

Mass Media and Electoral Conflict Management in Kogi State, Nigeria

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Abstract : Election is no doubt widely assumed as one of the most suitable means of resolving political quagmires even though it has never been bereft of conflict which can manifest before, during, or after polls. What, however, advances democracy and promotes electoral integrity is the existence and effectiveness of institutional frameworks for electoral conflict management. Electoral conflicts are no doubt unique in the sense that they represent the struggles of people over the control of public resources. In most cases, the stakes involved are high and emotional that they do not only undermine inter-group relationship but also threaten national security. The need, therefore, for an effectively functional conflict management apparatus becomes imperative. While at the State level, there exist numerous governmental initiatives at various electoral stages aimed at managing conflicts, this paper examines the activities of the mass media, which is another prominent stakeholder in the electoral process. Even though media influence has increased tremendously in the last decade, researchers are yet to agree on its utility in the management of conflicts. Guided by the social responsibility theory of media reporting and drawing data from observed trends in Kogi state, the paper, which context analyses the 2019 gubernatorial election coverage in the state, observes both conflict escalation and de-escalation roles in the media. To mitigate conflict reporting misrepresentation, therefore, a common approach to conflict reporting should be designed and ordered by the National Broadcasting Commission as well as the Nigerian Press Council. This should be garnished with the training of journalists on conflict reporting and development of a standard conflict reporting procedure.

Keywords : conflict management, electoral conflict, mass media, media reporting

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