



Nigerian Media and the Anti-Corruption Campaign: A Discourse of Contemporary Issues and Challenges Delimiting Media Potency

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Abstract

The last three decades witnessed a geometric rise in the quantum and sophistication in the dynamics of corruption in Nigeria. The Transparency International (TI), an international corruption monitoring organization, had, in the 1990s, consistently rated Nigeria as one of the most corrupt nations of the world. Although, bodies, agencies and institutions were put in place by successive Nigerian governments to fight corruption; indications show that much has not been achieved. Thus, if all these institutions and agencies have seemingly failed in the campaign against corruption, the onus rests on the Nigerian media to sensitize the citizenry to the social, political and economic consequences of corruption on the nation. The writer posits that the role of the Nigerian media in mobilizing the citizenry to shun corruption is critical and crucial to the success of the anti-corruption campaign. This piece examines some of the contemporary issues and challenges confronting the Nigerian media as well as suggests some lee-ways to circumventing the challenges so that the Nigerian media can position itself as a potent agent of change.

Keywords: Nigerian Media, Anti-corruption, Mobilization, Citizenry, Change Agent.

Introduction

Most contemporary developing societies are bedeviled by the twin evils of corruption and underdevelopment induced by bad governance. The two evils are

conceptually referred to as 'cause-and-effect' in national development parlance. Where corruption is prevalent and systemic; underdevelopment naturally

becomes its manifestation. Corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria, it is found in virtually every society, whether developed, transitional or underdeveloped. The only difference is the degree of prevalence. While corruption may be systemic in some societies, especially developing ones, it is incidental in others, especially developed societies.

Corruption has become a global phenomenon with its different forms of manifestations highly dependent on the system of power distribution as well as the legal and moral norms in operation. The degree of corruption is inversely proportional to the degree of openness of the system. An open system conceptually promotes freedom of the press and accountability in governance. Corruption is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, it predates the formation of the conglomerate named Nigeria (Familoni, 2005). In Nigeria, corruption is found among the high and the low, in government and out of government, among males and females, and among the young and the old alike. Corruption has become so pervasive in Nigeria that it is often tagged the 'Nigerian way of life'. However, it is important to note that every successive government in Nigeria, especially, since independence, has made some efforts at curbing corruption. Many reforms, laws, statutes, organizations, and agencies have been put in place to curb corruption. However, these bodies have not substantially succeeded in nipping corruption in the bud. Thus, the onus is on the media to take up the challenge by mobilizing the citizenry to shun corruption by educating them on its

negative consequences. This is, of course, in line with the submission of Kaufmann (2004) that successful anti-corruption campaigns are dependent on knowledge and information. Thus, it is imperative to bring the media into the picture because of the critical position they occupy as crucial vehicles for the success of anti-corruption campaigns. However, the media must be well positioned and strategic in devising ways of circumventing the impediments, advertently or inadvertently, created by the society or other institutions of the society in the process of carrying out their functions.

Theoretical Foundation

This discourse is anchored on the Mobilization Model and the Agenda Setting Theory of the press (media).

Mobilization Model

The 20th century ideal of media practice is anchored on the presumed duty of journalists to, through information dissemination, influence and mobilize the general public to demand reforms from the government where and when necessary. Developments in the 20th century drastically changed the hitherto complacency posture of journalists of the 18th and 19th centuries. Media owners of the period (that is, 18th and 19th centuries) were preoccupied majorly with profit-making with little or no

concern for media moral and social responsibility to the public. A newspaper outfit was then seen, according to Protess, Cook, Doppelt, Ettema, Gordon, Leff, and Miller (1991, p.13) as “a private enterprise owning nothing whatsoever to the public, which grants it no franchise. It, therefore, is affected with no public interest. It is, emphatically, the property of the owner, who is selling a manufactured product at his own risk”. Thus, journalists and journalism of the period operated under the principle of the Libertarian Theory of the press, and was not preoccupied with the idea of achieving societal betterment through an informed citizenry. However, contemporary journalism is being guided by a new concept of responsibility to the society. The new paradigm known as the Social Responsibility Theory of the press is hinged on a socially responsible press that is committed to pursuing public enlightenment and to upholding standards of civic morality. Thus, Protess et al. (1991, p.13), while citing the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) state that “the primary purpose of gathering and distributing the news is to serve the general welfare by informing the people and enabling them to make judgement on the issues of the time”. This is encapsulated in the theoretical formulation known as the mobilization model of the press. The

model is premised on the duty of the press to conduct investigations on issues of public interest and expose such misconducts that individuals or public officials may want to hide and through such disclosures galvanize the mass public to exert pressure on the government to take corrective actions. The paradigm holds that the general public when given some doses of exposes by the media becomes a catalyst for change. The paradigm incorporates three major steps. It states that media investigation leads to change in public opinion which ultimately leads to public policy reforms. According to Protess et al. (1991), the mobilization model of the press is based on three assumptions. First, that investigative journalism is capable of mobilizing public opinion. Second, that the public continues to be the linchpin of democracy, and third, that an outraged public can elicit government action against abuses revealed by media muckrakers.

Agenda - Setting Theory

The Agenda-setting theory was propounded by McCombs and Shaw in 1979 after their Chapel Hill Study of 1968 presidential election in America. McQuail (2005:548) defines agenda setting as a “process of media influence (intended or unintended) by which the relative

importance of news events, issues or personages in the public mind are affected by the order of presentation (or relative salience) in news reports". Proponents of the theory posit that, the more the attention given to a topic or event or issue by the media, the greater the importance the news audience will attach to it. This was aptly put together by Rogers (2004:10) when he states that "the amount of news coverage accorded an issue by the media might indeed lead the audience individuals to rate such an issue as more important". The theory is predicated on the assumption that the media predetermine issues that are regarded as important by the audience at any given time. Agenda setting theory does not ascribe to the media the power to determine what people think but what people think about (Folarin, 2002). Agenda setting is achieved through the number of times such issues are reported (frequency), the use of headlines and pictures (prominence), and the opportunity to raise points and counter points (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008). However, Weaver, McCombs and Shaw (2004) identify three levels of agenda setting namely; media agenda setting, public agenda setting, and policy agenda setting. According to the trio, media agenda refers to the issues considered by the media as prominent; public agenda refers to the issues the audience sees as prominent in relation to the prominence or

frequency of coverage given by the media, while policy agenda refers to reforms instituted by the political arm (government) as a result of the pressure caused by both media and public agendas. Thus, this process shows the link between media agitation and necessary reforms (to be) instituted by the government.

Historical Development of the Nigerian Media

What was later christened 'Nigerian Press' could be described as one of the outgrowths of the late 15th and early 16th centuries' agitation against slave trade along the Coast of West Africa. The 'illegitimate trade' which had human beings as 'article of trade' which was later replaced with 'legitimate trade' with commodities as 'article of trade', in the 16th century precipitated the influx of the Europeans into the countries along the Coast of West Africa notably Nigeria, Gold Coast (Ghana), The Gambia and Sierra-Leone. According to Barton (1979, p.20), the Europeans in West Africa "had come to trade, convert and administer". However, with the publication of Black Africa's first Newspaper, *The Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser* in 1801, establishment of "newspapers began to spread slowly at first, then more rapidly and eventually almost like a bush fire out of control throughout the coastal belt of West Africa" (Barton 1979, p.15). Newspapers, subsequently, sprang up in almost all the colonies.

In Nigeria, newspapering was

facilitated by the missionaries who came under the pretence of evangelizing and promoting legitimate trade. According to Sobowale (1985:28):

“in what amounted to an attempt to atone for the sins of Europe during the dark days of the slave trade, missionaries set out to christianize the freed slaves. They also educated them so that they would not only be helpful in spreading the gospel among their kinsmen, but also useful to the Europeans in their businesses”.

With time, religious organizations such as the Methodist Mission, the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Church of Scotland Mission, and the Roman Catholic Mission that had established their stronghold and influence across the length and breadth of Nigeria discovered that they needed some vehicles of communication to assist in pursuing their missionary activities. According to Duyile (2004, p.33), the missionaries began “to think about setting up newspapers that would publish religious news and other news affecting their churches, their converts, and their immediate environment”. The desire to disseminate news about their missionary activities and other happenings precipitated the establishment of printing presses by the missionaries. To Oso (2012, p.13), “the origin of the Nigerian press is closely linked to the Christian Missionary zeal to educate,

evangelize and civilize the 'natives' of their new colonies”. While Rev. Waddel of the Presbyterian Church established a printing press in Duke Town, Calabar in 1846; Rev. Townsend did same in Abeokuta in 1854. Although, the printing presses at the beginning engaged in the production of educational pamphlets, almanacs, arithmetic booklets to further the educational push which the missionaries were propagating, they, however, later graduated to the publishing of newspapers (Duyile, 2004). It was Rev. Henry Townsend's press at Abeokuta that first produced what was later referred to as the first newspaper in Nigeria, *Iwe Irohin fun awon ara Egba ati Yoruba* in 1859, while Rev. Waddel's printing press waited till 1885 before its first newspaper, *Uwana Efik*, could hit the newsstands (Duyile, 2004).

Other newspapers that were established after *Iwe Irohin* included *Anglo-African*, the weekly newspaper founded in 1863 by Robert Campbell, who doubled as the proprietor and editor of the newspaper (Sunday, 2008). Although, *Anglo-African* lasted for two years, *Iwe Irohin*, existed for eight years. History has it that, *Iwe Irohin* collapsed as a result of the uprising of October 13, 1867 by the Egbas against the Europeans and European Missionaries in Abeokuta (Duyile, 2004). The collapse of *Iwe Irohin* created a lull in newspaper publication in Nigeria. For about thirteen years, 1867 to 1880, there was no locally produced newspaper in Nigeria. The blank period, according to Coker (1968), negatively affected both political and social activities of the period. However, the 1880's witnessed the

beginning of newspaper proliferation in Nigeria. Newspapers that came on board included *Lagos Times and Gold Coast Advertiser* (1880), *Lagos Observer* (1882), *The Eagle and Lagos Critic* (1883), *The Mirror* (1887), *Lagos Weekly Record* (1890) and a host of others.

However, it is imperative to point out that broadcasting did not commence in Nigeria until over seven decades after the publication of the first newspaper. It was the colonial masters that introduced broadcasting to Nigeria in 1932 (Sunday, 2008). Broadcasting in Nigeria, according to Oso, Odunlami and Adaja (2011, p.13) “was created by the colonial state to serve the imperial interests particularly during the World War II”.

Aligning with the protection of the imperial interest reason for the establishment of broadcast media in Nigeria, Daramola (2003, p.169) states that, “the intention was mainly to strengthen the colonial hold of Britain on the colonies for political, cultural and economic reasons. The service was to provide information link between Britain and the colonial officers scattered all over the British Empire”.

Specifically, the first form of radio broadcasting in Nigeria was the radio redistribution or rediffusion type in which information or programmes were “relayed by means of wires connected to loud speakers installed in the homes of subscribers” (Akalugo, 2001, p.16). In 1932, the

British Empire Service commenced the broadcasting of programmes from Deventry, England to Lagos (Kalejaiye, Atofojomo and Odunlami, 2006). Thus, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC's) programmes were relayed through radio waves (known as wired broadcasting) to Lagos. This, according to Akalugo (2001) was also known as Radio Distribution Service (RDS) which was under the control of the Posts and Telegraphs department. Wired broadcasting was commissioned in Lagos in 1935, and thirteen stations were opened in the three regions, namely, North, East, and West. In the Northern region, stations were opened in Katsina, Jos, Zaria, Sokoto, Maiduguri and Ilorin. In the Eastern region, the stations were, Port Harcourt, Calabar and Onitsha; and in the Western region, Warri, Abeokuta and Ijebu-Ode (Akalugo, 2001). The Radio Distribution Service (RDS) was the precursor of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) that was established in 1951 which metamorphosed into the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) in 1957.

The establishment of the NBC precipitated the founding of both federal and regional broadcasting stations (radio and television). The Western region established its own television station, the first television station in Black Africa in 1959, while its radio station was established in

1960. The other two regions – East and North, followed suit. While the former Eastern region established its radio and television stations in 1960, the Northern region's broadcasting services took off in 1962. Thus, the proliferation of states in Nigeria in the 1970s, 80s and 90s equally led to the proliferation of broadcasting stations, both radio and television. It is, however, important to point out that the establishment, ownership and control of the broadcast industry at the time remained exclusively under the purview of the governments (federal and region/state). Thus, according to Akinjogbin and Atofojomo (2012, p.105), “broadcasting in Nigeria started under the control of the government, and it was used principally as a tool of propaganda and to influence information made available to the public”.

However, with the promulgation of the National Broadcasting Commission Decree 38 of 1992 by the Babangida Administration, the Nigerian Broadcast industry became deregulated, and private ownership of broadcast media was allowed. By 1993, licences were given out to private investors to establish broadcast media. And in 1994, the first private radio station in Nigeria, Ray Power 100.5 FM, took off (Kalejaiye et al., 2006). Other radio and television stations have since been established.

Corruption and Anti-Corruption Campaign in Nigeria

The various manifestations of corruption have made the concept so vague and nebulous that it has become difficult to capture all the features in a single definition. Thus, the concept, that is corruption, has been defined variously and variedly by scholars with each laying emphasis on some elements central or germane to his/her discipline or profession. However, the common denominator of all the definitions has to do with officials' flagrant misuse or abuse of office, most often for private gains. Begovic (2005 p. ?) sees corruption as the intentional non-compliance with 'the arms-length principle' with the aim of deriving some advantages either for oneself or for related individuals.

Corruption encompasses all activities or actions that are illegitimate, dishonest, illicit, illegal and dubious. However, some scholars opine that corruption could be positive or negative. According to George (2012, p.17), “there is positive corruption where the illegal proceeds of corruption are internalized or used within the domestic economy, while negative corruption occurs where the illegal proceeds are externalized, that is exported or invested in foreign countries”. Corruption is not limited to a country, society or region. It has become a global phenomenon exhibiting different kinds of manifestations that are contingent upon the system of power distribution as well as the subsisting legal

framework. Corruption is found in virtually every society of the world. The only difference is the degree of occurrence, while corruption could be pervasive and endemic in some societies, especially developing/underdeveloped ones; it could be incidental and minimal in others, especially developed countries. The degree of freedom inherent in the system determines the level and incidence of corruption.

In Nigeria, corruption has more or less become a way of life. It has become a principal means of wealth accumulation (Osoba, 1996). Corruption is, probably, as old as Nigeria, because history has it that incidences of corruption existed before the colonial era. Sokefun (n.d) posits that the traditional system that existed before the colonial administration was not corruption free. The traditional rulers (Obas, Emirs and Obis) wielded great powers and influence among their subjects. The arrangement was devoid of accountability, inclusiveness and participation. For example, in Yorubaland, the Oba is literally referred to as 'Kabiyesi', which is interpreted as 'no one can question his authority'. This apparent lack of accountability, transparency and probity encouraged misuse and abuse of power. Also, the contraption that was named Nigeria was fraught with corruption.

According to Familoni (2005, p.39), "the country was decreed into existence in 1914 with the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern British Protectorates by Lord Lugard. There was no objective criterion for the amalgamation except for the administrative

convenience of the British colonialists". Corruption has, since continued to grow in Nigeria. The country, that "in 1981 had a GNP per capital of US\$870 and ranked among the 50 richest nations of the world, has today become one of the poorest nations of the world with a per capital income of about US\$300" (Ade-Ojo and Leigh, n.d, pp.148-149). Corruption had witnessed a phenomenal rise both in diversification and sophistication, especially, since the discovery of oil in the 1970s. The oil boom has been both a blessing and a curse to Nigeria.

According to Salisu (2000, p.2), "it is a blessing because it launched Nigeria into the international capital markets and a curse because it provided opportunities for rent-seeking activities as well as corrupt practices in both private and public sectors of the economy". Thus, between 1995 and 2005, Nigeria was consistently ranked by the Berlin-based Transparency International (TI) as one of the five most corrupt nations of the world. Salisu (2000, p.9) states that "Keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping a goat from eating cassava". Thus, the level of corruption has adversely affected Nigeria's economy. Citing Salisu (2000, p.15), "statistical exercise revealed that the magnitude of corruption on the Nigerian economy has been quite considerable as it increased from 11 percent of the GDP in the 1960s to around 60 percent in the 1990s". Thus, the spate of corrupt practices has portrayed the country in a bad light, both locally and internationally. President Jonathan, remarks that "the widespread international perception of Nigeria as a corrupt country has

caused damage to the dignity and honour of many honest and diligent Nigerians and to the country's global competitiveness" (*The Nation*, June 4, 2013, p.7).

However, it is important to note that, the campaign against corruption in Nigeria, especially by the governments, could be traced to the period before independence. Before the enactment of the anti-graft act in Nigeria, there existed the Criminal Code and the Penal Code as the principal legislations against criminal conducts. While the Criminal Code applied to the Southern region of Nigeria, the Penal Code was for the Northern region of Nigeria. Both contained provisions to combat corrupt practices in the public sector. For example, Chapter 12 of the Criminal Code titled "Corruption and Abuse of Office", criminalized and prescribed punishment for public officials guilty of corruption. Section 98 of the criminal code states that, "[. . .] a public officer is guilty of the crime of official corruption if he corruptly demands or obtains benefits of any kind either for himself or for any other person in return for his action or official duties, particularly, or any matter connected with Government" (Sokefun, n.d, p.54).

Also, Section 419 of the Criminal Code prescribes punishment for anyone who obtains goods by false pretence and with intent to defraud. False pretence, according to Sokefun (n.d, p.16), is defined as "any representation made by words, writing or conduct of a matter of fact either past or present which representation is false in fact, and which the person making it known to be false or does not believe to be true". Also, Section 494 (I) of the Criminal

Code makes it an offence for any agent or officer to corruptly accept any gift or consideration whatsoever, from any person either for himself or another person as an inducement or reward for doing or for bearing to do an act in relation to his principal's affairs or business. As a matter of fact, the Criminal Code is replete with a number of provisions to combat corruption and other forms of abuse of office.

It is pertinent to state that government determination to combat corruption before and after independence was aptly demonstrated by the different commissions or tribunals set up to investigate allegations of misappropriation by public officials. In 1956, the Foster Sutton Tribunal of Enquiry was set up to investigate Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, the Premier of Eastern Region, for allegedly diverting huge sums of money belonging to the Eastern Nigeria to finance his Bank, Africa Continental Bank (ACB) as well as enriching himself in the process. Also, the G.B.A. Coker Commission of Inquiry of 1962 was instituted to probe Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Premier of Western Region, having being alleged that he and his colleagues in the leadership of Action Group (AG) fraudulently diverted funds accruing to the Cocoa Marketing Board of Western Region to finance their party, the Action Group (AG) (Osoba, 1996).

It is also on record that, the Agunyi-Ironsi government that came to power after the aborted Nzeogu coup of January 1966 instituted various investigating panels to probe government parastatals and assets of public officers that served in the first

republic. The Ironsi government lasted only six months as it was toppled by the July 29, 1966 counter-coup that brought Gen. Gowon to power. Although, the Gen. Gowon administration was 'divinely' favoured by the oil boom of the 1970s, the regime wasted and squandered the oil money (wealth). According to Salisu (2000, p.5), "the oil boom was responsible for the 'Dutch Disease Syndrome' in Nigeria[...]The use of oil boom resources to finance large scale public expenditure programmes introduced grand (political) corruption in Nigeria". Thus, the spate of corruption under Gen. Gowon provoked the Muritala-Obasanjo palace coup of July 29, 1975. The Muritala-Obasanjo regime equally waged a noisy war against corruption. It set up many probe panels which revealed many scandalous cases of fraudulent and unlawful enrichment on the part of many high ranking officers. The outcome of the probe led to the dismissal of ten out of twelve State governors that served under Gen. Gowon, many federal and state permanent secretaries, chairmen and board members of federal and state public corporations and other government functionaries (Osoba, 1996).

The 1979 Constitution also made provisions for fight against corruption. The constitution provided for a Code of Conduct for public officers and a Code of Conduct Bureau for the enforcement of the prescribed punishment for breaches. However, the Shagari administration did not utilize to the fullest the provisions of the 1979

Constitution. Corruption continued to thrive in the country, and this led to the Buhari-Idiagbon take over in 1983. The Buhari-Idiagbon regime took a stern and harsh response to the twin ills of corruption and indiscipline among public officers especially, and Nigeria citizens as a whole. As a result of this, many public officials who served in the regime of Shagari were incarcerated for a fairly long time while others were tried by special military tribunals and sentenced to life or long terms of imprisonment. The regime instituted and pursued vigorously its 'War Against Indiscipline and Corruption' (WAIC). It is important to point out that other regimes - Gen. Babangida, Chief Sonekan, Gen. Abacha and Gen. Abdulsalam publicly decried the spate of corruption in Nigeria and instituted policies and steps to curb corruption, most of the regimes only paid lip service to the programmes.

On assumption of office in 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo unambiguously stated his resolve to tackle corruption. According to Sonaike (2003:115), Chief Obasanjo, "rode to power on an agenda of reform top of which was a promise to rid the country of corruption and to bring accountability back into governance". As a matter of fact, the first bill to be sent to the National Assembly by Chief Obasanjo was the anti-corruption bill which resulted in the enactment of the Corrupt Practices (and other related) Offences Act of June 13, 2000 which established the Independent Corrupt Practices (and other related) Offences Commission (ICPC). In furtherance of the determination and commitment of the Chief Obasanjo administration

to curb corruption, he established the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Act which was signed into law on June 4, 2004.

In spite of all these efforts, corruption remained the number one social ill in Nigeria. For a period of five years (2000-2004), Nigeria was consistently rated either as the most corrupt nation or second most corrupt nation among the countries selected for corruption rating in the whole world by the Transparency International (TI). Thus, if the structures and agencies put in place to curb corruption in Nigeria have not significantly changed the status quo; it becomes imperative to cross-examine the link between laws/statutes, enforcement agencies, and the public/masses expected to change their attitude and disposition to corruption. The link in this regard is the media. Thus, it is imperative to cross examine roles expected to be played by the Nigerian media in the campaign against corruption.

Role Expectation of the Nigerian Media in the Anti-Corruption Campaign

In every setting, either democratic or authoritarian, the media institution usually positions itself between the 'governors' and the 'governed', whether it (media) is seen as being equidistant between the agencies of power (government) and the public (masses), or is nearer to one than the other (Sparks, 1995). It is crucial to admit that the media institution is responsible for connecting both the governor and the governed together in every society. According to Esan

(2000, p.107), the media “are responsible for connecting the different parts of society [...] responsible for helping us understand each other better [...] and responsible for what we know of the others who may be far removed from us”.

The position of the media is universally recognized as crucial and critical to the success of any government as well as its programmes. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, while highlighting the obligations of the mass media, states in its Chapter 11 Section 22 that, “the press, radio, television 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”. This buttresses the enormous responsibility vested on the media in ensuring accountability, transparency and good governance. Thus, media responsibility in ensuring a corruption-free society is hinged on this constitutional provision. According to Alawode (2011, p. 239) “[...] the press has obligation to provide full and accurate information on matters of public interest, through which governments, institutions, organizations and all others in authority, at whatever level, are held accountable to and by the people”.

The pivotal role of the media in combating corruption cannot be controverted. Although, corruption has become a global phenomenon, it is important to note that effective strategy of curbing corruption can only be home-grown, because specific strategy is required for specific incidence. Hardly can any

anti-corruption campaign programme succeed without incorporating the media into the programme. Successful anti-corruption campaigns usually depend on knowledge and information majorly provided by the media. This position was corroborated by a schema developed by Kaufmann (Stapenhurst, 2000) as a potent formula for fighting corruption. The schema states that, Anti-Corruption (AC) equals Knowledge and Information (KI) plus Leadership (LE) plus Collective Action (CA) [AC = KI + LE + CA]. The strategy upholds that, for anti-corruption campaign to achieve success, it must be supported and promoted by the media through their knowledge-based and orientation-changing information. Thus, for the much touted anti-corruption campaigns of successive governments in Nigeria to yield expected results, the Nigerian media should pro-actively and correspondingly take some actions, among which are:

Information and Education

The media are information bearers between the leaders and the led. They carry and disseminate information from the leaders to the citizenry and vice versa. Thus, it is expected of the media to provide information that will open the consciousness of the citizenry to the problems associated with corruption and to educate the masses on how to curb the epidemic. Media organizations should publish stories, news, commentaries and

news analyses that will help the listening or viewing audience to take informed decisions. The media, through information and education, can create and maintain an atmosphere of public life or lifestyle that will discourage corruption among the citizenry. The prevalence of corruption in Nigeria, according to White (2010, p.45) is an “evidence of a lack of system awareness”. White (2010, p.45) posits that the awareness by public officials that, “if I do my duty, I will also be benefited when others do theirs”, will go a long way in discouraging people from corrupt practices. Also, the realization that, if 'I steal funds meant for education and deny some people quality education; somebody somewhere will steal the funds for road construction or maintenance that will affect me'. Thus, if the damage or harm such corrupt practices will cause could be successfully registered in the sub-consciousness of the citizenry, quite a number of those with that tendency will change or give up the idea.

Involvement in the Anti-Corruption Campaign

The media should be actively involved in the campaign against corruption. The contemporary challenges in the society have necessitated the media to 'move from without to within'. The media being the fourth estate of the realm confers

on it the responsibility of representing and protecting the interest of the masses. According to Sparks (1995, p.51), “the claim of the press (media) as an estate is premised on the fact that, it represented the disenfranchised in the deliberations of the representatives of the enfranchised”. Thus, to conceive media's role as simply reporting activities of the government is inadequate. The media should actively participate and contribute in the legislative processes leading to decision taking as well as execution of actions leading to implementation and execution, as well as evaluation of programmes. The media possess the unique power of knowing, measuring and organizing public opinion such that their participation in the processes of decision making and decision implementation would afford policy makers the opportunity of coming up with decisions, policies and programmes that will represent, reflect and meet the needs, yearnings and expectations of the masses. Thus, implementing such policies and programmes would be easy and successful because the citizenry would easily key into such. For anti-corruption programmes to succeed, the media must not be made to report from outside but from inside. Media involvement in the entire process will make the media subsume their reports, news stories, commentaries, news analyses, etc. under a news

genre known as development communication. A communication genre, which Udoakah (1998) explains as a new journalism philosophy which was introduced to meet the development needs of the developing nations of the world. It is a communication strategy that communicates appeals from the government to citizens for co-operation as well as appeals to citizens to adopt new ideas and ways of doing things (Udoakah, 1998). Thus, the underlying philosophy governing the media system would be the systematic use of communication resources to pursue developmental goals at the individual, community and societal levels (Anaeto and Anaeto, 2010).

Mobilizing the Citizenry Against Corruption

The contemporary ideal of journalism practice is anchored on the belief that journalism should, through the dissemination of information, influence and shape public opinion and mobilize the masses to request for reforms from the government where and when necessary. The new paradigm of media practice is hinged on the Social Responsibility Theory of the media. The contemporary media system is governed by the 'media's responsibility to inform' and the 'public's right to know'. Thus, the media institution is expected to

pursue public enlightenment and uphold standard of public morality. News stories, opinions, commentaries, news analyses, etc. are to be framed and presented in a manner that the public will easily interpret and understand them. The slant of news reportage and presentation should be such that will serve the public's general welfare as well as promote public enlightenment. According to Breit (2010, p.62) while citing Chen and Meindi (1991), states, "the distinction between what is included in texts and what is left out or downplayed is a crucial factor in influencing audience interpretations". The media, by reporting corrupt practices among public officials, would activate the consciousness of the citizenry to pressurize policy makers (government) to effect reforms in the necessary parts of the state laws, provisions and statutes. This paradigm holds that the general public, when given some doses of exposes by the media, becomes a catalyst for change. The model known as 'Mobilization Model' is based on the assumption that media exposes lead to policy reforms by first changing public opinion (Protest, Cook, Deppelt, Ettema, Gordon, Leff and Miller, 1991). Thus, it has become a necessity for the media to carry along the masses in the campaign against corruption.

According to Justice Mustapha Akanbi, pioneer Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices (and other related) Offences Commission (ICPC) in Nigeria, "[...] every one of us is an agent for fighting corruption. And, unless we accept the challenge, Nigeria cannot change. This is because greed has become the order of the day" (*The Nation*, May 20, 2013 p. 5).

Investigating and Reporting Malfeasance

It is the duty of the media to investigate all allegations of misconduct and abuse of power by public office holders as well as report and publish their findings in the public domain. It is not enough for the media to raise public awareness about corruption, its causes, consequences and possible remedies; it is the responsibility of the media to investigate and publish cases of corruption (Stapenhurst, 2000). Media exposure of corrupt officials through investigation and reporting may prompt or generate public hatred or hostility to such persons or government such that such officials or government may eventually be voted out of office in subsequent election, especially in a democracy. It is a fact, that evil thrives in secrecy, and when such acts are exposed, perpetrators are shamed. Woodrow Wilson, former President of the United States of America, once

commented that, “everyone knows that corruption thrives in secret places and avoids public places and we believe it is a faith presumption that secrecy means impropriety” (Stapenhurst, 2000, p.14). Thus, through hard-hitting journalism, all abuses committed by public officials would be exposed, and there would be no place to hide and that will compel those with corruption tendencies to embrace new lifestyles.

Exposing Procedural Flaws

There may exist some flaws or inadequacies in the laws, procedures, and statutes of the land that are encouraging corruption. It is the duty of the media to point out such openings to policy makers to close. Media investigations can reveal or identify gaps, flaws or weaknesses in anti-corruption laws, regulations or procedure for investigating or prosecuting suspected corrupt officers, that promote corruption, such that such authorities are urged to change or consider changing those laws. Since the media possess the legitimacy to interview or seek information on any issue of public interest; experts or professionals' views on such matters or issues are sought. Such experts may have identified and chronicled the challenges in the area. Thus, when such flaws and challenges are reported by the media, the agency or

institution concerned can begin the process of amending such laws.

Giving Support to other Anti-Corruption Bodies

The role of the media in investigating, reporting, and helping other bodies and agencies to combat corruption cannot be quantified. Media reports on allegation of corrupt practices usually motivate anti-corruption agencies and other prosecutorial bodies such as the police, court, task forces, anti-graft agencies like ICPC, EFCC, Code of Conduct Bureau, etc. to embark on full scale investigation. Such reports could either be a public scrutiny of the operations and efficiency of such bodies or reinforce credibility and legitimacy of such bodies. Media reportage of the work and findings of anti-corruption agencies and prosecutorial bodies will enhance their effectiveness in that such will create public support and confidence for them.

Contemporary Challenges and the Anti-Corruption Campaign by Nigerian Media

The history of the Nigerian media is replete with a lot of 'kudos', both before and after independence. At every point in the life of the country, the Nigerian media had played significant roles in growing and sustaining the country. In the struggles against colonial domination, the desire to obtain

independence, the fight against military autocracy, and in the entrenchment of democracy; the Nigerian media played magnificent roles. Olukotun (2000, p.94), while reiterating the commendation a former NADECO leader, Chief Anthony Enahoro, gave the Nigerian press, states, “I send my heartiest appreciation to the heroes of the media without which the battle would have been prolonged, perhaps, even lost. I thank them all not only for their sacrifices but also for keeping the fires of democracy and free speech burning when it was easy to have done otherwise”.

In spite of the numerous accolades showered on the Nigerian media, it has been and continued to be vibrant and combative, Momoh (2000, p.38) posits that “there have been thorns and ditches on its path” especially, in the struggle to be a potent change agent in the campaign against corruption in Nigeria. One great challenge the media now contend with is that whistle-blower journalists run a higher risk of assassination in the contemporary society. Reputable journalists known to have investigated and exposed corruption in high places had been murdered by agents hired for such purposes. Journalists such as Sayomchai Vijitwittayapong of the *Matichon* daily newspaper in Thailand, Oscar Garcia Calderon of *El Espectador* newspaper in Colombia, Larisa Yudina of *Sovietskaya Kalmykia Today* in Russia, Dele Giwa of *Newswatch* in Nigeria, and a host of others across the globe were assassinated for investigating or possessing information that can indict the people in the corridors of

power. Stapenhurst (2000), while re-echoing the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists states that out of the 17 journalists killed in the first half of 1998, at least 7 had investigated or denounced cases of corruption.

Another challenge facing the media is that majority of the institutions established to enforce anti-corruption laws are weak. Media investigations and exposes can only be effective if such lead to the repeal of laws that allow corruption to thrive and/or punishment for apprehended corrupt officials. However, when such allegations are investigated and reported by the media, anti-corruption agencies or bodies with prosecutorial powers are expected to take up from there. But, when such allegations are poorly handled by anti – corruption agencies, and probably, deliberately created loopholes to allow the culprit escape justice, not only will the whistle-blower be discouraged, his/her life becomes endangered. In some cases, to the consternation of the public, judgments given by judges are illogical, non-commensurate to the offence committed and difficult for the public to comprehend.

Again, media's efforts in the anti – corruption campaign are being hindered by lack of access to information and/or the unwillingness of public officials to disclose information. Hoarding of facts and figures pertaining to corrupt activities of public officers usually constrains media publication, especially when such allegations can not be verified.

Furthermore, media's anti –

corruption activities, especially in whistle – blowing, are being constrained by oppressive judicial system. Whistle – blowing or alarm – raising power of the media is immensely restrained by the laws of Libel, Seditious, Privacy, etc. Journalists' fear of being arrested, prosecuted and even convicted by the court for whistle – blowing, especially when such acts cannot be immediately verified due to non – cooperation of public officers, has put some limitations to media's efforts at reporting corruption cases in Nigeria.

Above all, for the media to be proactive in its information dissemination function, especially in investigating and reporting official misconduct and abuse of power, the media must enjoy financial autonomy. Investigative journalism is capital intensive; journalists may at times spend days, weeks or months in unraveling leaks. It means sufficient money is required in making contacts, meeting and interviewing people, travelling, photocopying and documentation. This is a serious burden on most media organizations considering the country's economic hardship and proportion or percentage of patronage.

Strategies to Enhance Media Performance

The contemporary society has vested quite a number of responsibilities on the media, irrespective of the constraints and limitations fostered on it by the prevailing/existing structures and institutions in society. The media, as the intermediary institution between the ruler and the

ruled, can never be justifiably excused for abdicating its watchdog responsibility as a result of limitations or challenges structurally or institutionally imposed on it. Thus, it is imperative for the media to find means of circumventing the challenges to claim its pivotal role in society. For the media to remain relevant and effective in the campaign against corruption in Nigeria, the following suggestions/recommendations must be considered.

First, media practitioners and stakeholders should conscientiously promote professionalism. A profession, according to Hornby (2000) refers to “a type of job that needs special training or skills, especially one that needs a high level of education”. Nigerian media and stakeholders are expected as a matter of importance encourage and promote professionalism, for the media to remain relevant in the scheme of things in the contemporary society. According to Adaja (2012, p.17), “[. . .] for journalists to perform those functions as prescribed by the constitution of the land, they must be properly schooled in the art and science of journalism”. The role of the modern journalist requires practitioners to be intellectually and technically sound as well as possess sufficient knowledge of the ethical requirements of the profession. Sufficient knowledge about the intricacies of the profession will make the journalist be on top of whatever challenge or constraints that may want to hinder him/her in carrying out the professional

responsibilities assigned to him/her. Professional competence will make the journalist know that it is the duty of the media to meet the “public's right to know” with the “media's right to inform”, and to ensure government's accountability to the people.

Second, Journalists should tap optimally the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. The Nigeria FOI Act, which was signed into law in May, 2011 by former President Goodluck Jonathan after a decade of dilly – dallying, provides that every citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has a legally enforceable right to request and be given access to public records in custody of any government or public institution. This provision, coupled with the freedom of the press to publish without prior approval, has given Nigerian media practitioners (Journalists) the latitude to ask, seek, unveil and publish public officers' misconducts. The fact that every citizen or journalist has the support of the court to enforce access to information, especially if it could be proven to be of public interest, is enough motivation for journalists to expose abuses of office by public officers. Thus, Nigerian journalists should exploit maximally the provisions of the FOI Act 2011 to unfold secret acts or abuses of public officials such that those exposes would prompt other bodies or agencies with prosecutorial powers to take over from there.

Third, for better performance in the campaign against corruption, the Nigerian media should place more emphasis on investigative journalism. The modern society requires the media to go beyond mere

reporting of events to the levels of active involvement both in decision making and implementation. Media practitioners should be involved in unearthing cases of corruption or abuses of office. It is a fact that, hard-hitting reporting by the media sometimes prompts prosecutorial bodies to launch formal investigation on such issues. According to Stapenhurst (2000), investigative journalism training increases media practitioners' awareness of corrupt practices as well as the strategies to be adopted to curb it and sensitizes the public to the likely damages to society. Through investigative journalism, public officials' misdeeds are exposed which may lead to the prosecution, resignation or sack of the officers concerned. According to Sonaik (2003), an investigative report of forgery committed by Alhaji Salisu Buhari, former speaker of the House of Representatives by the *News Magazine* on July 12, 1999, eventually led to his resignation on July 21, 1999. The magazine had in its July 12, 1999 edition titled the 'Face of a Liar' reported that the speaker, Salisu Buhari, lied about his age and academic qualifications and had presented forged documents to the Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the qualification requirements for intending or prospective contestants. After much noise and scheming, Salisu Buhari admitted that he lied and resigned on July 21, 1999. This corroborates the power of the media in exposing and curbing corruption, as well as the saying that 'the pen is mightier than the sword'.

Furthermore, the issue of the protection of journalists is key to the success of the anti – corruption

campaign. If journalists are to investigate and expose corruption especially at high places, their safety and protection must be guaranteed. First and foremost, the government and other security agencies must be ready to provide journalists on investigative missions the necessary cover. The risk of being harmed, kidnapped, killed or assassinated must be reduced to the barest minimum.

Second, the media organization must make available all necessary materials and facilities that will encourage and enhance the performance of the journalist. Media organizations should put in place a solid arrangement and structure to defend the journalist in case of attack, arrest or prosecution. As a matter of fact, the life of each and every journalist must be insured, while a adequate arrangement or compensation for the immediate family of each journalist must be guaranteed in case of any eventuality. Above all, adequate and/or attractive remuneration must be provided for journalists, especially those on investigative missions, because exposes 'sell' news organizations more than the daily routine news. As such media organization managers must allocate substantial resources to investigative journalism.

Again, media reports on corruption should, apart from being informational and educative, be persuasive. If the underlying basis for media intervention is to curb corruption; such news stories, commentaries, editorials, news analyses, etc. must be splashed with persuasive messages. News reporting or dissemination of information is

different from persuasion. According to Sobowale (2013, p.24), "the aim of persuasion is to change people's views, positions and decisions on issues or products and get them to take certain action". To feel the impact of the media on the campaign against corruption, the media must transcend its informational posture/function by technically and tacitly emphasizing its correlational function. Media practitioners may embed in their corruption stories what necessary actions to take, how to go about it, and why such actions are considered imperative. With this, the citizenry will not only be informed, but sufficiently educated about the pros and cons of corruption as well as the direction to direct their thoughts.

Furthermore, Nigerian journalists owe the citizenry the duty of following through all reported corruption cases. It is a common occurrence in Nigeria for journalists to abandon cases half-way. There is the need for the Nigerian media to review their strategy for optimum performance or impact. When journalists stumble on leaks, reports should ginger concerned bodies to investigate, anti – corruption agencies should be prompted to summon, arrest and prosecute suspects.

The media should resist any attempt to kill or sweep the case under the carpet, no matter the calibre of the persons involved. Media persistence and insistence on observing due process and the rule of law as well as reporting the case at every stage will make it difficult for any manipulation to take place. Journalists are expected to monitor

and report the trial or prosecution of the suspects even beyond conviction. Cases abound where journalists stop reporting corruption cases in court before judgment was delivered.

However, for maximum impact, journalists are expected to report beyond conviction, because in some cases fines are awarded, refunds are to be made, properties are confiscated or accounts are frozen. In cases like these, the citizenry requires to be informed whether such judgments are implemented or not. Also, what happened to properties seized, money refunded or account frozen must be reported. This will serve as a deterrent to others.

Above all, media practitioners themselves should shun corruption if they want to wage a successful war against the epidemic. The saying that 'those who must go to equity must go with clean hands' applies here. Thus, journalists should abreast themselves with the necessity to purge themselves of all vices, such as brown envelopes, political harlotry, partisanship, nepotism, ethnicity and subjectivity in reporting.

Journalists must consistently seek to acquire knowledge on the causes, manifestations, consequences and the different dimensions of corruption. Citing Jason (2000, p.120), "those (journalists) who inform must be well informed themselves". Adequate information and sufficient knowledge of corruption as well as the role expectations of the media institution in the campaign against corruption will go a long way in helping journalists to live up to the expectations of the society.

Conclusion

Although, corruption has become a universal phenomenon exhibiting different kinds of manifestations and sophistication in different societies/nations of the world; it has equally become a difficult task/venture to compose a definition of corruption that is all inclusive of the different nuances. Corruption, in most developing countries, Nigeria inclusive, has become so pervasive that it has become a nightmare of sorts to successive governments-both military and civilian. Thus, it has become the concern of most Nigerian governments to seek ways and means of tackling menace effective.

Successive Nigerian governments have each created structures and agencies to curb corruption. In spite of the Criminal Code and Penal Code for the prosecution of criminal cases in the Southern and the Northern parts of Nigeria; both the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions provided for the establishment of other organs to deal with corruption and criminal cases. Such bodies include, the Code of Conduct Bureau, Bureau of Private Enterprises, Public Complaints Commission, etc. However, in view of the shortcomings of these bodies, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) was established in 2000 while the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established in 2004 to handle corruption cases. It is important to note, as earlier stated, that all those provisions and agencies did not substantially succeed in the campaign against corruption in Nigeria.

Thus, the onus falls on the Nigerian media as a change agent to proactively put to bear its professional responsibility of informing, educating and persuading the citizenry to embrace a new lifestyle that is devoid of corrupt tendencies. The media institution occupies a central position in society. It possesses the constitutional right / obligation and professional competencies to bring about change when other institutions seem to have failed.

The society depends on the media for information and education, and the media have the freedom to decide the slant or frame of giving out information that will bring about the expected result. Thus, the media institution, as a last resort of sorts, has the responsibility of galvanizing and mobilizing the citizenry to abhor both corruption and those harbouring corrupt tendencies in the society

However, it is important to note that the media institution is seemingly constrained by a number of challenges, especially in the contemporary society. Media practitioners or journalists who embark on investigative missions are always prone to attacks, threats of kidnapping, assassination, etc., especially when high ranking officials are involved. Weak public institutions as well as lack of adequate protection for the journalists have been found to demotivate journalists in the quest to unravel official corruption in high places in Nigeria. Absence of life insurance, Police protection and institutional support for journalists who have flair for investigative journalism often discourage them

from pursuing corruption stories. However, all the above and other limitations do not suggest that the journalist should jettison his watchdog responsibility. According to Professor Modupe Adelabu, a former Deputy Governor of Ekiti State, "the lone voice listened to and believed by the masses is that of the media; therefore, reporters should be objective in the discharge of their duties... and the media should remain patriotic in raising the stakes of accountability [...]" (*The Nation*, July 29, 2013. P.8). Media practitioners should find ways of circumventing both environmental and institutional challenges.

First and foremost, Nigerian journalists should tap into the provisions of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. The Act provides for an enforceable right of every citizen to ask government or public institution to make information available to him/her at request. This is a window of opportunity that the Nigerian journalists are yet to effectively utilize. According to a survey by 'One Voice', 'a coalition of some Civil Society Organization, "... since the Act's (FOI) passage in 2011, there has been no report of our media organization taking government to court over denial of access to information" (*The Nation*, June 4, 2013 P.32). Thus, with effective use of the provisions of Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, and deliberate and conscious promotion of professionalism and investigative journalism; the media would make the difference in the anti-graft campaign in Nigeria.

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