

The Role of Radio in Combating Corruption in North Eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

Radio being one of the channels of communication has been an un-negligible tool that can bring growth and development of every society particularly in African continent Nigeria inclusive. It is an instrument that can play vital role in creating awareness, influencing or reorienting the thinking of the masses on critical issues such as corruption. However, radio being the most accessible medium in Nigeria is not doing enough towards exposing corrupt practices in the society just like print media especially in North-Eastern part of this country. This paper examined the place of radio in combating corrupt practices within the Nigeria ambience. The paper solely relied on secondary data where the researcher consulted reputedly peer reviewed journals. The paper was anchored on the social responsibility theory. Findings of the study revealed that radio has the potency to combat corrupt practices in Nigeria. The study recommends among others that there is the need to provide radio journalists with the knowledge and methods they need to conduct investigations, professional organizations and media owners must assure frequent training on investigative journalism. Investigative reporting requires journalists to collaborate with syndicates.

Keywords: Journalist, Corruption, Radio, Combat, Media.

Introduction

Corruption is an international issue. Nearly all nations in the world today exhibit certain characteristics of corruption, although these instances are significantly more common in developing nations like Nigeria (Alawode, 2009). It's possible that there isn't exactly a certain time when corruption first started in Nigeria. However, Aije and Wokeroro (2012) argued that corruption can be linked to the colonial era, when Nigerians were bought off with various foreign items in exchange for domestic goods. In addition to this, different regimes have a history of engaging in corrupt behavior. The different coup d'etats by military regimes often used widespread corruption as justification for their illegal takeover of power. This often involves abrogating the constitution and replacing it with decrees, violating basic human rights, and using corruptly lethal force to keep things in check while also hurting the economy. According to Shuaib (2016), out of the 57 years Nigeria has been a state since 1960, the history of corruption in that country is deeply rooted in the more than 29 years of military administration.

One of the causes of poverty, which has driven many young people into all kinds of criminal activity, has been recognized as corruption. The numerous disputes related to the Nigerian state can be attributed to the devastating impact of corrupt activities in Nigeria. Therefore, it is absolutely safe to state that corruption and war are bound together. More than ten (10)

million children in school age do not attend, especially in Nigeria's north, according to a World Bank report. This implies that, in ten to twenty years, these out of school children will mature into people who unintentionally end up as social outcasts. This group of unruly individuals will engage in all kind of illicit activity, which will ultimately result in all manner of confrontations and violence. These unruly youngsters are the driving force behind the numerous clashes in Kaduna, Jos, and Kano, as well as the Boko Haram terrorism that is currently terrorizing the country. These individuals work for municipal and state governments, both of which have representation at the federal level of government. These individuals have been neglected primarily as a result of corruption and theft of cash intended to create an atmosphere that would allow them to prosper and be productive. Numerous conferences, seminars, and scholarly papers have been held in an effort to combat the rising tides of corruption in Nigeria, but the problem has persisted and has even gained strength. Despite this, one of the most important stakeholders in the battle against corruption is supposedly the mass media especially radio which also used by the common man.

Ayoola (2008), focusing on the media's involvement in the fight against corruption, believes that if democracy were to endure and be a successful concept, the media's role in supporting it through anti-corruption campaign could not be overemphasized. Ayoola's assertion is supported by the extraordinary role the media played in exposing the Watergate Scandal (1972–1974), which is still regarded as one of the most notorious corrupt cases in American history. (Which led to Richard Nixon's resignation as president of the United States).

The mass media especially radio through investigative journalism has historically been employed in Nigeria (though not actively) by journalists to curb the excesses of dishonest politicians and other public officials. For instance, the media aggressively covered Diezani Alison Madueke, the former minister of petroleum resources, and the NNPC's questionable business practices (Komolafe, Nkereuwem & Kalu-Amah, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

For this paper, the social responsibility theory is thought to be appropriate. Suntai & Shem (2018) claim that Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm developed the social responsibility idea in the middle of the 19th century. The theory is based on the idea that news organizations and journalists should acknowledge and fulfill specific societal commitments. The social responsibility theory, according to Anaeto, Onabajo, and Osifeso (2012), is predicated on seven fundamental tenets, including the following: the media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to society; these obligations can be met through professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance; the media should regulate itself within the framework of law and established constitution; that the media should reflect society's diversity, provide access to many viewpoints, and guarantee everyone the opportunity to respond; that anything that could cause crime, violence, civil unrest, or offense to minority groups should be avoided by the media.

According to the social responsibility theory's aforementioned tenets, society has a right to demand high standards of performance from the media. Investigating social problems and exposing corrupt incidents that have gone unnoticed by the public but are yet of the utmost importance are examples of this expectation.

Method and Material

This study solely relied on the documentary review method. This research study adopts a documentary research method to retrieve sufficient data to explore the theme "Predatory Publications among Academics in Nigerian Universities: A Narrative Review". According to Payne and Payne cited in Ahmed (2010), documentary methods are utilized for investigating and categorizing written documents. Agbo, Lenshie, & Boye, (2018) expound that "The use of documentary research method requires careful and systematic study and analysis of documented sources based on written texts, visuals, and pictorial data which may be based on secondary data". Bailey (1994) cited in Ahmed (2010) says the documentary research method entails the analysis of documents that contains information about the phenomenon that one wishes to study.

The core sources of data for this study are secondary sources. In other words, the study solely relied on information from extant studies. However, the researcher were meticulous to only consider published peer review articles as their sources. The rationale behind the above decision hinged on the fact that information from other sources may be misleading and based on mere hunches instead of scientific evidence and discourse.

Literature Review

Corruption

It is challenging to come up with a single description that fully encompasses or summarizes corruption due to its complexity. Because corruption has several facets, Enste & Heldman (2017) support the idea that there isn't a single, precise definition of it. According to Suntai and Shem (2018), corruption is any dishonest behavior that compromises a society's ethical standards. Also remember that corruption refers to any intentional attempt by public or private sector authorities to obtain unjustified wealth by misusing their positions of authority (Suntai & Shem, 2018).

Corruption encompasses behavior in which officials in the public sector, whether politicians or civil servants, inappropriately and unlawfully enrich themselves, or those close to them, by the misuse of the public power entrusted to them (Transparency International, 2013). Asemah & Asogwa (2012) observed that a corrupt system is one that exhibits infrastructural decline, a lack of patriotism, the subjection of common interests, incorrect implementation of policies and programs, and a gap between vision and its realization. However, the World Bank defines corruption as the "abuse of public office for private gain" in Begovic (2005). The main flaw in the aforementioned definitions is that the authors are unable to say unequivocally that corruption extends beyond public and private sector officials to include members of the general public and jobless people in the society. Therefore, this essay

follows the first definition put out by Suntai and Shem (2018), according to which corruption is any dishonest behavior that lowers a society's ethical norm.

The Role of Radio in the Fight against Corruption

There is little indication that Nigeria's ongoing battle with corruption and its negative perception throughout the world have improved in the past ten years (Komolafe, Nkereuwem & Kalu-Amah, 2019). In reality, the current administrations and other past administrations' anti-corruption rhetoric has not resulted in any significant anti-corruption policymaking, programs, or projects. According to Justine & Egere (2018), exposing individuals who steal public funds in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, is comparable to engaging in war. On the one hand, this has resulted in insanity in public service, and on the other, in underdevelopment.

According to Justine & Egere, the culture of impunity is frequently the rule rather than the exception. This is a result of the lack of reporting and investigation of state crimes. The media's potential as a catalyst for social and economic progress has not been completely realized, which contributes to this terrible situation (Justine & Egere, 2018). Commenting on Nigeria's lax approach to combating corruption, Justine & Egere (2018) stated that in Nigeria, corruption and bribery appear to be common occurrences. Due to the pervasive culture of impunity, Nigerians are extremely outraged over the selective fight against corruption. The Nigerian people are frequently underserved in addition to the government's insensitivity to the situation of the majority, which is met with indifference. Many alleged corruption cases are still under investigation despite the "total" war on corruption waged by anti-graft organizations including the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and the Related Commission (ICPC), and the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB).

The above pathetic situation implies that the only hope for the common man in the fight against corruption in Nigeria is the media. Hence, it is pertinent to note that one of the most critical stakeholders in the fight against corruption is the mass media. The media are supposed to serve as the bridge between the government and the governed as well as the mouthpiece of society. In other words, one of the professional duties of the media in every society is to be a civic watchdog whose mission is to uncover secrets/issues and keep the government accountable to society. Kwase & Shem (2018) maintain that the mass media play an invaluable role in society through investigating societal ills and unravelling facts hitherto hidden from the people and which would help in bringing about both rural and national development, and this can only be achieved via a journalism practice called investigative journalism.

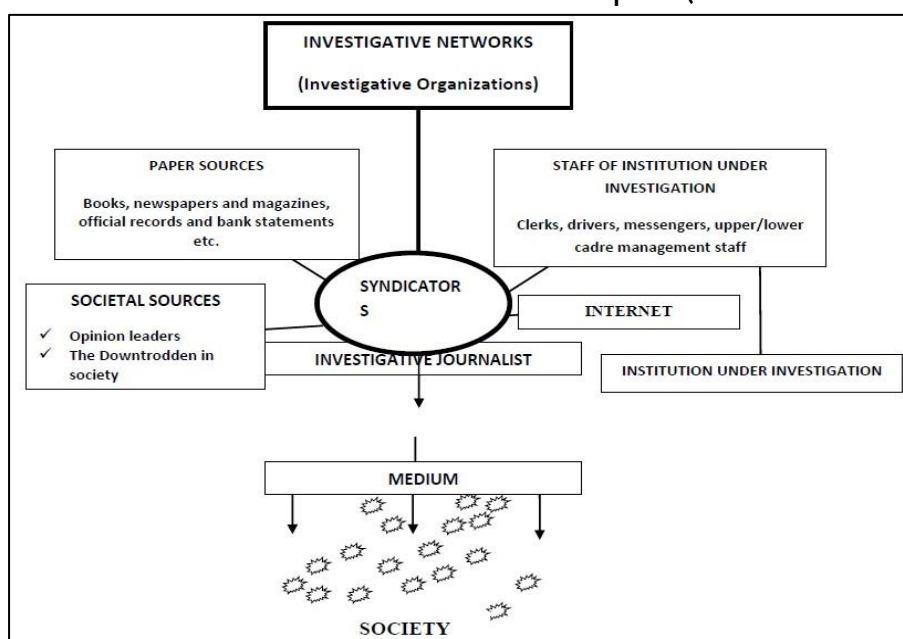
Gambo (2002), cited in Edmond & Wilson (2018) asserts that the media have a duty to ensure that all actions of government and government officials remain consistent with these objectives. The media help to create and maintain a sense of nationhood and undertake developmental tasks through education and building political stability, help in the formation of public opinion and create forum for public discussions and, as well, serve

as watchdogs on government to prevent all forms of abuses. Schiffrrin (2014), cited in Schauseil (2019) corroborates that for more than a century, investigative reporting has had a significant impact against corruption, human rights abuses and corporate exploitation. In Nigeria, the most spectacular manifestations of the potentials of the media in curbing corruption has been the forced resignations of Mallam Salihu Buhari, Evans Enwerem, Chuba Okadigbo, Adolphus Wabara, and Patricia Ette, Adenike Grange and others on scandals of forgeries, falsifications and contract scams (Edmond & Wilson, 2018). Commenting on the role played by the media in the fight against corruption in recent years, Oyeboode (2015) affirms that the media have so far played a remarkable role, though this paper contends that there is the need for more efforts. In his words Oyeboode (2015) captures it thus:

In the recent past, the media have also done well in few cases. The media followed up the forgery and perjury cases against former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Salishu Buhari and investigated the questionable past of the old senate president, Evan Enwerenm. Other cases have been brought against former senate president, Chuba Okadigbo (for financial recklessness) and against former national vice-chairman of the Peoples' Democratic Party, Bode George (for contract splitting). These personalities were either convicted or removed from offices as a result of the relentless interest and follow-up generated by the stories and pressure mounted by the media on the executive and the judiciary to bring them to justice (p. 42).

From the foregoing, it is necessary for the Nigerian media, particularly investigative radio journalists, to acknowledge that the battle against corruption is their societal obligation. As a result, all journalists must take action because they are the common Nigerians' only hope.

Figure 1: A Journalistic Framework to Combat Corruption (*Suntai and Shem, 2018*)



The diagram above was purposefully designed by Suntai and Shem (2018) as a framework to guide journalist in the fight against corruption. The diagram/model illustrate how an investigative journalist networks collaborate with other sources in order to generate authentic information about a perceived corrupt case. According to Suntai and Shem (2018) for corruption to be combated effectively in Nigeria there is the need for non-profit investigative networks that would aid investigative journalists in the course of investigation. Notwithstanding, the absence of this networks should not be an excuse not to effectively investigate a corrupt case because an investigative journalist can use other sources as illustrated in the diagram above.

Possible Challenges of Radio in the Fight against Corruption

Despite the powerful potential of the media (especially radio), particularly in a nation like Nigeria where corrupt practices are increasing alarmingly, Anyadike (2013) notes that it is evident that recently, newspapers, television, and radio stations tend to have the same headlines; there is no difference in terms of breaking news based on in-depth investigation into issues of high national significance.

No real effort was made to unearth custom or generate fresh information. Investigative journalism in a growing country like Nigeria is challenged by a number of issues that are practically hurting its correct practice, according to Ugwu (2010), cited in Anyadike (2013). In fact, the aforementioned claim leads many observers to question if investigative journalism is being practiced in Nigeria at all. Aretha & Ben (2012) observed that the following are some of the extant challenges bedeviling journalist in radio stations in the fight against corruption:

Media Ownership: Aretha & Ben (2012) argue that the owners of media houses have influence not just through direct intervention or by establishing lines that cannot be crossed; they set the tone and decide which markets to target. They control editorial budgets and hire and fire their editors who are their representatives in the media world. Thus, the editor's powers can be constrained when the owners insist and impose policies on the media house. This can limit who, what and how a journalist investigates and reports an incident.

Political Interference: Government officials have hung on this anticlimax statement to oppress journalists and scare them away from satisfactory performance of their responsibility (Omojola, 2015). One of such recent cases is the arrest of Omoyele Soware in 2019 and similarly when Gbenga Aruleba of the African Independent Television (AIT) was arrested and detained several days by the civilian regime of Olusegun Obasanjo for allegedly inciting the public against the government, an allegation that could not be substantiated.

Sometimes, the government of the day feel the need to close down media houses that employ probing investigative journalists. In extreme situations, the license of the media

house may be withdrawn by the government of the day, thus leaving several journalists jobless (Aretha & Ben, 2012).

Economic Constraints: Most media houses in Nigeria are faced with financial challenges. For instance, many media houses do not pay their journalists well and this may encourage the journalists to manipulate facts behind the activities of dubious people or organizations in society who offer handsome monetary rewards for favourable media coverage. In his words, Ekwo (1996), cited in Oberiri (2016) summarizes the above situation thus:

Faced with the inability to pay salaries of workers, produce or service available equipment and myriad of other problems occasioned by the decline in government subvention, the Nigerian Television Authority and Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria devised several other means to make money (p.11).

The above scenario led to a lot of compromise, with sensationalism of news stories and half-truths. In the same vein the media, be it broadcast or print have lost their credibility as they have slowly relegated the social responsibility of journalism to an income generated journalism practice (Oso, 2000; Oberiri, 2016). Oyebode (2015) asserts that for the media to give fair and favourable coverage, "brown envelopes" (envelopes containing bribes) are given to journalists. Government ministries and agencies now include inducement in their budgets for public events and tag it "press public relations" or "business relations." Invariably, this money is used to 'grease the palm' of journalists who cover beats in these establishments.

Limited Access to Information: The Nigerian investigative journalist has limited access to official archives and records. Sometimes, official archives are incomplete, poorly maintained and subjected to tough official secrets or privacy laws, which are often left over from the colonial era. The Nigerian investigative journalists, as with many of their counterparts in Africa have to be far more creative and flexible to find alternative routes to the evidence they need.

Dearth of Qualified Journalists: A good number of the people that are into investigative journalism in Nigeria are not qualified to practice this noble profession. Hence, they can easily bargain vital information for just a few thousands of naira.

Other difficulties include the emotional or sensational tendencies of uncommitted journalists who defend and cover up the rottenness of racial, religious, and familial divisions. These difficulties can prevent a serious journalist from entering a crisis-prone area to balance his reports.

Conclusion

The mass media are still one of the most important players in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, despite the country's pervasive corruption. Therefore, Investigative journalists in radio stations must therefore recognize that looking into corrupt cases is not a choice but

rather a duty they must fulfill, as doing otherwise would be tantamount to recklessly abdicating their professional obligations.

Recommendations

Only a handful of the theoretical and empirical articles on the subject of radio's contribution to the fight against corruption, particularly in the public and private sectors, that have been published and presented throughout the years have specifically focused on media corruption. As the saying goes, "you cannot offer what you do not have." Before criticizing corrupt politicians, business people, civil workers, and other individuals, the Nigerian media organizations must first rid themselves of the rotten apples among them and foster an environment that allows practitioners to work efficiently. Even zealous journalists respect the adage that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

In order to provide radio journalists with the knowledge and methods they need to conduct investigations, professional organizations and media owners must assure frequent training on investigative journalism. Investigative reporting requires journalists to collaborate in syndicates. To keep up with modern trends, they need to also have access to forensic information and artificial intelligence. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and other government institutions must work together to share information with Nigerian investigative journalists. However, this paper suggests that such synergy should not encourage investigative journalists to ever associate with these organizations because there is ample evidence that they, too, are capable of being highly, absolutely corrupt, to the point of setting up a journalist or collaborating with criminals to commit heinous crimes against innocent people.

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