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The Development Journalism Model for Inclusive Policy Implementation: A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria and the U.S

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Abstract

This paper presents a comparative analysis of the development journalism models in Nigeria and the United States, focusing on their roles in promoting inclusive policy implementation. Development journalism, a media approach that prioritizes social issues, public education, and government accountability, is critical for fostering inclusive policy and addressing developmental challenges. In Nigeria, the media serves as a vital platform for advocating policies that address poverty, healthcare, education, and governance, but faces significant challenges, including political interference and limited resources for investigative reporting. In contrast, while more diverse and independent, the U.S. media landscape is influenced by corporate interests and political polarization, limiting its effectiveness in certain areas of development journalism. The paper explores the similarities and differences between the two models, evaluating their impact on public awareness, participation, and policy change. Key findings suggest that while both countries rely on media to inform the public and drive policy advocacy, the effectiveness of development journalism is contingent upon media independence, access to resources, and political context. Policy recommendations are provided to enhance the role of the media in promoting inclusive policy processes, including strengthening media independence, investing in investigative journalism, and fostering greater public engagement through digital platforms.

Keywords: Development Journalism, Policy Implementation, Media Independence, Inclusive Policy, Nigeria, United States

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of Development Journalism and Its Significance in Policy Implementation

Development journalism is a specialized form of journalism that goes beyond merely informing the public about events and news. It is rooted in the idea that the media should report and participate actively in the development process. Development journalism focuses on social issues such as poverty, health, education, human rights, and other topics that are crucial for national development, particularly in developing countries (Swart & Broersma, 2022) ^[85]. The media's role in promoting social justice, equitable growth, and community welfare is at the heart of development journalism. Unlike traditional forms of journalism, which may prioritize sensational or conflict-driven narratives, development journalism emphasizes the importance of long-

term, constructive reporting that aims to create social change, foster community engagement, and promote sustainable development (Zayani, 2021) ^[90].

In the context of policy implementation, development journalism becomes a key player in shaping public discourse around government policies. It plays an essential role in educating the public about new policies, ensuring transparency, and advocating for the needs of marginalized groups. Effective policy communication through development journalism can bridge the gap between policymakers and the public, making policies more accessible and understandable to the general population (Köstler & Ossewaarde, 2022) ^[55]. Moreover, by highlighting societal issues, providing investigative insights, and promoting public debates, development journalism can influence policy change and contribute to better governance.

In this model, journalists are not just neutral observers, but active participants in the democratic process, engaging citizens in conversations that shape their realities (Ulnicane, Knight, Leach, Stahl, & Wanjiku, 2021) ^[87].

The significance of development journalism in policy implementation is immense. It influences the direction of policies, facilitates civic participation, and holds leaders accountable for their decisions. Through in-depth reporting on policy failures, gaps in implementation, or the negative consequences of poorly designed policies, development journalism can ensure that policies are re-evaluated and adjusted to better meet public needs. This is especially important in a globalized world, where policies need to be inclusive and cater to diverse communities. Thus, development journalism is not merely about reporting on issues; it is about using the power of the media to support inclusive policy-making and encourage active civic participation (Hao, Nyaranga, & Hongo, 2022) ^[46].

1.2 Brief Introduction to Nigeria and the U.S. as Case Studies

The selection of Nigeria and the United States as case studies for this comparative analysis allows for an exploration of development journalism in two vastly different contexts: a developing country in sub-Saharan Africa and a developed democracy with a long history of media freedom. Both countries present unique opportunities to understand the challenges and successes of development journalism in different political, social, and economic environments.

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, is a nation with a complex political structure and a diverse cultural landscape. Despite significant progress in economic development, Nigeria still faces numerous challenges such as poverty, corruption, health crises, and inadequate infrastructure. The media in Nigeria plays a critical role in informing citizens about policies and advocating for social justice (Falola & Heaton, 2008) ^[41]. However, it faces significant obstacles, including censorship, political interference, limited resources, and the challenge of reaching rural populations. Nigerian journalists often find themselves navigating a delicate balance between government control, ethical journalism, and the need to promote national development. The role of the media in policy advocacy is particularly crucial in Nigeria, as it helps highlight issues such as government accountability, social inclusion, and the delivery of essential services. However, the media's ability to effect positive change in policy implementation is often hampered by political pressures, financial constraints, and safety concerns for journalists (Usman, 2022) ^[88].

In contrast, the United States represents a different environment for development journalism. The U.S. has a well-established, diversified media landscape that includes both traditional outlets and newer digital platforms. While the media in the U.S. is generally free from direct government control, it faces its own set of challenges, such as the concentration of media ownership, corporate influence, and growing polarization in public discourse (Pan & Fan, 2023) ^[82]. Development journalism in the U.S. operates within a competitive media environment where policies are often debated vigorously, and the media plays a

prominent role in shaping public opinion. The media in the U.S. has historically been a key player in advocating for social reforms, promoting public awareness of key issues such as civil rights, healthcare, and education, and holding politicians accountable for their actions. However, even in a more developed media landscape, challenges such as misinformation, media bias, and the commercial pressures of news production complicate the role of development journalism in promoting inclusive policies (Yang, Feng, Gong, & Chang, 2023) ^[89].

Comparing these two countries offers valuable insights into how the media, through the lens of development journalism, can influence policy-making and public engagement in different contexts. While both countries utilize their media to inform the public and influence policy, the mechanisms through which development journalism operates and the barriers it faces are significantly different, reflecting their unique political and economic environments (AbdelGhaffar, 2023) ^[1].

1.3 Purpose of the Comparative Analysis

The purpose of this comparative analysis is to explore the role of development journalism in promoting inclusive policy implementation in both Nigeria and the United States. By examining how the media in these two countries addresses social issues and communicates policy changes, the analysis will provide insights into the challenges and opportunities that development journalism presents in different contexts. A key aim is to evaluate how effective media coverage has been in fostering public understanding, encouraging participation in the policy process, and promoting social change through informed policy discussions.

The study will also investigate how development journalism contributes to policy advocacy and the implementation of inclusive policies that prioritize marginalized groups. In countries like Nigeria, where issues of poverty, inequality, and access to essential services are prevalent, the role of media in pushing for policy changes that benefit the disadvantaged is especially critical. In the U.S., where the focus may be on issues such as healthcare access, environmental justice, and civil rights, development journalism can drive reforms and bridge the divide between policymakers and citizens. Through this comparison, the study will aim to identify best practices from both countries that could inform policy communication strategies in other regions, particularly those facing similar developmental challenges.

By contrasting the media systems, challenges, and impact of development journalism in Nigeria and the U.S., this paper seeks to illuminate the ways in which journalism can be used as a tool for positive social transformation, particularly in relation to inclusive policy. This comparative approach will also highlight the potential for cross-national learning, providing insights into how each country could enhance its media engagement to better serve its citizens and ensure that policies are more inclusive and impactful.

1.4 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this research are to assess the role and impact of development journalism in fostering inclusive policy implementation in Nigeria and the U.S., with a focus

on identifying both common practices and significant differences between the two countries. The first objective is to explore how development journalism in both countries shapes public understanding of key policy issues and contributes to informed discussions about national development priorities. This will involve examining the effectiveness of media campaigns, news reports, and investigative journalism in raising awareness about important social issues and mobilizing public support for policy reforms.

A second objective is to identify the specific challenges faced by development journalists in each country. In Nigeria, challenges such as media censorship, government pressure, limited resources, and the difficulty of reaching rural and underserved populations often restrict the potential impact of development journalism. In contrast, the U.S. faces challenges such as media consolidation, political polarization, and the influence of corporate interests over news content. Understanding these challenges is crucial for improving the capacity of the media to play a more significant role in policy implementation and ensuring that development journalism fulfills its potential as a tool for social change.

The third objective is to assess the overall effectiveness of development journalism in advancing inclusive policies in both countries. By examining case studies of successful and unsuccessful media-driven policy initiatives, the study aims to determine the extent to which development journalism has been able to promote public engagement, influence policymaker decisions, and foster inclusive policies that address the needs of marginalized communities. Ultimately, the study will offer recommendations on how development journalism can be strengthened in both Nigeria and the U.S. to enhance its role in promoting inclusive, sustainable policy development.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Definition and Principles of Development Journalism

Development journalism is an approach to journalism that prioritizes social, economic, and political development in the context of a nation's needs. It is based on the principle that media should actively contribute to the development of society, addressing crucial issues such as poverty, healthcare, education, human rights, and sustainable development (Mutsvairo *et al.*, 2021) ^[58]. The primary objective of development journalism is not merely to report the news but to engage the public in processes that lead to social transformation. It is different from traditional journalism, which focuses on covering sensational or entertainment-driven stories. Instead, development journalism seeks to influence public opinion by fostering an understanding of the challenges and opportunities that nations face in achieving development goals (Ekeh, Apeh, Odionu, & Austin-Gabriel; Ibidunni, William, & Otokiti, 2023) ^[23, 46].

One of the central aspects of development journalism is public service orientation. This principle asserts that journalists are obligated to focus on issues that promote the well-being of society as a whole, especially marginalized communities (Kamboh, Ittefaq, & Yousaf, 2022) ^[51]. They act as intermediaries between the government and the public, ensuring that policies and initiatives align with the

needs of the people. Inclusivity is another core tenet of development journalism, which insists on representing the voices of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups, such as people with low incomes, women, and minorities. By giving these groups a platform, development journalism advocates for policies that are inclusive and equitable (Alex-Omiogbemi, Sule, Michael, & Omowole, 2023a) ^[20].

Moreover, accountability and transparency are vital components of development journalism. Journalists in this model are expected to hold public institutions and policymakers accountable for their actions. They should investigate and report any discrepancies or failures in government policies, especially those related to public welfare (Eyo-Udo *et al.*, 2023) ^[14]. Additionally, development journalism emphasizes a problem-solving approach, which focuses on not only reporting problems but also highlighting potential solutions. For instance, journalists may provide information about successful case studies or development strategies from other countries that can be adapted to the local context. Lastly, development journalism calls for community engagement. Journalists often work closely with communities, fostering dialogue between citizens and the government to ensure policies are reflective of the people's needs (Onukwulu, Agho, Eyo-Udo, Sule, & Azubuike, 2023a) ^[77, 39].

In sum, development journalism is not just about information dissemination; it is about transforming societies by addressing real-world issues in a manner that empowers citizens and encourages their active involvement in the policymaking process.

2.2 Review of Literature on Development Journalism in the Context of Policy Implementation

Research on development journalism has shown its significant role in shaping public awareness and influencing policy outcomes, particularly in developing nations. Scholars argue that media plays an essential role in facilitating the effective implementation of policies by educating the public about governmental initiatives and encouraging their participation in the policy-making process. In countries like India, Ghana, and Nigeria, development journalism has been used to promote key public health messages, such as the importance of vaccination programs and maternal health initiatives, contributing to the success of such policies (Onukwulu *et al.*, 2023a; Onukwulu, Agho, Eyo-Udo, Sule, & Azubuike, 2023b) ^[40, 77, 78].

A key finding from the literature is that media can serve as a bridge between policymakers and citizens. By reporting on government policies, the media not only informs the public but also holds the government accountable. This role becomes particularly crucial when policies are designed without significant input from the public. As the literature on media and public policy has demonstrated, media outlets can either support or undermine policy implementation depending on how they engage with the issues. For example, in India, media has contributed to social welfare programs by raising awareness about public services, helping to build trust in government initiatives. However, in countries with lower levels of media freedom, like Nigeria, the role of the media can be stifled by government interference or lack of resources (Adewoyin, 2022; C.

Ogbeta, Mbata, & Katas, 2022)^[12, 64].

In Nigeria, the media landscape is often shaped by political pressures, which limit the capacity for critical and investigative reporting. The Nigerian media, despite these challenges, plays a vital role in policy advocacy, calling attention to issues such as corruption, lack of infrastructure, and human rights abuses. Scholars have noted that although development journalism has the potential to foster public participation in governance and policy implementation, the fragmented media landscape in Nigeria and the political climate often hinder its full potential (Apeh, Odionu, Bristol-Alagbariya, Okon, & Austin-Gabriel, 2023a)^[24]. However, when media organizations collaborate with civil society groups, their influence on policy can be substantial. For instance, public campaigns organized by media outlets in Nigeria have successfully raised awareness about the need for reforms in areas such as education and healthcare, prompting government action (Egbuhuzor *et al.*, 2023)^[34].

In contrast, the U.S. media, while often free from direct government censorship, faces challenges related to corporate media ownership and political polarization. Despite these issues, U.S. journalism has been instrumental in holding the government accountable on a range of social issues, from civil rights to environmental policy. Research on U.S. media suggests that while media outlets may not always engage in development journalism explicitly, they contribute significantly to shaping public opinion on critical policies. Through investigative journalism and policy-focused reporting, U.S. journalists have influenced policy debates on issues like healthcare reform and climate change, advocating for inclusive and progressive policies (Fanijo, Hanson, Akindahunsi, Abijo, & Dawotola, 2023; Kokogho, Odio, Ogunsola, & Nwaozumudoh, 2023a)^[42, 52].

The literature emphasizes that development journalism, regardless of the country, must balance the duty to inform with the responsibility to advocate for the public good. In both Nigeria and the U.S., the media's role in policy implementation is affected by the broader political and media environments. Despite the challenges posed by censorship or ownership concentration, the media remains a key player in shaping public opinion, promoting accountability, and pushing for inclusive policies.

2.3 Comparative Studies of Journalism Models in Nigeria and the U.S.

When comparing the journalism models in Nigeria and the U.S., it becomes apparent that both countries face distinct challenges in using media as a tool for development and policy implementation. In Nigeria, the media often operates under significant constraints, including political influence, financial limitations, and censorship. The government's involvement in media operations, particularly through ownership or regulation, can limit the ability of journalists to freely engage in development journalism (Okedele, Aziza, Oduro, & Ishola, 2023a)^[69]. Despite these obstacles, Nigerian media outlets have still played an important role in raising awareness about critical issues like corruption, human rights violations, and public health challenges. Development journalism in Nigeria often focuses on social issues such as the need for education reform, healthcare improvements, and infrastructure development. These efforts are essential in encouraging public participation and

creating a more informed citizenry (Ekeh, Apeh, Odionu, & Austin-Gabriel, 2023a; Omokhoa, Odionu, Azubuike, & Sule, 2023a)^[24].

In contrast, the U.S. media landscape is characterized by a greater degree of media freedom and infrastructure. U.S. journalists have access to a broad range of resources, allowing them to engage in more in-depth investigative reporting. However, the growing concentration of media ownership and the rise of partisan news outlets have created challenges for journalistic objectivity. While the media in the U.S. has the freedom to engage in development journalism, it is increasingly influenced by commercial interests, which can detract from its ability to cover social issues comprehensively. The role of U.S. media in policy advocacy is often framed through a lens of public interest, but media outlets are not always able to cover issues that do not attract large audiences or corporate sponsors (Leghemo, Segun-Falade, Odionu, & Azubuike, 2023; Okedele, Aziza, Oduro, & Ishola, 2023b)^[77, 70].

Despite the differences in political systems and media infrastructure, there are commonalities in how both countries approach development journalism. In both Nigeria and the U.S., the media plays a critical role in informing the public, advocating for policy change, and holding governments accountable for their actions. However, the way in which this role is executed depends largely on the political environment, media freedom, and the resources available to journalists. By comparing the two countries, one can see that the media in both nations can serve as an essential force for social change, but the effectiveness of development journalism is contingent on the broader socio-political context (Onyebuchi, Onyedikachi, & Emuobosa, 2023a)^[79].

2.4 Key Theories Supporting the Study

Several communication theories provide a strong foundation for understanding the role of development journalism in influencing policy and promoting social change. One of the most important theories is participatory communication, which asserts that communication should be a two-way process. It involves not just the transmission of information from the media to the public, but also encourages active dialogue and feedback. This theory emphasizes the need for communities to engage in decision-making and policymaking, rather than being passive recipients of information. In development journalism, participatory communication is particularly relevant as it allows marginalized communities to voice their concerns and ensures that policies are reflective of their needs (Kokogho, Odio, Ogunsola, & Nwaozumudoh, 2023b; Uchendu, Omomo, & Esiri, 2023)^[53, 86].

Another key theory is media influence on policy. This theory posits that the media has a direct or indirect effect on public opinion, which in turn can influence the decisions of policymakers. Research has shown that media coverage of key issues can change public attitudes and generate public pressure, which may result in policy shifts. For example, media campaigns focusing on healthcare reform or environmental protection can create public awareness that compels policymakers to act (Alex-Omiogbemi, Sule, Omowole, & Owoade, 2023b)^[21].

Framing theory is also important in the context of

development journalism. This theory suggests that the way issues are presented in the media influences how the public perceives them. Journalists who frame development issues in a way that emphasizes solutions, inclusivity, and empowerment can help generate support for policies aimed at improving social conditions. Lastly, social responsibility theory highlights the ethical role of the media in serving the public good. According to this theory, media organizations have a duty to provide accurate information, foster public discourse, and ensure that the public's interests are prioritized in policy debates. This theory supports the idea that development journalism is an ethical responsibility of the media to foster a well-informed, active citizenry that can engage with and influence policy decisions (Alex-Omiogbemi, Sule, Omowole, & Owoade, 2023c; Chintoh, Segun-Falade, Odionu, & Ekeh, 2023a)^[22, 28].

3. Development Journalism in Nigeria

3.1 Historical Context and Evolution of Development Journalism in Nigeria

Development journalism in Nigeria has its roots in the post-colonial period, when the country was striving to assert its identity and begin the process of nation-building. After gaining independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria faced numerous challenges, including political instability, ethnic tensions, and the struggle to create a cohesive national identity (CHINTOH, SEGUN-FALADE, ODIONU, & EKEH, 2023a)^[28]. In this context, the media emerged as a key institution in the development process, tasked with promoting social cohesion and facilitating political and economic development. Initially, Nigerian media were largely influenced by colonial-era structures, with a strong reliance on foreign media content. However, as the country moved through the 1960s and 1970s, the importance of local media in promoting national development became increasingly clear (Chintoh *et al.*, 2023a)^[28].

The 1970s marked a period of significant growth in Nigerian media, as the government began to recognize the importance of the media in shaping public opinion and fostering national development. During this period, the Nigerian government invested heavily in public broadcasting, particularly radio and television, to disseminate information about government policies and programs aimed at socio-economic development. However, this state control of the media also led to significant limitations in journalistic independence, as government-owned media outlets were often tasked with promoting government policies, rather than acting as independent watchdogs (Ekeh, Apeh, Odionu, & Austin-Gabriel, 2023b; Leghemo, Azubuike, Segun-Falade, & Odionu, 2023)^[25].

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed further evolution in Nigerian media, with a greater emphasis on private media outlets. As Nigeria experienced military rule, political repression, and growing public disillusionment with the government, the media began to play a more critical role in holding authorities accountable. In this period, development journalism emerged as a response to the failure of the government to address critical issues such as poverty, inequality, and infrastructure. Journalists increasingly began to focus on issues of social justice, advocating for the rights of marginalized groups, and promoting public participation in the political process. This period of heightened media

activism was catalyzed by the efforts of civil society groups and media practitioners, who saw the media as a powerful tool for achieving social change (Nwaozomudoh *et al.*). Despite the numerous challenges faced by Nigerian media, including government censorship, economic pressures, and limited resources, development journalism has continued to play a significant role in shaping the discourse around policy implementation. Over time, the media in Nigeria has adapted, with both traditional and digital media platforms becoming central to the conversation about inclusive development (C. P. Ogbeta, Mbata, & Katas, 2023)^[65].

3.2 Role of the Media in Promoting Inclusive Policy Implementation

The media in Nigeria plays a pivotal role in promoting inclusive policy implementation by acting as a bridge between the government and the public. Development journalism serves as a platform for raising awareness about government policies and ensuring that marginalized communities have a voice in policy discussions. This role is particularly significant in a country like Nigeria, where a large portion of the population is excluded from the decision-making process due to factors such as poverty, illiteracy, and lack of access to information.

The media's role in inclusive policy implementation begins with its ability to inform the public about key government policies, particularly those aimed at social welfare and development. In a country as diverse as Nigeria, with over 500 ethnic groups and varying regional needs, it is essential for the media to communicate policy initiatives in a way that resonates with all segments of the population. This requires journalists to tailor their reports to local contexts and ensure that the information is accessible and relevant to different communities. Media outlets also provide platforms for public discussions, allowing citizens to express their views and concerns regarding policies and their potential impact.

Furthermore, Nigerian media outlets serve as a crucial tool for advocacy. Development journalism encourages the media to focus on the needs of vulnerable groups, such as women, children, people with disabilities, and rural populations, who often face significant barriers in accessing public services and participating in governance (Ojukwu, Omokhoa, Odionu, Azubuike, & Sule, 2023)^[74]. Through investigative journalism and reporting on issues such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, the media can bring attention to gaps in policy implementation and advocate for reforms that ensure more inclusive development. This advocacy role has been particularly important in areas such as public health, where the media has played a vital role in raising awareness about diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis, and has pushed for greater access to healthcare services in underserved regions (Adewoyin, 2021)^[11].

In addition, media outlets help hold policymakers accountable by reporting on the effectiveness of policies and highlighting instances where government actions fall short of their intended goals. For example, the media has exposed corruption in the distribution of aid, particularly in the aftermath of natural disasters, and has advocated for better transparency in the allocation of public resources. Through such efforts, the media ensures that citizens remain

informed and engaged in the policymaking process, leading to more inclusive and accountable governance. Overall, the media in Nigeria plays a critical role in bridging the gap between policymakers and the public, ensuring that development policies are inclusive, transparent, and effectively implemented to meet the needs of all citizens (Agho, Eyo-Udo, Onukwulu, Sule, & Azubuike, 2023; Omokhoa, Odionu, Azubuike, & Sule, 2023b) ^[75, 13, 78].

3.3 Challenges Faced by Nigerian Media in Policy Advocacy and Public Participation

Despite its critical role in promoting inclusive policy implementation, the Nigerian media faces numerous challenges that hinder its effectiveness in policy advocacy and public participation. One of the most significant challenges is political interference. The Nigerian government has often sought to control the media, especially state-owned media outlets, in order to ensure that media coverage aligns with government interests. This interference has sometimes led to self-censorship within the media, with journalists and media organizations avoiding coverage of sensitive issues for fear of government retaliation. The consequences of such interference are far-reaching, as it undermines the ability of the media to perform its watchdog role and diminishes the overall effectiveness of development journalism (Daramola, Apeh, Basiru, Onukwulu, & Paul, 2023) ^[14].

Another major challenge is economic constraints. The Nigerian media sector is primarily driven by private ownership, which is heavily reliant on advertising revenue. As a result, media outlets often prioritize profit-driven content, such as entertainment and sensationalism, over more in-depth reporting on social issues and policy advocacy. Many media outlets struggle to fund investigative journalism or coverage of policy-related issues that require significant resources. This financial pressure can result in reduced capacity for media outlets to engage in development journalism, particularly in regions outside the commercial hubs of Lagos and Abuja, where resources are more limited (Apeh, Odionu, Bristol-Alagbariya, Okon, & Austin-Gabriel, 2023b; Hanson & Sanusi, 2023a) ^[25, 42].

Inadequate training and capacity building for journalists also pose a challenge. While there has been a growing emphasis on journalistic training in Nigeria, many journalists still lack the skills necessary to effectively report on complex social issues and policy matters. In particular, there is often a lack of understanding of how to analyze policies, engage with civil society groups, and effectively communicate the needs of marginalized populations. This limits the effectiveness of development journalism in Nigeria, as journalists may lack the necessary tools to hold government officials accountable or effectively engage with the public on policy matters.

Finally, media fragmentation is another significant issue. With the rise of digital media and social platforms, the Nigerian media landscape has become highly fragmented, with different segments of society accessing information from a variety of sources, many of which lack editorial oversight or professional standards. While this provides greater access to information, it also creates an environment where misinformation and disinformation can thrive, making it more difficult for the public to trust the media as a

reliable source of information (Ogunyemi & Ishola, 2023) ^[66]. This lack of trust in the media can undermine the media's role in fostering public participation and advocating for inclusive policy implementation. Despite these challenges, Nigerian media continue to play a crucial role in advocating for social change, promoting public participation, and holding policymakers accountable. The evolution of the media landscape in Nigeria reflects both the potential and the limitations of development journalism in a complex and dynamic political environment (Hanson, Okonkwo, & Orakwe, 2023a; Ishola, Odunaiya, & Soyombo, 2023) ^[42].

3.4 Case Studies or Examples of Media-Driven Policy Success or Failure

Case studies of media-driven policy success or failure in Nigeria illustrate the significant impact that development journalism can have on policy implementation. One example of success is the role of the Nigerian media in advocating for the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). The NHIS was established with the goal of providing affordable healthcare to Nigerians, especially those in the informal sector who previously had limited access to health services (Abiola-Adams, Azubuike, Sule, & Okon, 2023a) ^[8]. Over the years, Nigerian journalists have played a key role in raising awareness about the scheme, its benefits, and its limitations. Through investigative reporting and public campaigns, the media helped highlight the successes of the program in certain regions while also pointing out gaps in coverage and issues related to its implementation. This media attention has prompted government action to address some of the shortcomings in the NHIS, ensuring that more Nigerians have access to quality healthcare (Adewoyin, Onyeke, Digitemie, & Dienagha, 2023; Ajayi & Akerele, 2021) ^[2, 13].

Another example of media-driven policy success can be seen in the fight against polio in Nigeria. Journalists have been instrumental in raising awareness about the dangers of polio and the importance of vaccination (Sule, Eyo-Udo, Onukwulu, Agho, & Azubuike, 2023) ^[13]. Through media campaigns and partnerships with international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Nigerian media outlets have helped increase vaccination rates in previously hard-to-reach areas, significantly reducing the incidence of the disease. In this case, the media's role was not only to inform the public but also to act as an advocate for the health and well-being of vulnerable populations (Hanson, Okonkwo, & Orakwe, 2023b) ^[44].

However, there have also been instances where the media's influence on policy has been less successful. One notable example is the failure of the National Identity Management System (NIMS) in Nigeria. Despite the significant media coverage and advocacy surrounding the need for a national identity system to improve governance and service delivery, the program faced numerous challenges, including corruption, poor coordination, and lack of funding. The media's role in highlighting these issues was essential, but the government's inability to effectively address the problems meant that the policy failed to achieve its objectives (Abiola-Adams, Azubuike, Sule, & Okon, 2023b) ^[3].

4. Development Journalism in the U.S.

4.1 Overview of Development Journalism within the U.S.

Media Landscape: In contrast to many developing nations, the United States does not have a formal or widely recognized development journalism model. However, the role of the media in promoting social change, fostering public dialogue, and advocating for inclusive policies reflects some of the core principles of development journalism. The U.S. media landscape is highly diverse, with a mix of public and private sector media, including numerous news outlets, blogs, digital platforms, and independent media organizations. These outlets play a significant role in informing the public, promoting transparency, and contributing to policy discussions on issues such as healthcare, education, social justice, and climate change (Odio *et al.*, 2021) ^[60].

In the U.S., the concept of development journalism is often intertwined with investigative journalism and advocacy journalism. Journalists in the U.S. frequently report on issues related to social equity, poverty, and human rights, which align with the principles of development journalism. However, these efforts are less formalized compared to other countries, where development journalism is often a distinct approach aimed specifically at promoting national development goals. The U.S. media, particularly public broadcasting services like PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) and NPR (National Public Radio), has been an important platform for discussing societal issues in a manner that encourages public participation and policy reform (Abiola-Adams, Azubuike, Sule, & Okon, 2023a; Digitemie, Onyeke, Adewoyin, & Dienagha, 2023) ^[2, 13].

Over the years, the U.S. has seen increasing efforts to cover issues of inequality, public health, education, and the environment, often through investigative reporting that highlights the gaps in policy and the needs of marginalized communities. This type of media engagement mirrors the goals of development journalism, as it seeks to empower the public and encourage policy changes that can improve social conditions. While not specifically branded as "development journalism," this form of journalism, particularly in relation to social justice issues, is aimed at fostering a better-informed public that can advocate for more inclusive and equitable policies (Abiola-Adams, Azubuike, Sule, & Okon, 2023c) ^[6].

The U.S. media also engages in policy advocacy, particularly in areas such as healthcare reform, racial justice, and environmental sustainability. Journalistic efforts in these areas have often helped raise awareness and mobilize public support, which in turn influences the legislative process. Nonetheless, there are significant challenges in the U.S. media landscape, such as media consolidation, corporate influence, and political polarization, that can hinder the media's ability to serve as an impartial advocate for the public interest (C. Ogbeta, Mbata, & Katas, 2021) ^[63].

4.2 Mechanisms of Policy Communication and Media's Role

The U.S. media plays a crucial role in policy communication by informing the public about legislative changes, policy proposals, and the positions of various political actors. The mechanisms of policy communication

in the U.S. involve multiple channels, including television, radio, print media, and online platforms. In recent years, digital media has become an increasingly important tool for policy communication, with social media platforms, blogs, and independent news sites playing an integral role in shaping public discourse around policy issues (Okon, Odionu, & Bristol-Alagbariya, 2023) ^[40, 73].

One of the primary functions of the media in the U.S. is to translate complex policy issues into accessible language for the general public. For example, policies related to healthcare reform, taxation, and environmental regulation often involve intricate legal and technical details that are difficult for most citizens to understand. Journalists work to simplify these issues and explain their potential impact on the lives of everyday Americans. Through this process, the media serves as an intermediary between policymakers and the public, making it easier for citizens to engage in policy debates and understand the implications of various policy proposals (Adekola, Alli, Mbata, & Ogbeta, 2023; Okedele, Aziza, Oduro, & Ishola, 2023c) ^[71].

In terms of inclusive policy implementation, the U.S. media serves as a platform for promoting policies that benefit underrepresented or marginalized groups, such as racial minorities, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities. Media outlets, particularly those with a focus on social justice, play a significant role in highlighting the gaps in policy and the challenges faced by vulnerable communities (Omokhoa, Odionu, Azubuike, & Sule, 2023c) ^[76]. For example, reporting on issues such as police brutality, racial inequality, and income inequality often leads to public outcry, which pressures lawmakers to take action. The media's role in raising awareness about these issues and advocating for policy change is an essential component of promoting inclusive development in the U.S. (Ayinde, Owolabi, Uti, Ogbeta, & Choudhary, 2021; Chintoh, Segun-Falade, Odionu, & Ekeh, 2023b) ^[31].

Furthermore, policy communication is not limited to traditional media channels. Digital platforms have empowered citizens to engage directly with policymakers and participate in policy debates. Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook have become powerful tools for political mobilization, with many advocacy groups and grassroots organizations using these platforms to spread awareness, organize protests, and engage directly with elected officials. This shift has led to a more interactive and participatory form of policy communication, where the media acts as both a source of information and a space for public engagement (Akinbola, Otokiti, Akinbola, & Sanni, 2020; Ekeh, Apeh, Odionu, & Austin-Gabriel, 2023c) ^[19, 26].

The media also holds the government accountable by reporting on the effectiveness of policies and highlighting any discrepancies or failures in their implementation. For example, investigative reporting on healthcare policies, environmental regulations, and civil rights issues often exposes gaps in policy that disproportionately affect marginalized communities. In this sense, the U.S. media serves as a critical tool for ensuring that policies are implemented fairly and equitably.

4.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of the U.S. Model in Comparison to Other Countries

The U.S. media model has both significant strengths and

notable weaknesses when compared to media landscapes in other countries, particularly those in the developing world. One of the key strengths of the U.S. model is its freedom of the press. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees that journalists can report without fear of censorship or governmental interference, which has allowed for a diverse range of media outlets to emerge, from mainstream news organizations to independent blogs and podcasts. This media pluralism ensures that a wide variety of perspectives are available to the public, fostering robust discussions on critical policy issues (Oyedokun, Akinsanya, Tosin, & Aminu, 2023) ^[82].

Another strength of the U.S. media model is the resources available for investigative journalism. Major news organizations like The New York Times, The Washington Post, and NPR are known for their investigative reporting, which often uncovers corruption, highlights social issues, and contributes to the development of public policy. Investigative journalism has been instrumental in advancing social causes, such as the civil rights movement, women's rights, and environmental protection. The U.S. media's ability to mobilize public opinion around these issues has led to tangible policy changes, including the passage of civil rights laws and environmental regulations (Ajayi & Akerele, 2022a; Iwe, Daramola, Isong, Agho, & Ezeh, 2023) ^[16].

However, there are significant weaknesses in the U.S. media landscape that hinder its ability to fully align with the principles of development journalism. Media consolidation is one of the major drawbacks. Over the past few decades, the U.S. media industry has become increasingly consolidated, with a handful of large corporations controlling a significant portion of the news landscape. This concentration of media ownership can limit the diversity of perspectives and result in news coverage that is more focused on profit-driven content, such as entertainment or sensationalism, rather than in-depth reporting on social issues and policy discussions (Ishola, 2023) ^[48, 49].

Another challenge is political polarization, which has become increasingly pronounced in U.S. media outlets. Many news organizations are perceived to have a partisan bias, which can undermine the objectivity and neutrality of reporting. This polarization has contributed to a divided public, with different segments of the population receiving vastly different interpretations of policy issues based on their media consumption habits (Apeh, Odionu, Bristol-Alagbariya, Okon, & Austin-Gabriel, 2023c; Oyedokun 2023 *et al.*) ^[26, 82]. As a result, the media's role in promoting inclusive policy implementation may be compromised, as certain groups may be excluded from the national conversation or their concerns may be misrepresented. Furthermore, the growing influence of social media platforms has introduced new challenges for U.S. media, including the spread of misinformation and the rise of echo chambers, where people are exposed only to information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs. This phenomenon can hinder the media's ability to foster informed public debate on policy issues, as misinformation can cloud public understanding and impede effective policy advocacy (Eyo-Udo, Apeh, Bristol-Alagbariya, Udeh, & Ewim, 2023) ^[13].

4.4 Notable Examples of Media Involvement in Policy Issues, Inclusive Policy Models

The U.S. media has been deeply involved in several significant policy issues, particularly those related to civil rights, healthcare reform, and environmental protection. One notable example of the media's involvement in policy advocacy is the coverage of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Media outlets like The New York Times and broadcast networks, as well as local newspapers in the South, played a crucial role in bringing attention to the systemic racism and discrimination faced by African Americans. Through coverage of events such as the March on Washington and the Selma to Montgomery marches, the media helped build public support for policies that led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, two landmark pieces of legislation that helped ensure greater inclusivity and equality for African Americans (Abiola-Adams, Azubuike, Sule, & Okon, 2023b; Chintoh, Segun-Falade, Odionu, & Ekeh, 2023b) ^[5, 29].

In more recent years, the U.S. media has played a key role in promoting healthcare reform. The Affordable Care Act (ACA), commonly known as Obamacare, was a highly contentious issue that garnered extensive media coverage. Journalists and advocacy groups used the media to inform the public about the provisions of the ACA, explain how it would benefit vulnerable populations, and debunk misinformation about the law. The media's coverage of healthcare disparities, particularly regarding the uninsured, helped generate public support for the ACA and ultimately led to the expansion of healthcare coverage for millions of Americans (Odionu, Adepoju, Ikwuanusi, Azubuike, & Sule, 2023) ^[61].

Another example is the media's role in advocating for climate change policies. In the 2000s and 2010s, media outlets increasingly highlighted the impact of climate change on vulnerable populations, such as low-income communities and those living in coastal regions. Coverage of extreme weather events, environmental disasters, and scientific reports from organizations like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has contributed to growing public demand for climate action. This media attention helped galvanize support for policies like the Paris Agreement and state-level initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions and transitioning to renewable energy sources (Odionu & Ibeh, 2023) ^[62].

5. Comparative Analysis of Development Journalism Models

5.1 Comparative Analysis of the Development Journalism Models in Nigeria and the U.S.

The development journalism models in Nigeria and the United States differ significantly in their approach, structure, and purpose, but both seek to influence policy outcomes and enhance public participation in the democratic process. In Nigeria, development journalism has emerged as a distinct model aimed at addressing national development challenges, particularly focusing on the needs of marginalized and underrepresented communities. Nigerian media often prioritize issues such as poverty reduction,

access to education, healthcare, and good governance, which are critical to the country's overall development agenda. The primary focus is on informing the public, advocating for inclusive development, and holding the government accountable for its policies and programs (Abiola, Okeke, & Ajani, 2023; Ajayi & Akerele, 2022b) ^[9, 17].

In contrast, the U.S. model of development journalism is less formalized and often overlaps with other journalistic approaches such as investigative journalism, advocacy journalism, and public interest reporting. While the U.S. media does play a role in promoting inclusive policies, particularly around issues such as racial justice, healthcare, and environmental sustainability, the media landscape is much more fragmented (Ogunyemi & Ishola 2023a) ^[67]. There is less emphasis on a government-directed or public-service-focused approach, and instead, journalism in the U.S. often reflects a diverse range of interests and viewpoints. The U.S. media is highly competitive, with numerous private and public outlets catering to different political and social perspectives. Despite the absence of a formal development journalism model, many U.S. outlets engage in policy advocacy and public education, highlighting issues of social inequality and mobilizing public opinion for policy change (Abiola-Adams, Azubuike, Sule, & Okon, 2023d; Onyebuchi, Onyedikachi, & Emuobosa, 2023b) ^[80].

One major difference between the two models is the role of government influence. In Nigeria, the media faces challenges with political interference, government censorship, and limited freedom of the press, which can restrict its ability to function as an independent watchdog. This can undermine the effectiveness of development journalism in pushing for policy changes that benefit the public. In contrast, the U.S. media enjoys greater press freedom and the ability to operate independently from government influence, although corporate interests and political polarization still present challenges. This freedom allows U.S. media to engage in investigative reporting and policy advocacy, although the proliferation of biased reporting and the influence of corporate interests can lead to fragmented and polarized coverage of policy issues (Apeh, Odionu, & Austin-Gabriel; Onyebuchi, Onyedikachi, & Emuobosa, 2023c) ^[26, 81].

5.2 Identifying Commonalities and Contrasts in Media Practices

Despite their differences, both the Nigerian and U.S. models of development journalism share commonalities in their overarching goals. Both seek to promote public awareness of critical social issues, encourage citizen participation in the policymaking process, and advocate for policies that benefit marginalized and vulnerable communities. For instance, in Nigeria, media outlets highlight issues such as corruption, inequality, and healthcare access, aiming to raise awareness and encourage action from the government. Similarly, in the U.S., the media addresses issues like racial inequality, immigration policy, and climate change, using their platform to inform the public and advocate for policy change.

Both countries' media also play a significant role in bridging the gap between policymakers and the public. In

Nigeria, media outlets often serve as the primary channel for citizens to access information about government policies and public sector programs. This is especially critical in a country where many citizens may not have direct access to government officials or policymaking forums. U.S. media outlets, similarly, act as intermediaries in disseminating information about policy issues and holding lawmakers accountable (Kokogho, Odio, Ogunsola, & Nwaozumudoh, 2023c; Okedele, Aziza, Oduro, & Ishola, 2023d) ^[54, 72].

Despite these similarities, the methods and effectiveness of development journalism differ greatly between Nigeria and the U.S. The most prominent difference lies in the level of independence of the media. In Nigeria, media outlets often face significant pressure from the government, political elites, and corporate interests, which can compromise their ability to report independently and hold those in power accountable. In contrast, U.S. media enjoys far more independence, which enables investigative journalism and in-depth analysis of policy issues. However, the corporate consolidation of media outlets in the U.S. has led to a concentration of ownership, which may skew coverage towards more sensationalist or commercialized content, leaving less room for in-depth development journalism focused on inclusive policy.

Another key contrast is the role of digital media in both countries. In recent years, the rise of social media platforms and digital news has amplified the voice of citizens and civil society in both Nigeria and the U.S. In Nigeria, digital media provides a platform for grassroots organizations and activists to organize protests, spread information, and advocate for policies that promote social justice and inclusive development. In the U.S., digital media plays a similar role in mobilizing public opinion and facilitating public discourse around policy issues. However, the digital divide in both countries means that the most marginalized groups may not have equal access to digital platforms, thereby limiting their ability to engage fully in policy debates and advocacy efforts (Abiola-Adams, Azubuike, Sule, & Okon, 2023e) ^[8].

5.3 Role of Media in Creating Awareness, Participation, and Driving Policy Change

In both Nigeria and the U.S., the media plays a pivotal role in creating awareness about critical social issues and driving public participation in the policymaking process. The media acts as a platform for public dialogue, where citizens can discuss policy issues, share their concerns, and advocate for changes that reflect their needs and aspirations. In Nigeria, the media's role in public education is especially important, as it serves as one of the few channels through which citizens can access information about government initiatives and the state of the nation's development. Through investigative reporting, media outlets bring attention to issues such as poverty, lack of access to basic services, and poor governance, pushing for reforms and policies that are more inclusive (Oyedokun 2023 *et al.*) ^[82].

In the U.S., the media's role in raising awareness is similarly important, particularly on issues related to human rights, healthcare access, and social justice. Media coverage of high-profile events, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, has sparked national debates on race, inequality, and police reform. News outlets play a critical role in

highlighting disparities in the justice system and promoting policy reforms aimed at creating a more equitable society. Additionally, public service campaigns conducted by media outlets have led to greater participation in issues such as voter registration, public health initiatives, and environmental conservation (Ajayi *et al.*, 2023)^[18].

The media's role in policy change is not limited to creating awareness; it also serves as an advocacy tool that influences public opinion and, consequently, policy decisions. In both Nigeria and the U.S., media outlets have used their platforms to hold the government accountable by exposing corruption, mismanagement, and ineffective policies. In Nigeria, media coverage of government failures, especially in areas like education and healthcare, has led to public outcry and increased demand for policy reform. In the U.S., media attention on policy issues such as healthcare reform, immigration, and environmental regulations has sparked nationwide discussions and influenced political campaigns. However, the effectiveness of media in driving policy change can vary based on the political context in each country. In Nigeria, the media's ability to drive meaningful policy change is often constrained by the political climate, where media outlets are sometimes subject to censorship, government control, or the influence of powerful elites. In the U.S., while the media enjoys greater freedom, political polarization and corporate influence can skew public discourse, making it difficult for certain issues to gain widespread support.

The effectiveness of the development journalism models in Nigeria and the U.S. can be evaluated in terms of their ability to promote inclusive policy and empower marginalized communities. In Nigeria, development journalism has played a crucial role in raising awareness about the challenges faced by underprivileged communities and advocating for policies that address poverty, access to healthcare, and good governance. However, the model's effectiveness is often limited by political interference, limited media independence, and a lack of resources for investigative journalism. Despite these challenges, the Nigerian media continues to be a powerful tool for social change, especially in rural areas where traditional channels of communication are limited.

In the U.S., the media has been effective in advocating for inclusive policies in areas such as healthcare, civil rights, and environmental sustainability. The press freedom in the U.S. allows for greater investigative reporting and policy advocacy, which has led to significant policy shifts in various sectors. However, the U.S. media is not without its challenges, including political bias, corporate influence, and the increasing prevalence of misinformation, which can undermine its ability to engage in meaningful policy discussions and drive inclusive policy change.

6. Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the development journalism models in Nigeria and the U.S. has revealed significant differences and some important similarities in the way both countries utilize the media to drive inclusive policy implementation. While the media in both contexts plays a critical role in informing the public, advocating for marginalized communities, and promoting political accountability, the degree to which the media can

effectively influence policy is shaped by the political, economic, and social environments in which it operates.

In Nigeria, development journalism has evolved as a tool for addressing national development challenges, particularly those that affect marginalized and underserved communities. The media has been instrumental in raising public awareness about pressing issues such as poverty, healthcare access, and corruption. However, challenges such as political interference, media censorship, and the lack of resources for investigative reporting often hinder its ability to function as a fully independent force for policy change. Despite these obstacles, the Nigerian media continues to serve as an essential agent for public engagement and policy advocacy, contributing to the national discourse on issues that matter most to citizens.

In contrast, the U.S. media landscape, while more diverse and independent, faces its own set of challenges. Although the U.S. media enjoys a higher degree of press freedom, the increasing corporate consolidation of media outlets, political polarization, and the rise of fake news have created barriers to effective development journalism. Despite these issues, the U.S. media remains a powerful force for policy reform, particularly in areas such as civil rights, healthcare, and environmental policy. Media outlets in the U.S. continue to be essential in raising awareness about social issues and fostering public participation in the policymaking process.

The comparative analysis highlights that both Nigeria and the U.S. have media systems that contribute to the development of inclusive policies but face unique challenges in their ability to effectively foster public engagement and policy advocacy. In both countries, the media plays a pivotal role in creating awareness about policy issues, promoting public discourse, and holding the government accountable. However, the political context in which the media operates often determines its ability to achieve the full potential of development journalism.

Based on these findings, several policy recommendations can be made to improve the media's role in driving inclusive policy processes. Both Nigeria and the U.S. must ensure that the media operates independently of political and corporate interests. In Nigeria, efforts to protect press freedom and reduce political interference are essential for fostering an environment where development journalism can thrive. In the U.S., addressing the corporate consolidation of media outlets and promoting greater diversity in ownership would improve the media's ability to represent a broader range of public interests.

Both countries should invest in strengthening the capacity for investigative journalism, particularly in the areas of development policy, social justice, and governance. Media outlets in both Nigeria and the U.S. would benefit from training journalists in investigative techniques and ensuring they have access to the necessary resources to conduct in-depth reporting on policy issues.

The rise of digital media has created both opportunities and challenges for development journalism. To ensure that media can fulfill its role in policy advocacy, both countries should focus on promoting digital media literacy among the public. This would help people critically engage with information, recognize bias, and participate more effectively in policy debates. There is a need for greater collaboration between media outlets, civil society organizations, and the

public to ensure that development journalism reflects the needs of marginalized communities. Collaboration can amplify the impact of media reporting on policy change and provide a platform for the voices of those who are often excluded from traditional media narratives.

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