhari when he campaigned against the incumbent President Jonathan before the 2015 elections in Nigeria. Having claimed victory at the polls, President Buhari went ahead to proclaim the defeat of the terrorist group in 2015 and 2016, it came as a rude awakening to discover that the group can kidnap hundreds of schoolgirls to spread their terror of discouraging western education especially among women.

Conclusion

The research has added to the body of work about newspaper coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency by focusing on how military operations are reported in four Nigerian newspapers. The findings have shown contrasts in newspaper coverage and framing of the military when reporting about campaigns against Boko Haram, and how the military has been presented in these reports. The study has also been able to show the dominant and prevalent frames used by the newspapers in their coverage. A significant contribution of this study, not found in previous literature is the military focus of the research which came

from the statement credited to the former Director of Defense Headquarters, Major-General John Enenche who claimed that the media framed Boko Haram as being superior to the military thus making the soldiers unable to confront the insurgents in battle. The study was able to show that the media have framed the military positively and in some cases against some established journalism ethics and principles. In other words, the Nigerian military can be said to have turned the media to work for and with them in reporting military operations against the insurgents.

The study found a disparity in frame patterns used by the newspapers in their reportage of military operations against the Boko Haram group between 2014 and 2016. *Daily Trust*, *Premium Times* and *The Nation* newspapers emphasized the Injured/arrest/capture/death of Boko Haram members making up 22% of the frames while *Vanguard* emphasized cooperation frame accounting for 11% of the total frames. Four (4) frames, representing (24%), were prevalent (i.e common) in the coverage by the newspapers. These frames included the following: Rescue frame, Mobilization frame, Clarification frame, and Issues frame. The other frames accounting for 76% of the frames were not prevalent i.e. were not found in all the newspapers. Overall the findings show that frames showing the military in a positive light were dominant with 80% of the total frames. In addressing the types of news frames discernable from newspaper reports, the frame that emphasizes harm, capture or death of Boko Haram insurgents stands out among the framing group for this study. In other words, newspapers would put injury to Boko Haram members than harm to soldiers of the Nigerian government forces fighting the insurgents, thus showing an aversion to positively present reports about government forces over the militant insurgents, and at the same time keeping reporting about challenges faced by the military against the insurgents at a minimum.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the Nigerian press should continue the practice of using frames that highlight the strength of the government (military) over terrorist organizations. Frames promoting peace, government policy actions and response to setbacks should be promoted over those capable of causing chaos and confusion in the polity. *Premium Times* and *Vanguard* should also reduce the number of negative frames in their stories. Although they may be reporting reality, such reports should be written with government successes as the main thrusts of the message. The fabric of Nigeria as a fragile, secular and multicultural society coupled with the roles played by ethnicity and religion

can be distorted by one negative report, which can be interpreted differently by various groups.

Further studies can also be carried out to find out the consistency of the findings using more recent data as well as expanding the framing categories and also the inclusion of other media forms like television, radio, and magazines to broadly generalize and understand the dynamics of how Nigerian media reports military operations against the Boko Haram insurgent group. Other studies could also be expanded to cover other crises like the Fulani Herdsmen violence, Niger Delta militants and the Biafra agitations in the southern part of Nigeria.

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