



ROLE OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM IN CURBING PUBLIC CORRUPTION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the role of Investigative Journalism (IJ) in curbing public corruption for sustainable development in Nigeria. It describes IJ as a form of journalism in which reporters go in-depth to uncover wrongdoing, review government policies and draw attention to societal ills that could hinder national development. The researcher conducted an in-depth interview with five senior broadcast and print journalists. Agenda setting theory is used to explain the role played by investigative journalism in curbing public corruption in Nigeria. Findings show that free, aggressive, and bold investigative journalism constitute a bigger deterrent to public corruption and enable citizens to hold public office holders accountable, which is critical to advancement and preservation of democratic institutions. Based on the data generated, the paper concludes that IJ is inversely proportional to public corruption i.e. increase in investigative journalism leads to decrease in public corruption in a country. The paper recommends that journalists should deepen their capacity to effectively perform their watchdog function through regular training. Media should device new means of generating revenue from non-political sources to make them independent and capable of conducting objective investigations to curb public corruption for national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Investigative Journalism; Public Corruption; Watchdog; Accountability; Development;



Introduction

Investigative journalism, also known as exposé journalism, adversarial journalism, alternative journalism, in-depth journalism, muckraking journalism, advocacy journalism, public service journalism, watchdog journalism and journalism of outrage has no single generally acceptable definition (Gamme, 2019; Ekharefo, Okoro, & Olley, 2016; Ismail, Ahmad & Mustaffa, 2014). Folarin's (2005) definition is more relevant to this paper. He defines investigative journalism as a branch of development journalism that focuses on critical questioning and evaluation of the usefulness of developmental projects and the efficiency of control by the authorities concerned; it x-rays public complaints of misgovernment and probes allegations of corruption both of which may stand in the way of development.

Investigative journalism (IJ) is gradually becoming an important part of our national life, as it helps in revealing happenings at local, state, and federal levels that others may like to cover up. It is a branch of Development Communication (DC) which focus on critical questioning and evaluation of the usefulness of developmental projects and the efficiency of control by the authorities concerned; it also x-rays public complaints of misgovernment and probes allegations of public corruption both of which may stand in the way of development (Folarin (2005). It is thus, critical to the advancement and preservation of democratic institutions for its role in the fight against public corruption in the area of raising public awareness about corruption, its causes, effects, and possible remedies with a view to fostering a culture of integrity into the public and provoking judicial judgment on them. Asemah and Asogwa (2012) observe that the press, through investigative journalism can check the excesses of public office holders and hold them accountable, insisting that public corruption in high and low places can be exposed through investigative journalism which will make governments accountable and transparent in their dealings.

Alawode (2009) describes public corruption as a 'worldwide phenomenon' found in almost all countries of the world. He however avers that the incidences of corruption are much more prevalent in developing countries like Nigeria where accountability and rule of law is low. Journalists and journalism thus, play an essential role in this process; identifying lies, hypocrisy, corruption, and outright law breaking which neither the public nor the police can do effectively. Thus, robust, and independent journalism which is fearless and goes in-depth is



therefore, an essential part of democratic life capable of promoting development (Cooper, 2009).

Development on the other hand, is defined as the act or process of growth or progress in socio-economic life of a society, while sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (The Brundtland Commission, 1983).

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development (2001) enumerates thirteen indicators that help in identifying countries development status e.g. High level of poverty (proportion of population below \$1 a day); Mis-governance; Poor health facilities (Healthy life expectancy at birth); Poor standard of education (Net enrolment rate in primary and secondary education); Low demographics; Higher natural hazards (Human and economic loss due to natural disasters); Contaminated atmosphere (Emissions of greenhouse gases); Land degradation (Land affected by desertification); Oceans, seas and coasts (Bathing water quality); Percentage of Freshwater (proportion of total water resources used); Biodiversity (proportion of terrestrial area protected, area of selected key ecosystems); Economic development (Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita); Global economic partnership (Share of imports from developing countries and from LDCs); Consumption and production patterns (Domestic material consumption). These characteristics are more visible in developing countries where accountability is low due to poor investigative journalism.

Various Nigerian governments (both civil and military) have been accused of corruption, but the extent to which the media has been successful in exposing public corruption is open to question (Yusha'u 2009). Scholars are unanimous in identifying Nigerian under development to corruption. On the role media play in fighting corruption, scholars and media practitioners have expressed divergent views on the role played by the Nigerian media fighting corruption by exposing public corruption in line with section 22 of the 1999 constitution. Kontagora (2011) is of the view that the media has done very little in its watch dog function and can hardly conducts independent investigations and only report arrest and prosecutions by anti-graft agencies like EFCC and ICPC or Code of Conduct Bureau instead of initiating the investigation. Gimi (2011) however commends the Nigerian media in their fight against public corruption for publishing investigative reports like: '1200 ex-lecturers protest non-payment of pension, gratuity' (*Daily Trust* 1st July, 2012), 'Death in EFCC Custody' (*The Guardian* 1st July, 2012); 'Poor as House Mouse' (*Daily Trust* 2nd -7-12). It is in this line of thinking that



this paper examined the role of investigative journalism in the fight against public corruption in Nigeria.

Public Corruption as Impediment to National Development

Omojola (2010) defines public corruption as a communication process involving abuse of office and which produces personal gains, rather than public interest. Salisu (2000) sees the term as misapplication of public resources to private ends e.g. collecting bribes, awarding contracts to unqualified companies, diverting public funds etc. Tanzi (1995) defines it as the intentional non-compliance with the laid down principle aimed at deriving some advantages for one-self, relative or friends. Okolo & Akpokighe (2014) identify ten most common features of public corruption capable of undermining national development. They include: giving and receiving bribes, inflation of contracts, abuse of public property, lodging government fund in private accounts, examination malpractices, adulterating food or drugs, misappropriation, and embezzlement of fund; money laundry by public officers; using proxy names to buy property, kick back and payment upfront. He concludes that any public office holder who indulges in any of the above can be declared corrupt.

Commenting on the effects of public corruption on national development, former EFCC Chairman, Malam Nuhu attributes Nigeria's under-development problems, conflicts and stagnant economy to public corruption, insisting that corruption is responsible for the perpetual collapse of Nigeria's infrastructure and institutions; it is the cause of the endemic poverty in Africa because it distorts resource allocation and government performance; it is behind the under-development and cyclical failure of democracy to take root in Africa. He concludes by describing corruption as worse than terrorism (Ribadu, 2006).

Langseth (1999) identifies bribery as the most obvious evidence of public corruption and that the consequences of corruption are more pervasive and profound, as corruption diverts leads funding resulting to either services of poor quality or total absence. When there is inadequate transparency, accountability, and probity in the use of public resources, the state fails to generate credibility and authority. Public corruption undermines the credibility of democratic institutions and counteracts good governance. There is a high correlation between corruption and an absence of respect for human rights, and between corruption and undemocratic practices. Corruption alienates citizens from their government.



Olagunju (2012) describes corruption as the bane of any nation; its malady cut across every religious denomination and political system and it affects both young and old, man and woman alike. Olagunju also likened it to cancer that contaminates all strata of the socio-political and economic structure of any society and its malignant nature is difficult to treat. Corruption indeed impedes economic growth, generates inequities, and erodes government credibility and the efficient functioning of state institutions. Farrales (2005) describes corruption as a timeless phenomenon that can exist under any form of government, in any country or state and at any time". It is a global phenomenon that cannot be pinned down to any particular historical period of human development.

Corruption is often responsible for increased costs of goods and services (inflation), the funnelling of scarce public resources to uneconomic high profile projects at the expense of the much needed projects such as schools, hospitals and roads, or the supply of potable water, diversion and misallocation of resources, conversion of public wealth to private and personal property, inflation, imbalanced economic development, weakling work ethics and professionalism, hindrance of the development of fair in market structures and unhealthy competition there by deterring competition (Transparency Ethiopia, 2013).

Since corruption affects public projects, it leads to significant loss to education, health, and poverty prevention budgets, in both underdeveloped and developed countries, corruption is considered to be an important obstacle in the way of sustainable development (Floristeanu, 2010). A lack of action can result into state capture by private interest groups, with harmful effects on the state, its economy and society, because the rules of the game can be fundamentally distorted for good, in the favor of some privileged individuals (Anderson and Gray, 2006). The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released by the Transparency International for the year 2012 suggests that levels of bribery, abuse of power and secret dealings are still perceived to be very high in most countries (Shruti, 2012).

Bardhan (1997) identifies public corruption as the bane of a positive link between development and democracy and is described by the World Bank as a major impediment to development. Corruption is an impediment to growth and poverty reduction; corruption limits opportunities, creates inefficiencies, and forms additional barriers to the smooth delivery of services (Leautier, Petkoski, & Jarvis, 2006). Corruption also, makes it difficult and nearly impossible for governments to function effectively, disempower individuals to perform optimally, negate



development assistance including aids (Kaufmann, 2009) and stifle private sector efficiency (Amao & Amaeshi, 2008). Corruption also destroys democratic processes and makes democratic efforts meaningless even at the grassroots Corruption is a destroyer and collateral destroyer of democratic institutionalization Corruption trades off democratic gains. It is impossible for democracy to drive development once corruption is rife in the democratic space (Vaughan, 1995).

Dandago (2008) describes public corruption as the greatest obstacles to Nigeria's development in the following way:

Corruption in Nigeria, just as in most other African countries, has currently become the greatest challenge to leaders and citizens, threatening to undermine effective governmental financial management. It is also a threat to both economic development and the process of establishing an enduring democracy in developing countries, like Nigeria.

Development projects are often made unnecessarily complex in Nigeria to justify the corrupt and huge expense on it (Dike, 2008). Combating corruption is therefore instrumental towards achieving effective, fair, and efficient governance. Also, adequate transparency, accountability, and probity in the use of public resources will go a long way in promoting sustainable development.

Investigative Journalism as a deterrent to public corruption

Media scholars as well as public affairs commentators are of the opinion that investigative journalism has a crucial role in the fight against public corruption. Media can play an important role in raising public awareness, promoting integrity, and detecting and reporting on public corruption. Olurunyomi (2017) identifies three factors that serve as the lifeblood of any democracy. They include: criticism, independence, and investigative press. He explains that an effective investigative journalism can resist influence of government officials, advertisers, and work objectively without fear or favor. It is only such a free press that can check the appetite of any public office holder to amass power/wealth at the expense of the citizens. Na'Allah (2013) identifies investigative journalism as a veritable force that can fight public corruption in Nigeria:

Through investigative journalism, manipulation, exploitation and destruction of lives and properties that have become prominent features of the Nigerian society would be addressed, and by doing that, journalists would be assisting the three arms of government in discharging their mandates



Tsegyu (2014) asserts that the mass media are often looked upon as important institution in the fight against public corruption in any democratic system because of their watchdog function of monitoring the actions and inactions of those in power i.e. watching and, if needs be, reviewing and criticizing the activities of public office holders with a view to promote accountability in governance.

Ibrahimi (2007) describes investigative journalism as central to watchdog role of the media in a democratic system:

The most important role of the media is that of ‘watchdog’; regular and independent inspection of those in power, including, supply of trustworthy information about their activities. The main concern to the watchdog role is investigative journalism. By doing this, the media consider themselves as a representative of the wider public, and of course, the opponent of government. Media representatives have this right as members of the fourth estate to keep an eye on politicians on behalf of the public. This watchdog role is essential if citizens want to hold public officials accountable for their actions. When media perform its watchdog role, it fulfils its tasks toward public; otherwise, the scandals mentioned above, and unmentioned ones would always remain unrevealed.

Supporting the above, Alawode (2008) asserts that the very consciousness among the public office holders that there exists a vibrant press that is ever watching to report corruption could be a deterrent to corruption inclined officials and individuals. This implies that the presence of a ‘vibrant press’ that is up and doing i.e. with qualified and dedicated journalists who can investigate, and report corruption is enough deterrent to corrupt public office holders.

Bolsius (2012) insists that high levels of press freedom (to investigate and report corruption) can lead to low levels of public corruption implying that the more the press is free to carry out its watch dog function, the less the corruption in the society. The major assumption of watch dog concept is that the media are representative of the wider public and at the watch dog over government (Ibrahimi 2007). It emphasizes watching, if needs reviewing and criticizing activities of the three other estate of the realm. Watch dog role is therefore involves regular and independent inspection of those in power to serve as deterrent to corrupt public office holders and thus, the only way reporters can fight corruption is through investigative journalism (Filkov, 2012). Butler (2013) summarized the concept as ‘an unofficial fourth establishment of democracy’ that acts as a balance of power on the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government.

Sambe (2005) also asserts that in performing its watch dog or surveillance function, mass media



in Nigeria has kept watch over government, its three arms and the entire society, so as to keep their performance up to the expected standard of accountability to promote development of the country. People in power whether in government, business, or any other group in society can abuse their power; they can be corrupt, steal money, break laws, and do all sorts of things which harm other people and will usually try to keep this information secret. Societies thus need journalists who can investigate issues because people have a right to know about the society in which they live; they have a right to know about decisions which may affect them, even if people in power want to keep them secret (Ingram & Henshall, 2008).

By drawing public attention to any behaviour that is generally perceived as unacceptable and exposing such behaviour as corrupt, mass media can raise public awareness; activate anti-corruption values; and generate outside pressure from the public against corruption (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). The impact of media reportage of public corruption can be ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible.’ It is tangible when some sort of visible outcome can be attributed to a particular news story or series of stories. For instance, the launching of investigation by authorities, the scrapping of a law or policy promoting opportunities for corruption, the impeachment or forced resignation of a crooked politician, the firing of an official, the launching of judicial proceedings, the issuing of public recommendations by a watchdog body, and so on. It is intangible when checks on public corruption arise from the broader social climate of enhanced political pluralism, enlivened public debate and a heightened sense of accountability among politicians, public bodies and institutions that are inevitably the by-product of a hard-hitting, independent news media (Stapenhurst, (2000).

Alawode (2008) opines that reporting of public corruption has led to the removal, resignation, and prosecution of some highly placed officials in Nigeria like the former Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun (Guardian April 4, 2005), former Speaker Patricia Etteh (Newswatch 9 September 2007) and former Senate President Adolphus Wabara (Vanguard 6 May 2004). Successful action against corruption is dependent on knowledge and information which can be delivered by media. First, media raise public awareness about public corruption, its causes, consequences, and possible remedies and thus can foster a culture of integrity. Secondly, media can investigate, detect, and report incidences of corruption, bringing corruption cases into the public and provoking judicial judgment on them (OECD, 2013). Through their reportage of



daily happenings, the media serve the society by disseminating the activities of government and making it accountable to people in line with section 22 of the 1999 constitution.

Factors Affecting Investigative Journalists Ability to Curb Public Corruption

How well media perform their role of a watchdog on public office holders depends on a number of factors. An empirical study by Gerli, Mazzone, and Mincigrucchi (2018), used in-depth interviews to investigate the constraints and limitations of investigative journalism. Findings identified three main threats to watchdog journalism e.g. the instrumentalization of the media outlets by 'external' actors, the weakness of the print press market, and the low level of professionalism which play a big role in influencing media decision-making process on who to investigate. The influence can lead to stronger partisan investigative journalism often depending on strictly personal interests. An explorative study by Ntinbanye (2018) employed a qualitative content analysis research method to collect and analyse data on challenges facing investigative journalism in Africa. Findings showed that investigative journalists found it difficult to perform effectively because of various factors including lack of commitment to investigative journalism by media owners, and lack of both financial and human resources.

Suntai and Shem (2018) used content analysis as an instrument for generating and analysing conceptual and empirical data using Social Responsibility theory as a framework, found several constraints e.g. threat to life; risk of media house in which media houses were either been invaded by security operatives for publishing some revealing reports or simply closed down; political interference by government of the day where sometimes close down media houses or revoke its license; economic constraints in which many media houses failed to pay their journalists well and this may encourage the journalists to manipulate facts behind the activities of dubious people or organizations within the society who offer handsome monetary rewards for favourable media coverage; limited access to information, as some Nigerian investigative journalist have limited access to official archives and records; dearth of qualified journalists because a good number of the people that are into investigative journalism in Nigeria are not qualified to practice the profession.

Nogara (2009) asserts that the watch dog functions depend on a number of factors defined by the political, economic, and legal environment in which the media operate. They include:



1. Freedom of expression - Media freedom of expression is essential to investigate and report incidences of corruption in a professional, effective, and ethical manner.
2. Access to information - Information flows may facilitate public oversight of government and increase the accountability of politicians for bad conduct. In most countries, citizens receive the information they need through the media, which serve as the intermediaries that collect information and make it available to them.
3. Ownership – media owners do not allow reports that affect their interests
4. Competition - Intense competition in the media industry can also be a strong determinant of its effectiveness to combat corruption.
5. Outreach - The ability of media to reach and inform the wider public is critical to the fight against public corruption.
6. Credibility - Public trust in media is essential to compel action against corruption from the authorities or the public.

Onyango-Obbo (2004) identifies lack of political and economic incentives to investigative journalists as a major factor that diminished media effectiveness to fight public corruption. Investigative reporting continued to be risky and costly in a context of increased legislative restrictions and government's hostility which made the 'new generation' of journalists and editors more risk-adverse and opportunistic, by preferring light reporting on sports and entertainment, likely to attract bigger audiences and advertisers than political and investigative reporting. He observes that qualitative, independent media reporting on corruption can play an important role in pressuring the government to act in the public interest. Some of the challenges identified above are internal which affect the successful take-off, while some are external which affect the final outcome of the investigation.

Theoretical Framework

This paper employed the Agenda setting theory to validate the role played by investigative journalism in curbing public corruption in Nigeria. The theory was developed by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw who suggested that media has a great influence on their audience by instilling what they should think about, instead of what they actually think. This is achieved by covering a news item frequently and prominently with a view towards making the audience regard it as more important. The agenda of a news organization is found in its pattern of coverage on public issues over a period of time with some issues well emphasized, some receive light coverage, and many are seldom or never mentioned.



This theory is relevant because the more media give prominence to anti-corruption crusade by exposing public corruption, both government and citizens will take it as important and begin to hold public office holders accountable and in the end assist in curbing public corruption.

Objectives

1. To find out the relationship between investigative journalism and public corruption
2. To find out how investigative journalism curb public corruption.

Methodology

The paper applied in-depth interview to collect data on the role of investigative journalism in curbing public corruption in Nigeria because in-depth interviews give direct access to unique forms of experience and expression often denied by other methods (O'Sullivan *et al*, 2003). Five senior journalists from five media outfits were purposively selected and interviewed on the role of investigative journalism in curbing public corruption for sustainable development in Nigeria. They include 1 (from FRCN, Kaduna Zonal station representing public broadcast stations) 2 (from ABU FM Radio representing community broadcast stations), 3 (from DITV/Alheri Radio representing private broadcast stations), 4 (from Hotlines Magazine representing News Magazines), and 5 (from Sawaba Newspaper representing Newspapers). These respondents were selected because they have tremendous experience in journalism and have at one time or the other conducted and published investigative stories. The five interviews were transcribed, data collected, analysed, and finally presented in a narrative format (Caulfield, 2019).

Findings

Data from the in-depth interview with the journalists showed that respondents 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 have all agreed that there is a strong relationship between investigative journalism and public corruption in Nigeria and agreed that the only way reporters can fight public corruption is through investigative journalism. Respondents 1 and 2 argued that investigative journalism play a big role in the fight against corruption because a typical Nigerian politician want to be in the corridors of power as long as he/she lives, and he knew fully well that exposing his



corrupt practices could end his political career therefore he will not like investigative journalism. This implied that investigative journalism serves as deterrent to public corruption.

Respondents 1 and 5 are of the view that that Nigerian politicians no matter how corrupt they are always portrayed themselves as ‘saints’ and so will not like anything that could tarnish their own images. According to them, the very consciousness among the public office holders that there exists a vibrant press that is ever watching to report corruption could be a deterrent to public corruption in Nigeria.

Respondents 4 and 2 agreed that only ‘objective’ investigative journalism can curb public corruption in Nigeria. To him, any report that failed to stand the test of objectivity cannot produced the needed result i.e. fighting corruption and other social vices.

Respondents 3 and 1 aver that Nigerian media contributed to the fight against public corruption by giving prominence to investigative stories and articles on headlines of their various news bulletins. They added that headlines provide summary of major news items in a radio, television, newspapers for easy capture by listeners and readers. They observed that release of investigative stories coupled with punitive action will go a long way in curbing public corruption in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

RQ1. What is the relationship between investigative journalism and public corruption?

Respondents 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 interviewed have all agreed that a strong relationship exist between investigative journalism and public corruption in line with the fourth estate of the realm concept which notes that the only way reporters can fight public corruption is through investigative journalism, insisting that if Nigerian journalists can properly monitor public office holders and be brave enough to expose any corrupt practice, public corruption will drastically reduce in Nigeria. This concurs with Bolsius (2012) who observes that high levels of press freedom (to investigate and report corruption) lead to low levels of corruption.

Speaking on the relationship between public corruption and investigative journalism, Respondents 2 and 1 observed that a typical Nigerian politician want to be in the corridors of power as long as he/she lives, and he knew fully well that exposing his corrupt practices could



end his political career therefore he will not like investigative journalism. They argued that the higher the publication of investigative corruption news, the lower the public corruption in Nigeria and vice versa. This agrees with Ibrahimi (2007), who stressed that regular and independent inspection of those in power is capable of tackling public corruption.

RQ2. How does investigative journalism curb public corruption?

Respondents 1 and 5 observed that the very consciousness among the public office holders that there exists a vibrant press that is ever watching to report corruption could be a deterrent to public corruption in Nigeria, arguing that Nigerian politician no matter how corrupt they are always portray themselves as ‘saints’ and so will not like anything that could tarnish their own images. This implies that the presence of media that is up and doing; with qualified and dedicated journalists who can investigate, and report corruption can deter corrupt public office holders. This concurs with Alawode (2008) who asserts that a vibrant press that is ever watching could be a deterrent to corruption inclined officials and individuals.

Respondents 1 and 4 observed that investigative journalism coupled with punitive action have the capacity to curb public corruption in Nigeria. They identified lack of severe punishment to those found wanting especially when they are close to power as the biggest challenge to anti-corruption campaign. They explained that a situation where corrupt public office holders go scot-free even when exposed by the press undermined the impact of investigative journalism in Nigeria. This agrees with a study by Rijckeghem and Weder (1997) who argued that failure to punish corrupt public office holders as a result of inability to prove cases in courts promotes public corruption in Nigeria.

Respondents 4 and 2 stressed that broadcasting only ‘objective investigative journalism’ can curb public corruption in Nigeria. According to them publishing investigative stories cannot bring the needed change unless it is objective and in national interest. They however noted that the Nigerian press has done very little in the area of investigative journalism and the fight against corruption, saying the press mostly report arrest and prosecutions by anti-graft agencies like EFCC and ICPC or Code of Conduct Bureau, but do not initiate independent investigation into sensitive issues like public corruption.



Respondents 3 and 1 assert that Nigerian media have contributed to the fight against public corruption by giving prominence to investigative stories and articles in their stations and newspapers that led to arrest of senior public office holders e.g. Top 10 Corruption Scandals Nigeria's National Assembly Hasn't Resolved (Premium Times April 26, 2015); 'Corruption in Nigeria: Facts before the case' written by Abbas A. Dikko (Daily Trust 24th Dec 2008); an editorial titled 'Government not serious in anti-graft crusade' (Daily Trust 5th April 2012); airing of a video clip purported to be part of the conversation between Lawan and Billionaire, Femi Otedola over the \$3million bribery allegation scandal (Channels TV on July 3rd 2012) etc. Giving prominence to anti-corruption stories has gone a long way in making it critical to national development.

Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between investigative journalism and public corruption with a view to identifying the role played by investigative journalists in the fight against public corruption in Nigeria. The study concluded that media could play an important role in the fight against corruption by exposing corrupt public office holders through objective investigative journalism. This implied that the presence of a 'vibrant press' that is up and doing with dedicated journalists who can investigate, and report corruption objectively is enough deterrent to corrupt public office holders.

Investigative journalism thus, plays an important role in promoting public accountability by making anti-corruption prominent in its news and programmes with a view to enlightening the public as well as government on the effects of public corruption and encouraging citizens to hold the government accountable. This implied that lack of investigative journalism can lead to absence of checks and balances which corrupt public office holders and enable corrupt public office holders to divert public funds meant for infrastructural development to personal uses without any fear.

As observed by respondents 1 lack of severe punishment to public office holders who violates provisions of the Freedom of Information Act especially when they are close to power remained the biggest challenge to investigative journalism in Nigeria. According to him, a situation where corrupt public office holders go scot-free even when they violate the act can undermine the impact of investigative journalism in Nigeria. It is in this line of thinking, that the study deduced that reportage of investigative news is inversely proportional to public



corruption i.e. the more active the investigative journalists are, the lower the rate of public corruption in a particular place at a particular point in time.

The study also agreed with the ‘agenda setting theory’ that the more anti-corruption stories are given prominence, the more both citizens and the government will take it important and begin to hold public office holders accountable.

Recommendations

The paper recommended that journalists should deepen their capacity to perform objective investigative journalism to curb public corruption for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Investigative journalists should device new means of generating independent revenue from non-political sources to enable them exercise full editorial independence and be politically neutral to conduct investigations objectively in order to curb public corruption in Nigeria.

The federal government should ensure full implementation of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) at both federal and state levels to enhance access to public information by investigative journalists for effective watchdog. Also, governments should ensure that public office holders who hoard information within the stipulated two weeks are punished to serve as deterrent.

Finally, non-profit investigative outfits should be established to provide checks and balances to public office holders and promote accountability.



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Persons Interviewed

- Buhari Auwalu is the Zonal Director, FRCN Kaduna
- Nasiru Abdu Mohammed is the General Manager, ABU FM Radio
- Hassan Sani Kontagora is the publisher of Hotline Magazine, Kaduna
- Shuaibu Gimi is the controller of news, DITV/Alheri Radio, Kaduna
- Mamoon Baba Ahmed was the General Manager, Kaduna State Media Corporation

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