

MEDIA AND ENDEMIC CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: A SCRUTINY OF THE ROLE OF THE PRINT MEDIA IN THE WAR AGAINST CORRUPTION

NZEAKA, Emmanuel Ezimako; EHONDOR, Beryl & EDOSONWAN, Aifuwa

Pan –Atlantic University, Lagos, Nigeria

Corresponding author E-mail: *enzeaka@pau.edu.ng*

Abstract

The media are the bedrock of any democratic system acting as a connection between the government and the people via its publications. This study thus examined the role of the press, especially newspapers, in covering endemic corruption as well as the challenges faced along the way, using Nigeria as a microcosm for Africa. Social Responsibility Theory (SRT) and media content analysis were used to analyse data collated from 200 corruption and anti-corruption related reports from Premium Times and Vanguard Newspapers published in six months, January to June 2017 and isolated cases in 2019, 2018, 2020, and 2021. The newspapers were identified via purposive sampling and have received awards for investigative reporting. Their headlines and content were reviewed to determine whether the reports were investigative or interpretative journalism within the months and years under review. Findings revealed that print media in Nigeria have been reporting on corruption and government fraud, however, their reportage has been more interpretative than investigative. The press tried exposing corrupt practices in government but was also confronted with challenges such as the curtailment of free speech, intimidation, assassination, and weak laws, hampering the war against corruption. The study recommended that media houses focus on investigative reporting, which is imperative for a democratic state. The press must also advocate autonomy, security, strengthening of current legislation for open access to information, implementation of punitive measures against uncovered corrupt officials and other government support in the fight against corruption. Media and the government must collaborate in the interest of societal growth.

Keywords: Corruption, Newspapers, Government policy-makers, Laws, Freedom curtailment

Citation of article: Nzeaka, EE. *et al.*, (2022). Media and endemic corruption in Nigeria: A scrutiny of the role of the print media in the war against corruption, *International Journal of Development and Management Review*, 17(1): 174-192

Date Submitted: 13/12/2021

Date Accepted: 20/01/2022



CC BY

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijdmr.v17i1.11>

Publisher: Development and Management Research Group (DMRG)

Introduction

The media and society are like the two sides of a coin, mutual and inseparable; each peculiarly determines the other. The media's primary functions in society are surveillance, correlation, culture transmission, information dissemination, management, instruction, and mobilisation. By its general functions, the media are the bedrock of any democratic system as it acts as a connection between the government and the people, regulating contentious issues (Winston, 2003; Singn & Nity, 2018; Gaile, 2013; Obi-Ani et al, 2020). This is done through the news. Some of these newsworthy items that the media want to draw our attention to may include social malaise like corruption. Reporting corruption puts the act under check, creates awareness on how deep it has eaten into our social fabric and the need to expose those involved. By doing these, the media performs some of its functions to society. But with the steady rise of corruption index, according to Transparency International, there are aspersions as to the role of the media in the much-talked about 'war against corruption' in Nigeria. Africa continues to be on the dashboard for international focus, and Nigeria is the epicentre. The Nigeria media, being society's mouthpiece, mirror and criticize thus become significant for continuous study. This study, therefore, seeks to answer the question of contemporary media efficiency in the face of corruption.

Corruption is a historical phenomenon due to human tendencies and acquisitive nature to enrich himself with material things, especially money to secure a fulfilled life. This social malaise has bedevilled humankind since the inception of life. Aristotle of 384 BC hinted at this issue. When the One, the Few, or the Many rules in the public interest, the constitutions under which they do so must be right regulations. Constitutions aimed at the personal interests of the One, the Few, or the Masses, on the other hand, must inevitably be perversions... The masses are not particularly upset by being barred from holding public office... what irritates them is the notion that those who have the pleasure of holding public office are misappropriating public funds (McKeon, 2001). Corruption lingers for long periods, Fraud is difficult to eradicate. The foundational social and historical system of governance is deeply entrenched in dishonesty and incompetence.

Instances of corruption in Nigeria abound. In 2009, the world feasted on media reports in Thisday Newspaper about the Halliburton scandal that exposed corruption and embarrassing corrupters (Adebowale & Ali, 2009; Igiebor, 2019, Ebekozi, 2020) involving top NNPC government officials who besmirched the system by collecting bribes from the US company to award contracts. This scandal also linked four past Nigerian presidents as it dates back to 2004 when the \$7 billion contracts were awarded. The Nigeria media also revealed the Siemens scandal which involved a former minister of communication and companies from Libya and Russia in a scandal to the tune of EUR 10 million to enable Siemens to supply telecommunication equipment. This was reported in Cellular News. Guardian Newspapers report of April 29, 2009, exposed the Vaswani Brothers tax evasion scandal to the tune of N2.5 billion (\$6.5 million) unpaid taxes to the government which led to the deportation of these brothers from Nigeria. Several heads of state have also been associated with corruption. Prominent among them was the regime of General Sanni Abacha from 1993-1998, who stole billions of Dollars and made world news headlines. According to Basu and Codella (2018), General Sani Abacha reportedly stole approximately \$4

billion from Nigeria; Switzerland froze some \$660 million in Swiss Bank accounts, and the Federal Supreme Court ruled in 2005 that \$505.5 million of that total should be repatriated to Nigeria - the first such case of an African country receiving repatriated funds. In 2020, there was a report by the Punch Newspaper on electricity contracts worth millions of Dollars that were mired in financial scandals and corruption perpetrated by a federal government official. These include, as reported by Ojerinde (2019)

Second Benin-Onitsha 330kv Trx Line Power lines awarded to ABB; Gombe-Yola-Jalingo 330KV Trz Line Consortium awarded to Chrome; Katampe-National Stadium 132KV Trx Line awarded to ABB Powerlines; Umuahia-Mbalano 132 KV Trx Line awarded to Santo Energy; Yola 330/132/33KV S/S awarded to Siemens; Umuahia-Ohafia 132KV Trx Line awarded to Harlesden Engineering; Ohafia-Arochukwu 132KV Trx Line awarded to Mogabs Ltd; Mbalano 132/33KV S/S awarded to Union Allied Engineering; Ohafia 132/33KV S/S awarded to Union Allied Engineering; Akure-Ado Ekiti 132KV SC Trx Line and Onitsha 330/132/33KVS/S, both awarded to Siemens (Ojerinde, 2019: 1).

These contracts were destroyed by official corruption and either abandoned or cancelled and the Nigerian government never probed the perpetrators of the corruption. Again, according to Punch Newspaper of October 25 2021, the World Bank disqualified some Nigerian firms and another 18 individuals for corrupt practices.

Almost every Nigerian and non-Nigerians quite familiar with the country agree that corruption has eaten deep into Nigeria. Although it is pretty derogatory, some even say or insinuate that it could be referred to as part of Nigerian culture to be corrupt (Ibidolapo, 2016). Its tolerance for corruption is quite alarming. In May 2016, it was reported, via various mass media and social media, that David Cameron, the British Prime Minister in a conversation with the Queen of England, had described Nigeria as ‘fantastically corrupt’ (BBC, 2016). Although the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was present during the conversation, quickly intervened to say that the Nigerian President was not corrupt and was working hard in the fight against corruption. His intervening response remains an affirmation of the world’s perception of Nigeria’s corrupt state to a large extent. The media’s coverage of the story did not appear to have helped also. Soon after the Prime Minister’s utterance became public, President Muhammadu Buhari affirmed that Nigeria is ‘fantastically corrupt’. Meanwhile, the President had just delivered a keynote address at the Commonwealth programme tagged, “Tackling corruption together: A conference for civil society, business and government leaders” (Punch, 2016).

The President of Nigeria, Muhammad Buhari, has always been known for his integrity, discipline and zero-tolerance for corruption. While he was the military Head of State from 1983 to 1985, General Buhari initiated the War against Indiscipline to tackle various societal vices, including corruption which threatened national growth and development. His achievements in the fight against corruption in the 1980s and his promise (as a civilian) during the presidential campaign to fight corruption, especially among government officials, are possible reasons President Muhammad Buhari was voted to lead Nigeria again. However, as at the last ratings in

March 2021, Nigeria's corruption rank is 149th out of 180 countries. This outcome is a marked increase from 146 in 2019 and 136th in 2015, also years when the incumbent took office as President. The graph below illustrates this.

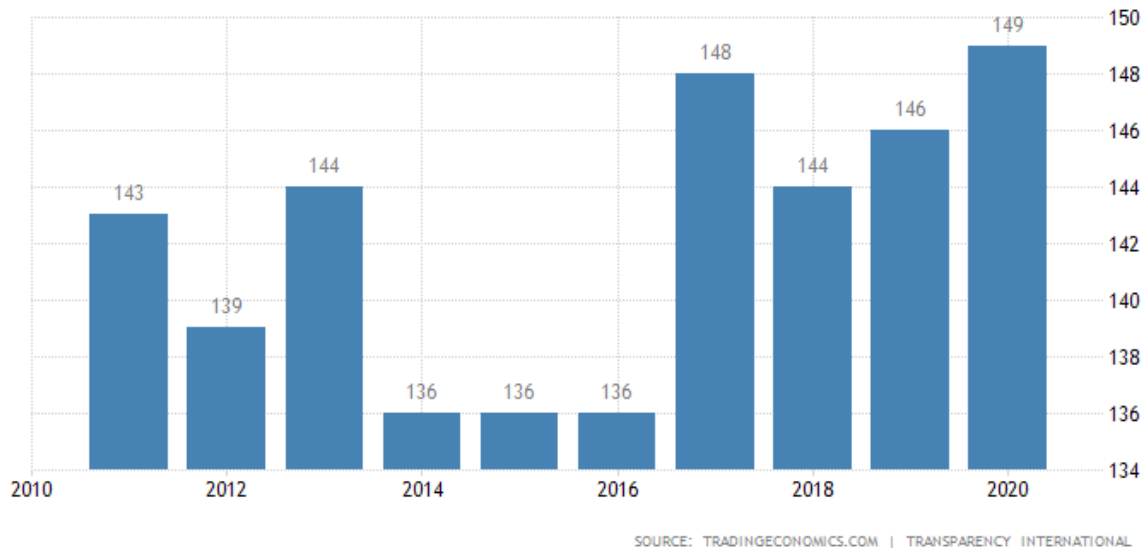


Figure 1: A graph indicating a marked increase in corruption.

Source: Transparency International (2020)

A proactive media can effectively fight corruption and take up the role, to some degree, of any of the three arms of government. This means that those who engage in news reporting must step up their performance, especially considering the benefits of investigative journalism. The anti-corruption war seems to be on and fiercely heated in the Nigerian media space. Reports about the Buhari administration's anti-corruption war have been made available to the public through the media. The print media, for instance, have continued to enlighten and update members of the public about cases that were brought to light by anti-corruption agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC).

Nevertheless, there are conflicting views on whether the war has been so far objective and focused in the right direction as reported in the print media. The press owes the public a duty of reporting and carrying out investigative journalism that seeks the truth about the current state of corruption and active fights against it. They are the guardians of democracy and defenders of public interest (Amodu, Usaini, & Ige, 2014).

This study's problem is that corruption continues to cause decay in Nigerian society, slowing down growth and economic development. Yet, the media's impact appears insignificant. The media has the social contract to mobilise the public against any act that violates the social norm because it is under obligation to carry out this pertinent duty as it has to keep people abreast about the event without any slant (Hasan, 2014). Over the years, various bodies have been established to investigate corrupt persons and cases, such as the EFCC and the ICPC. However, this is not adequate. Thus, the media is being called to account by the public, being the fourth estate of the realm, as scrutinised by this study. The fourth estate, i.e. the media, also plays an

enormous role in the anti-corruption war and is expected to provide unbiased, objective and factual accounts of corrupt persons and investigated cases. However, it appears that some media stories on the anti-corruption war are either hearsay or reports gathered from statements given by the government and its anti-corruption agencies. This contention forms the bedrock of the problem of the study.

Therefore, this study investigated whether the media is involved in the anti-corruption war through investigative journalism. The study's objective is to determine whether media reports on the anti-corruption war are investigative. The content analysis of the print media and findings will draw attention to the significance of investigative journalism in media reporting. It will also help media practitioners provide balanced representations and pragmatically consider the public good in their respective reports. This study will shed further insight into the media's role in Nigeria's war against corruption. Meanwhile, the following subsections present a conceptual framework on the subject matter, theoretical framework, methodology, analysis, findings, and conclusion

Conceptual Clarification

Corruption

Generally, an action is considered corrupt if it influences somebody to give an undue advantage to another person or society; it is interconnected to the moral concept alone and extends to the causative concept (Miller, 2011; Chinwuba, 2020; Abba-Aji et al., 2021). Corruption is a broad concept that cannot be pinned down with a single definition because it varies from culture to culture. The Philippines Institute of Development Studies, following the World Bank (1997) definition of corruption, describes it as the misuse or the abuse of public office for private gain (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2006). On the other hand, it is generally used to refer to acts that are considered immoral, such as bribery, extortion, fraud, nepotism, pilferage, theft, embezzlement, falsification of records, graft, bribery, perjury, lying, dishonesty, indiscipline, money laundering, sexual immorality or perversion. The United Nations Convention against Corruption points out that it is so multifaceted that it defies a definite definition (Stople, 2008). It is not difficult to identify corruption because it involves a minimum of two persons from a particular group in a specific location exchanging gifts, items, services or money at the detriment of society (Tansi, 1998; Salisu, 2000). It is a deviation from what is considered proper, and it is selfish and disruptive conduct. Corruption is much graver than defined by the World Bank and other institutions (Folarin, 2014). However, for this study's purpose, corruption will be discussed within the World Bank definition scope.

Corruption is undoubtedly one of the most significant challenges of our time. This challenge leads to impoverishment and loss of lives and threatens society's economic, political, social and environmental stability (Igbuzor, 2016). Economically, corruption reduces the wealth of a nation where politicians ignore the development and maintenance of basic infrastructures. A government official that lacks the political will to maintain and follow the rule of law but continues to use his position to his advantage soon loses the people's trust. It weakens people's faith in the government and its institutions. The decay of corruption diminishes trust even among a society's

social fabric fanning into flames an antisocial community. The disrespect and disregard for man engendered by corruption may further be extended to disregard laws that protect the environment from exploitation (Transparency International, 2016). Altogether, corruption does not benefit any society but brings ruins and destruction.

Corruption in Nigeria

According to the African Union, corruption consumes about \$140 billion every year from the continent, about 25% of the GDP (Ribadu, 2009). In the past fifty years, an estimated \$ 1 trillion have left the continent through corruption (Adeyemi, 2017). In Nigeria, government officials have stolen about \$440 billion, six times the money used to reconstruct Europe after World War II (Sorunmi, Raufu and Salako, 2010). Fraud is the most severe developmental challenge to Nigeria; it is endemic and has stunted its progress over the years (Ikpeze, 2013).

Studies show that the origin of the nation's corrupt practices can be linked to precolonial times (Ejovi, Mgbonyebi and Akpokhiye, 2013; Ibidolapo, 2016). This appalling situation can be connected with the social challenges that have bedevilled the country since colonialism, which eroded society's traditional norms. Some of these reasons include colonialism, dictatorship, underdevelopment, cash economy, lack of education, lack of nationalism, coupled with the dearth of ethical and moral values (Callaghy, 1986; Ossei, 1999; Ruzidana, 1988). The writers posit that corruption has become prevalent, and each regime in the country has developed it into the level of statecraft.

Moreover, trade between the European and Nigerian companies was unbalanced, allowing European firms to exploit Nigeria's rich natural resources. It seems that the unequal terms of trade to accumulate wealth while suppressing Nigerians formed the foundation for building structures of corruption in Nigeria. The structure was sustained even after Nigeria gained its independence by giving authority to selected persons who would protect their interests. Meanwhile, the British colonialists had taken over all the main sectors of the economy, including mining and manufacturing, foreign trade, shipping, banking and insurance (Ibidolapo, 2016).

The Nigerians who were handed authority did not appear to be interested in the nation's welfare since they were given political appointments and were reaping more than they had bargained for, not to talk of the opportunities for extended nepotism. These individuals were assigned ministerial and director positions in various parastatals with powers to award contracts for public projects, issue licences, award scholarships etc. They remained loyal to the colonial power that acted as their political godfathers to whom they owe their first allegiance (Ijewereme, 2015; Nwele, 2019)

Although Nigeria seems to have freed itself of colonial ties to a great extent, corruption persists in various forms, such as "godfatherism", nepotism, bribery etc. The different civilian administrations and military coups have not succeeded in ridding Nigeria of this disease. Some claim that this has been and will remain so because the nation's leaders and ruling class since independence have selfish interests, they will stop at nothing to continue to secure themselves and their immediate families. The perceived endorsement of corruption and the Nigerian people's

disregard and oppression have further worsened the situation (Hoffman & Patel, 2017; Chukwu & Mgbani, 2018). To sum up the situation, Nigeria has the distinction of being the African nations' most frequently involved in international bribery schemes exposed by anticorruption prosecutors, behind only Iraq and China worldwide.

Anti-corruption War in Nigeria

Corruption has grown so big and firm that some believe it cannot be eradicated but managed. It has been described as the principal threat in the public and private domains. It weakens the delicate democratic structures by stimulating a widespread lack of expectation regarding politicians and political affairs. Corruption damages trust and confidence in the government, necessary for upholding and developing sustainable political, economic and social order in a system.

Beyond looking at the prevailing situation of corruption among politicians and government officials, this moral virus can be found in all other social institutions, including the family, educational institutions and religious institutions. For instance, some parents pay for their children to use special examination centres to pass the University Matriculation Examinations; religious leaders milk their poor and gullible congregation by demanding tithe and other material compensation for prayers in the guise of investment in God. Therefore, the war against corruption is an all-inclusive fight that requires African and global citizens' support, whether directly or indirectly. After all, we are interconnected spatially via a click.

The anti-corruption war is so crucial that the former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, refers to it as “a fight for the soul of Nigeria” (Vanguard, 2017). Although all hands are expected to be on deck, the Nigerian government has established agencies that will take centre stage in the anti-corruption war. Top agencies are the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC).

The EFCC is the principal agency in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. According to its website, the Commission is empowered to prevent, investigate, prosecute and penalise economic and financial crimes. It is charged with the responsibility of enforcing the provisions of other laws and regulations relating to economic and financial crimes, including:

- Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Establishment act (2004)
- The Money Laundering Act of 1995
- The Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act 2004
- The Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act 1995
- The Failed Banks (Recovery of Debts) and Financial Malpractices in Banks Act 1994
- The Banks and other Financial Institutions Act 1991; and
- Miscellaneous Offences Act
(EFCC, 2017)

None of these has effectively checked corruption in Nigeria.

The Role of the Media in the Anticorruption War

The government - the executive, the legislature and the judiciary – are not alone in the fight against corruption. As the fourth estate, the media should be contributing to advancing the anti-corruption war. The public relies on the media to get informed on the progress being made by government agencies in the investigation and prosecution of suspected criminals and corrupt officials. Beyond just creating awareness, the media should push for the consequences and trials of the culprits through exhaustive journalism. The access to information gives the press the impetus to dig out stories about corruption in Nigeria. The relevance of information is paramount in this fight by the media.

The World Bank states that the media are entrusted with a crucial role in presenting an environment that will check corruption and fraud. The press is a powerful means of checking corruption in society (PR EM networks, 1997). This condition is well known in Nigeria. The advent of the new media has also opened a new vista to fight corruption through citizen journalism in the public sphere. There is a correlation between the media and the extent to which corruption has eaten into Nigeria's social fabric. The more the press is liberated, the more acts of corruption are exposed, and vice versa.

Notwithstanding enormous challenges, the media have made concerted efforts in Nigeria to fulfil their duties to the public regarding corruption by giving news to the people about corruption. Some privately-owned media have been unfazed by the persecution from the government and corrupt politicians. It has fulfilled its duties by publishing news about corrupt people and unethical practices in the country, from the destruction of personal files in the ministry, judiciary, bank heist, armed robbery, advanced fee fraud to public funds embezzlement by politicians to the exposure of top public servants. All these exposures improve good governance and regulate graft in society.

The media in Nigeria, especially the print media, have exposed multiple news items on corruption in Nigeria, leading to several court trials, convictions and resignations from important positions. They have informed the people about corrupt government activities, the award of ghost contracts, corrupt institutions, and information on a private citizen involved in various corrupt practices. The press monitors government projects that involved huge sums of money and the contractors connected with them to see that the job has been executed as planned by the government. Any corrupt practice is promptly reported to the people through the media at any point in the contract's execution. The monthly Federal Executive Meeting, where the federal government announces the awards of contracts, usually becomes the front page news in the media for the public to be abreast with and monitor. The news headline may include the actual sum of the contract and companies awarded the contract to keep the people well-informed with government activities and the projects' development (Pitman & Chienweze,2018).

The success of the EFCC and ICPC rests on the media who publish and give them clues to corrupt people in Nigeria. They, at the same time, inform the people of their activities in Nigeria. The news that the agencies get from the media enables them to pursue some instances to a logical conclusion as they probe the scandal. However, the media have also attacked the agency for not

arresting top government officials involved in various scandals. The press broke the news on the aviation scandals involving N1.3 trillion (i.e. \$3.5 billion) and other related scandals indicate that the government is not immune to corruption. The media also broke the scandal in the Nigerian Ports Authority in 2004 which led to the prosecution, trial and conviction of the topmost government officials of the agency. They were involved in the over-invoicing of various purchases in millions of naira. The Board Chairman and some members of staff were given different prison terms from 2-5 years. Thisday Newspaper opened the story on November 4, 2009. They were indicted because they purchased military berets at inflated prices (Sowunmi et al., 2010). An internet-based newspaper, The Osun Defender, also reported corruption in INEC in 2009 in the governorship election in Idi – Osi Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Likewise, the Beam Newspaper also reported corruption in Brass Local Government in Bayelsa State which led to the House of Assembly freezing the local government's account. The local government officials diverted about N27 million, i.e \$70,000 (Agbada cited in Sowunmi et al, 2010).

The media also faced persecution because of the potency of the news item. Many have been killed, some have also been put in prison unjustly, while some newspaper houses and TV stations have been closed unjustly because of reports on corruption. There has been the outright assassination of media personnel in Nigeria. A few examples include Newswatch Dele Giwa, 1986, The Guardian, Bayo Olu 2009, Punch Omololu Folabi 2006, Thisday Newspaper Godwin Agbroko 2006, The News Bagauda Kaltho 1996, The Guardian Tunde Oladepo 1996, and many others from different parts of Nigeria who lost their lives in the line of duty. Below are the number of journalists assassinated in the fight against corruption in Nigeria from 2017-2021:

Name	Gender	Date killed	nationality	Judicial Inquiry status
Pelumi Onifade	Male	24/10/2020	Nigerian	New request
Alex Ogbu	Male	21/01/2020	Nigerian	New request
Maxwell Nashan	Male	15/01/2020	Nigerian	New request
Precious Owolabi	Male	16/04/2017	Nigerian	No information received so far
Ikechukwu Onubogu	Male	15/11/2017	Nigerian	Ongoing /unresolved so far
Famous Giobaro	Male	16/04/2017	Nigerian	Ongoing/unresolved

Figure 2: Killed Journalists in Nigeria from 2017-2020

Source: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/safetyjournalists/observatory/country/223778>

Investigative journalism refers to finding, reporting, and presenting news reports that other people attempt to put away from the public domain (The News Manual, 2008). It also involves a creative, proactive process that digs deeply into a subject or issue of public interest and produces new information or gathers known information together to create new insights (KAS, 2010). Unlike interpretative journalism, investigative journalism relies not only on others' information to

present a story to the public. Instead, it goes the extra mile to probe deep and critically look into various story angles. Investigative journalism generally builds on interpretative journalism.

Theoretical Framework: Social Responsibility Theory

The social responsibility theory, an offshoot of Libertarian Theory, was developed in the mid-nineties in the United States of America under the Hutchins Commission on freedom of the press to review the concept of press freedom as proposed in the libertarian theory (Asemah et al, 2017; McQuail, 2009; Hasan, 2014). Unlike the libertarian theory, the social responsibility theory involves the media's adherence to professional principles and codes of conduct when carrying their editorial duties.

The theory's features include the following: that media organisations and workers should write and report responsibly and always observe the profession's guiding principles. The media is not part of the government and must be treated independently (Khan et al, 2020). The theory also provides that the public be given a chance to respond to reports or stories published. The media must maintain ethical standards and be responsible to society. The media should educate the public and speak against social ills. The press should represent all parties to an issue and avoid taking sides (Middleton, 2009). Finally, the media should present valuable reports to the public and avert destructive stories that can lead to civil disturbance and unrest.

The provisions of social responsibility theory informed the evaluation of the Nigerian media in this study. Because print is primary, it offers tangible proof of media production and feeds other media outlets such as internet publications, radio, television, and social media. As a result, the notion applies to our activity since the press serves as society's watchdog. In essence, the media are socially responsible for society's wishes to inform them of the current situations. Both the theory and the study are intertwined because people will be unaware of corrupt activities in society if there is no socially responsible journalism. As a result, the theory's application broadened the framework to emphasise the importance of the press in a corrupt society.

Methodology

This study used content analysis through desktop computer research. Data were collated from two hundred corruption and anti-corruption related reports from *Premium Times* and *Vanguard Newspapers* (the two main newspapers used in this research). The newspapers identified via purposive sampling, have received awards for investigative reporting. All articles examined and analysed were published within six months (January 1 to June 30, 2017); some excerpts from 2018 to 2021 were added to the list for updating and currency. Their titles and content were reviewed to determine whether the reports were arrived at through investigative journalism within the months under review. Furthermore, the reports selected for the study had the word "corruption" or "corrupt" featured in their titles, and the stories were checked to ensure that they discussed corruption concerning Nigeria if it was not already specified in the title. Articles with content that reflected sources as statements received from government officials, parastatals, corporate organisations, or other media outlets were tagged interpretative journalism. The reports did not

reflect that the journalist(s) went an extra mile to gain in-depth and hidden details, which were not immediately available to the public. Investigative reports reflected otherwise, and the journalists engaged in uncovering such stories indicated that the stories were new and original. Such investigative reports may be used and acknowledged by other media outlets.

Findings

Most of the findings were gathered from newspaper publication in 2017 which indicated a phenomenal rate of corruption index in Nigeria. Out of over a hundred functional newspapers in Nigeria (<https://nigerianfinder.com>, 2020), two online newspapers were selected for this research for analysis. See appendix

Discussion

The study was carried out to determine how many investigative media reports are published as part of the media's effort toward advancing and supporting the anti-corruption war within six months. Out of 73 reports by both newspapers within the period, only three were investigative in nature. This meant that the reporters, using available reports in public, pursued the stories to dig out details that will expose acts of corruption and other truth that were initially hidden from the public. There were many investigative and interpretative reports presented by the newspapers within the period based on its reporters' investigation.

If the media are actively part of the anti-corruption war, there may be a need to consider an upward review of the number of investigative reports published. Interpretative reports are beneficial too, but following that it depends on information from mainly the concerned parties; there is a likelihood that the reports will be lopsided to a reasonable degree. Concerning the social responsibility theory, the demand on reporters requires that bits of intelligence are responsibly ethically gathered, all parties are duly represented and the good of the public should be prioritised.

The result also shows little investigative journalism done in Nigeria, especially for corrupt practices by government officials and the ruling class members. For several reasons, including the high financial implication of carrying out investigations, the investigation of Nigerian politicians who will not entertain such may mean putting the reporter's life at risk etc. However, this study recommends investigative journalism as the next level for the Nigerian media, especially if it wishes to contribute to the anti-corruption war.

The 'brown envelope syndrome' (corruption) is another hindrance. This is because most media people are not adequately paid, so they fall victim to the vice they are fighting against by accepting a bribe from the public to pervert news on dishonesty. Some media houses also slant stories favouring the highest bidder, thereby relegating the ethics of the profession to the background because of extreme poverty. Additionally, some media houses do not pay salaries regularly and also sack staff indiscriminately. This indirectly encourages hatchet jobs (Adesina, 2008). Some editors destroy important news on corruption once they are paid to, thereby becoming corrupt.

Ownership of the media also plays a vital role in this media fight against corruption; most newspapers both online and offline are privately owned. Media owners linked with the scandals are politicians connected with the government. Consequently, they continuously regulate stories that are related to them. Sometimes, they sack recalcitrant journalists who refuse their instruction. The se media owners may use the channel and the journalists to advance corrupt personal agendas. When it is a government-owned media, it restricts any publication on corruption that will embarrass the government in power. Most of the press are financially dependent on the owners, who are also politicians in government (Sowunmi et al., 2010). The diagram below indicates the balance:

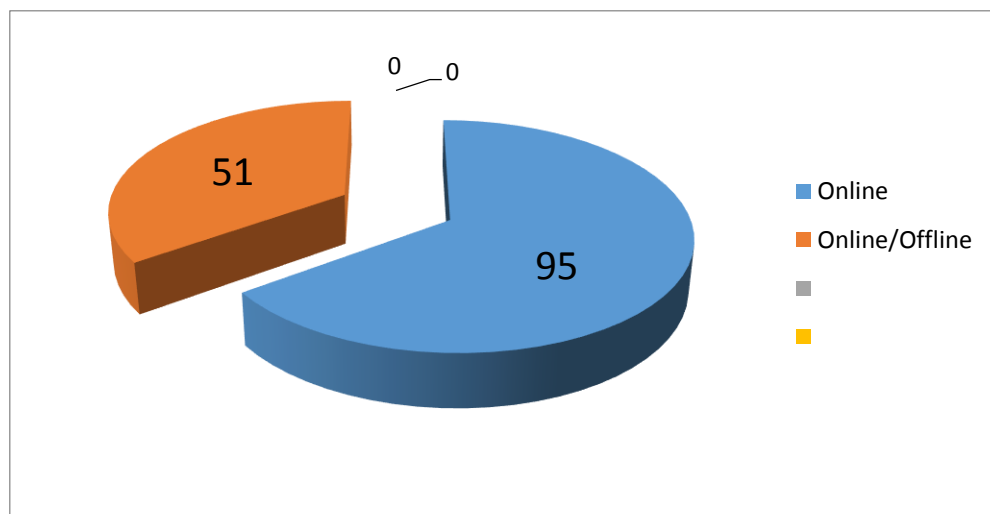


Figure 3: The Number of Registered Newspapers in Nigeria

Source: www.nigeriafinder.com

Most of these newspapers both online and offline are privately owned, therefore they could influence the pitch of the news on corruption especially when they are connected with their political affiliate or the source of revenue.

Conclusion

The media in Nigeria, in aligning with the social responsibility theory, is living up to its bidding in this fight against corruption despite all odds. It plays a vital role in society, especially the giant of Africa. Africa continues to be on the dashboard for international focus, and Nigeria is the epicentre. Thus, all effort should be put in place to encourage the press to do a better job disseminating information to the public without bias. Emphasis must be placed on doing investigative journalism and ethically so. This will promote a high degree of responsibility and ethics in pursuing gatekeeping and agenda-setting duties persistently. Some of the factors that will

enhance the media's role in fighting corruption and investigative journalism are recommended below.

Recommendations

- The media's autonomy is paramount to extricate the press from the stranglehold of diverse interests, including government officials and politicians who would not like any corruption report because they may be directly involved in the matter according to findings. Another is that the media practitioners should be under regular training and retraining to be abreast with the technicalities of the job and attain international best practices to be adequately prepared to fight corruption headlong without fear or favour. Furthermore, there is a need to fight fake news. News items should draw a line between fake news and reality (Sowunmi et al., 2010). Furthermore, the media should exploit the Freedom of Information Bill, which gives them the power to investigate various government activities.
- The anti-corruption war in recent times appears to be much more challenging for the President. The corruption war, however, cannot be fought by him alone. The Presidency requires the support of the government and the populace in general. All the arms of government must be involved: the legislature should ensure the creation of laws that will adequately deal with corrupt persons and practices; the executive should implement existing laws and advocate the making of new regulations that will help tackle corruption; the judiciary should interpret and apply the law without fear or favour in corruption cases. The media, which is usually referred to as the fourth estate is also key to the anti-corruption war.
- For the media to fulfil its role, including being a watchdog, it must be independent. Furthermore, a media that is to be at the forefront of enthroning a corruption-free society must also not be hindered by ownership, political and economic interests and affiliations (Alawode, 2008). To use the power of the pen more appropriately, the media will need to go beyond interpretative journalism concerning corruption cases and issues. Although investigative journalism costs much more, it is the only way the press can genuinely join in and meaningfully contribute to the anti-corruption war waged by the Nigerian government.
- Finally, the media could push for the adoption of traditional African oath-taking to combat corruption in Nigeria. This powerful traditional judicial system has been neglected for a long time. It should be given as an option in the oath-taking procedure for those who want it. The media should push that traditional practices should be used to combat corruption. Let the government officials swear by Amadioha or Sango or in a powerful shrine or deity. Stamping the emblems of traditional divinities on official government documents and contract papers may perhaps reduce, if not stamp out corruption. This will apply instant justice to the culprits (Ilechukwu, 2014). Anything that should be done to encourage the media war against institutionalised corruption in Nigeria should be promoted. The Nigerian constitution gives them more impetus, as section 22 of the 1999 Constitution is

unambiguous on the press's freedom. ``The press, radio and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in the chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people`` (Malema, 2009). The media should always equip themselves with these constitutional powers to fight corruption until it is completely controlled.

Reference

- Abba-Aji, M. Balabanova, D. Hutchinson, E. & Mckee. (2021). How do Nigerian newspapers report corruption in the health system? *International Journal of Health Policy and Development*, 10(2): 77-85.
- Adebowale, Y & Ali, A.M. (2009). *Halliburton –US seeks extradition of Briton in NLNG bribe scandal*. Retrieved from [http://www.africanloft.com/halliburton-bribe-scadal](http://www.africanloft.com/halliburton-bribe-scandal)
- Adesina, F. (2008). Analyst examines journalists' role in anti-orrupation war. *Nigerian Compass* 9th December.
- Amodu, L., Usaini, S., & Ige, O. (2014). The media as the fourth estate of the realm. Retrieved from *Researchgate*, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308120682>
[The Media as Fourth Estate of the Realm](#).
- Chinwuba, E.C. (2020). Low-level corruption in Nigeria: A critical evaluation. *OWIJOPPA*,4,1, 2630-7054.
- Chukwu, C.C & Ngban, J.N.(2018). Democratic governance and the frightening impact of corruption in ocntemporary Nigerian society. *Revista Brasileira de Gestão Ambiental e Sustentabilidade*. 5(9): 3-25
- BBC. (2016, May 10). *David Cameron calls Nigeria and Afghanistan 'fantastically corrupt*. Retrieved from BBC News Service: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-36260193>
- Ebekozien, A. (2020). Corrupt acts in the Nigerian construction industry: Is the ruling party fighting corruption?, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 38(3): 348-365.
- Ejovi, A., Charles, M.V. & Akpokibe, O.R. (2013). Corruption in Nigeria: A historical perspective. *Research Humanities and Social Sciences Journal*, III(16): 19.
- Folarin, S. (2014). Corruption, politics and governance in Nigeria. *Covenant University*, 1-26.

- Gaile, M.S. (2013). The role and future of social media in modern society: Is social media worthwhile for local media. *Journalism Research Nr 6*.
- Ibidolapo, B. (2016, April 22). *The anti-corruption legal framework and its effect on Nigeria's development*. Retrieved from SPA Ajibade & Co.: <http://www.spaaajibade.com/resources/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/DBolu.THE-ANTI-CORRUPTION-LEGAL-FRAMEWORK-DRAFT.pdf>
- Igbuzor, O. (2016). *The Buhari administration and war against corruption in Nigeria*. Retrieved from Otive Igbuzor: <http://www.otiveigbuzor.com/the-buhari-administration-and-war-against-corruption-in-nigeria/>
- Igiebor, G. O. (2019). Political corruption in Nigeria: Implications for economic development in the fourth republic. *Journal of Developing Societies*, 35(4): 493–513.
- Ikpeze, N. (2013). Fusion of anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria: *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy*, I(1): 148-167.
- Ilechukwu, L.C. (2014). Adoption of traditional religious practices in combating corruption in the Nigerian education system. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(5).
- KAS. (2010). *About investigative reporting*. Retrieved from Investigative Journalism Manual: http://www.investigative-journalism-africa.info/?page_id=31
- McKeon, R. (2001). *The basic works of Aristotle*. New York: Modern Library.
- Ojerinde, E. (2019). How corruption crippled Nigeria`s power sector. Retrieved from www.punchng.com
- Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2006). *Anti-corruption and governance: The Philippine experience*. APEC Study Center Consortium Conference: Ho Chi Minh City: APEC.
- Punch (2016, May 12). *Buhari agrees with Cameron that Nigeria is 'fantastically corrupt'*. Retrieved from Punch: <http://punchng.com/buhari-agrees-cameron-nigeria-fantastically-corrupt-2/>
- Ribadu, N. (2009). *Corruption: The trouble with Nigeria*. Retrieved from <http://www.gamji.com> article

NZEAKA, E. E., EHONDOR, B. & EDOSONWAN, A.: *Media And Endemic Corruption in Nigeria: A Scrutiny of the Role of the Print Media in the War Against Corruption*

PREM Network (1997). *Helping countries combat corruption: The role of World Bank*. Washington, DC, P.44.

Salisu, M. (2000). Corruption in Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://www.lums.co.uk/publications>.

Sowunmi, F A., Raufu, An A., & Salako, M A. (2010). The role of media in curbing corruption in Nigeria. *Research Journal of Information Technology*, 2(1).

Stople,(2008) Corruption and anti-corruption in Nigeria. A paper presented at a one-day workshop in reporting Tanzi corruption in Nigeria organised by UNODC, EFCC and NUJ.

The News Manual (2008). *Introduction to investigative reporting*. Retrieved from The News Manual: https://www.thenewsmanual.net/Manuals%20Volume%202/volume2_39.htm

Transparency International. (2016). *Nigeria: Profile*. Retrieved from Transparency International: <https://www.transparency.org/country/NGA>

Vanguard (2017, April 8). *Anti-corruption war “A fight for the soul of Nigeria – Obasanjo”*. Retrieved from Vanguard Newspapers: <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/anti-corruption-war-fight-soul-nigeria-obasanjo/>

Winston,B (2003). *Media technology and society: A history from the telegraph to the internet*. London: Routledge S

Appendix

Newspaper reports on corruption in Nigeria from 2017-2021

Premium Times

After an examination of two hundred media reports from 2017 on corruption in the Premium Times and Vanguard Newspapers both online, the following are the relevant and related reports gathered:

1. Corruption is Nigeria's worst problem – Buhari (January 12, 2017)
2. Senator slams Buhari says President lied on SGF Lawal’s alleged corruption (January 24, 2017)
3. Osinbajo meets heads of security, anti-corruption agencies, ministers (February 10, 2017)
4. APC Women Leader accuses party official of corruption (January 12, 2017)
5. Special Report: Nigeria’s oil-rich communities abandoned in shocking poverty despite huge wealth (January 29, 2017)
6. EFCC arraigns FUTA VC, Bursar for alleged corruption (February 14, 2017)

7. Special report: How Buhari is suppressing own govt's anti-corruption war [April 28, 2019](#)
8. Corruption: EFCC 'secured about 1500 convictions in 14 years' — Official (February 16, 2017) Nigeria still as corrupt as before – Transparency International [January 29, 2019](#)
9. Buhari's lawyer gave 'corrupt' Nigerian judge N500,000 during certificate controversy; Witness tells court (February 21, 2017)
9. Group launches 'Corruption Anonymous' to aid whistleblower policy (February 26, 2017)
10. How I fought corruption in Lagos Judiciary – Osinbajo (March 2, 2017)
11. NDDC reacts to corruption allegation, defends car purchases (March 2, 2017)
12. Malabu \$1.1 billion Scandal: EFCC files fresh corruption charges against Shell, Eni, Adoke, Etete, others (March 2, 2017)
13. Corruption allegations: Just in case FG has forgotten these cases! January 19, 2019
14. Latest Corruption Report: Menace to increase in Nigeria March 30, 2019
15. Nigeria still very corrupt — Transparency Int'l January 30, 2019
16. Corruption reports against me “fake news”, says President July 2, 2018
17. Vice-Chancellors, Bursars involved in corruption in Nigerian universities (March 19, 2017)
14. Buhari's war on corruption won't stop, aide pledges (April 2, 2017)
15. Why court freed Nigerian judge accused of corruption (April 5, 2017)
16. Court rulings against corruption cases 'worrying' – Sagay (April 7, 2017)
17. Investigation: How Jigawa Govt's land grab for Chinese firm threatens livelihood of 150,000 citizens (April 7, 2017)
18. How Nigerian churches are encouraging corruption – Obasanjo (April 8, 2017)
19. Group wants high-profile Nigerian corruption cases sent to International Criminal Court (April 9, 2017)
20. Why Nigerian govt is losing corruption cases – Obasanjo (April 10, 2017)
21. Witness testifies in Orji Kalu's corruption trial (April 11, 2017)
22. Interview: Why we can't investigate corruption cases against former governors – ICPC Chairman (April 15, 2017)
23. Nigeria to boost growth with non-oil revenues, anti-corruption war – Adeosun (April 21, 2017)
24. How Nigeria Customs gave N12 million to judge accused of corruption – Witness (April 28, 2017)
25. Corruption more prevalent in Nigeria's Executive Arm, not Legislature – Senators (May 10, 2017)
26. Kano anti-corruption agency suspends Emir Probe (May 13, 2017)
27. Nigerian govt won't interfere in Malabu OPL 245 corruption probe – Kachikwu (May 15, 2017)
28. We have 'water-tight' case against Kano Emirate Council – Anti-corruption chief
29. May 15, 2017
30. Senate finally passes Buhari's anti-corruption bill (May 30, 2017)
31. Nigerian judge accused of corruption allowed to travel abroad (June 1, 2017)

32. What Nigerian media must do to effectively fight corruption — Ribadu (June 3, 2017)
33. Four Nigerians accused of corruption in Switzerland in fresh trouble in Nigeria (June 6, 2017)
34. Why corruption is endemic in Nigeria - Finance Minister (June 7, 2017)
35. Judge cleared by NJC faces fresh corruption charges (June 8, 2017)
36. Exclusive: How Jonathan, ex-Minister, helped Senator get N26 billion ports contract without due process (June 15, 2017)
37. Corruption: Nigerian lawmaker detained as ex-minister jumps bail (June 18, 2017)
38. Corruption: EFCC sets surety free as ex-Minister turns self in (June 20, 2017)
39. High profile corruption cases Nigerians expect in 2021.Jan 2021
40. Group writes Buhari, lists 'ignored' N900 billion corruption cases Feb 2021
41. EXCLUSIVE: Top NCC officials enmeshed in N122 million fraud March 2021
42. PANDORA PAPERS: Peter Obi reacts, tries to mislead Nigerians/October 2021

Vanguard Newspapers

1. Corruption as a relay race in Nigeria (January 22, 2017)
2. Buhari says Magu, SGF Lawal cleared of corruption allegation (January 24, 2017)
3. Integrity and the war on corruption (January 26, 2017)
4. Buhari's anti-corruption war at crossroads: Reps speak (February 4, 2017)
5. Corruption in Nigeria is wealthy, powerful, influential – Osinbajo (February 10, 2017)
6. CCT trial: Saraki pleads not guilty to fresh corruption charges (February 24, 2017)
7. Elite encouraging corruption in Nigeria – Osinbajo (February 28, 2017)
8. Osinbajo, CJN disagree on corruption in Judiciary (March 2, 2017)
9. Truth of the matter is that corruption in Nigeria is systemic – Osinbajo (March 3, 2017)
10. Ex-Adamawa governor Ngilari jailed five yrs over corruption (March 6, 2017)
11. The judiciary and the silky path of corruption (March 9, 2017)
12. Combating Corruption and Impunity in Nigeria (March 9, 2017)
13. Everyone is a victim of corruption - Lai Mohammed (March 15, 2017)
14. Obasanjo is Nigeria's father of corruption, sits on stolen wealth – Fayose (March 16, 2017)
15. Dino Melaye proposes antidotes for corruption (April 2, 2017)
16. Why court dismissed corruption charges against Justice Ademola (April 6, 2017)
17. Anti-corruption war “a fight for the soul of Nigeria – Obasanjo (April 8, 2017)
18. Whither Buhari's anti-corruption war? (April 12, 2017)
19. Whistle-blowing as panacea for corruption (April 15, 2017)
20. IKOYI BILLIONS: Gov. Wike accuses FG of covering corruption (April 15, 2017)
21. Buhari's anti-corruption fight good omen for Nigeria – Shekarau (April 17, 2017)
22. Grand corruption' (April 20, 2017)
23. The corrupt war against corruption (1) (April 23, 2017)
24. Corruption: Umar is frustrated — Presidency (April 25, 2017)
25. The corrupt war against corruption (2) (April 30, 2017)

26. True Talk: Issues Around the Anti-corruption War (May 3, 2017)
27. The corrupt war against corruption (3) (May 7, 2017)
28. The beauty of corruption (May 14, 2017)
29. Fighting corruption in Nigeria: Two timely interventions and one anti-climax (May 24, 2017)
30. Corruption: ...not just funds that are stashed away but also petroleum resources – Onyeama (June 8, 2017)
31. Former governor gets 14 years jail term for corruption (June 13, 2017)
32. Allegations of corruption against N-Delta leaders are worrisome (June 18, 2017)
33. Senate orders committee to start treating petitions on corruption (June 20, 2017)
34. Corruption and the Nigerian Church (June 24, 2017)
35. Corruption: Customs, clearing agents disagree, set up committee (June 30, 2017)
36. Over 70% of corruption cases in Nigeria linked to unknown companies – FG
May 17, 2021
37. Corruption Perceptions Index 2020: Nigeria ranks 149 out of 183 countries — CISLAC
January 28, 2021
38. Transparency International’s report indicts Nigerians, not Buhari— Presidency
February 1, 2021
39. The way out of corruption — Obi December 9, 2020
40. Nigeria now second most corrupt West African country on corruption index January 28,
2021
41. Nigeria’s poor corruption rating by TI not true reflection of anti-graft war —Lai
Mohammed