**PRINT MEDIA OBJECTIVITY AND JOURNALISTIC ETHICS**

**(A CASE STUDY OF STATE-PRESS RELATIONS IN AKWA IBOM STATE)**

**BY**

**EDET, UDUAK IME**

**UCP/H2012/MC/236**

**TO**

**DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION**

**UYO CITY POLYTECHNIC, UYO**

**AKWA IBOM STATE.**

**FEBRUARY 2015**

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**UYO CITY POLYTECHNIC, UYO, AKWA IBOM STATE.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA (HND) IN MASS COMMUNICATION**

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**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this work was written by Edet, Uduak Ime, with Registration No: **UCP/H2012/MC/236** under the supervision of:

Mr. Emmanuel Ebong ……………………

(Supervisor) Signature/Date

Pastor George Udoh, Ph.D ……………………..

(Head of Department) Signature/Date

**DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to Almighty God and to my beloved husband, Comrade Sylvester Asukwo Bassey.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Firstly, I acknowledgement the Almighty God for his infinite mercies and grace that has seen me this far.

 I acknowledgement my mother, Madam Arit Edem Uyeire; I say a very “thank you” for your love, care, prayer and contribution to my success.

 I cannot fail to express my profound gratitude to Mr. Emmanuel Ebong, my supervisor as well as my Head of Department for his untiring effort in reading through the original manuscript and making corrections and useful suggestions which help me to bring up this work to this level.

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 My indept thanks go to my colleagues Miss Victoria, Wilson, Unyime Jones and Uduak Abraham who inspired me during the course of this work

**ABSTRACT**

The study was to find out how unethical press reportage brings about sour relationship between the state and the press and also how the presses are ridiculed by the government due to accurate and factual reports. The problem was to assess the extent, which sour state press relations affects press reportage. The research design used for this study was random sampling which the researcher examined different editions each of two newspapers. The press should report accurate and factual reportage and the government should give the press a chance to avoid sour state – press fends. Over the years, there had been cases of sour state – press relations in Akwa Ibom, cases where the state have been abused by the press and the press by the state. This study is to delve into the causes of this abuses and the way by which it can be salvages.

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING**

**1.1 Introduction**

One important issue that keeps on resonating in journalism practice the world over is state-press relations. That is, relationship between the state and the press. The state here is always represented by the government or persons in authority. It is the duty of the journalist to educate, entertain, inform and provide public enlightenment and opinion to the audience and moreso, evaluate government policies and programmes.

The print medium, in the midst of mass media helps tremendously in the dissemination and analysis of these information and policies of the government to the large heterogeneous audience. Print medium is also the target of this study because of its noticeable form as a medium of mass dissemination of information. Until recently in Akwa Ibom State, it was government’s broadcast media that held the beam of information dissemination in Akwa Ibom State. From the foregoing, it’s a common knowledge that he who pays the piper calls or dictates the tune to a greater extent. Therefore, the print media establishments by individuals in Akwa Ibom State are not only time but the best to a democratic setting like the case in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State. The conviction for the foregoing is predicted on the fact that for democracy to flourish, certain democratic principles such as freedom to express oneself should be upheld.

It is on this note that Article 19 of the University Declaration of human rights empowers everyone with the right to freedom of expression and to hold opinions without interferences and to seek, receive and impact ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers will be stressed.

**1.2 Background of the study**

The above which Nigerian is a signatory is in supplement to the provision of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in its various designations, which also calls for such like rights of granting freedom of expression, to receive and impact ideas and information without interference.

Probably overwhelmed by the above provisions, many journalists in Akwa Ibom State seem to practice the journalism profession in absolute some control measures, some of which are legal, economic and ethical control.

Local control is the law regulating journalism practice. Economic control is often exercised through foreign exchange for spare parts and newsprint as well as market response. And the crux of this study; ethical control has been made to rest with the professionals, and it is usually expressed in the code of ethics for the practice of journalism which may be international, national or regional. It is ethical control in the regional practice of journalism that informed this study, the topic: “Print Media Objectivity and Journalism Ethics: A study of State-press relations in Akwa Ibom State.

The argument lies on the fact that in the press reportage and evaluation of government policies and programmes, certain ethical issues must be considered. Likewise, the state to which the journalist evaluates its activities should provide a conducive environment for the flow of information, as this will allow for development. It is on the basis of the foregoing that Nigerian Press Organization’s code of conduct as applicable in Akwa Ibom State is replicated below to aid the study.

**Code of conduct of Nigerian Press Organization Preamble**

1. Abuses of the rights of the press are punishable by law. Indeed, the law of Libel, civil as well as criminal and the law of contempt, deal adequately with such abuse.
2. Any abuse of the rights of the press, therefore, cannot be the objective of declaration.
3. But experience has shown many lapses in the practice of the profession and it has for long become apparent that as code of conduct must be established among practicing journalists themselves, if they must fulfill their true functions and if a standard below which journalists may not be expected to fall may be laid down.

It is pursuance of these objectives that we hereby solemnly declare:

1. That the public is entitled to the truth and that only correct information can form the basis for sound journalist and ensure the confidence of the people.
2. That it is the moral duty of every journalist to have respect for the truth and to publish or prepare for publication only the truth and to be best of his knowledge
3. That it is the duty of the journalist to publish only facts, never to suppress such facts as he knows, never to falsify either to suit his own purposes or any other purposes.
4. That it is the duty of the journalist to refuse any reward for publishing or suppressing news or comments, other than salary and allowance legitimately earned in the discharge of his professional duties.
5. That the journalist shall employ all legitimate means in the collection of news and he shall defend at all times the right to free access, provided that due regard is paid to the privacy of individuals.
6. That once information has been collected and published, the journalist shall observe the universally accepted principle of secrecy and shall not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence.
7. That it is the duty of every journalist to correct any published information to be incorrect.

The above amidst others like the Nigerian union of journalist’s code of conduct are some of the recorded ethical measures of journalism practice in Akwa Ibom State as the context of this study. As earlier stated, the issue is that while government feels that is logical to restrain the power of the press and if possible, have a total control, the press fights fiercely to resist this stance government wants to subject it. In the face of these and many other challenges, the question is if the journalist in Akwa Ibom State is still objective and ethical in his coverage of news and events in Akwa Ibom State, especially news event that have to do with evaluating government policies and programme.

**1.3 Statement of the Problem**

It is the duty of the journalist to serve the political system by making information, discussion and consideration of public affairs accessible. It is also his/her place to inform the public to enable it (the public) to take self-determined action as well as to protect the rights of the individuals by acting as watchdog over the government.

Therefore, journalism practice is not only aimed at ordering the society but keep the citizens abreast with government policies. It is the quest to serve the citizens and society through information dissemination that certain sour relationship crops up to constrain journalism practice.

This study would give us the insight as to what extents the Akwa Ibom State journalist practice its professional duties. It will find out if journalists in Akwa Ibom State practice within the confines of the ethics of the profession. And above all, this study seeks to find out the problem which journalists encounter in the course of carrying out their duties in relationship with the government.

**1.4 Research Questions**

In pursuance of this study, the following questions would serve as standards at producing the desired result:

1. What are the respondents’ general perceptions of the mass media?
2. What are the respondents’ perceptions of the print media in particular?
3. How do the respondents respond to print media contents?
4. How do the respondents adjudge press reportage in relation to government policies in Akwa Ibom State?
5. What are the respondent’s assessments of the effectiveness of the press in Akwa Ibom State?

**1.5 Objectives of the study**

The basis objective of this study is to research and identify the problems of objectivity which is part of the ethical requirements of journalism practice. It is the target of the study to research into the relationship that exists between the state and press in Akwa Ibom State especially as it relates to ethics on the part of the press. The study will also find out if ownership (government and practice) will in anyway influence news reportage, comments, opinions, features and editorials as such influence could be sensational rather than ethical.

In identifying the problems of government clamping down on the press and the ethical questions of the press in Akwa Ibom State, ways of improving journalism in order to attain genuine professional excellence and what the government should known about press coverage will be recommended.

**1.6 Significance of the study**

Every research study, unarguable seeks to know and proffer solution to problem. The problems inherent in this research have relevance to journalism, journalists, government and the people. Its significance therefore, includes:

1. The study will highlight how a state-press relation hinders or facilitate media practice in Akwa Ibom State.
2. If it is proven by this study, that surmounting the problems of state-press relations in Akwa Ibom State are the cogs of effective journalism practice, then the institutions or authorities concerned would be called upon to improve on these weaknesses as to give journalism its pride of place.
3. The findings of this study would absolutely enhance the journalism profession or career for the practitioners, government and the society.
4. The study will further improve the lives of both rural and urban people of Akwa Ibom State by the objective reporting and analysis of social and development issues.

State-press relations are an important area of concern to journalism and the society. It is therefore, hoped that this study will serve as a source of reference and inspiration of future research and will also add to the existing knowledge in the world of journalism not only in Akwa Ibom State but beyond.

**1.7 Limitations of the Study**

State-press relations are a broad of research in journalism practice in Nigeria. This is because; a study of the press system in Nigeria to a greater extent is the study of Nigerian development. Therefore, the study is limited to Akwa Ibom State. Research such as this minimal in the literature. It is on that basis that this study sets to research the relationship between the state and the press. Furthermore, the stat-press relation is limited to the print media. Why limited to print media is simple. Until recently when Africa Independent Television (AIT), Rhythm 93.7, Ray Power Station and Treasure 98.5 stations were established as broadcast media and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) which are owned by the government that were in operation.

The contents of these government-owned electronic media would no doubt, be easily adjudged as reflections of government directives and therefore, would not allow for rational discourse for speedy development.

**1.8 Definition of Terms**

**Broadcast media:** This is the use of radio and television to disseminate information to the public. It is otherwise known as the electronic media.

**Censorship:** It is the examination of media contents before they are published so that unacceptable parts could be cut out.

**Film:** Is one of the media of mass communication where messages are disseminated via motion picture.

**Journalist:** A journalist is a person who writes for newspaper, magazines, television, or radio. In this context, it is sometimes referred to as the practitioner.

**Journalism Ethics:** It is the moral belief that influences the behaviour, attitudes and ideas of journalists to practice in certain ways.

**Journalism Practice:** It is the practice of collecting, writing and publishing news in newspapers, magazines, television and Radio for public consumption. It is otherwise referred to as media practice.

**Libel:** Is the defamation of a person’s character through the print broadcast media.

**Mass Media:** The mass media are the channels used in disseminating messages to the public.

**Objectivity:** It is the comment, reports or observation which its sets of assumption depends on facts rather than on the feelings.

**Press:** The press refers to newspaper or to the journalists who write them.

**Print media:** Is a form of mass media. Basically, it is the use of newspaper, magazine and book as channels of mass communication.