



AUDIENCE ASSESSMENT OF BROADCAST MEDIA SURVEILLANCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Amongst the many functions of the media, the surveillance function is no doubt, a very fundamental role. This function places a demand on the media to scan the environment and report dangers, especially impending dangers, which largely contribute to the insecurity of lives and property. In line with the sensitive nature of this function and the current insecurity situation in Nigeria, it becomes pertinent to assess how far the Nigeria's broadcast industry has fared in fulfilling the surveillance function and how the industry's audiences perceive its performance. The residents of six selected cities from the six geo-political zones of Nigeria were sampled. Questionnaire served as the measuring instrument. Using survey research method, we found out, amongst others, that the broadcast media are not effective in the discharge of their surveillance function. In line with the findings, the paper recommends amongst others that the Nigerian broadcast media must, as a matter of necessity, contribute to the security of the country by effectively playing the surveillance role.

KEY WORDS: Surveillance function, Security, Broadcast media, Audience, Assessment, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Amongst the core responsibilities of the media, the surveillance function takes a critical role. Here, the media are expected to bring to the consciousness of the public impending dangers. This function places a demand on the media to cover, analyze and report impending dangers that are threats to lives and properties of a given society. Keshku (2003, p. 39), while writing on media surveillance, asserts that, "This is a process of collecting and distributing information about local, national and international events and conditions. Example is information on the recent

face-off between the United States and Iraq over weapons of mass destruction, etc."

Odigbo (2003, p. 178) citing Lasswell ((1984), observes that the "they (mass media) watch over, guard and alert society of impending problems and often proffer the way forward" while Amuchiazi (1999) asserts that:

The media further exercise surveillance over the environment and alert members of the society to the realities of their environment. The media normally report what is

wrong in the society and take bold and firm stand on its inadequacies like drug addictions, fake drug importation, hard drug trafficking, armed robberies, political thuggery, hired assassinations, smuggling, environmental degradations, economic sabotage, lack of basic social amenities, high unemployment rate, downturns in education, poor healthcare, the outbreak of epidemics and so on and so forth in their watchdog and surveillance functions (Odigbo, 2003, p. 178).

Writing on media surveillance also, Josephat (2008, p. 25) avers that:

The surveillance function or role of the media presupposes that the media are the eyes and ears of the public. The media provide information and alert their heterogeneous audiences of the changes that take place around them. The media consistently survey the environment and convey salient issues or mediated messages to the audience in order to reduce uncertainties and consequently react to the conflict or change in a rational way. The media in discharging their surveillance function, usually scout round the environment and bring news of social, economic and political developments, dangers that are threats to national stability, threats to

public welfare, environmental pollution and degradation as well as scandals of varying dimensions to the people.

Mu'azu (2002, p. 49) notes that in the surveillance function of the media, "the press plays the role of an observer, which is a necessary component for enforcing economic, political, cultural and even moral stability". Chigozie (2009, p. 129) asserts, "In this role, the media highlight aspects of the society and report as news".

The surveillance role of the media is of two types-the instrumental surveillance and the warning/beware surveillance. According to Dominick (1990), the instrumental surveillance helps the mass media to transmit information that is useful and helpful to the public. Some of these news include what films are playing at the local theatres, stock market prices, new products, latest fashion, ideas, recipes, teen's fads, and many more related issues.

On the other hand, warning or beware surveillance (which is the focus of this study) occurs when the media inform us about threats from natural disasters like hurricanes, erupting volcanoes, and other negative happenings around us like depressed economic conditions, increasing inflation, or military attacks (Dominick, 1990). "In crisis/conflict, this type of surveillance is called early warning. It generally refers to the set of activities that aim to collect, collate

and analyse data in order to detect and identify signs of an emerging crisis before it explodes into uncontrolled violence” (Musifiky, 2009, p. 194).

Consequent on the explanations and analysis above, it is pertinent to assert here that media surveillance is imperative in engendering national security. As stated earlier, media surveillance involves amongst others, pre-information on a looming abnormality, disaster, unrest or crisis. Lasswell (1984) cited in Odigbo (p. 178) gave credence to the above assertion when he affirmed that “they (mass media) watch over, guard and alert society of impending problems and often proffer the way forward”. Chimezie (2010, p. 91) affirms that “the surveillance function of the media is critical to national security”. The implication here is that the media, while discharging their surveillance role, must get the citizens informed of impending/life threatening dangers. This, according to Jones (2011) will reduce uncertainties and salvage the people from destruction.

Contributing to the debate, Meyor (2009) argues that media houses all over the world have continued to play the surveillance role with utmost responsibility. According to him, “the mass media in U. S. A., France, Russia, China and many other countries have effectively played the surveillance role by constantly serving the people with security/safety reports which have

helped to avert many calamities that would have occurred. The surveillance function of the media is very expedient to achieving national security” (Meyor, 2009, p. 32).

Davidson (1974) in Ndolo (2005, p. 219) x-rays the tasks of the mass media in ensuring security/peacekeeping thus:

- 1) Increasing the quantity and quality of public communication.
- 2) Providing early warnings of situations that might lead to conflict as well as alerting leaders and attentive publics to opportunities for increasing understanding.
- 3) Stimulating the use of mechanism such as negotiation, mediation and arbitration for conflict resolution and management and providing information that facilitates these processes.
- 4) Helping to create a mood in which solutions are more likely to be sought and accepted.
- 5) Mobilizing or helping to establish contacts among those interests in finding peaceful solutions, and helping to build opinions favouring such solutions.

Amongst the various tasks of the mass media x-rayed by Davidson, the second task specifically highlights the surveillance function of the media. The media must always scout around the environment and

get the people informed of any threat/danger. When the media serve the public with information of an impending threat (early warning), it enables not only the masses but also the security agents to either avert it or minimize its effect. Providing early warnings on impending dangers is indeed the major essence of the surveillance function of the mass media.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

As a core social responsibility role and in recognition of the surveillance function, the media are required to amongst others, scan the environment and get the people informed of looming dangers. This, as earlier established in this study, can help contribute to national security.

Nigeria is currently facing security challenges that require urgent solution. In Nigeria's drive to national security, the critical question is, have the Nigerian broadcast media (in their quest to contribute to national security) effectively played the surveillance function? The above question forms the thrust of this study.

To give this study direction, the researchers formulated the following objectives:

- (1) To determine the extent to which the media surveillance function can help improve national security.
- (2) To find out whether the Nigerian broadcast media have effectively

played the surveillance function in their quest to engender national security.

- (3) To evaluate government/broadcast media partnership in achieving effective national security.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From the above stated objectives, the following research questions were raised:

- (1) To what extent can the surveillance function of the mass media help in achieving national security?
- (2) Have the Nigerian broadcast media effectively played the surveillance function in their quest to engender national security?
- (3) Have Nigerian governments effectively collaborated with the broadcast media to achieve national security?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Generally, this study will expand the frontiers of knowledge in the field of broadcasting and national security. Specifically, the study will be relevant to media practitioners as it will help them understand how they can effectively contribute (through the surveillance function) to the national security situation.

In addition, the study will help Nigerian security agents to know how best to partner with the Nigerian broadcast media to guarantee national security. More so, tertiary

institutions (including research institutions) will find this study very helpful in the teaching and learning of media and national security. Finally, the study may also open up other research opportunities in this and other related areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Beware Surveillance/Warning (which is the main thrust of this study) occurs when the media inform the public about looming threats from terrorism, natural calamities such as storms and erupting volcanoes, military attacks, etc. The ability of the media to effectively gather such information and disseminate same to the public is an obvious affirmation of their effective observance of this all important role which studies have shown has capacity to contribute to national security.

A study conducted by Binga (2011, p. 43) shows that the media (through the surveillance function) have helped to avert many crisis that would have occurred in Cameroon. Binga further observes that the discharge of such sensitive role by the media has helped to strengthen the security of Cameroon. Yambe (2010, p. 41) equally remarks in his study that surveillance role of the media has contributed to national security in Ghana. He affirms that the media have given overwhelming support to the Ghanaian security agents, which have helped to maintain peace in the country.

Furthermore, Kem (2010, p. 34) reveals in her study that the media have continued to play the surveillance function which has led to the uncovering and abortion of mayhem in Ethiopia. He noted that the media have helped to ensure national security in Ethiopia. Ziya (2011, p. 11) also observes that Benin Republic has been living in peace as a result of the security reports the media unveil to the public and the security agencies.

In another study, Goje (2010, p. 63) argues that the surveillance function of the media has seriously contributed to the security of lives and property in South Africa. She states that in South Africa, the media are always at alert in informing the people of dangers to ensure safety measures are put in place. Elna (2010, p. 11) also agrees with the above conclusions when he states that the mass media have contributed to the security of France. He asserts that the security agencies often collaborate with the media to ensure national security.

The various studies carried out so far indicate that the situation in Nigeria is different. The Nigerian media have not effectively played the surveillance role. Ikenna (2011, p. 87) confirms this assertion when he argues that the Nigerian media are yet to sufficiently perform the surveillance function of the media. He contends that the broadcast media are the worst in performing the surveillance role. To support

Ikenna's views above, Ugwu (2010, p. 56) argues that the incessant Jos crisis would have been averted if the media had lived up to expectation in helping the security agents to bring peace in the area.

Seimo (2010, p. 73) carried out a perception based study in the area of media and security challenges and found out that the broadcast media did not effectively perform the surveillance role in the Niger Delta crisis. Siemo notes that there are enormous benefits derivable from the surveillance function of the media, which includes strengthening the security of a given place. He further argues that the Nigerian broadcast media displayed insensitivity to the security of the region in media coverage of the crisis. Maxwell (2010, p. 9) corroborated Seimo's findings when he observed in his study that the media, particularly the broadcast media, have not adequately contributed to the security of Nigeria. He lamented that despite the overwhelming potential of the media to help strengthen national security, the Nigerian broadcast media are yet to satisfactorily play such responsibility.

In another similar study by Nwafor (2011), it is revealed that the mass media can contribute to national security, but have failed to maximize such ability for the benefit of Nigerians. Nwafor opines that when the media present security reports

such as threats of some possible attacks by some violent groups, the citizens, the security agents and others involved will move to avert the danger. In a recent study on the Boko Haram terror attacks, Okoro and Okechukwu (2012) further support the earlier positions which suggest that the Nigerian broadcast media have not effectively played the surveillance function in their reportage of the Boko Haram insurgencies in the Northern part of Nigeria. A much earlier study by Adeyemi (2011, p. 32) has also reached similar conclusions. He argues that instead of just waiting to report these attacks, the media should thrive to secure national security by adopting the investigative approach to uncover and thwart their plans and where it is extremely difficult to abort the plans proper alternative measures could be put in place to minimize the effect on the people and the nation.

Most of the authors cited in this paper conclude that to ensure national security, a healthy partnership must exist between the media and the government. The duo must unite to thwart insecurity situations and help the nation attain a satisfactory level of national security. However, studies have revealed that the governments of Nigeria find it difficult to collaborate with the media to achieve any sane national objective because of the mutual suspicion between the two (Maxwell, 2010; Ugwu, 2010).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories are maps of realities. This implies that they help to give explanations as to why things occur the way they do. To this end, the authors employed both the Agenda Setting and the Social Responsibility theories to give this study a strong footing.

Agenda Setting Theory:

The notion of agenda setting by the media can be traced to Walter Lippmann in 1922. He suggested that the media were responsible for the “pictures in our heads”. Forty years later, Cohen in 1963 articulated the ideas when he argued that the media may not always be successful in telling people what to think, but they are usually successful in telling them what to think about. Lang and Lang reinforced this notion by saying that the mass media force attention to certain issues (Ogbuoshi, 2011, p. 32).

The Agenda Setting theory helps in the understanding of the effects of mass media content on individuals particularly target audience. This theory also explains the effect of the media on culture and society. It describes the powerful influence, which the media can have in determining not only the issues that members of the society talk about, but also how they talk about them.

Certainly, in the popular view, mass communication exerts tremendous influence on human affairs. The ability of the mass media and other technologies to mould the public

mind and significantly influence the flow of history is a widely ascribed power (Gaberna,1990, p.74 cited in Kalu, 2010, p. 11). A study about Agenda Setting function of the media reveals that the media not only make the audience learn factual information about public affairs and what is happening in the world but also learn how much importance to attach to issues or topics from the emphasis placed on them by the media. According to Gladys and Kurt (1983), cited in Ikenna (2011, p. 86) “...the media clearly lack powers to suppress concern. But they can do more than stimulate interest. By directing attention to these concerns they provide, a context that influence how people will talk about these matters... the media more than direct attention to a problem; they influence how people will think about it”. The ability of the media to influence salient events on the public minds has been part of Nigeria’s political and economic culture to date.

The media can contribute to Nigeria’s national security by setting agenda on security issues. This entails giving much attention to issues that have to do with security. In doing so, they raise the consciousness of the people and influence them to taking precautionary measures that will engender peace and stability in the country. The media can also go a step further to deepen the relevance of the report by engaging in investigative reporting. Recall the

role of two famed US reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein in solving the Watergate scandal, which was a criminal matter that also involved US national security. The exposure by the two reporters led to first ever resignation of a sitting US President.

Social Responsibility Theory:

The social responsibility theory according to Ndolo (2005, p. 35), “owes its origin to an American initiative- the 1947 Hutchins Commission on the freedom of the press”. The emergence of this theory was an attempt to provide restraint to the excessive press freedom advocated by the libertarian theory. The idea here is to ensure the press does not abuse the freedom at its disposal.

The social responsibility theory posits that the power and near monopoly position of the media impose on them an obligation to be socially responsible in discharging their duties. The theory explains that the media owe the society a duty to discharge their responsibility responsibly. Obot (2004, p. 104), citing McQuail (1987), while highlighting the main principles of the social responsibility theory, asserts among others, “that the media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to the society”. Eze (2012, p. 15) confirms these obligations to include the effective discharge of the surveillance function. Soola (2004, p. 133) corroborates this argument thus:

The West African newspaper has observed that it will be failing in its obligations to the readers if it did not report crimes and reflect community anxieties about them. At one level, such reports send unequivocal messages to people to take measures to protect themselves and their properties.

Also, while writing on media surveillance as a social responsibility function, Soola (2004, p. 133) citing Sandman, Rubin and Sachsman (1976) asserts that, “People need to know if the streets are blocked or dangerous, some of those planning to drive or walk through the area of a disturbance may choose another route if they are told what is happening”. They further warned that, “A news blackout sets a dangerous precedent. Word-of-mouth rumours are likely to be even less accurate than the mass media. And if serious grievances have festered to the point of a riot, the public has a right to know.”

From the above, if the Nigerian broadcast media responsibly play their surveillance role of warning the masses including the security agents of an impending/imminent danger, then it will help to initiate proactive steps to forestall such danger in the country, thus, engendering national security.

METHOD

The authors employed Survey research methodological approach to

prosecute this study. Residents of six randomly selected cities from the six geo-political zones of Nigeria were surveyed.

Proportional representation and the purposive sampling technique were used to select the respondents and administer copies of the questionnaire to them. In addition, tables and percentages

were used to present and analyze the collected data. Below is a table of the six selected cities, their states, geo-political zones, states, Local Government Areas, population and proportional representation, as released by the National Population Commission of Nigeria.

Table 1: Geopolitical Zones, State, Local Government Areas, Population and Proportional Representation

Geo-Political Zone	State	Local Govt Area	Population	Proportional Representation
North-East	Bauchi	Bauchi	493,730	116
North-West	Kano	Kano-Municipal	371,243	87
North-Central	Niger	Suleja	215,075	51
South-West	Lagos	Ikeja	317,614	75
South-East	Enugu	Enugu	717,291	169
South-South	River	Port-Harcourt	538,558	127
Total			2,653,511	625

Source: Authors' Field Survey

From the total population of 2,653,511, a sample of 625 was drawn using Taro Yamane formula (0.04 error margin). Proportional representation and purposive sampling were used to distribute the

copies of the questionnaire to the respondents who had basic knowledge in the subject of study as well as follow broadcast reports as active audience members.

Table 2: Respondents Perception of the Extent to Which the Surveillance Function of the Mass Media Can Contribute to National Security in Nigeria

Selected Cities	Large extent (%)	Minimal Extent (%)	Can't Say (%)	Total (%)
Bauchi	17.1	0.4	0.1	17.6% n=107
Kano-Municipal	13.0	0.8	0.4	14.2% n=86
Suleja	8.0	0.3	0.3	8.6% n=51
Ikeja	10.1	1.1	1.0	12.2% n=74

Enugu	25.2	0.6	0.3	26.1% n=158
Port-Harcourt	18.0	2.0	1.3	21.3% n=125
Total	91.4% n=547	5.2% n=32	3.4% n=22	100% n=601

Source: Authors’ Field Survey

Table 2 above shows that 547 respondents representing 91.4% agreed that the surveillance function of the media can contribute to a large extent in Nigeria’s national security. Thirty-two respondents representing 5.2% said that the surveillance function of the media could contribute to a minimal extent in Nigeria’s national security while the

remaining 3.4% indicated that they could not say anything in that regard. From the above analysis, it is obvious that the surveillance function of the media can contribute to Nigeria’s national security to a large extent. The findings of Binga (2011), Yambe (2010), and Kem (2010), all gave credence to the above result.

Table 3: Audience Assessment on Whether the Broadcast Media Have Effectively Played the Surveillance Function in their Quest to Engender National Security in Nigeria

Selected Cities	Yes (%)	No (%)	Can’t Say (%)	Total (%)
Bauchi	1.8	15.2	0.6	17.6% n=107
Kano-Municipal	1.0	13.1	0.1	14.2% n=86
Suleja	0.6	7.0	1.0	8.6% n=51
Ikeja	0.4	11.0	0.8	12.2% n=74
Enugu	1.1	24.9	0.1	26.1% n=158
Port-Harcourt	3.3	17.0	1.0	21.3% n=125
Total	8.2% n=51	88.2% n=529	3.6% n=21	100% n=601

Source: Authors’ Field Survey

Table 3 shows that 8.2% of the respondents agreed that broadcast stations in Nigeria have effectively

played the surveillance function of the media in their quest to engender national security in the country.

However, majority of the respondents (88.2%) agreed that the Nigerian broadcast media have not effectively played the surveillance role in their quest to contribute to national security in Nigeria. The remaining 3.6% of the respondents indicated that they could not offer any opinion on the question.

From the analysis above, we could infer that broadcast stations in Nigeria have not effectively played the surveillance function of the media in their quest to contribute to national security. Seimo (2010) in his perception study of the media and security challenges revealed that the broadcast media failed to effectively employ the surveillance role in the

Niger Delta crisis. Seimo emphasized that there are enormous benefits derivable from the surveillance function of the media, which amongst others can help to strengthen the security of a given place. He concluded that the Nigerian broadcast media displayed insensitivity to the security of the region. Maxwell (2010) corroborated Seimo’s finding when he revealed in his study that the media, particularly the broadcast media have not adequately contributed to the security of Nigeria. He lamented that despite the overwhelming potential of the media to help strengthen national security, the Nigerian broadcast media are yet to satisfactorily play such role.

Table 4: Audience Assessment of Whether Nigerian Governments Have Effectively Collaborated With the Broadcast Media to Achieve National Security

Selected Cities	Yes (%)	No (%)	Can’t Say (%)	Total (%)
Bauchi	2.3	15.1	0.3	17.8
Kano-Municipal	1.5	11.8	1.0	14.3
Suleja	1.2	6.8	0.5	8.5
Ikeja	0.7	11.5	0.2	12.3
Enugu	3.5	22.0	0.8	26.3
Port-Harcourt	2.7	17.8	0.3	20.8
Total	11.9% n=71	85% n=511	3.1% n=19	100% N=601

Source: Authors’ Field Survey

From the above table, 11.8% agreed that governments had effectively collaborated with the broadcast media to ensure national security in Nigeria while 85.3% indicated that governments had not effectively collaborated with the broadcast

stations to enthrone national security in Nigeria. Nineteen respondents representing 2.9% of the total respondents indicated that they can’t say anything in this regard. This result validates the findings of Maxwell (2010) and Ugwu (2010).

These authors have earlier argued that the Nigerian government have not seriously worked with the media to promote national security in Nigeria.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The analysis of this study data helps to reach the following conclusions:

1. The surveillance function of the media can contribute to a large extent in engendering national security.
2. The broadcast media are yet to effectively play the surveillance function of the mass media in their quest to engender national security.
3. Governments (Federal, States and LGAs) are yet to effectively collaborate with the broadcast media to achieve national security in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcome of this study, we make the following recommendations:

- (1) As stated earlier, the surveillance function of the mass media empowers them (media) to keep watch of the environment and report any impending danger. The broadcast media must imperatively recognize this function. They must at all times effectively carry out what researchers call “environmental scanning” to detect impending dangers and notify the public accordingly. This, to a large extent, will enable the public,

including the security agents to either avert the danger or make adequate arrangements to minimise the effects. This will ultimately engender national security in Nigeria.

- (2) Government at all levels (Federal, State and LGAs) must, as a matter of necessity, partner with the broadcast media to curb the monster of insecurity ravaging the region.
- (3) Further studies in this area should involve broadcast media practitioners to identify their expectations from the Government and society generally so that they could be effectively mobilised to perform the surveillance function.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt about the fact that Nigerian journalists and government have not enjoyed cordial relationship over the years. To discharge their watchdog role, journalists try to expose the corruption in government, while government on the other hand tries to cover-up their misdeeds by often employing extra-legal means to clampdown on the press. This contention has always put the duo apart.

However, the issue of national security calls for collaboration between government and the media. This one critical area places a need for the two to shelve their swords and cooperate for national security objectives. To effectively actualize national security, both government

and the media must cooperate and collectively enthrone peace and stability in the nation, which will ultimately bring development.

To achieve this, the media must effectively play the surveillance role by alerting the people (which include

the security agents) to enable them avert or minimize danger/crisis effects. The government must as well create the enabling environment and work closely with the media. This will help to engender national security in Nigeria.

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