

**INVESTIGATING REPORTING, TOOLS TO ENHANCE  
INCLUSIVITY AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE  
PRESENTED AT A MEDIA TRAINING ON INVESTIGATIVE  
JOURNALISM, INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY IN NIGERIA**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Investigating reporting tools to enhance inclusivity and accountable governance, is apt especially coming at a time investigative journalism is almost being relegated to the background of news reporting by media professionals.

In this paper, we shall focus on different definition/interpretation of what investigative journalism is; why journalists need to carry out investigations; sources of ideas; interviews, use of data, application of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), writing skills and investigative reports that yielded results in perhaps in US and Nigeria.

***Brief discourse on what is Journalism***

Journalism is an integral part of world history because it has shaped our way of life. Journalism is a part of any society, ancient and modern, which makes it possible for both individual and groups to communicate new information and the latest news to one another. It involves gathering, analyzing and presentation of information. *(Please note that information is about something that has just happened or will happen soon while News is*

*a report about recent happenings in a newspaper, television, radio or internet. News is also something that is not known earlier).* However, before any phenomenon becomes news they must be a reporter.

*Harcup (2009) says journalism is “a form of communication based on asking and answering the question who? What? Where? When? Why? And How?” (p.3). He goes further to explain that journalism “is an attempt to inform the society about itself and makes public that which would otherwise be private” (p.3). Continuing, he said “journalism is sometimes said to be a mirror reflecting society, on occasions a distorting mirror” (p. 12).*

Hasan (2010) sees journalism “as anything that contributes in some way in gathering, selection and processing of news and current affairs for the press, radio, TV, film, cable and the Internet”, (p.174). She points out that the objectives of journalism include acting as a mediator or translator between the public and policy-making elites; acting as a ‘watch-dog’ over the elites as the public had the final say with their views; provides citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing as well as provides conversation rather than lecture. Eric Hodgins of *Time Magazine* defines journalism as the conveying of information from here to there with accuracy, insight and dispatch and in such a manner that the truth is served.

However, there are different types of journalism, which is also known as genres of journalism. But for this purpose, we shall consider the view of McQuail (2010). The different types of journalism include prestige and quality journalism; specialized journalism; investigative journalism; new journalism (personal and committed); civic journalism; development journalism; advocacy journalism; gossip journalism and alternative journalism. For the purpose of this workshop/seminar, we shall concentrate on Investigative Journalism

### ***EXAMINING THE ROLE OF A JOURNALIST IN A DEMOCRATIC SETTING***

In any democratic setting, the role of a journalist primarily is to educate, to entertain and to keep the citizens abreast of daily occurrences. The journalist also weighs the social pulse of the people and elicits their contribution. Beyond that, journalist keeps watch on the happenings within the society and acts when things go wrong. The journalist’s concern is

always with now and with what happens next. A journalist takes delight in discerning the news and then making it clear because what is hidden is greater than what is seen. So, journalist tries to discover and dig deep.

Today, it has become fashionable for those in public office to engage in all sorts of malfeasance ranging from over-valuation and invoicing of contracts sum; outright stealing, ‘ten per cent’ kick-back; appropriating monies for contracts not executed and outright selling of contracts. Influential socialites are not left out as they engage in social misdeeds that are antithetical to cultural norms. All these alleged corrupt practices have led to lack of transparency and accountability in governance, thereby retarding development and breeding indiscipline in the country.

It is, therefore, the duty of a journalist to defend public rights against encroachment by state and corporate powers by performing the role of watchdog. In other words, journalist is the eyes and ears of the public, its defender against possible abuses by the state (Coronel, 2011).

As watchdog of the society, the journalist monitors, check excesses of those in power that take delight in abusing their various offices and then expose them for prosecution. It is argued that the media with all the power and influential roles in the society, have the capacity to go the whole hog to unearth these societal ills that have become general malaise. And to perform this watchdog role effectively, a reporter must investigate all stories to give credibility to it. In playing the watchdog role, the journalist’s mission is to sniff out wrongs, point fingers at those to blame, and report in a way that is to bring about change.

Thus, the need for investigative journalism or watch-dog journalism, which entails uncovering some secrets somebody wants to keep hidden, reveals scandals, and shames even the individual involved.

### **What is Investigative Journalism? Different Perspectives**

Investigative journalism stands as a formidable force, capable of unearthing truths concealed in the shadows and holding the powerful accountable. It transcends conventional reporting, demanding a unique skill set that goes beyond the basics of journalism. In Nigeria, investigative journalists have

demonstrated some capacities in digging deep and exposed some corrupt practices.

The media, as a vital tool of communication, have greatly assisted in exposing the endemic corruption in the country, thereby checking the activities of those saddled with leadership responsibility. It has also let people to know that corruption does not have a divine origin, but a reflection of the historical integration of man and his environment in the production and reproduction of goods and services. As a historical phenomenon, it requires consistency, tenacity of purpose and the provision of the basic needs of life to minimize its corrosive effect on the society.

Investigative journalism requires depth and different techniques in gathering information. Investing journalism is reporting issues either crime or otherwise with the highest standard of accuracy and application of some ethical norms. Investigative reporting is very difficult and challenging because it involves scoops and exclusive coverage. Investigative journalism also means ‘expose journalism’; ‘adversarial journalism’; ‘in-depth journalism’; ‘muckraking journalism’; ‘advocacy journalism’; ‘public service’; ‘watchdog journalism’; ‘journalism of outrage’ and “project reporting” (Houston, 2010, pp. 45-49).

US-based Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), (1983) define investigative journalism as “systematic, in-depth, an original research and reporting, often involving the unearthing of secrets, heavy use of public records, and computer -assisted reporting with a focus on social justice and accountability”, (p.170). This definition clearly sets the standards for investigative reports in terms of criteria, the process and focus that distinguish it from other journalism genres.

A handbook published by UNESCO, and cited by Global Investigative journalism Network (n.d), says investigative journalism involves exposing to the public matters that are concealed—either deliberately by someone in a position of power, or accidentally. It requires using both secret and open sources and documents to dig up the truth.

While Ganiyu (2010) states that investigative journalism entails “having a nose for news and then dig deep to unearth the wrongs in the society by

cross-checking facts and figures from credible sources, (p.172), Houston, (2010) sees the concept of investigative journalism as being an original reporting that is laced with vigorous documentation and series of interviews; very conservative, probing waste, fraud and abuse in government agencies, challenging powers-that-be and brings with it the moral judgment.

Asemah (2011) points out that investigative journalism is “a story that requires a great amount of research to come up with facts that might be hidden, buried or obscured by people who have a vested interest in keeping those facts from being published” (p.410). In like manner, Hassan (2014) conceives investigative reporting as “a kind of journalism in which reporters deeply investigate a topic of interest, often involving crime, political corruption, or some other scandal” (p. 235).

To Harcup (2012), the concept of investigative journalism is somewhat problematic because “the methodology is characterised by in-depth and near obsessional research; dogged determination, accumulated knowledge, team effort, the crucial support by editors and the space to pursue stories not due to notions of truth, but that it might turn out to be interesting” (p.97).

Unlike conventional reporting, in which reporters rely on materials supplied by the government, Non-Government Organisations, NGOs, and other agencies, investigative journalism depends on materials gathered through the reporter’s initiative. As an essential arm of journalism, investigative reporting examines wrongs in the society and depicts those who suffer from such mistakes, thereby seeing themselves as guardian of public interest; it is concerned about how laws and regulations are violated and then tries to expose those behind it and why they engage in such acts (Okoro, 2020).

According to Okoro (2020) investigative journalism is synonymous with stalking the powerful and sleazy socialites by digging deep into their secret’s love affairs and shoddy deals; it is not paparazzi journalism, but focuses rather on corruption in government, crimes, corporate misdeeds, children and minority groups as well as environmental degradation. Investigative reporter strikes through the mask by going beyond what is

public knowledge to exposing underneath lies and hypocrisy of power wielders.

Kaplan (2013), a veteran journalist with Global Investigative Journalism Network, identifies key features of investigative journalism as follows:

- i.* It is time consuming, very expensive, risky and requires team work because of its in-depth nature. Investigative journalist needs to convince their editor that it is worthwhile to undertake such a risky venture when day-to-day events can produce satisfactory newspaper.
- ii.* It has originality and is proactive in nature.
- iii.* It is planned/systematic/methodological/near obsessional and painstaking research.
- iv.* It requires in-depth work and, therefore, must dig deep-tries to unearth the truth, malfeasance in the story.
- v.* It involves the heavy usage of data and public records/documents
- vi.* It is a craft and of high standard

### **Investigative Journalism vs Synonyms that Look Like it (Leak Journalism and Colombo Journalism)**

#### **Leak Journalism:**

Leak journalism is quick-hit scoops gained by the leaking of documents or tips, typically by those in political power. ‘Selective leak’ of information to the press is aimed at promoting one’s interest. Selective leak is the release of official information or investigative files by public officials, police or intelligence agents and politicians to journalists.

Often journalist reports the leaked information without cross-checking and even looking out for additional facts on their own. Leak journalism is not investigative reporting but can be the beginning of investigation for journalist by verifying information as well as provide content. Failure to verify leaks may lead to publishing incomplete, distorted news reports/stories and outright falsehood without in-depth investigation. This in turn makes rumours, un-substantiated claims and emotions the bedrock of information gathering.

#### **Colombo Journalism**

Colombo journalism refers to a style of investigative journalism that emphasizes in-depth reporting; thorough research and fact-checking; objective story-telling and exposing corruption and wrongdoing. This style is named after the famous Columbo detective series, where the protagonist, Lt. Columbo, would appear innocent and naive but would actually be cleverly gathering evidence to solve the case.

Colombo journalism is practiced globally in countries with strong tradition of press freedom and democratic values. It applies a similar approach, where journalists ask seemingly simple questions; listen carefully to response; follow up with more questions; analyse evidence and data as well as piece together the truth. This style of journalism is characterised by tenacity, attention to detail and persistence

#### **PURPOSE OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM**

Journalists, media academics and commentators all agree that investigative reporting is one of the most difficult genres of journalism. However, there are different reasons why journalists engage in investigative reporting.

According to the *Investigative Journalism Manual* (2010, Ganiyu, 2010,) and Gallagher, 2011), the purposes of embarking on investigative reporting include:

- i. To pursue stories of public interest because IJ seeks after public good or interest by holding all wrongdoers accountable for their actions. Public interest here means the interest of the community that is affected which may not necessarily be the whole country.
- ii. It produces new information or looks for a fresh angle to old information to add freshness or newness as well as reveal the significance of the story but the story must be cross-checked with other sources via experiential, documentary and human underpinnings for veracity.
- iii. To ensure that justice prevails in the society and the mighty who oversteps the boundaries of human decency is brought back to the right tract, so that the society can continue to run in an orderly and peaceful fashion.

- iv. To expose corruption, wrongdoing and hypocrisy of those in positions of authority and possibly hold the powerful accountable for their misdeeds while in office;
- v. To reveal the truth by rooting out facts many people often want to hide from the public as well as re-establish fairness and objectivity in journalism reporting.
- vi. To fight against exploitation and illegal practices that are harmful to individuals or society. It is not about sensationalism and salacious gossips nor about celebrities and victims of tragedies, but serves as a check against the power hungry corporations and government for the interest of the public.

### **QUALITIES OF AN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER**

Nwabueze (2012), states that the investigative reporter is engaged in journalism of outrage, outrage at unfairness, outrage at abuse and exploitation by the powerful” (p.23). So to be able to carry this enormous task, the investigative reporter must possess some distinct qualities:

- i. Sound news judgment, logical in thinking; good organisational and communication skills;
- ii. Sense of public interest and quest for social justice
- iii. Research and analytical
- iv. Incisive mind, persistence [perseverance, single-minded, adventurous and courageous
- v. Good writing skills and good interview skills
- vi. Ability to see news behind the news and have nose for news
- vii. Knowledge of photojournalism,
- viii. Computer literacy and Internet savvy –must be a MOJO and Back pack reporter
- ix. Good inter-personal relationship (good-mixer).
- x. Love for reading.
- xi. Have a passion for truth and justice. **Xii.** Have strong ethics.

### **PHYSICAL TOOLS FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM**

Besides, the traditional tools of using midget, writing pen, jotter, tape recorder, still camera, video camera, electronic pen, eye glasses and watch;



a small bag, cash, mobile phone, personal computer and power bank, they are other tools needed in this digital era while embarking on an investigative reporting. It requires an intense commitment to unearthing and a distinctive skill set.

Nick Toso and Catalina Villegas, founder and co-Founder respectively of Rolli (2023) listed some modern tools needed by an investigative journalists in an attempt to unearth truth (2023). The tools are:

**i. Use of Public Records Requests-Freedom of Information Act (FOIAs)**

These records or documents including court filings, property records, or tax documents offer useful insights into the subject of inquiry. Public records are the bedrock of investigative stories and it can be accessed using tools like 'FOIA Machine. This platform simplifies the process of creating, tracking, and sharing Freedom of Information Act requests, ensuring public data is readily available for journalists.

**ii. Reliable sources**

Using reliable sources is a requisite skill in investigative journalism because sources is journalist's golden key to genuine, first-hand information. According to Akinola (2018), sources are 'honey pot'; and trusted network of sources takes time to build. This close-knit network consist of whistleblowers, experts, insiders, or simply average citizens with knowledge relevant to a specific story.

**iii. Data Journalism**

Data journalism is a unique blend of traditional journalism, data science and design that provides a modern approach to storytelling. The practice involves careful analysis, visualization, and making sense out of large datasets to tell a compelling story. The advent of new media technologies has further empowered investigative journalists as it offers numerous tools in sourcing for stories, especially the social media, seen as modern marketplace of information.

**iv. Other data-analysis tools**

Utilising other data journalism tools for data-intensive stories can refine raw unprocessed data into meaningful narratives. Some of the tools are:

- a. **'Datawrapper'**: Is one of the tools that helps create interactive charts, maps, and tables without any coding skills necessary.
- b. **'Tableau Public'**: It is used for more extensive data work. It provides advanced data visualisation options.
- c. **'Geo-based journalism'**: It leverages on location to drive home hard-hitting realities. Tools like 'Google Earth Pro' have been instrumental, enabling journalists to locate, map, and measure areas globally. Similarly,
- d. **'Carto'**: It helps you create instructive visual representations; it provides readers with a spatial understanding of the events.

**v. Social Media tools**

These days, stories often break on social media platforms before anywhere else. Nowadays, journalists increasingly use platforms like Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to find story leads, sources, or simply to gather public opinion on trending issues. Other social listening tools are 'Tweetdeck' or 'CrowdTangle' which help monitor and track social media posts, users, or specific keywords to ensure journalists are always at the forefront of emerging stories.

**vi. Software and Internet tools**

There are numerous software information management tools.

- a. **'Evernote'**: It is used by journalists to capturing, organizing, and sharing notes from anywhere. It allows you to compile information from various sources, collaborate on projects, and even transcribe audio notes, making it a versatile tool in our arsenal.
- b. **'Wayback Machine' website**: It provides an invaluable investigative asset. Enables journalists explore billions of past web pages, offering a historical perspective on any issue. It peep into the past to join the dots in the present narrative or refute claims using historical web data.

**DocumentCloud**: It is used for inspecting, annotating, and publishing primary source documents. It provides a platform for

browsing, analyzing, and even annotating documents efficiently - an ally during large scale investigations. These help investigative reporter in unravelling the truth and social justice for public interest.

- c. **'FactChecker'**: Fact-checking tools are essential in validate investigative reporter's narratives and uphold the credibility journalistic writing. It allows an investigative reporter us to evaluate claims thoroughly, ensuring we provide our readers reliable and verified information are sent out to the readers or audience as the case maybe.

#### **vii. Privacy and encryption tools**

These tools also play an important role in today's journalism landscape as well as secure communication to protect sensitive information and the safety of sources. The tools are:

- a. **Signal and Wire**: It provides end-to-end encryption for safe communication.
- b. **Tor Browser**: It is anonymous Internet browsing for journalists.
- c. **Import.io**: It aids in gathering and analyzing databases and handling raw data.

Note that 'Tor Browser' and 'Signal' messaging app ensures confidentiality and anonymity, protecting both journalists and their sources in precarious situations.

### **REPORTORIAL TECHNIQUES OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM**

The reportorial styles for investigative reporting depends on the manner of information gathering employed by the reporter. But Mustapha-Koiki and Ayedun-Aluma (2013) are of the opinion that the investigative reporter explores all the human and non-human angles to a story. Some of the techniques are:

- i. **Undercover/Impersonation**: Impersonation involves investigative reporter pretending to be another person to be able to deceive in other to gain an advantage to have access to information. Example is Emmanuel Maya of the *Sun* Newspapers who used impersonation to unearth a story titled, 'Inside Nigeria's industrial concentration camps.' Maya

exposed the inhuman conditions that thousands of Nigerians were subjected to in factories run by Asians. So, he posed as a casual labourer in a period of seven weeks, where he worked in different factories like WAHUM, Eskimo and OK. He succeeded at last as kept his camera inside his pants. This is a proof of the hazards of investigative reporting.

- ii. **Ambush:** Ambush is actually one of the tactics of war as a surprise attack by someone or something that was hidden. It is employed by an investigative reporter to accost his/her source who may prove difficult to track down to speak. This method employed by journalist most times gets their sources scared and due to this unexpectedness, they force them to divulge information which would assist them in their reports. Example is Wola Adeyemo of *TELL* magazine employed ambush to unearth former President Olusegun Obasanjo's third term agenda. While investigating the story titled '*Third Term Agenda,*' Andiamo and his colleague employed the ambush style and laid siege for their subject who was an honourable member of the House of Representatives.
- iii. **Digital tools:** The advent of the Internet and new technological tools have contributed in enhancing investigative journalism. Reporters now gather news with digital hidden cameras, surreptitious recording devices, phone and computer hacking and other surveillance equipment.
- iv. Fact-checking and verification.
- v. Surveillance and counter-surveillance: Involves close observation of an individual or group of persons under suspicion.
- vi. Encryption and secure communication. Encryption (Cryptography) involves obscuring information to make it unreadable without special knowledge, key files or passwords. It simply means coding your jottings.

### **SOURCES OF INVESTIGATIVE JOIURNLAISM**

Some of the common sources for investigative journalists include:

- i. Whistleblowers: Insiders who come forward to reveal wrongdoing or corruption.

- ii. Documents: Government records, corporate files, emails, memos, and other papers that provide evidence.
- iii. Interviews: On-the-record conversations with witnesses, victims, experts, and others with relevant information.
- iv. Leaks: Confidential data or tips from anonymous sources.
- v. Public/private records: Government databases, property records, court filings, and other publicly accessible documents.
- vi. Data journalism: Analysis of large datasets to uncover patterns and trends.
- vii. Undercover reporting: Journalists posing as ordinary citizens to gather information.
- viii. Tips from the public: Information provided by readers, viewers, or listeners.
- ix. Collaboration with other journalists or media outlets: Sharing resources and information.
- x. Collaboration with Non-governmental organizations (NGOs): Partnering with groups focused on specific issues.
- xi. Academic research and studies: Using scholarly work to form investigations.

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT AND INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISMS**

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is a law that allows citizens to access information from the government. In the context of investigative journalism, FOIA is often used to request documents and information from government agencies to uncover wrongdoing, corruption, and other stories of public interest.

Investigative journalists use FOIA to request a wide range of documents, including emails, reports, memos, and other records. The goal is to shed light on government activities, expose wrongdoing, and hold officials accountable.

Some notable examples of investigative journalism made possible by FOIA are The Watergate scandal, The Pentagon Papers and The Edward Snowden revelations

### ***HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM***

Investigative journalism could be traced to the late 19th century, when reporters began exposing social and political injustices. The modern concept of Investigative Journalism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s following the work of journalists like Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, who investigated the Watergate scandal.

Historically, the era between 1890 and 1920 is often described as the *golden age* of muckrakers when journalists like Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, and Lincoln Steffens exposed corporate and political corruption. It was the era American President, Theodore Roosevelt, coined the term, “Muckraker.” Journalists such as Ida Minerva Tarbell, Joseph Lincoln steffens and Uton Sinclair were dubbed ‘muckrakers’ by President Theodore Roosevelt of America for pioneering investigative reporting of corrupt practices and problems in government or businesses. Their activities were likened to racking up mud, or muck by Roosevelt, who meant it as a term for derision.

Kovach and Rosenteil (2014) states that “one of the earliest investigative works was done by two journalists, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, of *Washington Post*, who in a methodical way broke the *Watergate* story by exposing illegal activities of the then US President Richard Nixon and his agents and their attempts to cover up their wrongdoing” (p. 170). Their follow up stories finally led to the resignation of President Nixon in 1974 and then the book and later film-*All the President’s men*.

Between 1920s-1940s is described as the *Progressive Era* when journalists like George Seldes and I.F. Stone continued the muckraking tradition by investigating government and corporate malfeasance. Then it was followed the New Journalism of 1960s-1970s, especially during the period of World War I, when journalists like Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein, and Seymour Hersh pioneered a more in-depth and investigative approach to reporting.

But in the 1970s, investigative reporting re-emerged following competition from technology and television, which was becoming a source of news. So, many newspapers and magazine publishers saw investigative journalism as a way to counter the competition from television, which was unsuited to in depth coverage of news.

A landmark investigation written by Graham (2023) and published in *New York Times* about Catholic Church sex abuse in a 900-page report revealed widespread sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church throughout Pennsylvania. Some other journalists including Jason Berry and Laurie Goodstein who wrote about abuse cases in the 1990s and early 2000s. These investigations have led to greater awareness, reforms, and accountability within the Church. Since then, investigative journalism has become a vital part of the media landscape, with many news organizations and non-profit groups dedicated to in-depth reporting and accountability.

### ***X-Raying Investigative Reporting in Nigeria***

In Nigeria, between 1859 when *Iwe Irohin* was established and 1960s so many newspapers emerged including the popular *West African Pilot* in 1937 by Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Nigeria Tribune* in 1949 by Obafemi Awolowo, *Lagos Weekly Record* in 1890 by John Pagne Jackson, and *The African Messenger* in 1914 by Ernest Ikoli. These are frontline newspapers fought against the exploitative tendencies and lies of colonial administration.

But the over 20 years of military interregnum in Nigeria changed the style of news writing and reporting as media professionals started digging deeply into activities and programmes of the various military administrations. Investigative journalism thrived as the media in Nigeria became known for being brave and outspoken (Rønning, 2009). In spite of constant harassments and intimidations, “Nigeria media still published critical investigative journalism reports that challenged the legitimacy of the various military dictators as the Nigerian press has over the years revealed grand corruption schemes” (p.536).

It is also worthy of note that two journalists, Dele Giwa and Bagauda Kaltho were presumably killed in their attempt to unravel the atrocities of both Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha respectively. This again, brings to the fore, the role of investigative journalism in Nigeria.

Certainly, Dele Giwa and his fellow journalists-Ray Ekpu, Dan Agbese and Yakubu Mohammed- played significant roles in pioneering print-investigative journalism in Nigeria. These veteran journalists founded *NEWSWATCH* in 1984 with its first edition appearing on newsstand in January 28, 1985. Within a short period of its existence, the news magazine

carved its journalistic niche via investigation of technical issues which included business practices and numerous interviews. Its whistle blowing techniques namely visiting federal or state governments to get documents, data and informative parcels endeared most Nigerians to *NEWSWATCH* magazine (Dyikuk, 2012).

According to *Vanguard* (2011), *NEWSWATCH* had an in-depth style of reporting that was original and proactive in content and style. One is not surprised that in a 1989 description of the magazine, they note that it “changed the format of print journalism in Nigeria and introduced bold, investigative formats to news reporting in Nigeria” (p.30). Dele Giwa later died at his residence on October 19, 1986 courtesy of a letter bomb. The son, Billy who handed over the parcel to his father was in the study with Kayode Soyinka, the London Bureau Chief of the *NEWSWATCH* Magazine.

However, the waves of investigative reporting started creeping in and more awareness being created in 1999 when *The News* magazine uncovered the certificate forgery scandal of Salisu Buhari, former Speaker of the House of Representatives. That investigative story led to his exit from office and eventual presidential pardon by the Olusegun Obasanjo led-government (*Vanguard*, 2011, & Ganiyu, 2010).

Furthermore, investigative journalists in Nigeria have also exposed some alleged corruption practices in high palaces and among top government functionaries between 1999 and 2020. Some landmark investigations carried out by Nigerian media and journalists include:

- a. The defunct *The News* magazine exposure of the corrupt process that exalted Ibrahim Salisu to the position of Speaker, House of Representatives in 1999 and how he was brought down;
- b. Media revelation of Senator Evan Ewerem, the former Senate President, double identity. These revelations ultimately galvanised efforts for the resignation and subsequent trial of Salisu in court while Ewerem lost the Senate President position (Akani, 2017).
- c. *The Nation* newspaper of January, 19, 2016 revelation of about how 55 Nigerians stole more than N1.34 trillion between 2006 and 2013 in an arms deal;



- d. *This Day* Newspaper of May 23, 2016 also revealed how Federal High Court had asked the former Minister of Finance Okonjo Iweala to account for the N30 trillion missing in the country's account four years ago (Akani, 2017).
- e. Media exposure of N195bn Maina's pension scam, kerosene subsidy scam, \$6bn fuel subsidy scam; N123bn fraud, police pension's fund fraud and Stella Oduah's car purchase scandal; NNPC's missing \$20bn, \$15m in private jet arms's scandal, crude oil theft's scandal, Ekiti Gate, Mohammed Abacha's N446bn case and N7bn bribe to Christian religious readers (Ajomole, 2015).
- f. Exposure of the Malabu \$1.1bn oil and the 2016 budget padding scandals.
- g. Media exposure of Sambo Dauki, (Dasuki gate) the former National Security Adviser, alleged diverting and disbursing of over \$2.1bn to various individuals and also sponsoring the second term bid of former President Goodluck Jonathan (Ebuzor, 2016).
- h. Exposure of former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir Lawal, spurious contract of N220m for the removal of grasses and provision of 115 hectares of village irrigation in Yobe State and later transferred the funds to another firm, Rholavision Engineering Limited (Umoru, 2016).
- i. Exposure of breach of due process in the \$25bn contract award involving the Group Managing Director (GMD) of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Dr. Maikanti Baru (Yakubu, 2018).
- j. *Crossriverwatch*, a popular local blog site in Cross River, exposure of some financial impropriety in former governor Ben Ayade's including alleged withdrawal of N4.3bn from local government account for the purported conduct of 2019 general elections and diversion of N500m from the Cross River State Micro Finance Bank meant for farmers as well as Ayade's government awards of contracts without advertising and competitive bidding (Okoro, 2020).

## **CHALLENGES FACING INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING IN NIGERIA**

Investigative journalism faces various challenges, including:

- i. Lack of resources: Investigative reporting need finance because it is time-consuming and resource-intensive. This makes it difficult for news organisations to fund in today's fast-paced news cycle.
- ii. Unfriendly media laws: Journalists may face lawsuits, subpoenas, and other legal challenges for pursuing sensitive stories. Inclusive must be official Secrets Act and State Security laws.
- iii. Access to information: it is somewhat difficult, especially in our clime, Nigeria, to obtain documents, data, and interviews due to government secrecy, corporate confidentiality, and sources' fear of retaliation.
- iv. Safety/security/threats: Journalists may risk physical harm, online harassment, intimidation and surveillance while investigating dangerous or sensitive issues.
- v. Pressure to prioritise clickbait over in-depth reporting.
- vi. Inadequate training and retraining of IJ to enable them stay up-to-date with rapidly changing technologies and digital tools.
- vii. Balancing the need for secrecy with the need for transparency and accountability.
- viii. Difficulty in collaborating with sources and whistleblowers who may have their own agendas.
- ix. Complex ethical dilemmas.
- x. Prebendalism/political patronage due to ownership factor

## **INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM AND INCLUSIVITY**

Journalism is said to exist to serve the public, the implication being “all the public.” This normative vision of journalism’s civic purpose is inclusive. Yet, journalism often serves as a powerful force for exclusion, for keeping quality information away from those who need it most, and for discouraging anyone but the richest, most educated citizens from participating in the public conversation.

Inclusive reporting, therefore, entails journalists striving to report on diverse communities with sensitivity, accuracy, and cultural competence, avoiding stereotypes and biases. Inclusive journalism confronts prejudice

and discrimination by telling stories which reflect diverse perspectives, rebuild trust and help reclaim **journalism** for all of us (<https://inclusivejournalism.cymru/>).

Therefore, Investigative Journalism and inclusivity are interconnected in several ways:

- i. **Diverse perspectives:** Investigative journalism benefits from diverse teams and sources, ensuring a wider range of voices and experiences are represented.
- ii. **Underrepresented communities:** Investigative journalism can shine a light on issues affecting marginalized communities, amplifying their voices and stories.
- iii. **Inclusive reporting:** Journalists should strive to report on diverse communities with sensitivity, accuracy, and cultural competence, avoiding stereotypes and biases.
- iv. **Accessible storytelling:** Investigative journalism should be accessible to diverse audiences, using clear language and formats that cater to different needs and preferences.
- v. **Holding power accountable:** Investigative journalism can expose systemic injustices and promote accountability, which is essential for creating a more inclusive and equitable society.
- vi. **Collaboration and co-creation:** Journalists can collaborate with community members, activists, and experts to co-create investigative projects, ensuring that diverse perspectives shape the narrative.
- vii. **Language accessibility:** Investigative journalism should be translated and made accessible in multiple languages to reach broader audiences.

Note that picaroon journalism practiced by elite journalists and jaundiced investigative journalists have become an encumbrance to inclusivity.

## **INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM AS TOOL TO PROMOTE ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE**

Accountable governance refers to a system of governance where public officials, institutions, and leaders are responsible for their actions, decisions, and policies. The public officers are answerable to the people

and must be transparent in their decision-making processes as well as willing to explain and justify their actions.

Some key principles of accountable government include transparency, responsiveness, answerability, participatory: effectiveness, efficiency and imbibing rule of law. Besides, accountable governance promotes trust in government, human rights, sustainable development, reduced corruption, improve public services and citizen engagement as well as inclusive decision-making

Therefore, for Investigative Journalism to play a crucial role in promoting accountable governance, it should be able to uncover corruption and abuse of power; expose wrongdoing and holding officials accountable; shedding light on government secrecy and transparency and revealing conflicts of interest and unethical behavior.

Furthermore, IJ should be able to providing a platform for whistleblowers and sources; analysing and interpreting complex data and information; conducting in-depth investigations and research; collaborating with other media outlets and organisation; Empowering citizens with accurate and unbiased information and encouraging public debate and discussion

Accountable governance is essential for ensuring that power is used responsibly, and that the public interest is served. By performing these functions, investigative journalism will promotes transparency and accountability in government; supports democratic values and human rights; enhance public trust and engagement in governance; encourages good governance and reform as well as provides a check on power and corruption. In fact, Section 22 of 1999 Constitution highlights the need for the mass media to hold government accountable to the people. However, identity politics limits the work of a good number of investigative journalists on good governance.

### **REQUISITE WRITING SKILLS FOR THE INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST**

- i. Clarity and Conciseness: Ability to distill complex information into concise, easily digestible summaries; convey complex information in a clear, concise manner.

- ii. **Storytelling:** Capacity to craft compelling narratives that engage readers.
- iii. **Precision:** Attention to detail and accuracy in reporting facts and data.
- iv. **Organisation:** Skill in structuring and presenting information in a logical, coherent way.
- v. **Analytical thinking:** Ability to interpret data, identify patterns, and draw meaningful conclusions.
- vi. **Contextualisation:** Capacity to place findings within a broader context, providing readers with a comprehensive understanding.
- vii. **Objectivity:** Ability to maintain a neutral tone and avoid bias.
- viii. **Persuasiveness:** Skill in presenting evidence and arguments in a convincing manner.
- ix. **Transparency:** Willingness to explain methods, sources, and limitations.
- x. **Adaptability:** Ability to adjust writing style and tone to suit different platforms and audiences.
- xi. **Engaging headlines and leads:** Skill in crafting attention-grabbing headlines and introductory paragraphs.
- xii. **Ability to write for different formats:** Skill in writing for various media platforms, such as print, online, and broadcast.
- xiii. **Ability to meet deadlines:** Capacity to work under pressure and deliver high-quality content within tight timelines.
- xiv. **Fact-checking:** Diligence in verifying facts and ensuring accuracy.

## **HOW TO FOSTER INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING (A CASE OF SYBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP)**

Investigative reporting requires a new understanding and commitment between gatekeepers and reporters. There is need for mutual expectations between editors and reporters have expectations and work towards it.

### **Editors/News Managers**

New managers should expect from reporters who want to do investigative stories:

- A realistic appraisal of the “minimum” and “maximum” story that might result from an investigative effort
- Periodic updates on reporting developments.

- Exclusivity for the news outlet—no sharing of investigative reports.
- If necessary, co-operation with other regional or Colombo reporters to broaden the story and deepen its impact.
- Follow ethical guidelines.
- Ideas about photos, graphics and other visual elements.
- Story delivered in the correct format.
- Reliability of information.

### **Reporters Expectations**

Here's what reporters should expect from news outlets while they pursue investigative stories:

- Commitment to publish the story.
- Time and resources to do the story.
- Support within the newsroom, including up the chain of command.
- Byline credit when paired with a Colombo reporter.
- Willingness to stand by or vouch for the provisional reporter.
- Occasional help by intervening to help set up important interviews.
- Cover expenses for transportation, faxing, notebooks, internet access.
- Extra payment for enterprise stories.
- Mentoring, within and outside the media organisation, on investigative reporting techniques and specific mentoring on a story.

### **CONCLUSION**

The practice of investigative journalism is progressively declining as a result of some challenges associated with its practice more especially in the third world countries where corruption, embezzlement, and nepotism are gradually becoming a culture. This ugly scenario has over the years affected the political and economic advancement of Nigeria. Indeed, in many media outfits in Nigeria today, investigative journalism is downplayed because journalists fear the challenges associated with investigative reporting, which includes loss of life, financial constraint, and political interference, existential challenges, cartelism, prebendalism, toxic ethnic identity and the like.

The Constitution of the federal of Nigeria acknowledges this very important role of the media/journalist in Chapter 2, under fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy, when it says that “the state shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power.” Then section

22 of Chapter 2 which empowers the mass media-newspapers, magazines, radio, television, etc- to monitor government and make good accountable to Nigerian people and uphold the objectives of the state is paid lip service to.

Even as the constitution has given enormous powers to journalist to hold those in power accountable, most journalists don't know the extent to which investigative reporting is being practiced and therefore don't engage in it.

But in this noble pursuit, as journalists, our journey often outweighs our destination, and these pivotal tools act as our compass, leading us on the right path— the path to revealing enduring, impactful stories that truly matter.

Investigative journalism, propelled by such potent tools and techniques, ventures to unearth buried realities, delve into questionable practices and, through revelation, earmark responsible parties. These tools simplify tasks that could otherwise take days or even weeks, enabling us to stay up-to-date in the dynamic world that we cover, ensuring we're incredibly equipped to assist the world in its progress towards betterment.

Indeed, investigative journalism is essential for promoting development, ensuring that power is held accountable, and marginalized voices are amplified. Besides, inclusive investigative journalism is essential for uncovering truths, promoting social justice, and amplifying diverse voices. Embracing inclusivity by investigative journalist would help enhance credibility and trust; increase impact and reach; promote social justice and equity; foster a more informed and engaged citizenry and fostering a more diverse and inclusive media landscape.

With regard to accountable governance, it is essential for ensuring that power is used responsibly, and that the public interest is served. Investigative journalism is essential for ensuring that those in power are held accountable for their actions, and that the public has access to accurate and reliable information to make informed decisions.

By promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance, investigative journalism contributes to sustainable development and the

achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

According to Nick Toso and Catalina Villegas, founder and co-founder of *Rolli* respectively, “IJ is a complex and demanding discipline, requiring more than natural curiosity and a knack for writing. It's a pursuit of truth, driven by the powerful combination of in-depth exploration techniques and technology tools. For those ready to dive deep, it's a call to join the vanguard of truth-seekers and the warriors of justice for the public interest” (2023, n.d)

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. News agencies and organisations should take up all expenses incurred by journalists while investigating cases of corruption and crime rather than allow them rely on sources for bribes and payments.
- ii. Exploring the option of employing Freedom of Information Act signed into law by former President Goodluck Jonathan on May 28, 2011. This Act has opened a new vista in our quest for accountability in governance as it affords any person the right to access of request for information from public officials, agencies and institutions.
- iii. That the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) should set up centre for investigative journalism and collaborating with international agencies for special funding and training of journalists.
- iv. Investigative journalists should seek for collaboration and sponsorship from renowned independent investigating team based in US, UK and some European countries, and in Nigeria. Such investigating bodies include, Independent investigating Team of Journalists (US); Bureau of Investigative Journalists (UK); Centre for Investigative Journalism and Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalists (Nigeria).
- v. Investigative journalists should be given more incentives including provide a comprehensive insurance cover because of the risky nature of investigative journalist who go all out to unmask hidden crimes and other societal ills.
- vi. Investigative journalists should demonstrate that they serve the interest of the public by uncovering malfeasance and abuse as well



as develop a sense of outrage as well as a sense of public interest for optimum performance.

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