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*Original Paper*

## Appraisal of Broadcast Journalists' Application of Freedom of Information Act in Political Reportage in Rivers State

Alikor Queen Nneka<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Public Relations and Advertising, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

### Abstract

The study appraised the application of Freedom of Information Act by broadcast journalists in political reportage in Rivers State. The objectives to investigate whether FOI Act has improved journalists access of official information in Rivers State and determine the challenges faced by journalists in utilizing the FOI Act in Rivers State. A total of 200 journalists were sampled through the questionnaires structured in line with the research objectives. It was found that journalists in Rivers State do not utilize the contents of the FOI Act effectively because of the uncooperative nature of government officials in terms of releasing official information. This is largely because of the bureaucratic bottlenecks that exist in the various ministries, departments, agencies and parastatals of government. It was therefore recommended that the Government should be transparent in all of its dealings in the society because they hold the positions in trust for the society and that the press should put the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act into force by going to the law courts when officials of government refuse to release official information.

**Keywords:** Freedom, Information, Government, and media.

### Introduction

The passage of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in 2011 by the National Assembly and the subsequent assent given to the Act by Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan led Federal Government of Nigeria brought with it a lot of jubilation, expectations, hope, prospects and relief on the part of the media that it will become easy to operate within the country. Down the line, it is still a matter of debate as to what impact the passage of the law has had on media operations within Nigeria and Rivers State in particular. This is especially as it is becoming increasingly hard to tell whether journalists are being granted easy access to relevant information about the activities of government in the country (Alemoh & Gambo, 2016).

One of such cases is the supposedly lack of open access to the annual budget of Rivers State by journalists. Speculations are rife as to the possibility of the government operating a different budget from the one presented to the Rivers State House of Assembly by the Executive Governor of Rivers State, Nyesom Ezenwo Wike. Opposition parties in the state like the All Progressives' Congress, APC, have repeatedly chided the government openly to make the contents of the budget open as it was a public document by the government usually responded that the budget was out there but the people including practicing journalists cannot account for what is in the annual budget of Rivers State year in, year out. This brings to fore, the import of the Freedom of Information Act in unraveling the imbroglgio and setting the records right (Daramola, 2003).

In recent times, it has become trendy to blame the media for not doing enough to drive societal advancement. Some people, especially those averse with the policy direction of the sitting government, out rightly associates the media with connivance with the government in power to deceive the society in matters of public importance and rather act as the megaphones government misrule. Media operators on their part are locked in a dreaded battle of wits with the government in trying to carry out its functions in the society. This has brought a love-hate bond amongst the media and the society on one hand, and the media and the government on the other hand, leaving the media between the devil and the deep blue sea. In essence, the media is being viewed with much suspicion by both the government and

other members of the society.

Meanwhile, the people have continued to innovate on new means to reach out and air their grievances to the government since it is becoming common place to believe that the media are placating the government. The media space have therefore become so democratized that the mainstream media can no longer claim exclusivity of being able to midwife the wishes and aspirations of the people and serving other related functions hitherto ascribed to them (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The media space has become so revolutionalised to the extent where everyone in the society now assume the responsibility of having a say in the affairs of their political leaders irrespective of ethnicity, religion due to the access and freedom that intervening social media offers.

As the people veer off the journalistic cliff through citizen journalism, the trained journalists are strapped in the thinking that veracity and transparency are two essential elements in political leadership and that has one big challenge encountered by journalists in trying to know what ought to be known from the government of the day. Democracy can only be said to be reasonable and allowed to exist when there is stringent accountability of state institution and this is one of the factors that informed the passage of the Freedom of Information Act (Oso & Pate, 2011).

According to Yalaju (2006), citizens should have the inalienable right to access officially held information because it would inescapably enhance good governance, transparency, responsibility and people's participation in government. He argued that the laws of the press should be such that allows the press the liberty to access information as this will strengthen the media by securing and protecting freedom of expression of the members of the society (Mojaye & Msughter, 2022).

It was after the inauguration of the 6th National Assembly of 2011-2015 that the Act was reintroduced after undergoing several modifications to suit the taste of the powers that be at the time. The upper and lower chambers of the National Assembly had to work tediously on the document before it was finally passed into law. Thus, by the 27th of May, 2011, the law had taken another dimension and form and then signed into law on the 28 of May, 2011 by Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, who was the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria at that time. With the signing of the Freedom of Information Act, it remains to be seen if the press in Rivers State are utilizing its provision in their daily reportage of the political sphere. This is the task of this study (Okon & Okogbule, 2016).

### **Problem Statement**

The political climate in Nigeria in recent times has necessitated the need for the use of the Freedom of Information Act to effectively unravel some hidden truths about some happenings in the country. This is because, its non-utilisation or apparent under-utilisation has allowed a lot of unverifiable information to flood the country's information space and caused a lot of havoc in the society. It is no longer news to see members of the society discussing politics and fabricating facts in order to win an argument. Some of them, because of their political affiliation, tell outright lies in order to favour their preferred political party. Today, the society is at loss as to what to believe when it comes to certain issues within the polity (Scarpino, 2009).

The free access to the means of sending, receiving and sharing information offered by the social media has not helped matters as different fake and genuine information rent the air from both verifiable and non-verifiable sources. We now have social media comedians, influencers, advertisers and several other nomenclatures all creating and disseminating different forms of digital contents. With this, it becomes increasingly difficult for the government to control the flow of information and therefore the direction of the thoughts of the members of the society. This means an invitation to chaos in the society because if wrong information festers in the society, the people will react negatively.

The present democratic dispensation requires that the press should be free to gather any form of information from the government and report same to the society without restraint. The press led the war to end the impact of Decree 4 of 1984 in Nigeria which made it criminal for the press to report certain issues that were meant to embarrass the Government (Sa, 2009).

Today, Nigeria is believed to be in a democratic dispensation which has run for over twenty years. The Freedom of Information Act is supposedly one of the dividends of democracy. It is expected that the

journalists, especially those in the broadcast media will fully utilize its provisions in their daily duty of informing society. This is one of the sure paths to societal development. Whether this is the case, is the reason why this study was set because there seems to be a lot of lacuna in media reportage of political events in the country.

Several issues and questions like that of why the Chibok girls have not been fully rescued till date after several years in captivity, the rampaging Herdsmen and their killings across the length and breadth of the country, the unending onslaught by Boko Haram, the rising spate of insecurity across the states of the country among other things, have remained unanswered by the government. It simply shows that it is either the journalists are not asking the right questions or that the government is not giving them answers, hence this study.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objectives of this study were to;

1. Examine how broadcast journalists in Rivers State utilize Freedom of Information Act in the process of news gathering and reporting.
2. Investigate whether FOI Act has improved broadcast journalists' access of official information in Rivers State.
3. Determine the challenges faced by broadcast Journalists in utilizing the FOI Act in Rivers State.

### **Media and Politics in Nigeria**

Politics sets the path for members of the society to acquire power in trust and for the rest of other members of the society. The power is used to enhance the governance of the state and influence the society at large in a positive manner. It is this power that provides order and direction in the society. Mass media are the vehicle that carries messages in enhancing the democratic system in Nigeria political development. This, they do by ensuring that every event in the society is monitored, reported and the implications pointed out to keep the society alert lest the cherished values of the society get eroded. The media also serve as a means of societal participation in the affairs of governance in the state. The media are expected to provide a monitoring function on government, industry, and society by ensuring that societal values are perpetuated. The media also keeps record of happenings in the society so that societal discourse can be guided by verifiable evidence.

McQuail in Msugther (2017) observes that the conduct of democratic or undemocratic politics, nationally and internationally, depends on the operations of the mass media. This is because the media are defenders of societal values and aspirations. Should the media be silenced through funny laws, then society will suffer for it. This brings the import of the Freedom of Information Act to the fore. The media cannot successfully hold the government accountable if there is no legal backing compelling the government to come clean with relevant information on its activities within the society. It therefore implies that the media must maintain vigilance on behalf of the society at all times or the government will just do whatever they like and get away with it (Udeajah, 2004).

Yalaju (2006) reports that the history of the press in Nigeria is in some sense the history of modern day Nigeria because most of the struggles the press had engaged in are the reason for some positive changes being witnessed in the Nigerian political experience. Democracy is one of the world's most recognized and accepted forms of government because of its premium for the choice of the majority as against the minority strings. Democracy is a system of government where the supreme power to govern the society is vested in the people and implemented by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held 'free' elections.

The electoral process is central to the sustenance and perpetuation of democracy. This is because, for a democracy to bear the hallmark of legitimacy and sovereignty, there is need for frequent check on some 'entrenched interests' in the form of periodic change in leadership of a country and avoid alienation certain set of people in the society. Galadima in Msugther (2022) writes that in Nigeria, legitimate authority normally derives from the general elections where the President is elected for the country and to do that, political parties are normally formed to canvass for votes. It is based on the candidates

presented for election by the participating political parties, that the electorates will choose who will lead the country.

In the present dispensation (general elections of 2023), the people will rely on the media for information from the electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and the various candidates standing for elections. This task is very huge because the candidates are in a thug of war to out-do themselves in order to gain the favour of the electorates. So many of the candidates of the various political parties vying for various positions in the coming elections have also latched on to the social media with all of its uncertainties to sell their candidacy to the electorates which consists majorly of youths. Without stringent regulation of the social media, a lot misinformation goes on that cries for attention.

Pate (2011) notes that General Mohammadu Buhari's regime of December 1984 to August 1985, tried to shut down the press by restricting its powers operate within the society through draconian laws. In his words, "The relationship between the press and the short-lived regime of General Buhari regime was harsh and unfriendly...the regime adopted draconian measures that undermined the freedom of individuals and that of the press. In the process, the freedom of the press to professionally gather and disseminate information was threatened by physical attacks, arrests of media professionals, restrictions to the importation of raw materials for the production of newspapers and magazines, denial of access to information and cooperation from key government officials and other crude tactics combined to emasculate the vibrancy of the press and lead to the enthroning of a (negative) climate on the whole society, p. 100.

The love-hate relationship between the press and government in Nigeria was precipitated by what Amadi (2017) describes as the "do-or-die attitude of politicians", which according to him is 'bane of political development of developing societies like Nigeria...by 2003, the wide political misconception that was incapable of transiting from one civilian government to another was broken" p. 21. The media has been part of the electoral process in Nigeria. Amadi (2017) agrees that aside the educative, informative, entertainment roles of television (media) to her varied audience, it has been involved in changing lives in all areas of human endeavours...the mass media introduced standardized roles, norms, behaviour, trends, codes as well as attitudes in society. This attitude is being sponsored by the broadcast media for a virile society like Nigeria.

### **Freedom of Information Act**

The freedom of Information Act makes it easy for journalists to place a demand on the government as a matter of obligation to provide information on their activities for the good of the society. For example, the government can be compelled by the courts to provide the details of a contract it awarded if the members of the society cry foul of the presentations made by government officials. The journalist of any member of the society acting for himself or on behalf of the society can then demand that the details of such a contract be made public for the world to know what really transpired (Msughter, 2020). The FOI Act is therefore not limited to be operated by the journalist but it is leverage for members of the society to seek and know what is going on in government as a matter of right.

With the paucity of time with which the broadcast industry utilizes in creating its content, and the attendant wide range of reception of broadcast messages, many government officials fear to grant broadcast journalists audience especially when it comes to revealing sensitive matters in the society (Msughter et al., 2022). The guarantee of going to court to seek redress when such information is not released by government officials can be counter-productive considering that the judiciary in Nigeria is not very effective. The process of delivering judgement is very slow and when the judgement is delivered, the government hardly obeys it but will rather go an appeal spree in courts of higher jurisdiction and therefore defeat the aim for requiring such information.

For the print media, the case is different because going to court forms the basis of generating other news items and the appeals will form a wheel of other chronicles and the government usually avoids such because it will open several other hidden secret about government operations within the society. The broadcast industry do not have that luxury of time to take up such a revelation cum war trip but are restricted to the big news everyday (Msughter, 2021).

## **Empirical Review**

Nsereka and Amannah (2014) did an evaluative study of the Freedom of Information Act on Media Practice in Nigeria. The purpose of the research was to evaluate the relationship between the Freedom of Information Act and media practice in Nigeria. The crux of the research was to find out whether journalists were conscious of the utilization of the Act in order to enhance their efficiency in practice. That is, being able to utilize the Act to get information hitherto hidden and inaccessible to them. To accomplish their task, a survey research design was adopted, using the questionnaire and interviews to gather data in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The findings showed that the Freedom of Information Act had the potentials of engendering effective media practice in the country. The duo hinted that anti-press laws were still impeding the effective utilization of the FOIA in the country.

The study concluded that the FOIA was a catalyst of Freedom with responsibility and good governance, fairness, accuracy, balance and objectivity. It recommended that journalists should go farther than the surface of stories by utilizing the tenets of the FOIA. The recommendations of this study give bite to the research objectives of the present study as it seeks to query the utilisation of the FOIA in the daily practice of journalism in Port Harcourt.

Onoja (2005) in another study, did an assessment of how political issues were treated by Nigerian Newspapers. This was done by the use of content analysis in assessing the ration of political news to other subject matters, the readers' interest on political stories and the level of prominence attached to these stories by way of placement and importance. The study found that political issues were not given adequate attention by newspapers in Nigeria. Most of the stories were mostly tailored to sooth government interest. It then recommended that newspapers should render vivid and unbiased reportage of political issues as well as scale up political content in publications as a way of consolidating political consciousness in Nigeria.

The study reviewed above also gives another lacuna for which the present study is set to fill. Whether the journalists are utilizing the FOIA in their daily reportage is yet to be known. Again, Nsereka and Amannah (2014), has established that the FOIA is a tool that could rein the consciousness of journalists to be effective in their practice.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Social Responsibility Theory**

This theory was born out of the quest for media self-regulation and improved operational efficiency. Henry Luce, Chief Executive Officer of Time Incorporated in the United States of America, provided funds for an autonomous commission to make recommendations concerning the role of the press and this led to the creation of the Hutchins' Commission on Freedom of the Press established in 1942. Members of the commission consisted of leaders from many areas of society, including academics, politicians, and heads of social groups" (Baran & Davis in Ukonu, 2005).

The Social Responsibility theory of the mass media as a concept is relatively new. Its usage started in the mid-20th century and is used mostly by developing and least developed countries of the world. It originally started in Europe as an off-shoot of the libertarian theory. The theory challenges media professionals' ingenuity to develop a new way of serving their community (audience members) without the frequent interference of the government. It encourages media establishment to see themselves as front line contributors in the battle to preserve democracy in a world drifting unavoidably towards authoritarianism. It places on the media to be more investigative and interpret/analyze factual report with a sense of accuracy and objectivity to the understanding of everyone, not just the elite group of people but to the pluralist community. The press in the context of this theory is regarded as the voice of the masses.

According to Anaeto et al. (2008), one significant feature of this theory is that, initially, the press present facts without interpretation thereby causing misinterpretation among members of the public and this resulted in conflicts in the society. There were instances where such pattern of news reporting had affected societal order and peace. With the utilization of this theory by some grounded journalists, news are becoming more investigative and interpreted to suit varied contexts and time. This theory is

considered not as an end, but a tool for social development with the core objectives of the media informing, documenting, analyzing, mediating, and mobilizing by creating and finding solutions to institutional misconduct. By extension, the theory brought about the participation of the audience in the generation, processing and consumption of news. Therefore, the theory can be said to be a socializing factor between the media and the society because it brought about the leverage with which media operations should be carried out in a stress free manner.

#### **Major features of the theory and its applicability to the Study**

- a. To help democracy prosper, the media must be at its best. Nothing should shackle the media legally to debar it from performing its avowed responsibility to the society. By creating a platform for audience participation in the news production process, the theory helps to deepen democracy.
- b. Emphasis on social responsibility, this in other words refers to the media being responsible towards the society. This means that the freedom given to the media is not absolute as the responsibility or implication of media content will be borne by its operators in line with societal dictates. This calls for vigilance on the part of the media.
- c. Media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions. It means that the media first sees itself as a member of the society than a hawk that is only there to swoop on its prey at any given opportunity. It also means that the media will not only feel the pulse of the society but also follow the perspective dictation of the society because it does not operate in a vacuum. If this is not the case, society will be plunged into chaos by the media.

#### **Agenda Setting Theory**

This theory describes the ability of the media to influence and place importance on issues of the day within the society through the level of prominence given to its reportage. The theory also focuses on what the audience thinks and debates in their micro and macro groups after exposure to media content. The idea that the media in a way, determines the issues or topic for public discussion forms the basis of this theory. Chimaraoke in Ukonu (2005) notes that the media may not tell one how to think but directly and indirectly determines issues for public debate through the heightened attention it gives to certain issues in its content. Several things happen simultaneously in the society but the ones that get public attention are the ones the media focus on in their bulletin.

This theory stemmed from the research conducted by the duo of McCombs and Shaw in the years 1968, 1972, and 1976 on the United State Presidential election. The duo focused on two key elements of awareness and information. They concluded that the media truly exert a significant influence on what people considered to be major issues (Okon, 2001). Agenda setting theory refers to how the media news framing, placing and slant of societal events determine which issue becomes the focus of public attention cum discourse.

#### **Major Features of the Theory and Its Applicability to the Study**

- a. The press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinions within the society. The press reflects the society naturally by ensuring that the key happening in a society are given adequate attention leading to public discourse and possible social changes.
- b. Audience relies on the media for information because they set the pace. The media is operating on public trust and therefore cannot be seen to be deceiving the audience with unverifiable news items. In fact, the media operating with the Five W's and H, shows a proof to the authenticity of a story.
- c. Agenda setting function of the media reflects the collaboration between the media and the society in the process of news generation, processing and consumption.

#### **Research Methodology**

In this study, the survey method was adopted. The study sought to collect, analyze and interpret data as it relates to the objectives. The population of the study comprised all registered members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, NUJ, Rivers State Chapter. By the official census of the NUJ, there are 450 registered journalists as at the time of carrying out this research. 450 persons shall therefore serve

as the population of the study. The choice of the NUJ is to ensure that only registered journalists are captured in the study and NUJ is the umbrella body of journalism in Rivers State. The sampling technique used in this study was the simple random sampling. Accidental sampling was also adopted given that journalists in Rivers State were always on transit due to the nature of their job. The sample size of 200 registered journalists in Rivers State was also utilised.

The questionnaire was the major instrument used for data collection. Data from the research were presented in simple tables for ease of interpretation. Analysis was done using the Weighted Mean Scores, WMS, on a four point Likert Scale, in line with the research questions posed. The decision rule shall be 2.5 and above to be accepted while below to be rejected.

### Findings and Discussion

**Table 1. How Journalists in Rivers State utilize Freedom of Information Act in their reporting**

S/ No	Questionnaire item	Responses				N	$\sum \bar{x}$	Means ( $\bar{x}$ )	Remarks
		SA	A	D	SD				
1.	Broadcast journalists utilize the FOIA in political reportage to seek information from government officials.	68	128	4	0	200	664	3.32	Accepted
2.	Broadcast journalists utilize the FOIA to seek information from government officials about projects executed by the government.	118	64	18	0	200	700	3.5	Accepted
3.	Broadcast journalists utilize the FOIA to seek information from government officials about government policies.	130	28	2	40	200	646	3.23	Accepted
4.	Broadcast journalists utilize the FOIA to seek information from government officials about the welfare of the people.	10	16	80	96	200	242	1.71	Rejected
5.	Broadcast journalists utilize the FOIA to seek information from politicians about campaign promises.	96	78	20	8	200	658	3.29	Accepted

The table above show the various ways journalists utilize the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. It shows that there is a high level of utilization of the Act but whether government officials release information on the basis of the Act or as a matter of personal discretion is a matter for another research question to unravel.

**Table 2. FOI Act influence on Journalists' access to official information in Rivers State**

S/N O	Questionnaire item	Responses				N	$\sum \bar{x}$	Means ( $\bar{x}$ )	Remarks
		SA	A	D	SD				
1.	Government officials release information to journalists without recourse to the application of the provisions of the FOIA.	146	26	22	6	200	734	3.67	Accepted
2.	Government officials do not release information to journalists without recourse to the application of the provisions of the FOIA.	30	14	86	70	200	404	2.02	Rejected
3.	Journalists must make official request before they will be granted any information they desire from government officials.	14	26	50	110	200	344	1.72	Rejected
4.	The FOIA has improved journalists' access to government information in Rivers State.	4	78	106	12	200	474	2.37	Rejected

From this table, the result is that whereas the respondents agreed earlier that Journalists in Rivers State were very conversant with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, the awareness has not translated into improved access to information neither can it be said that Journalists in Rivers State were exploiting the FOI Act.

**Table 3. Challenges faced by Journalists in utilizing the FOI Act in Rivers State**

S/N O	Questionnaire item	Responses				N	$\sum \bar{x}$	Means ( $\bar{x}$ )	Remarks
		SA	A	D	SD				
1.	Some government officials are not cooperative or receptive to journalists enquiry	146	26	22	6	200	734	3.67	Accepted
2.	There are bureaucratic bottlenecks on the way of government activities	130	28	2	40	200	646	3.23	Accepted



3.	The political environment is very unfriendly and officials tend to hoard information.	130	28	2	40	200	646	3.23	Accepted
4.	Some government officials prefer to talk to certain persons and not everybody that shows up as a journalist.	4	78	106	12	200	474	2.37	Rejected
5.	The court process is very slow.	40	6	116	38	200	564	2.42	Rejected

Table 3 shows the challenges bedeviling the effective implementation of the tenets of the FOI Act in Rivers State. Factors such as the uncooperative attitude of government officials, bureaucratic bottleneck within government ministries, agencies and parastatals and unfriendly political environment were adjudged as some of the challenges hindering the effective operation of FOI Act in Rivers State.

### Discussion of Findings

The first research objective was to examine how Journalists in Rivers State utilize Freedom of Information Act in their reporting. It was found that although Journalists were conversant with the provisions of the Act but they were not utilizing it in their day-to-day operations. As shown in the table 1 above, journalists in Rivers State are conversant with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and do utilize its provisions in their daily work routine. This finding puts the declaration by Nsereka and Amannah (2014) that journalists do not utilize the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act in their daily duty routine at variance. It shows that with the passage of time, more journalists in Rivers State are becoming aware and conscious of utilizing the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

The second research objective sought to ascertain the influence of the Freedom of Information Act on the access to information by journalists in Rivers State. Data showed that journalists were made to go through a lot of hurdles before getting official information which was ordinarily meant to be in public domain. The awareness level of the journalists has translated into improved access to information but it cannot be said that Journalists in Rivers State were fully exploiting the Freedom of Information Act.

The third research objective was to determine the challenges faced by Journalists in utilizing the Freedom of Information Act effectively in Rivers State. The pointers to this fact were the uncooperative nature of government official probably because of the subsistence of the Official Secret Act and other anti-press laws operational in Nigeria. The Table 3 shows the challenges bedeviling the effective implementation of the tenets of the Freedom of Information Act in Rivers State. Factors such as the uncooperative attitude of government officials, bureaucratic bottleneck within government ministries, agencies and parastatals and unfriendly political environment were adjudged as some of the challenges hindering the effective operation of Freedom of Information Act in Rivers State.

The implication of these results is that the Freedom of Information Act is not fully operational in Rivers State even though both the government and journalists are fully aware of its provisions. Both parties are yet to come to terms with the reality of Operationalising the law fully. This is not good considering the level of effort put into the making of the Freedom of Information Act. It took President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to sign it into law after President Olusegun Obasanjo refused to sign it into law through an eight-year period.

### Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it will be safe to conclude that as far as journalists in Rivers state are concerned, the old order of them struggling with news sources is still in force. Although the force of the old order has been toned down by the seeming signing into law of the FOI Act by the President Goodluck Jonathan led administration. The Freedom of Information is now a law but its exploitation

and operations is still being hampered by the same government that signed it into law. There seems to be a perpetual grudge the government is holding against the free operation of the press in all ramifications. This is consequent upon the retinue of laws from the establishment, operation and real content delivery of the press. The Freedom of Information Act is just an infinitesimal aspect of press operations which deals with news gathering and dissemination. There are other laws that regulate media content, operation and other sundry issues yet government has refused to be very cooperative with the press to effectively deliver on their mandate in the society.

The case of broadcast industry has the peculiarity of time and any information delayed can mark the end of it being in public domain within the time. The print media can drop a hint about it and continue investigation but the broadcast industry need hardcore evidence before any matter can be brought to public domain. This makes the full operationalisation of the Freedom of Information Act critical to the effective utilization of the media for the growth and development of the society.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were put forward.

1. Government should make it a policy to brief the press at regular intervals on their activities generally and not just in times of crisis.
2. The press should put the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act into full force by going to the law courts when officials of government refuse to release relevant official information.
3. The press should train and retrain its staff on the need to always apply the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act in their daily operations.

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