

Effect of mass media  
in democracy  
development  
sociology essay



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Media exists everywhere through TV, Internet, newspapers and radio, each one adds a lot to our society's attention. This research may help to understand the impact that media has on the people's political participation, knowledge and orientations, more exclusively in the developing democracies, while offering a theoretical framework to comprehend the nature and the role of political communication gaps within consolidating democracy across high contextual social differences. The following essay presents a critical account for a research study titled: " MEDIA USE, DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND COMMUNICATION GAPS IN A DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY", which was written by Erik C. Nisbet and published in the " International Journal of public Opinion Research Vol. 20 No. 4 in winter 2008. The writer follows number of stages in writing his research, now; this essay is an attempt to build a scientific and academic analysis for stages, procedures adopted in it, and also, it will highlight the positive and negative aspects of the methods and methodologies which the researcher used such as; survey and interviews, in addition, the essay will go through the objectivity of both, the research and the researcher.

### **Research paper's overview**

This research is titled " MEDIA USE, DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND COMMUNICATION GAPS IN A DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY" which talks about the " the relationship between mass media use and democratic citizenship within a developing democracy". The writer applied a survey conducted in the West African nation of Mali, where he examined the relationship between forms of media use and the obtained amount of political knowledge, participation and socializations. The survey pointed out that " socially

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privileged groups" benefitted more in political knowledge, participation and socializations than the other " dissident groups " (Nisbet, 2008) by the mass media use , finally ; the researcher ended up arguing some " implication of the results for understanding the importance of mass media in democratization process"(Nisbet, 2008) . Furthermore, the writer referred to the topic of democratic movement which offers for citizen to participate in political decision-making as long as an environment of press freedom and media penetration is secured. On the other hand; the writer encouraged the concept of " democratic citizenship" and its association with mass media use, also he talked about the obstacles which confront the " nascent stages" nations which witness a regression in terms of " socio-economic development, differentiation and stratification". All these factors emerged communication gaps which influenced the democratization process. The research stressed on two general categories: the first one is the functionalist role which states " how" well " mass media strengthens and enhances the basic functions and practices of participatory democracy" is the key factor of the successful democratic consolidation. The second one is the regulatory role which shows mass media as " an institutional and normative role which regulates some norms through socialization or through the threat of coercion" or both to keep " social integrity ". In other words, the mass media may reinforce social democratic change by keeping the integrity of the society while transition or change takes place rather than leading it but this role may emerge some challenges due to the traditional political institutions. In this sense, Huntington's (1991) view about the gradual democratization within developing democracies which is the optimal level. Temin and Smith's (2002) studied the role of the mass media in Ghana's 2000 election is an <https://assignbuster.com/effect-of-mass-media-in-democracy-development-sociology-essay/>

illustrative example. The researcher assumed, depending on the original knowledge gaps hypothesis, the importance of the increasing information acquired from the mass media within the members of the society in higher and lower socio-economic level, without any indication that the relationship between them is directly proportional but the amount of the knowledge acquired by the higher socio-economic strata is greater. This hypothesis reformulated to be restated as “ communication gaps aren’t limited to any particular type of mass media “ or” differential gains in knowledge”(Nisbet, 2008) but it impacts” individual behavior or attitudes” just like what the “ political science” added to what is mentioned before that the information individual receives from the mass media influences the attitudes of people based upon pre-existing belief, interest, motivation, or knowledge.

Mass media use strengthens democratic citizenship by socializing especially the dissident social groups into a “ common, dominant political worldview” which maintains social hierarchy and regime stability, which contribute in fostering the “ Democratic consolidation”. The writer cited four definitions of the “ Democratic consolidation” which calls for a high amount of public awareness of democratic political practices and high commitment to democratic norms, value and culture, towards long term probability of achieving the democratic consolidation as the study mentioned.

Some causes of communication gaps are classified as individual, structural and cultural factors which are related to the individual’s “ education attainment”, “ gender “ which are the dominant indicators , “ socio-psychological factors”, “ socio-economic status” , “ community structure” or “ the nature of the mass media itself ” and “ beliefs ” which all lead to <https://assignbuster.com/effect-of-mass-media-in-democracy-development-sociology-essay/>

differential gains in political knowledge acquisition. For example, some social or cultural societies may collectively estimate specific kind of knowledge more than other cultural or social societies, therefore; communication gaps emerge. Moreover, the researcher mentioned several supportive and contrastive points of view about the causes of communication gaps.

Finally, the research's discussion concentrated on the association between media use and democratic citizenship, as the table drawn below

Radio

Television

Newspaper

Political knowledge

\*There's association

There's association

\*\*There's no association

Table ()

\*Radio in developing states has disproportional role in educating the community

\*\* It has association between beyond the educated respondents although it's not the only variants which affect the amount of knowledge gained.

Note: no media use is associated with democratic orientation which contrast with what is stated that radio use is associated unexpectedly with socialization into democratic norms and ideals among “ lower educated, rural, ethnic minority citizens” who have more traditional political values.

And also mentions, Implication for understanding the causes of communication gaps.

The writer sums up with, the topic of Normative implication of political communication gaps in developing democracies which has been just clarified at the beginning of the analysis and which is viewed of two interfering arguments according to “ democratization and equality of participation in democracies”. The first theory “ the development first” proposes that the starting point for “ sustainable democracy” is prerequisites by “ economic and social modernization”. The contrast theory “ the democracy first” suggests that “ economic and social modernization” isn’t necessarily a prerequisite for democracy, like Mali’s case, according to World Bank Governance Indicators says that it’s the poorest countries in Africa but it relatively realizes high degree of sustained democratization. There’re several perspectives about both theories were uttered by some investigators the research is referred to in detail.

To conclude, our Scholar broadens a little bit to another topic which is whether the communication gaps and the inequalities in democratic participation may threaten the concept of democracy in developing state? Or can keeping the political stability through inequality of participation during the transition to correct it afterward once the democratic consolidating is

obtained. The answer of this question Paves the way for further “ theoretical work on how media, political inequality, and political outcomes are associated within developing democracies, as well as how these relationships may evolve as developing democracies consolidate and develop”.

## – **Methodology**

In the researching field, methodology is seen as the approaches, applications, methods, procedures and strategies which are used to reach any scientific knowledge (Tayraukham, 2009). So as a result, different questions in the research demand different approaches to answer these questions in a way that offers help to the readers and the seekers of knowledge (Dawson, 2002). Methodologies in the academic research could be either quantitative, qualitative or a mix of them both. Or it can be considered as the design of the research that was used in order to come up with as proved results as could be without engaging into the fault of changing data or facts. The methodology could be either quantitative through using the questionnaire, pre-test / post-test and the survey method. On the other hand, the qualitative nature of the research involves interviews with the participants of the study, observing a specific phenomenon or taking into account a specific case study.

## **The method's of the study**

Considering that the study is quantitative and qualitative in its approach, the tools (methods) used in collecting the data of the study were a survey to be implemented between January 3 and January 27, 2001 on the experimental Malian group with total sample size of 2089 accompanied by face to face <https://assignbuster.com/effect-of-mass-media-in-democracy-development-sociology-essay/>

personal interview of citizens 17 years old or older , of both urban and rural areas & in the respondent's native language and questionnaires directed for the interviewees which were used in order to “ Measure public opinion and behaviours democracy and track the evolution of such attitudes in selected nation over time”

Furthermore, the analyses depends on the a ” hierarchal ordinary least squares ( OLS) regression model which penetrated by number of exogenous variable; such as, individual-level socio-structural characteristics (urban/rural resident, age, language group, gender, education, and yearly income) , followed by antecedent endogenous variables; just like, measures of interest and efficacy, media use, political discussion, civic participation, political knowledge, and political participation. Each subsequent blocks of the variable accounted for by the equation was scaled with the incremental R2 and the sum of the series of incremental R2 is referred to as the ‘ cumulative R2’ (Cohen & Cohen, 2002).

Then, we can notice from the result of the survey that the interaction (communication gaps) were found between certain mass media use and some blocks of variables. (You can get back to see them in details on the section of method, interaction & results)

### – **The positive and negative aspects of the approach**

Here in this paragraph, I'll mention the positive and negative traits of employing a survey in this research: ” MEDIA USE , DEMOCTARTIC CITIZINSHIP AND COMMUNICATION GAPS IN A DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY “.



According to Patrick Parnaby ( 2006), the positive aspects of surveys are the effective design of the Survey which is crucial to get the information you need easily and provide an approximately extensive data with credible results, they are tractable, he also added that “ surveys act as the finger on the pulse of your project and can measure its strength”. They can measure the change during the time especially when we apply a pre-test against post-test just like the Malian political transition so , by the conducted survey we become able to measure the conversion of democratic citizenship before and after the change, and also the surveys can ensure the Coherent set of data because all respondents have exactly the same questions in precisely the same way and also during an interview, the interviewer can explore urge themes in depth, as he didn't notice before.

The negative aspects of implementing a survey are the traditional options for survey data collection which are expensive, needs hard resources, such as paper copies of a survey & pencils, and challenging to manage which requires patience of the sample who are ready to move on to the next phase of the survey, and also, a survey only collects information about the questions Required. In addition to all that, we will not be completely sure of the objectivity of questionnaire data, the individuals who are asked may be biased towards themselves and don't answer as correct as the reality of themselves.

HR-Survey recommends that if we want a successful survey, it must be written in a Simple Language and short, simple questions, be clear and direct and also you have to avoid errors in spelling, grammar and usage, and Keep the scales in the same direction.

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Our scholar, Erik C. Nisbet , follows Likert Scales' survey method which is lists of statements which offers a 5-point or 6-point scale as the participant can assess his/her level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.

### **Objectivity in relation to the broader aims of the article**

Sociologist, Michael Schudson, debates that “ the belief in objectivity is a faith in ‘ facts, distrust in ‘ values,’ and a commitment to their segregation.”

Journalistic objectivity is identified as equity, indifference and disaffiliation to any party, yet the writer most likely has to encompass all of these qualities.

There is a relationship between the terms Validity & Reliability and Objectivity.

The researcher states his objectivity in the study where he doesn't mention his point of view or the viewpoint's of his nation's law about the effect of mass media use at the democratic citizenship in his land and other developing democracies, like, Mali . Nevertheless, he appears a little bias to the idea that mass media use is effective in elevating the level of individual's democratic citizenship not as he thinks but as the results show.

Neither does he comment supportively nor contrarily to Mali's case, he only displays the data without deformation of the original one and conducts a survey as he protects respondents' privacy without telling anything about them as we observe during reading the article.

According to the Objectivity rules of Dr Frances Nelson, assumption 1 leads us to turn into the clarity and correctness of the analytic data, and also theory 3 “ Scientific method” talks about being disinterestedness with the

topic you are writing about guarantee your objectivity which both were shown in Erik C. Nisbet's research.

In this article, the objectivity of the researcher is obvious which refutes what Dr Frances Nelson said that the researcher and his subjectivity can't be separated.

Validity is the level of conformity between the results & the reality. This clearly appears in the research when the writer states the effect of several mass media on the individual's political knowledge, participation and socialization into the norms and value of democracy in the developing democracies and how the citizens have different orientations toward political democratic tendencies regarding to several variables.

Reliability is the measurement has to be credible and keep the same answers of the Malian persons who take the survey. As we see in the data of survey that the measure of democratic political orientations has low level of reliability because the democratic orientation and understanding of democracy in the developing countries " are evolving" , and from the writer's information doesn't mention any unrelated news about Mali, such as roles, habits and environment that he didn't find appealing.

To conclude, the subjectivity & objectivity contrast each other. The use of one of them or both depends on the topic of the research, the researcher's personality, the mass public which the research directed to. If the writer decide to utilize them, it must be useful for his study. Erik C. Nisbet makes use of his objectivity to enable the reader concentrates on the main topic more than on the researcher's point of view.

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## **Conclusion**

Through reading the previous essay, one can observe that study examines the effect of mass media on the citizen's political knowledge, participation and their socialization with the norms and values of democratic within developing democracies, e. g. Mali where some interactions were found like communication gaps by several causes and variables just like I mentioned before in the nascent stages polities.

As we can deduce, Mali realized a higher level of democratizations than many other nascent polities, though it had relatively different levels of economic development. Then, we can observe also that the study on Mali, lower state degree of linguistic groups than other developing states, doesn't indicate sufficient information about communication gaps. Not only does the communication gaps vary according to the change of political and social conditions (national context), but also we have to be aware of how the change takes place over time and of the level of democratization and political transition.

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