

NWICO: The Deaf Dialogue and Elusive Impracticality within the Framework of Knowledge Gap Theory

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DOI: 10.56201/rjmcit.vol.11.no3.2025.pg1.15

Abstract

This study is an examination of NWICO: The deaf dialogue and elusive impracticality within the framework of knowledge gap theory. The theoretical framework of the study was drawn from the knowledge gap theory. The study made use of survey design and the instrument used for data collection was interview guide. The data collected were analysed using Explanation Building Techniques (EBT), which were presented and analysed entirely in themes. Findings from the study revealed that, that, implementing NWICO within the global media landscape faces challenges such as resistance from dominant Western media power, persistent inequalities in information flow, and complications introduced by rapid digital media advancement, which together hinder efforts to achieve more balanced and equitable global communication. The study concluded that despite NWICO's intent to address international media imbalances, its impact has been limited by resistance and evolving digital media dynamics. The knowledge gap theory further illustrates how information inequalities can perpetuate socio-economic divides. The study recommended that, there is need for a nuanced approach that considers both global and local contexts to promote a more balanced and inclusive information landscape.

Keywords: NWICO, Deaf Dialogue, Elusive Impracticality, Framework, Knowledge Gap Theory

Introduction

The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) emerged as a response to the perceived imbalance in global information flow, a concern that became prominent in the late 20th century. Developing countries, particularly those in the Global South, argued that the dominance of Western media and information systems marginalised their voices, leading to an inequitable distribution of knowledge and power. This discontent was articulated through various platforms, most notably within UNESCO, which sought to address these disparities through NWICO (Roach, 1997). However, despite its noble intentions, NWICO has often been criticised as a "deaf dialogue" - a discourse that, while vibrant in its expression of grievances, has been largely ineffective in enacting tangible change (Nordenstreng, 2013).

One of the central challenges facing NWICO is its impracticality in bridging the knowledge gap that persists between the developed and developing worlds. The knowledge gap theory, as articulated by Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien (1970), posits that information is distributed unevenly across populations, with those of higher socioeconomic status acquiring information faster and more effectively than those of lower status. This theory suggests that rather than narrowing the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor, the global information flow may actually widen it. Within this framework, NWICO's efforts to create a more equitable information order appear, at best, aspirational and, at worst, futile

(McPhail, 2006).

The idea of NWICO was built on the premise that communication is not just a flow of information but also a tool for cultural expression and self-determination. Developing countries argued that the existing global communication structure perpetuated a form of cultural imperialism, where Western norms and values dominated the global narrative (Schiller, 1991). However, the attempt to restructure global communication through NWICO has been met with resistance, particularly from Western powers, who viewed it as a threat to the free flow of information and market-driven media systems (Preston, 2001). This resistance has significantly hampered the implementation of NWICO, rendering it an elusive goal rather than a practical reality.

Moreover, the advent of the Internet and digital technologies has further complicated the NWICO discourse. While these technologies promised to democratise information and give voice to the marginalized, they have also reinforced existing inequalities. The digital divide — the gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not — mirrors the knowledge gap identified by Tichenor and his colleagues (Van Dijk, 2020). In this context, NWICO's relevance has been questioned, as the mechanisms of information control have evolved beyond the traditional media structures it originally sought to reform (Hamelink, 2015).

Critics argue that NWICO failed to account for the complexities of global media dynamics, particularly the role of multinational corporations and global media conglomerates in shaping information flows (Mosco, 2009). These entities operate beyond the reach of national governments and international organizations, making it difficult for any coordinated effort, such as NWICO, to challenge their dominance effectively. As a result, the global communication landscape remains skewed in favour of the developed world, with the voices of the Global South still struggling to be heard (Boyd-Barrett & Xie, 2008).

The concept of a "deaf dialogue" within NWICO reflects the broader issue of power imbalances in global governance. The dialogue around NWICO has often been characterized by a lack of meaningful engagement between stakeholders, particularly between the Global North and Global South. This disconnect has perpetuated a cycle of unmet expectations and disillusionment, where the aspirations of developing countries for a more just and equitable information order are continually thwarted by the entrenched interests of powerful nations (Hachten & Scotton, 2016).

The impracticality of NWICO is also evident in its failure to adapt to the rapidly changing media environment. The rise of social media, for instance, has introduced new dynamics in global communication, where traditional gatekeepers are bypassed, and information flows more freely and unpredictably. However, this has not necessarily led to a more balanced information order. Instead, it has created new challenges, such as the spread of misinformation and the manipulation of public opinion by state and non-state actors (McNair, 2017). In this environment, the ideals of NWICO seem increasingly out of touch with the realities of contemporary global communication.

The knowledge gap theory provides a useful lens through which to understand the limitations of NWICO. By highlighting the structural barriers to information access and acquisition, the theory underscores the challenges of achieving equity in a globalised media landscape. Despite the proliferation of information channels, those with greater resources and access to education continue to dominate the global discourse, while marginalized communities remain at the periphery (Gaziano & Gaziano, 2021). NWICO's failure to address these underlying inequalities has contributed to its perception as an impractical solution to a deeply entrenched problem.

In light of these challenges, it is important to reconsider the goals and strategies of NWICO. Rather than focusing solely on the redistribution of information, there is a need to address the broader issues of power and control in global communication. This includes challenging the dominance of global media conglomerates, promoting media literacy, and supporting the development of independent media in the Global South (Thussu, 2018). Only by addressing these fundamental issues can the aspirations of NWICO be realized in a meaningful and practical way.

The NWICO debate reflects the on-going struggle for a more equitable global information order. While the dialogue around NWICO has been vibrant, it has often failed to translate into practical outcomes, leading to frustration and disillusionment among its proponents. This study helps to explain why NWICO's goals have remained elusive, highlighting the structural barriers that continue to impede progress. As the global media landscape continues to evolve, there is a need to revisit and revise the strategies for achieving a more just and balanced communication order, ensuring that the voices of the marginalised are not only heard but also empowered.

Statement of the problem

The problem at the heart of this study lies in the persistent and widening knowledge gap between developed and developing nations, a gap that the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was intended to address but has struggled to do so effectively. Despite the ambitious goals of NWICO to create a more equitable global communication system, the reality has been a perpetuation of the very disparities it sought to eliminate. The dominance of Western media conglomerates and the marginalisation of voices from the Global South remain largely unchanged, leading to a "deaf dialogue" where the concerns of developing nations are acknowledged but not meaningfully addressed. This study is particularly concerned with the impracticality of NWICO within the framework of the Knowledge Gap Theory, which suggests that information flows tend to benefit those who are already better informed and more privileged, thereby widening the gap rather than closing it. The study seeks to critically analyse how and why NWICO has failed to bridge this gap, despite the proliferation of digital technologies that were expected to democratise information access. In essence, the problem is not just the failure of NWICO to achieve its goals but also its inability to adapt to the evolving global communication landscape, which continues to disadvantage those in the Global South, thus exacerbating the existing inequities in global knowledge distribution. Hence, this study sets out to examine the NWICO: The deaf dialogue and elusive impracticality within the framework of knowledge gap theory.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to assess the NWICO as a deaf dialogue and an elusive impracticality within the framework of knowledge gap theory. The objectives are to:

1. Examine the challenges of implementing NWICO within the global media landscape;
2. Evaluate the relationship between NWICO's goals and the knowledge gap theory;
3. Ascertain the effectiveness of NWICO in addressing information disparities between developed and developing nations; and
4. Determine the practical implications of NWICO in promoting equitable access to global communication resources.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO)

Udoakah (1998) the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) primarily seeks a restructured media and telecommunications system to make room for a more just and equitable balance in the flow and content of international level to reflect more accurately the aspirations and activities of the less developed countries.

The agitation started in 1970 and engaged the attention of UNESCO under an African Director-General, Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, throughout the decade. Momentum started gathering in 1976 when a meeting of Latin American Governments convened at Costa Rica by UNESCO, endorsed the principle of state involvement in national communications policies to integrate mass communications media with national planning. According to Windlesham (1998), a month later, August, 1976, the Non-Aligned Summit meeting in Colombo called for a new order for information, proclaiming that the emancipation and development of national information media was integrate part of the overall struggle for political, economic and social independence.

Following soviet support, a draft declaration on the use of the mass media was tabled at the General Conference of UNESCO at Nairobi in November, 1976. The controversy which the documents generated split UNESCO, leading to the formation of an international commission for the study of communication problems, under the chairmanship of Sean MacBride. What emerged from the international commission was same approach as earlier versions. Behind the draft lay the firm belief that it was for governments to rule what was true and what was erroneous, and that controls on the press justified as a means of achieving political, economic or social objectives (Udoakah, 1998).

Britain, the United States and other Western countries found this unacceptable. So a lot of watering down has to be done at the 1978 Paris conference before the declaration was adopted by acclamation (see appendix for the declaration) However, it has been observed that the declaration was compromise in which no party compromised its principles. No wonder the United States were not entirely satisfied and had to withdraw from UNESCO in 1981, three years after the declaration was adopted. Britain later followed suit (Nwosu, 1990).

From the debate, the fear of the opponents of the call for the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) is that, it will bring increased interference with freedom of the press. On their part, the proponents argue that the current world information and communication system is an outgrowth of former colonial patterns and systems, and that information about the Less Developed Countries (LDC) is distorted in order to support political, social and economic expediency in the west (Nwosu, 1990).

It was also posited by McBride et al (1980) that, only if the mass media put more stress on what joins people together rather than on what divides them, then will the people of the world be able to help on another through peaceful exchange and mutual understanding. Okon (2004) posits that, in some respects, development and communication go hand in hand. Perhaps, this stems from the conviction that information and communication are essential factors of international relations in all fields and particularly in the establishment of a new system founded on the principle of equality of rights and the inflammatory rhetoric.

The debate has in fact become an emotional one, as reported by the New York Times of December 21st 1983, cited in Okon (2004) that;

UNESCO is a thoroughly politicised institution dedicated to attacking fundamental Western values, interests and institutions. It attacks and seeks

to circumscribe the free Western press. It characterises Western culture as an “imperialist” threat to the identity of other peoples. It attacks the force market economy and multinational corporations. It seeks to down grade individual human rights in favour of nebulous and proliferating “rights of peoples” thus helping tyrannical states to impose their orthodoxies on their subjects (p. 156).

Such question as the one below has also been put forward by the western media in countering the call for NWICO: what efforts are being made to discourage the governments of the Third World Countries from owning, operating and controlling the mass communication system? Perhaps, it is based on the foregoing that Okon (2004) describes the NWICO as “a dialogue of the deaf.” (p. 157). On a pragmatic note, the call for a NWICO seems an elusive ideal whose impracticability falls within the framework of the Knowledge Gap Theory. The basic assumption, in connection with this theory, is that the increase in media output, rather than evening out differences between the information-rich and the information-poor, actually accentuates those differences.

Still on a pessimistic note, Okon (2004) notes that, “unevenness of flow is a basic characteristic of news and not only of news flow but of water flow, oil flow, money flow, population flow and flood flow” (pp. 157-158). The foregoing has undoubtedly engendered a subtle resignation to the existing inequalities as an inescapable evil. Indeed some nations are simply doomed to domination by other nations in the sphere of communication. To say based on the foregoing, that the debate for a new world information and communication order is a parallel one is indeed stating the obvious (Okon, 2004).

Not too long ago, a more embracing model was propounded by Nwosu Ikechukwu in 1990 – The minimal disintegration and interdependence model. The emphasis by the model is on a radical “inside look” approach or a “minimal cut-off from dependence on the international communication flow pattern. This could only be achieved, based on the realization that the destiny of Third World countries lies, mostly in their hands and not in the hands of big power nations who can sometimes help but naturally have their national interests and ideologies influence what help they can render (Okon, 2004).

Global Media Hegemony

Global media hegemony refers to the dominance of Western media organisations, particularly those from the United States and Europe, in shaping the global flow of information, entertainment, and cultural narratives. This hegemony is primarily driven by the economic and technological power of Western media conglomerates, which control a significant portion of the world’s media resources, including television networks, film studios, news agencies, and digital platforms. These conglomerates do not only produce a vast amount of content but also have the means to distribute it globally, thereby influencing how people across the world perceive international events, cultures, and values (Thussu, 2022).

The dominance of Western media has led to concerns about the homogenisation of global culture, where the values, norms, and lifestyles promoted by these media giants become pervasive, often at the expense of local cultures and traditions. Critics argue that global media hegemony marginalises non-Western perspectives, reinforcing stereotypes and reducing the diversity of voices in the global media landscape. For instance, news coverage of international events is often filtered through a Western lens, which can skew public perceptions and obscure the complexities of issues faced by developing nations (Couldry & Meijas, 2019).

Global media hegemony raises questions about the concentration of media ownership and its implications for democracy. When a few corporations control the majority of media outlets, there is a risk that the diversity of opinions and perspectives necessary for a healthy democratic discourse may be stifled. This concentration of power can also lead to the prioritisation of commercial interests over public service, further entrenching the dominance of Western narratives in global media (Flew, 2023).

Cultural Imperialism

Cultural imperialism refers to the practice by which a powerful nation imposes its culture, values, and lifestyle on other nations, often through media and cultural products. This concept emerged as a critique of the global dominance of Western, particularly American, media content, which is widely disseminated and consumed across the world. Through films, television programs, music, and digital content, Western countries export their cultural norms and ideals, often at the expense of local cultures. This process can lead to the erosion of indigenous cultures and the adoption of Western ways of life, creating a form of cultural dependency (Tomlinson, 2021).

The impact of cultural imperialism is particularly evident in the way global media influences identity and cultural practices in developing countries. For instance, young people in many parts of the world may adopt Western fashion, language, and lifestyles as portrayed in media, which can lead to a disconnection from their cultural heritage. This phenomenon raises concerns about cultural homogenisation, where the rich diversity of global cultures is gradually replaced by a dominant Western culture, leading to the loss of cultural identities and traditions (Chin, 2022).

Cultural imperialism is not just about the spread of cultural products; it also involves the imposition of ideological frameworks. Western media often carry implicit messages about individualism, consumerism, and neoliberalism, which can reshape societal values and political attitudes in other parts of the world. This ideological influence can undermine local governance structures, traditional practices, and social cohesion, leading to conflicts and social instability in some regions (Schiller, 2020).

Theoretical Review

Knowledge Gap Theory

The Knowledge Gap Theory was propounded by Phillip J. Tichenor, George A. Donohue, and Clarice N. Olien in 1970. The theory posits that as the infusion of mass media information into a social system increases, segments of the population with higher socioeconomic status tend to acquire this information at a faster rate than those with lower socioeconomic status. Consequently, the gap in knowledge between these segments widens over time. The theory is grounded in the assumption that individuals with higher education levels and better access to information resources are more adept at processing and assimilating new information. They also have more opportunities to discuss and apply this knowledge, leading to cumulative advantages over time. The theory is relevant in understanding the persistent inequalities in information access and its effects on public knowledge, particularly in the context of new media technologies (Gaziano, 2022).

Criticism of the Knowledge Gap Theory centres on its deterministic view of information acquisition and its limited consideration of the role of other factors, such as motivation, interest, and interpersonal communication, which can influence knowledge acquisition. Critics argue that the theory underestimates the capacity of marginalised groups to close the knowledge gap

through alternative information sources and community networks. This theory has been challenged for its emphasis on mass media, as the rise of digital media and the Internet has altered the dynamics of information access and dissemination. Despite these criticisms, the Knowledge Gap Theory remains a valuable framework for analysing how disparities in information access contribute to social inequality (Flew, 2023). This theory helps to explain why NWICO's goal remain elusive, as the structural inequalities in global media access and the uneven distribution of information resources continue to widen the knowledge gap, making true global communication equity difficult to achieve.

Empirical Review

Sparks (2023) carried out a study on **“Globalisation, development, and the new world information and communication order.”** The study examined the historical context of NWICO, its goals, and the challenges it faced in promoting a more equitable global communication environment. The study also analyse the on-going relevance of NWICO in contemporary global media dynamics. The research utilised a historical and qualitative analysis of NWICO documents, policy debates within UNESCO, and subsequent scholarly discourse. The study also involved interviews with key figures involved in the NWICO movement. The study found that while NWICO's objectives were ground-breaking, they were undermined by geopolitical power dynamics and the entrenched dominance of Western media. It also revealed that the issues NWICO sought to address, such as media imperialism and unequal information flow, remain relevant today, particularly in the digital era. The reviewed study and the pioneer study are both related as they focus on NWICO, but are difference in the area of objectives, and scope.

Thussu (2022) conducted a study on **“International communication: Continuity and change.”** The study explored the shifts in global communication patterns over the past few decades, with a focus on how these changes have impacted the information flow between developed and developing countries. It also assessed the on-going challenges related to global media hegemony and cultural representation. The research employed a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative data on media ownership and distribution with qualitative case studies of media content in different regions. Findings revealed that despite the proliferation of new media platforms, global communication remains heavily skewed in favour of Western media conglomerates. This has perpetuated the knowledge gap between developed and developing countries, making it difficult for non-Western perspectives to gain prominence in global discourse. The revealed study and the current study are related as both centre on international communication but the area of divergent is on the objectives, scope and methodology.

Schiller (2020) carried out a research on **“Communication and cultural domination.”** This study investigated the impact of Western media dominance on cultural identity and the flow of information in developing countries. The study determined the extent to which cultural imperialism influences global communication and the knowledge gap. The study used a comparative analysis of media content from Western and non-Western countries, along with surveys of media consumers in developing nations. The study also analysed the policies and practices of major global media corporations. The findings revealed that Western media dominance continues to shape global narratives, often marginalising local cultures and perspectives. The study also found that this cultural imperialism exacerbates the knowledge gap, as local populations are more exposed to Western content than their own cultural narratives. The reviewed study and present study are related as both studies hinge on Western media dominance and flow of information in developing countries but differ on the objectives, scope and

methodological approaches.

Moyo (2019) did a paper on “**Rethinking global communication: The NWICO legacy in the digital age.**” The study reassessed the legacy of NWICO in the context of digital communication technologies. It evaluated how the digital divide and the knowledge gap have evolved with the advent of the Internet and social media, particularly in developing countries. The study adopted a mixed-method study, using both quantitative analysis of Internet and social media penetration rates in various regions and qualitative interviews with media experts and policymakers. The study found that while digital technologies have the potential to democratise information, the knowledge gap persists due to unequal access to these technologies. The study also stated that the ideals of NWICO remain relevant but are increasingly difficult to achieve in a digital landscape dominated by a few global tech giants. The reviewed study and the current study are related as both studies focus on NWICO but are different in the area of objectives, scope and methods. Therefore, the empirical review done identified gaps in existing research by critically analysing previous studies, and has highlighted NWICO, the deaf dialogue and elusive impracticality within the framework of knowledge gap theory as where further investigation is needed to advance knowledge.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey design method. Research design used was a survey, using personal interview design. This design provides an added value the research, which helps to make the findings of a research richer and more reliable. The population of this study comprised male and female communication scholars at the two universities in Port Harcourt metropolis. The choice of the category of respondents was informed by the nature of this study, which required knowledge of New World Information and Communication Order and knowledge gap theory as those outside this communication field may not have knowledge about the information. Therefore, 10 (ten) lecturers were used from department of mass communication in Rivers State University of Science and Technology and Communication Studies in University of Port Harcourt.

Primary data for the study was gathered through the use of in-depth interview. This enabled the study to collate first hand data and information on the phenomenon under study directly from the target population. The method for primary data collection was pre-determined to minimize confusion and save time. To this end, the researcher first established rapport with respondents before engaging them based on individual schedule for interview. This is in keeping with the sampling procedure adopted. As a result, only population elements that were willing to participate in the study were incorporated. This was also intended to achieve a high response rate. The secondary sources of data were the bulk of data used in the literature and analysed qualitatively to argument the interview in the next chapter. Data collected were analysed using qualitative method which were presented and analysed entirely in verbal terms, and conclusions were drawn from there. This method of analysis was chosen to ensure easy comprehensibility.

Results and Discussions

On the challenges of implementing NWICO within the global media landscape, Interviewee Oko said that, “implementing the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) within the global media landscape faces challenges such as resistance from dominant Western media powers, the entrenched inequalities in global information flow, and the lack of consensus among nations on how to address these imbalances, all of which are compounded by the rapid evolution of digital media technologies that further complicate efforts to establish a more

equitable communication order.”

On the relationship between NWICO’s goals and the knowledge gap theory, Interviewee Ric stated that, “the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and the Knowledge Gap Theory are deeply interconnected, both addressing issues of information inequality, though from different perspectives. NWICO, proposed primarily by developing nations in the 1970s, sought to address the imbalances in global information flow dominated by Western media organizations. Its goal was to create a more equitable distribution of information, ensuring that developing countries had a stronger voice and greater access to communication resources. This was seen as essential for these nations to participate fully in global discourse, safeguard their cultures, and promote their development agendas.”

Interviewee Har stated that, “the Knowledge Gap Theory, developed in the late 1960s, explores how information dissemination through mass media often benefits those who are already more knowledgeable or have greater access to information resources. This theory suggests that as new information enters a society, those with higher socio-economic status or better education levels tend to acquire information faster than those with lower socio-economic status, thereby widening the knowledge gap between different social groups.”

Interviewee Fre said that “the relationship between NWICO’s goals and the Knowledge Gap Theory lies in their shared concern with information inequality. NWICO’s agenda can be seen as a macro-level response to the global knowledge gap, advocating for structural changes in the global media landscape to reduce disparities in information access and representation.” Interviewee Aus added that, “While the Knowledge Gap Theory highlights how information disparities can manifest within societies, NWICO addresses these disparities on an international scale, focusing on how global power dynamics influence the flow of information between nations.”

Interviewee Chr agreed that, “both NWICO and the Knowledge Gap Theory underscore the importance of equitable access to information as a foundation for more just and inclusive societies. NWICO’s emphasis on creating a balanced information flow aligns with the efforts to mitigate the knowledge gap, as both aim to empower marginalized groups by enhancing their access to information and communication tools.” However, Interviewee Wal added that “the implementation of NWICO faces significant challenges, particularly in an era where digital media has further complicated the landscape, potentially exacerbating the knowledge gap by creating new forms of digital divide.”

On the effectiveness of NWICO in addressing information disparities between developed and developing nations, Interviewee Oko stated that “the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was conceived as a bold initiative to address the significant information disparities between developed and developing nations. At its core, NWICO aimed to rectify the imbalances in global media representation and information flow that heavily favoured Western nations.” Interviewee Oko added that, “the dominance of Western media conglomerates meant that much of the world’s news and cultural narratives were shaped by perspectives rooted in the Global North, often marginalising or misrepresenting the realities and interests of developing nations. NWICO sought to challenge this status quo by advocating for a more equitable distribution of communication resources, greater representation of developing countries in global media, and the protection of cultural diversity.”

Interviewee Ric said that, “despite its ambitious goals, the effectiveness of NWICO in addressing these information disparities has been limited. One of the primary challenges has been the resistance from powerful Western media entities and governments who viewed NWICO

as a threat to the principles of free press and free flow of information, which they argued were essential to democratic societies.” Interviewee Har posited that, “this resistance led to a lack of consensus and support for NWICO’s implementation, ultimately weakening its impact. Furthermore, the global media landscape has continued to be dominated by a few multinational corporations, which has perpetuated the imbalance in information flow that NWICO sought to correct.”

Interviewee Chr agreed that, “the rise of digital media and the Internet has introduced new complexities in the global information order. While digital platforms have democratized access to information to some extent, they have also led to new forms of digital divide, where disparities in access to technology, digital literacy, and content creation tools continue to reinforce existing inequalities. Interviewee Chr illustrated further that, “this shift has made it even more challenging for NWICO’s goals to be realized, as the dynamics of global information flow have evolved beyond the traditional frameworks that NWICO originally sought to address.” However, NWICO has not been entirely ineffective. It succeeded in bringing global attention to the issue of information inequality and sparked important discussions around the need for a more balanced and inclusive global media environment.”

Interviewee Aus said that “the debates and dialogues that NWICO generated have influenced subsequent efforts to promote media pluralism, cultural diversity, and the inclusion of developing countries in international media forums. Interviewee Aus agreed further that, “some developing nations have also used the principles of NWICO to strengthen their own media infrastructures, create regional media networks, and advocate for their interests in global communication negotiations.”

Interviewee Fre alluded that, “while NWICO has not fully succeeded in eliminating information disparities between developed and developing nations, it played a crucial role in highlighting these issues and laying the groundwork for future initiatives.” Interviewee Fre pointed out that, “the challenges of implementing NWICO in a rapidly changing global media landscape underscore the need for continued efforts to address information inequality, particularly in the context of new media technologies that both offer opportunities for greater inclusivity and present new barriers to achieving it.”

On the practical implications of NWICO in promoting equitable access to global communication resources, Interviewee Har stated that, “the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was envisioned as a framework to promote more equitable access to global communication resources, addressing the profound imbalances in media representation and information flow that disadvantaged developing nations.” Interviewee Oko said that, “in practical terms, NWICO aimed to empower these nations by advocating for reforms that would ensure they had the necessary infrastructure, resources, and support to participate meaningfully in the global information landscape.” Interviewee Oko added that “this involved not only increasing the representation of developing countries in international media but also ensuring they had access to the tools and technologies necessary to produce and distribute their own content.”

Also, interviewee Ric said that “one of the key practical implications of NWICO was the push for developing countries to build and strengthen their own communication infrastructures. This included the establishment of national and regional media outlets that could provide alternative perspectives to the dominant narratives propagated by Western media. By enhancing their own media capabilities, developing countries could better control the flow of information within their borders and contribute more effectively to global discourse. For example, initiatives

inspired by NWICO led to the creation of regional news agencies and networks, such as the Pan African News Agency (PANA), which sought to provide news from an African perspective and reduce reliance on Western news services.”

Interviewee Ama stated that, “NWICO also called for greater international cooperation in the field of communication, advocating for technology transfers, training programs, and financial support to help developing countries bridge the gap in media and communication capabilities. The practical implication of this was the recognition that achieving equitable access to communication resources required not just policy changes but also tangible investments in capacity building.” Interviewee Cle suggested that, “these efforts were intended to empower developing nations to not only consume global media content but also to produce and disseminate their own content on the world stage, thus ensuring a more diverse and balanced global information flow.”

Interviewee Aus said that, “however, the implementation of these practical measures faced significant challenges. The resistance from Western countries and media conglomerates, who viewed NWICO as a threat to their economic and ideological interests, limited the effectiveness of these initiatives.” Interviewee Oko added that, “the rapid evolution of digital media technologies has outpaced many of the solutions proposed by NWICO, creating new forms of inequality that were not fully anticipated at the time. The digital divide, characterised by unequal access to the Internet, digital tools, and skills, has become a significant barrier to the equitable access to communication resources that NWICO sought to promote.”

Interviewee Chris posited that, “despite these challenges, NWICO’s principles have had lasting implications for global communication policies. They have influenced discussions around media pluralism, the protection of cultural diversity, and the need for more inclusive global media governance structures. In today’s context, the push for equitable access to communication resources has evolved to include efforts to ensure that digital technologies are accessible and beneficial to all, particularly marginalized and underserved communities.” Interviewee Ama stated that, “the on-going relevance of NWICO’s goals is evident in contemporary debates about media equity, the digital divide, and the need for a more just and inclusive global communication environment.”

Interviewee Ric said that, “in essence, while NWICO’s practical implications in promoting equitable access to global communication resources have been met with varying degrees of success, its legacy continues to inform and inspire efforts to address the enduring inequalities in the global media landscape. The vision of a more balanced and representative global communication order remains a critical goal in the quest for global justice and equity in information access and exchange.”

Discussion of Findings

Objective One: To examine the challenges of implementing NWICO within the global media landscape.

The results revealed that, implementing NWICO within the global media landscape faces challenges such as resistance from dominant Western media power, persistent inequalities in information flow, and complications introduced by rapid digital media advancement, which together hinder efforts to achieve more balanced and equitable global communication. The knowledge gap theory anchored in this study remains relevant as it highlights how disparities in information access and acquisition can widen existing socio-economic divides. The theory underscores the need for targeted intervention to bridge these gaps, especially in an increasingly digital world where access to information can further exacerbate inequalities. This finding is in

consonance with the study of Thussu (2022) which stated that despite the proliferation of new media platforms, global communication remains heavily skewed in favour of Western media conglomerates. This has perpetuated the knowledge gap between developed and developing countries, making it difficult for non-Western perspectives to gain prominence in global discourse. Also aligns with the study of Moyo (2019) that the ideals of NWICO remain relevant but are increasingly difficult to achieve in a digital landscape dominated by a few global tech giants

Objective Two: To evaluate the relationship between NWICO's goals and the knowledge gap theory

The findings revealed that, NWICO's goals of addressing global information imbalances align with the knowledge gap theory by both emphasising the need to reduce disparities in information access, with NWICO focusing on international media inequality and the knowledge gap theory of social inequality within societies. The finding is in tandem with study by Schiller (2020) that Western media dominance continues to shape global narratives, often marginalising local cultures and perspectives. This cultural imperialism exacerbates the knowledge gap, as local populations are more exposed to Western content than their own cultural narratives.

Objective Three: To ascertain the effectiveness of NWICO in addressing information disparities between developed and developing nations

The findings showed that, the effectiveness of NWICO in addressing disparities between developed and developing nations has been limited, as its goals faced significant resistance from Western media powers and were complicated by the rapid evolution of digital media, which has introduced new forms of inequality while failing to fully balance global information flows. The knowledge gap theory, in which this study is underpinned, gives backing to this finding. The theory provides insight into how disparities in information access and dissemination can perpetuate inequalities between developed and developing nations. It also explains the importance of understanding and mitigating these gaps to achieve a more equitable global information environment, which aligns with the challenges faced in fully realising NWICO's objectives. This finding upholds the study of Thussu (2022) that despite the proliferation of new media platforms, global communication remains heavily skewed in favour of Western media conglomerates. This has perpetuated the knowledge gap between developed and developing countries, making it difficult for non-Western perspectives to gain prominence in global discourse.

Objective Four: To determine the practical implications of NWICO in promoting equitable access to global communication resources

The findings revealed that, the practical implications of NWICO in promoting equitable access to global communication resources include efforts to build media infrastructure in developing countries, increase international cooperation for technology transfers, and support regional media initiatives, though challenges such as resistance from dominant media powers and the complexities of the digital divide have limited its overall impact. This finding is in line with the study of Thussu (2022) that despite the proliferation of new media platforms, global communication remains heavily skewed in favour of Western media conglomerates. This has perpetuated the knowledge gap between developed and developing countries, making it difficult for non-Western perspectives to gain prominence in global discourse.

Conclusion

Despite NWICO's intent to address international media imbalances, its impact has been limited by resistance and evolving digital media dynamics. The knowledge gap theory further illustrates how information inequalities can perpetuate socio-economic divides. The study established that, while NWICO and the knowledge gap theory both address information disparities, NWICO's efforts to balance global media representation highlight the need for continued focus on reducing both international and intra-national information inequalities. Also, the study concluded that while NWICO aimed to address global information imbalances between developed and developing nations, its effectiveness has been constrained by resistance from powerful media entities and the evolving digital landscape. The knowledge gap theory reinforces the need for ongoing efforts to close information disparities and suggests that without targeted strategies, inequalities in global communication will persist. The NWICO is aimed to enhance equitable access to global communication resources through infrastructure development and international cooperation, its effectiveness has been constrained by resistance from established media powers and the complexities introduced by digital advancements

Recommendations

In view of the findings from the work, the following recommendations have been made.

- 1) There is need for a nuanced approach that considers both global and local contexts to promote a more balanced and inclusive information landscape.
- 2) Future efforts should combine NWICO's principles with modern digital approaches to ensure fair access to communication resources for all regions and communities.
- 3) Adopting strategies that combine NWICO's principles with modern digital tools, such as improving access to technology, supporting local media development, and fostering international cooperation to effectively bridge global information gaps.
- 4) Enhance NWICO effectiveness by increasing investment in global media literacy programmes and fostering partnerships between developed and developing nations to share knowledge and resources

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