

Women's Political Visibility and Media Access: The Case of Nigeria

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Edited by

Oladokun Omojola

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

The audience, media channel, message and message speed are all important aspects of a mass communication system. But more important is the appeal of the message. Is the message useful to the audience but a loss to media owners or workers? Is it significant to media owners but not of any profit to the audience? Is the message in the public interest? Does it promote development? Questions about the communication situation of a message have remained due to their social significance. Media scholars, professional communicators and sociologists have endeavoured to proffer answers, judging from the numerous studies that have been carried out.

Women's involvement in politics at all levels and its coverage in the media is an area that makes the situation of communication messages a big issue. It appears that news about women is hardly news for many media houses in terms of coverage the women get and with regard to the amount of news content they access and consume. The preponderance of men in the news, and in many cases to the detriment of women, requires a re-examination. Nigeria has been selected as a case study for this re-examination, having exhibited the requisite characteristics – democratic regime, vibrant media, women advocacy, etc.

Chapter One of this book – **Women's Political Visibility and Media Access: The Case of Nigeria** - exposes the connection between the logic of commercialism and its influence on the visibility of the politically active women. This logic restricts the diversity of news content in favour of those who have the means of purchase, which are mostly men. Focus group evaluations of the situation show a connection between women's low visibility in the news and their inconsequential access to content. One surprising evaluation attributes the connection to unconscious reporting! That brings to the fore journalistic consciousness-raising as an issue in media responsibility.

In Chapter Two, significant relationships are found between citizens' exposure to television broadcasts and political participation. The broadcasts encourage them to seek more information about political parties and election candidates. However, it turns out that the influences of television on participation of the residents are affected by citizens' own inadequacies.

Chapter Three traces women's political participation in Nigeria and advises the womenfolk to avoid a reoccurrence of dismal outings in the previous elections and be strategic about the future. It finds that 79 percent of respondents do not want to contest elections because "contesting is not for poor women" and of sheer disinterestedness, among other reasons. The chapter adds these are political diseases that are curable through increased media socialization, persuasive communication and elimination of violence at campaign rallies.

Chapter Four contends that inadequate media access is a major barrier to the realization of women's political aspirations in Nigeria. Notwithstanding the fact that women constitute 49.96 percent of the country's population, their political involvement is very low, hovering around 2 percent. Surprisingly, the Nigerian media have been found to contribute to this scenario as demonstrated in their discriminatory advertisement rates for electioneering communications. This chapter advocates the removal of all barriers militating against women's political visibility.

Chapter Five reiterates the poor showing of the media in their coverage of women as politicians. Besides that, the photographs published about them do not add any significant value. Surprisingly, wives of male politicians are found to take the shine away from professional female politicians! It submits that until women make bold moves and adopt the transformative approach which involves substantial risk-taking in politics, the constant media focus on their male counterparts and their families may remain for a long time.

The assertion of lack of exposure of female politicians is proved again in Chapter Six, with only 13 percent of stories on politics devoted to women. The chapter reports that 90 percent of stories on women were published inside the pages. This may not be unconnected with the general problem of women's invisibility. Deliberate media agenda for women offers a possible solution to this challenge.

Chapter Seven emphasizes information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a critical tool needed by women to enhance their socio-political and economic visibility. This can be achieved through the collaborative efforts of stakeholders which should be strategically articulated and harnessed.

Chapter Eight discusses two adapted strategies for increasing women participation in the Nigerian political arena. First is the Applied Communication for Development (ACD) Model, which involves advocacy, social mobilization and programme communication. Second is the Assessment, Communication, Analysis, Design and Action (ACADA)

Model, which involves situation evaluation, behaviour scrutiny, social mobilization and communication analysis. These models entail cyclical actions that can reverse the subjugation of Nigeria women in politics.

The reader can come to his or her conclusion after going through the book. But one thing stands clear: women are a critical part of development that must be cherished and appreciated. However, the onus is on them to do everything humanly and legally possible to firm up their political vitality in order to be relevant in the development process and become visible targets of media coverage. The world can hardly wait.

CHAPTER ONE

MEDIA CONTENT CONSUMPTION AND INFLUENCE ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL VISIBILITY

OLADOKUN OMOJOLA AND NGOZI MORAH

Abstract

The general patriarchal character of the media aligns with the logic of commercialism which prioritizes profit and restricts the diversity of news content in favour of those who have the means of purchase. It explains why there is a male preponderance in media ownership, staffing and content consumption especially in Nigeria where women have access to, and appear in, the news far fewer times than men. This provokes a question: Does low *content consumption* by women influence the way *media report* them? This paper unravels these two variables within a political context. Content assessment and respondents' rating of Nigeria's dominant print media (1999-2003) shows a robust political reporting but with a gender differential that is heavily skewed towards men. Focus group evaluations of the situation show a connection between women's low visibility in the news and inconsequential access to content. One evaluation attributes the scenario to *unconscious reporting!* That brings to the fore journalistic consciousness-raising as a critical factor, among others, in media performance.

Keywords: consciousness-raising, gender, media, political reporting, visibility, women.

Introduction

Strong relationships exist between the media and politics. Mass media contents have been found to influence party politics and political knowledge (Shields *et al*, 1995; McLeod *et al*, 1968; Wattenberg, 1982; Norpoth and Baker, 1980). Governments of democratic countries appreciate the tremendous impact of communication before and after elections. The convergence of political leadership and communication, through mass media contents, has been found to impact the socio-economic lives of citizens (Adebanwi, 2000). Political communication has become a viable field of theoretical exploration, characterized by constant revisiting in order to appreciate its conceptual foundation (Blumler and Gurevitch, 2000).

For instance, the Social Responsibility Media Theory¹ (Siebert *et al*, 1956), in its original form, emphasizes that the media have certain obligations to the society within the context of the liberty that they possess. The theory's basics, according to McQuail (1987), are that the media should be able to service the political system by making information accessible to *all*, inform the public to enable self-determined actions, protect the rights of the individual by acting as watchdog over the government and bring together buyers and sellers through the medium of advertising. This theory has been a subject of several censures and victim of countless criticisms which have resulted in a myriad of re-conceptualizations and scholarly u-turns. The situation is such that many of its advocates turned out to be its opponents. According to Soola (2002), in the vanguard of this rethinking and re-conceptualization were the foremost scholars of the dominant paradigm – Everett Rogers and Wilbur Schramm.

The reason for this rethinking is obvious. The Schramm and Rogers' school inappropriately exalted the pervasive and diffusion power of the media and mistakenly downplayed the various complex variables of development which include news consumption pattern, tradition, cultural orientation, local participation and other peculiarities of the people. This paper identifies the variable of news consumption and how that affects women's political visibility in the media.

For centuries, women have been dubbed the "weaker vessels"² in most political systems around the world. One of the reasons adduced for the women's low profile in politics is the unappreciable media access that women, especially female politicians, have - a situation blamed on the deliberate policy of exclusion, which gives prominence to men but makes women only theoretically relevant.

The media are usually blamed for the low visibility of women, without adequately taking into cognizance the various complex intervening variables of development just listed above. For instance, one of these variables – an audience's news consumption pattern - could directly influence the coverage that a news medium gives that audience.

The question arises: Is low visibility of female politicians in the media connected to their inability to fit in the logic of media commercialism which prioritizes profit and access to those with the means of purchase and who are mostly men? This logic is a critical characteristic that drives media operations and performance in a capitalist economy. Though several articles have castigated the media for abetting women's low visibility, yet others have countered, stressing other factors. These include a high level of illiteracy among women, colonial legacy interference and cultural practices which are issues that are not easily traceable to the media. However, no study has been seen in Nigeria to capture media content consumption as a possible factor responsible for women's palpable invisibility in the political media. This paper attempts to show that the low capacity of female politicians in terms of news content consumption affects their visibility in the media.

Media and Development: The Optimistic and Pessimistic Perspectives

Over the years, there have been recurring questions about the relationship between mass media communication and development. One is: Do the media promote development? For instance, how does a news story, an editorial opinion or advertisement in a national newspaper enhance the socio-economic conditions of the citizens? How does a popular television drama or musical programme on radio contribute to a nation's development? Some perspectives proffer answers.

Several studies (Shields *et al*, 1995; Watenberg, 1982; Norpoth and Baker, 1980; Westoff and Rodriguez, 1995; Schramm, 1964; Rogers, 1965; Lerner and Schramm, 1967; Salawu, 2002; Gupta *et al*, 2003, and Abu-Lughod, 1963) have shown that media contents do affect development and that, according to Alao (2003), "communication and civilization go together." Some also opine that though communication is a relevant factor in development, it is, however, complementary and that certain structural changes in the society must take place before this complementary role can be played (Grunig, 1971).

The foregoing works reflect the optimist perspective, which stresses that the media do not exist for themselves but are established to carry out

some responsibilities towards the society. Oduko (1985) asserts that one of the underlying reasons why political leaders set up a radio or television station or newspaper house is to promote development. A development task could be in the form of facilitating understanding between leaders and policy makers, on the one hand, and leaders and citizens on the other. The optimists agree that the media help in conveying programmes, actions and decisions of leaders to citizens and sending feedback from these citizens. The media assist tremendously in spreading the useful information that supports the socio-economic development of the land.

On the contrary, the pessimistic observers believe that the media constitute a factor in the breakdown of social control (Janowitz, 1981) and have expressed their reservation about the ability of the press to fulfill its appointed roles as watchdogs, protectors and facilitators of peaceful democratic politics in Africa. The argument here is that severe financial constraints, continuing government interference, widespread illiteracy, poor transportation infrastructure, sparse electrification, weak distribution networks and a paucity of qualified media professionals have limited the reach, effectiveness and professionalism of the media especially those owned by private investors. The effect of this limitation is the failure of the media to be relevant to the lives of their audience.

Government officials and media practitioners are also worried about the harmful influences of inaccurate and sensationalist media contents on uneducated, ignorant, naïve or inexperienced listeners or readers who easily give in to propaganda. Moreover, it is believed that even when the media are not deliberately out to manipulate the public, harmful consequences are also possible even in the absence of malicious intent (Frohardt and Temin, 2007). But one thing stands sure: the media can only impact positively or negatively when its target audience has consumed media contents. The critical questions are: What happens if the audience does not buy into the contents? How do the media react to such “anti-commercial” behaviour? This article attempts an investigation.

Stakeholder Theory, Media Commercialism and Media Content Consumption

In order to survive or break even in the competitive media market, many publishers often align themselves with wealthy customers in return for the coverage that can only promote the narrow interests of these patrons but neglect those of the greater public.³ Thus, media commercialism is considered antithetical to a socially responsible reporting.

The obsession with commercialism can be explained in the context of the massively declining newspaper readership, which is an experience that is commonplace in both developed (Bogart, 1989) and developing countries.⁴ The rising inflation, ever-increasing costs of newsprint and the drive to make more profit have been advanced as factors that make newspaper and magazine publishers cut their print run and aggressively emphasize the value chain with regards to advertising, news supplements and on-line edition.

The stockholder theory (Friedman, 1962) explains why commercialism has continued to drive away eligible print media readers, thereby nullifying the significant media impact which the optimists have enthused about. In its original form, the theory asserts that as long as they operate by the rules, stockholders, as a way of increasing profits, can deploy capital through company managers who act as agents to achieve that goal. This implies that corporate responsibility is the use of scarce resources to do business that guarantees good profits, as long as you follow due process. Here, the profit motive is higher than social responsibility and morals. Morality is more than just acting within the rules. For instance, do you refuse to cover a secondary school or university's activities because its students cannot afford to buy your paper? Critics of the stockholder perspective like to blame media owners for the woes in the industry, stressing that readers are alienated because media such as newspapers have slashed quality and raised price, all in the pursuit of short-term profits.

Unlike the stockholder system which prioritizes the interest of the founder and funder of an organization, the stakeholder theory obligatorily promotes corporate social responsibility and an environment bound up by a fair distribution of dividend among the stakeholders - big or small. According to Kaler (2003), the stakeholder theory promotes a reformist stance with regards to capitalism, thereby moving it in the "direction of greater equity and a less single-minded concentration on owner's interests..."⁵ In this respect, the media content consumers and the media channel users who place advertisements are critical stakeholders. In fact, they could be regarded as indispensable to the business as the media critically rely on income from their direction. The implication of this is that such stakeholders do have enormous power.

The question at this point is: What happens if the critical stakeholder decides to reduce or cut his input from the business? In such a scenario, many things are possible. But the one that may easily come to mind is that the profile of engagement will wane as the role of the stakeholder has entered the domain of generic definition (Carroll, 1996), which simply means that his contribution to the survival of the organization is no longer

strategically significant. The organization concerned will no longer prioritize the stakeholder as the attention will now shift to other stakeholders who make more meaningful contributions.

The continued functionality of media audience, made manifest in sustained content consumption and regular placement of advertisements, is a crucial criterion for the perpetuation of media commercialism. Once this is missing, a re-assessment occurs and attention shifts away to the beneficial contributors. This study tries to establish if the constant neglect of women, especially female politicians in media coverage, exists as a result of their inability to align with the commercial tendencies which respect mainly those who contribute to the financial wellbeing of the media through content purchase and consumption.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to determine how the women's consumption of news content affects their coverage in the media. It is broken into the following sub-objectives:

- To ascertain the magnitude of media coverage of politics compared to other areas;
- To establish the gender differential in that coverage;
- To determine audience's rating of access and actual audience's consumption of media content;
- To discover the gender differential in access and audience's actual consumption of published content;
- To find out how the gender differential in access and consumption of political stories affect the coverage of women.

Research Questions

The study was carried out in Lagos State of Nigeria.⁶ Study period was between 1999 and 2003. The country returned to democracy in 1999 after several years of military dictatorship which was characterized by ruthlessness and decadence. Lagos State had exhibited the characteristics necessary to conduct the study, including having the requisite respondents as explained under the method of study. The objectives of the study are transposed into the following questions:

- What was the volume of political stories published between 1999 and 2003 relative to other areas (finance, education, etc)?

- What was the gender differential in the volume of political stories published between 1999 and 2003?
- What was the citizens' rate of consumption (access to and reading) of political stories in Lagos State between 1999 and 2003?
- What was the gender differential in the consumption of political stories in Lagos State between 1999 and 2003?
- How did gender differential in the consumption of political stories affect media coverage of female politicians in Lagos State between 1999 and 2003?

Methods of Study

Three methods - content analysis, survey and focus group discussion, were adopted in the study. Content of the dominant media were evaluated to determine how much of political stories were published and how many on women. During the period under investigation - May 29, 1999 to May 28, 2003 - the press was expected to perform its responsibilities in an atmosphere of freedom, unlike during the military regime that preceded this period.

Content Analysis

Four Lagos State-based dominant publications – *Punch*, *Vanguard*, *Eko Today* and *Tell* – were studied. *Vanguard*, a national newspaper established in 1985, had its daily circulation at 100,000 copies during the period of investigation. The *Punch*, also a national newspaper and privately owned, was established in 1973. *Punch* prided itself as the largest circulating national newspaper in Nigeria, a disguised assertion that it circulated more than the 100,000 copies claimed by *Vanguard*.

Eko Today was a weekly newspaper backed by the Lagos State government. The paper, located in Ikeja, the Lagos State capital, devoted its coverage to the affairs of Lagos State. One of the librarians at the Lagos State library, who supplied the bound copies that were used for this study, put its circulation at between 30,000 and 50,000 copies. *Tell*, a general interest (but largely political) magazine, was first published in 1991. It had a nationwide circulation with an average weekly distribution of 80,000 copies at the time of the study. Only the hardcopy editions of the publications were investigated as none of the three newspapers and magazine had on-line editions that were functional enough for a proper assessment.

The contents evaluated were in 12 categories namely, *security, agriculture, land and housing, education, politics, morals, environment, transportation, health, general, financial and personnel* in line with the policy schedules of Lagos State government at the time of the investigation. The “general” covers those areas that could not easily be categorized. All the newspapers were visible on the newsstands and published throughout the period of evaluation. The four publications were randomly selected from a list except *Eko Today* which was the only functional state-owned newspaper that existed then.

Survey Research

The survey research was carried out in all the 40 constituencies of Lagos State. A constituency was categorized into six social strata comprising the following:

1. market men and women;
2. professionals, who worked independently of government e.g. bankers, engineers, lawyers, architects, teachers;
3. skilled labour, namely, welders, furniture makers, motor mechanics, tailors, drivers, etc;
4. public servants;
5. students;
6. unemployed people (This group included disabled persons who had been grounded. The magnitude of disability was not made relevant in this study. The qualifying criterion was that the respondent in this category suffered some kind of disability. This group also included pensioners.)

Gender was equalized in each category. Categorization into six groups constrained the aspect of this investigation to *stratified quota sampling*. In each constituency, a quota of three randomly selected respondents was allotted each of the six strata in order to generate a total population of 18 respondents. This was done in each of the 40 constituencies in the State, thereby giving a total sample of 720 respondents for investigation.

Focus Group Discussion

This study also explored the *degree of consensus* (Morgan and Krueger, 1993) and extent of divergence among members of two focus groups of top editors and media business managers on the issue at stake. After each

person spoke, he/she was asked to reword his/her statement in a short sentence or phrase.⁷ This meant less note-taking as it made the transcribing of the recorded audio less cumbersome. The first group had five discussants while the second had seven. Both sexes were fairly represented in the two groups. Most of the discussants had the requisite experience in newspaper production and management. This also meant that an informed response was expected. The first and second groups discussed for 37 and 41 minutes respectively. All discussants in both groups said their views did not represent any official position.

The topic of discussion - news consumption and its effect on coverage of women - was further broken into the following three questions:

- Are you aware that women accessed and read less political content than men in Nigeria's dominant media?
- Why do female politicians have low visibility in your political reporting compared to men?
- Is there any link between women's low consumption of content and their low visibility in political reporting?

Data Analysis and Presentation

Research Question 1(RQ1): What is the volume of political stories published between 1999 and 2003 relative to other areas?

One additional coder was asked to analyze the target content, thereby making a total of three coders (including these two authors). Table 1-1 shows the frequency of stories in all the 12 policy areas. It also shows that political stories had the highest frequency in each of the three columns. In order to demonstrate the authenticity of the generated data, intra-class correlation (ICC) was deployed to measure their reliability and consistency. The intra-class correlation, a variant of analysis of variance (Shrout and Fleiss, 1999; Fleiss, 1981; Griffin and Gonzalez, 1995), is computed on the platform of two-way mixed effect model. It calculates the internal reliability of each coder's count (single measures) as well as the reliability across the counts of all the coders.⁸ The singles measures correlation is shortened to SMC. The benchmark for reliability set for this study was 0.6000 (or 0.6) percentage point.⁹

Table 1-1: Stories according to the 12 policy areas

<i>Policy Area</i>	<i>Frequency</i>		
	<i>Coder A*</i>	<i>Coder B</i>	<i>Coder C</i>
Security	272	238	180
Agriculture	91	109	160
Land and housing	166	152	192
Education	252	251	171
Politics	648	616	850
Morals	149	127	267
Environment	211	237	52
Transportation	189	187	115
Infant mortality	228	239	158
General	330	359	381
Financial	301	296	590
Personal	122	93	207
Total	2959	2904	3323

* *The lead researcher's coding.*

The composite reliability computation shows the lower point of the singles measure at .5555 and the upper point at .9289, with the correlation standing at .7941. The lower point of the average measure is .7894 and the upper point at .9751, with coefficient alpha still on the high side at .9205. The alpha here, computed at 95 percent confidence interval (CI), is presented across the three coders: When this dichotomous computation was carried out across the three columns using KR20¹⁰ coefficient, it yielded the same results. Since the researchers' evaluation is contiguous to those of Coders B and C, that makes the researchers evaluation acceptable.

Table 1-2 presents the distribution of stories according to the policy areas and sizes (in mean inches).

Table 1-2 shows that Politics policy area has the highest frequency with 648 (21.89 percent) stories. This is followed by General, which is a distant second with 330 (11.16 percent) stories while Finance is third with 301 (10.18 percent) stories. The count regresses until it gets to Agriculture which is the lowest with 91 (3.07 percent) stories. This means that the press published more stories to inform people about politics than agriculture or any other area. Table 1-2 also shows that the policy area with the highest number of inches (one inch contained between 28 and 35 words) is General as it has a mean value of 25.61, followed by Finance with 14.24 inches and then by Politics with 13.90 inches. The least in Table 1-2 is Land and Housing with 9.29 inches.

Table 1-2: Total number of stories according to policy areas

<i>Policy Area</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Mean(in inches)</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Security	9.19	13.16	8.006
Agriculture	3.07	11.67	8.109
Land and Housing	5.62	9.29	4.349
Education	8.52	11.45	5.059
Politics	21.89	13.90	11.468
Morals	5.03	12.33	8.330
Environment/Pollution	7.14	9.72	4.704
Transportation/Traffic	6.38	10.17	6.880
Infant mortality/Health	7.70	12.76	11.278
General	11.16	25.61	23.819
Finance	10.18	14.28	15.577
Personal	4.12	11.35	6.604
Total	100 (n = 2959)	14.01	12.943

Table 1-3: Total number of stories published between 1999 and 2003

<i>Media</i>	<i>Stories (per cent)</i>
Eko Today	22.82
Vanguard	29.70
Punch	46.09
Tell	1.39
Total	100 (n = 2959)

Table 1-3 shows a total of 2,959 stories published by the press, with *Punch* publishing the highest of 46.09 percent and *Tell* carrying only 1.39 percent which is the lowest.

Table 1-4 presents the spread of political stories relative to all stories published across the four evaluated media.

Table 1-4: Percentage of political stories for each medium relative to other areas

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>Eko Today</i>	<i>Tell</i>
All Stories	2959	1364	879	675	41
Politics	648	233	199	186	30
%	21.89	17.1	22.6	27.6	73.1

Table 1-4 shows that all the media published more political stories than every other area. The total 648 political stories translate to 21.89 per cent of all the stories published, far ahead of General, which is next with 11.16 per cent. The trend is replicated across the four media and is particularly made more manifest in *Tell* which had 73.1 percent of its stories made up of politics. This prioritization of politics succinctly answers RQ 1.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What is the gender differential in the volume of political stories published between 1999 and 2003?

Table 1-5 displays the magnitude of political stories published on women. The total number of all stories and the total number of political stories are also displayed in order to appreciate how the political stories published on women compare.

Table 1-5: Percentage of politics stories published on women

	<i>All Stories</i>	<i>Punch</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>Eko Today</i>	<i>Tell</i>
<i>All Stories</i>	2,959	1,364	879	675	41
<i>Politics Stories (A)</i>	648	233	199	186	30
<i>Politics Stories on women (B)</i>	131	56	31	39	5
<i>% of (B) to (A)</i>	20.2	24.0	15.6	20.9	16.6

In Table 1-5, it is assumed that the political stories are about men and women. Therefore, it is obvious that the political stories published on women are far lower than those published on men by all the media. At a glance, each of the figures is in tandem with the total published by all the four media houses. Women had 20.2 percent of all the stories published. This trend is simulated in each medium. *Punch* had the highest 24.0 percent while *Eko Today* came next with 20.9 percent. This is followed by *Tell* with 16.6 percent while *Vanguard* had the lowest with 15.6 percent. This is a clear demonstration that more stories were published on men than on women.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): What is the citizens' rate of consumption (access to and reading) of political stories in Lagos State between 1999 and 2003?

A close look at RQ3 shows that the expected answer is beyond access. After access, then what? That one is supplied with a newspaper is not the same as reading it. Access to a newspaper becomes stronger if it is read. This is also buttressed by McNelly's (1966) assertion on what a mass medium must fulfill before it can contribute to development:¹¹ that it must have the attention of the reader or listener. Therefore, the answer to this research question also encompasses the rate at which the newspapers and magazine were read by the various segments of the population. RQ3 is then rephrased in the following manner:

- Do the various segments of Lagos State's population have access to the press?
- Do they read the contents of the press?

The questionnaire items are the following:

- Rate your access generally into the contents of *Punch*, *Vanguard*, *Eko Today* newspapers and *Tell* magazine between 1999 and 2003.
- Can you recall how often you read the contents of *Punch*, *Vanguard*, *Eko Today* newspapers and *Tell* magazine between 1999 and 2003?

The two items were inserted to further raise the profile of finding, bearing in mind the long period of assessment of four years. The response was on a five-point score, with the most positive (very high or very often) scoring five and the least positive (very low or never) attracting one. For a more reliable answer to RQ3, the researchers also raised two hypotheses in respect of the two questions:

- There was a significant access of the six segments of Lagos State citizens to the contents of the press.
- The reading of the press contents among the six segments of Lagos State citizens was significant.

The analysis proceeds with the description of the findings from the rating of the access to press contents as presented in Table 1-6.

Table 1- 6: Lagos State citizens' rating of their access to the political contents of the four publications

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Very Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Very High</i>	<i>Total</i>
%	3.4	7.0	21.0	59.9	8.7	100 (n = 586)

According to Table 1-6, the six segments of Lagos State citizens generally had access to the contents of the press. A total of 586 persons responded to the item out of the total 720. Of these 586 respondents, 68.6 percent had *high* or *very high* access, 21 percent had fair access while 10.4 percent of the respondents had a *low* or *very low* access. Table 1-7 shows the rating of how often the citizens read the contents of the press.

According to Table 1-7, *Punch* is the most read newspaper. A total of 718 from 720 responded to the item, amounting to a response rate of more than 99 per cent. One major reason responsible for the high rate of response was that the researchers and their assistants were strongly instructed to stay by each respondent while he or she completed the questionnaire and collect it back. Out of the 718 respondents, only a minute 10 percent, which translates to one respondent, said he or she *never* read the newspaper.

Table 1-7: Lagos State citizens' rating of the reading of press contents medium-by-medium

<i>Media</i>	<i>Frequency of Reading Press Contents in %</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Less Often</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Very Often</i>	
<i>Eko Today</i>	46.4	7.7	15.0	9.8	21.1	100 (n = 673)
<i>Vanguard</i>	7.2	9.4	31.8	32.1	19.5	100 (n =711)
<i>Punch</i>	0.1	3.5	14.8	43.2	38.4	100 (n =718)
<i>Tell</i>	12.6	21.8	26.1	33.0	6.5	100 (n =660)

An extremely high 96.4 percent read the paper either *less often*, *often* or *very often*. This trend was also noticed in *Vanguard* but in a weaker proportion. Out of the 711 who responded, 7.2 percent *never* read it while 9.4 percent hardly read it. A high 83.4 percent also read the newspaper in one way or the other. *Tell*, which had the least number of respondents (660), also showed a similar trend but with the weakest proportion when compared to *Punch* and *Vanguard*.