

JOURNALISTS' PERCEPTION OF NIGERIA'S MEDIA INFLUENCE IN ENTRENCHING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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ABSTRACT

The media have significant roles in entrenching good governance and accountability in Nigeria. However, despite Nigeria's constitutional provision for good governance and independent media role, journalists have diverse perspectives on the media's role in governance. Therefore, this study examined the journalists' perspectives on entrenching good governance and accountability in Nigeria to understand the media's role in a democratic society. The Social Responsibility Media theory framed this study while qualitative data through in-depth interviews were gathered from ten purposively selected journalists from five conveniently selected broadcast and five print media organizations in Nigeria. The findings revealed that journalists often beam their searchlight on the governments' activities. However, due to ownership structure, Editors' relationship with political office holders, and other challenges, journalists are often laid back in carrying out their major duties. The study concludes that although there are improvements in journalists' reportage of good governance, the Nigerian media has not lived up to its expectations in entrenching good governance and accountability and recommends that the media should be fully independent to perform its statutory roles in democratic societies.

Keywords: Journalists, Perception, Media Influence, Entrenchment, Good Governance, Accountability, Nigeria.

Introduction

Good governance is an indispensable tool for economic, social and political developments globally (Gisserlguitt, 2019). It provides the yardstick for which a society's democratic gains are measured daily, which assumes a prominent role in the discussion about democracy (Ogundiya, 2010). According to Akhtar, Malla and Gregson (2000), good governance involves fairness and justice in the institution of civil society. Similarly, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) opines that good governance ensures that corruption is minimized, the minority's views are taken into consideration, and the most vulnerable voices in society are heard in decision-making. In essence, good governance involves delivering the principles of fairness and proper services to the people effectively and responsibly.

In a democracy, the citizens are entitled to good governance from elected leaders. The principle of accountability involves holding elected public holders responsible for their promises and actions. Akhtar et al. (2002) submit that accountability is when governments and their institutions are duty-bound to give honest accounts to the public and the media concerning their performance in carrying out their responsibilities. This portends that governments in democratic dispensations must present honest accounts of their performance and responsibilities to the public and the media. In this regard, the media plays a vital role in ensuring that public office holders are held responsible for their actions and that the public can see government activities through media coverage. Abegunde and Fajimbola (2018) opine that the mass media is central to the institutionalization and survival of democracy anywhere in the world because it serves as a vital link between the government and the governed. This implies that the media is an important agent for the survival of democracies. They are the *middlemen* between the government and the citizens and must task elected officials on good governance and accountability.

Like many democratic nations, Nigeria has a vibrant (social) media. The media is referred to as the fourth estate of the realm due to its watchdog role over the other three estates (legislature, executive and judiciary). The media supplies the political information that voters base their decisions on and identify problems and wrongdoings by those in power (Sharma and Dubey, 2018). This implies that the media is expected to expose the wrongdoings of political office holders and hold them accountable for their actions. By so doing, they are entrenching good governance. Despite the prominence of discussions on good governance and its efficacy as an indispensable requirement for development, most developing countries, including Nigeria, are finding good governance a source of worry and serious challenge as it is still a mirage (Doornbos, 2018). This source of worry stems from the fact that media in most developing countries are under the purview of the government. Hence, they are *toothless bulldogs*. In addition, Nigeria's constitution makes provisions and empowers the media to hold the government accountable for its responsibilities. However, how effective has the Nigerian media been holding the government accountable? To what extent do journalists cover news and expose the wrongdoings of political office holders? How credible is the news on good governance emanating from the Nigerian media? These questions are what this paper seeks to answer as it microscopes the activities of the Nigerian media in entrenching good governance and accountability in Nigeria.

Literature Review

This section examines the concept of good governance, accountability, and the media's role in democratic governments.

The Concept of Good Governance

Governance is an essential democratic ingredient. The World Bank (1992) sees the principle of governance as to how power is exercised towards managing a nation's economic and social resources for development. Similarly, the UNDP (1997) defines governance as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority towards the management of a country's affairs at all levels. It consists of the mechanisms, institutions, and processes through which citizens of a country articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate on their difference. On his part, Kaufman (2005) believes that governance refers

to the tradition and institutions by which authority is exercised in countries. These definitions reveal that governance is an act or mechanism of governing a people. Governance is a process of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation; it involves the exercise of authority and control over human and material resources in a defined state (Abegunde and Fajimbola, 2018). Therefore, there could be a positive, negative, or good or bad governance classification. Our focus in this study is on good governance.

Good governance consists of efficient public service, a reliable judicial system, and an administration that is accountable to the public (World Bank, 1989 as cited in Gisselquist 2019). Also, while discussing good governance, Riddel (2014) posits that good governance examines how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. Therefore, according to Gisselquist (2019), elements of good governance include efficiency and effectiveness in public sector management, responsiveness and accountability of public officials to the citizens, the rule of law, and unhindered public access to information and transparency. Msughter, Maradun and Liman (2021) add that good governance comprises accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equitable and inclusiveness in effective and efficient ways. Also, Ogundiya (2010) noted that good governance has a relationship with the ethical grounding of governance and needs to be evaluated vis-a-vis specific norms and objectives laid down in society. Thus, 'goodness' or 'badness' of governance should be measured with an apt understanding of the essence of the State which is not only embedded in the constitution but also in the functionality of religious ideals and the nature of the State's current problems (Ogundiya, 2010).

Good governance is a prerequisite for growth and development in Nigeria. The Nigerian Constitution spells out the basic principles of good governance through accountability of public office holders, upon which the pillars of government at all levels must be built. Specifically, Chapter 2, Section 16(1) and (2) reveal that:

The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring; (a) The promotion of a planned and balanced economic development. (b) That the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good; (c) That the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or of a group and (d) That suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and prisons and unemployment sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens.

As explained by Eboh (2016), the common good is an antithesis of the good of the rulers or the ruling group because it implies that every individual, no matter how highly or lowly, has a duty to share in the promotion of the community welfare as well as a right to enjoy from the welfare of the community. Essentially, the common good is universal and cannot exclude any section of the population; in case of excluding any section of the population from enjoying the welfare of the community, that is not common good. In fact, it is a contradiction to its tenets (Eboh, 2016). Linking this explanation of common good to the definition of good governance

offered by Ogundiya (2010), it could be inferred that governance becomes good when it can attain the desired end of the State, measured in terms of equity, justice, protection of lives and property, preservation of the rule of law, enhanced participation and improved standard of living for all sections of the population.

Despite the above constitutional provisions as quoted, including the enormous resources (financial, materials and human) and gargantuan potentials of the country, as well as the successive economic and social policies and plans by successive governments in Nigeria, good governance can only be said to be elusive to the nation (Oseni, 2019). It is on record that successive governments in Nigeria, notably from Late President Umar Musa Yar'adua to the present, have always come up with certain points of development agendas, which to date appears to be at the foundational level.

On August 1, 2007, the administration of President Yar'Adua came up with its policy, named the "Seven Point Agenda," which included: Power and Energy, Food Security, Wealth Creation, Transportation, Land Reforms, Security and Education. Also, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, upon assumption of office after the death of his boss, Yar'Adua, came up with a 7-point agenda which he tagged "Transformation Agenda." According to Itah (2012), Goodluck's transformation Agenda is a policy package that proposes the reposition of the economy by addressing issues of unemployment, poverty, insecurity and, most particularly, the diversification of the entire economy from being dependent on oil to a significant reliance on non-oil driven economy. The present regime of President Muhammad Buhari also had a nine-point agenda, which according to the president, is already captured in the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan.

Essentially, the manifestation of the agenda as in the nation's experience of good governance is what we are witnessing today: a nation that had previously gone into recession and with a recurrent warning that the nation might still go back into recession. Summing up the influence of the agendas as a provision of good governance, Gyong (2011) noted that the success rate of the agendas was insignificant as the Yar'Adua regime's agenda was cut short due to his demise, Goodluck regime's agenda was destroyed by corruption across ethnic, religion class and geo-political boundaries. Meanwhile, the present regime of Buhari is equally plagued by the same vicious cycle. This governance experience in Nigeria begets the question: where is the Nigerian Press? This is because the Nigerian constitution in section 22 says: "The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people."

The Media and Good Governance

The media's role in entrenching good governance is widely recognized as Harold Lasswell and Charles Wright ascribed the media with surveillance, correlation, transmission, and entertainment functions. Likewise, there are indicators that policymakers are beginning to recognise the media as central to entrenching development in society. As UNESCO (2005) opined, all aspects of good governance are facilitated by the existence of pluralistic, strong and independent media in a society.

Essentially, the importance of the media in entrenching good governance in a nation can be summed up with the argument by Joseph Pulitzer in 1904. His words:

Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together. An able, disinterested, public-spirited press, with trained intelligence to know the right and courage to do it, can preserve that public virtue without which popular government is a sham and a mockery. A cynical, mercenary, demagogic press will produce in time a people as base as itself. The power to mould the future of the Republic will be in the hands of the journalists of future generations.

The crux of Pulitzer's argument is that the media of a society can either make or mar the society through the manners of discharging its functions. The media essentially have a disproportionately influential role in fostering a milieu where good governance flourishes. As the watchdog of the society and the agenda setter of salient public discourses, the media have a special influence in entrenching accountability which brings about good governance (Olaiya, Apeloko & Ayeni, 2013). The main responsibility of the media is to provide detailed, analytical and factual opinions and news to the people on issues of national concern. This is the critical link between good governance and the media. Alade (2019) noted that the media remain the only institution with the constitutional power to check and assess the activities of the government and bring public concerns and voices into force in government agendas and policies. The media also create a platform for public discussion. According to Alade (2019), social media in recent times is the most successful in that area since the medium is not constrained by censorship or gatekeeping manipulation inherent in the conventional media. Alade (2019) noted that the media remained the only institution with the constitutional power to check and assess the activities of the government and bring public concerns and voices into force in government agendas and policies. Consequently, the media should always exercise this constitutional power and create a platform for public discussion. According to Alade (2019), social media in recent times is the most successful in that area since the medium is not constrained by censorship or gatekeeping manipulation inherent in the conventional media.

Over the years, the media have been globally acknowledged as the watchdog of the society and their information/monitoring roles are considered a sine qua non for democracy and good governance. Paradoxically, one can say that social media, a subset of mass media, is the 21st century tool of mass expression and watchdog of the society. Essentially, the information production, dissemination, and consumption of the mass media can be considered necessary for democracy and good governance if properly utilized. The emergence of the internet as the new mass medium of the 21st century now substantially changes mass media's face as information can be distributed at high speed, low cost, and broad scope. Thus, there is egalitarian access to the production and consumption of news (Prat and Stromberg, 2011).

The Nigerian Media and Good Governance

The media exists, among other functions, to inform, educate, and serve as a platform for discussions and entertainment. In democratic societies, the media is a vital tool. The media acts as the middleman between the government and the citizens and perform watchdog roles over the government. The role of the media in entrenching good governance is clear. Sharma and Dubey (2018) noted that the media allow for ongoing checks and assessments by the

population of government activities and assist in bringing public concerns and voices into the open by providing a platform for discussion. In Nigeria, the 1999 Constitution clearly explains the role of the media in entrenching good governance. Section 22 states that "the press, radio, television and other agencies of mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people." This means that the media is mandated as a matter of responsibility to bring the government to account for their performances to the people at all times. This further portends that the media in democratic societies like Nigeria must be free to perform its constitutional roles to the people. The media must sensitize the populace about the activities of the government and beam their searchlights on public office holders who are not performing well. This will help the voters to make informed decisions during the next elections. As Nwagbara (2010) cited in Msugher et al. (2021: 907) explains that the media's role as the fourth estate of the realm "points to their capacity to perform the role of watchdogs, by monitoring those in authority, exposing their limitations and providing checks and balances to other three estates: the executive, the legislature and the judiciary."

Additionally, the media can contribute meaningfully to good governance by successfully performing its surveillance and watchdog functions. Good governance in the media means the media should be a credible example of the concept of good, as explained previously. To do this, the media should uphold the tenets of professionalism in their reportage, uphold the ethical codes of conduct in their dealings, and be accountable to the public in their reportage. Succinctly put, good governance in the media means the media should be conscious of what they do and know that they are accountable for their actions to the public, their professionals and invariably, themselves (Adaja, 2012).

Good governance by the media means the media must fight the 3cs- corruption, cronyism and collusion to a standstill. They should ensure the promotion of human rights and dignity, uphold the rule of law, and keep the public informed. To effectively discharge this role, journalists should be adequately equipped with the necessary investigative skills to ferret out the truth from all government activities and feed the public accordingly. Lastly, good governance for the media means there should be an enabling legal environment and regulatory framework for the media. This will guarantee press freedom, press independence and pluralism of the press. The Freedom of Information Act should be made to function to the fullest and media reportage must not be censored or subjected to influences that might suppress it. Essentially, an environment where freedom of information is not hampered by the Official Secret Act, where journalists are not threatened or intimidated and press independence is guaranteed is conducive to journalists in their quest to entrench good governance.

Several scholars have examined the connection between media and its role in entrenching good governance and accountability. For instance, Haruna (2014) found that the media is responsible for ensuring fairness in the electoral process by often reporting on electoral processes and the benefits of participating in voting exercises. Doing this will ensure that the citizens participate in governance and ensure a collective responsibility in holding public office holders accountable. Similarly, Santas (2014) agreed that the Nigerian media was up to the task of bringing public office holders accountable. He believes that the media exposes

government officials' corrupt practices, thereby making them (the media) a veritable partner in the fight against corruption. Dunu (2013) believes that the media's ability to contribute to good governance depends on how they can reflect and enforce the principles of good governance. For the media to contribute effectively to enthrone good governance, they must apply the basic principles of patriotism, accountability, and transparency in the discharge of their duties while upholding the sanctity of truth and fairness at all times.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of the study is to understand the Nigerian press' influence in entrenching good governance and accountability in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- Assess media influence in holding elected political office holders accountable to their campaign promises of good governance
- Understand the extent to which Nigerian journalists cover and expose the wrongdoings of political office holders during their tenure in office.
- To assess the credibility of news on good governance from the Nigerian press.

Theoretical Review

This study was anchored on the Social Responsibility Media Theory.

Social Responsibility Media Theory

The Social Responsibility Theory is one of the four normative press theories evolved by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956, cited in Folarin, 2002). According to Folarin (2002), the main assumption of the normative theories is that the press always takes on the form and colouration of the social and political structures within which it operates. Thus, social Responsibility Theory stemmed from the expectations cum concerns for media obligations, especially widespread criticisms of the American newspaper press regarding sensationalism, commercialism and imbalanced political reporting. This necessitated the establishment of a private commission of inquiry known as the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press in 1942, which resulted in The Social Responsibility Media Theory (Oboh, 2016). The report criticized the sensationalism of the press and the mixture of news with editorial opinion and thus, prescribed key journalistic standards for the press to maintain. The standards are that the press should:

- Provide a truthful, full, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning;
- Serve as a channel for exchanging comments and criticism and serve as a common carrier of the public expression;
- Give an unbiased and impartial picture of constituent groups in society; and
- Present and clarify the goals and values of society.

The Hutchins Commission noted that the press plays an important role in the society. Thus, the commitment to social responsibility is imposed on the media. Essentially, Social Responsibility Media Theory has five main propositions (McQuail, 2010). They are:

- The media have obligations to society, and media ownership is public thrust
- The news media and their contents should be truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant

- The media should be free but self-regulated
- The media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct
- Under some circumstances, government may need to intervene to safeguard the public interest.

A socially responsible press is professional, unbiased and ethical in carrying out its sacred responsibilities. It will act as a watchdog to the other estates of the realm to perform optimally and ensure that the government is accountable to the people. In essence, a socially responsible press can engender development. In relation to this study, the social responsibility theory will provide insights into the responsibility of the Nigerian media concerning ensuring that the government is held accountable to the people. Nigerian journalists will provide insights into how responsible the Nigerian media is in performing its watchdog role as the fourth estate of the realm.

Methodology

The study employed the qualitative research method while data was gathered through structured, in-depth interviews with participants. The purposive and convenience sampling technique were employed in this study. The purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting ten (10) journalists from five broadcast media (Television Continental (TVC); African Independent Television (AIT); Channels TV; Nigeria Television Authority (NTA); and Radio Nigeria Ibadan Office) and five print media (The Punch Newspaper, The Guardian Newspaper, Nigerian Tribune newspaper, The Sun Newspaper, and The Nation Newspaper) in Nigeria. These journalists were purposively selected as they had worked in the media organization and practiced for more than ten (10) years. Thus, they are expected to be able to provide answers to the media's role in entrenching good governance in Nigeria. The convenience sampling technique was employed in selecting willing and available journalists in responding to the questions for the study. Also, the selected media organizations were conveniently selected from South West branches for easy accessibility. Data was thematically analysed and discussed in line with the study's objectives.

Data Presentation

This section presents and discusses the data gathered from the in-depth interviews with journalists on their perceptions of the media's role in entrenching good governance and accountability. Three research objectives were set at the beginning of this study. The first research question examined how journalists held elected political office holders accountable for their campaign promises of good governance. This objective sought to understand if and how often journalists beamed their searchlight on elected government officials' activities and performances and reported their findings to the people. Participants were labeled from A to J for analysis and discussion, thereby hiding their identities, as many of them sought to remain anonymous. The findings showed that all the ten (10) participants agreed that they had at some point beamed their searchlight on the governments' activities. According to Participant A, *"I often report on political news. I have reported severally on the activities of many government officials. I have met with many of them and interviewed them and later went out to find out if what they said were true. For some, they were correct, while for some others, they were not entirely correct."* Similarly, Participant D, noted that *"we must report the activities of the government to the people. We have been doing exceptionally well since the beginning of democracy. Of course, all institutions are*

not perfect, including the media. However, we carry out our primary tasks to the best of our abilities." When asked to provide instances of holding the government responsible for their actions, one of the participants noted that *"I remember when I wrote a report about a politician in the South West who commissioned a 120km road in a town. A few months after the commissioning, we saw grass growing on the road and some cracks. I took pictures of the road and wrote a story about it. It got many people talking and questioning the quality of road done."*

Furthermore, 6 of the participants noted that while it was easy to expose the activities of government officials, sometimes it was difficult as a result of the media ownership structures in Nigeria. For instance, Participant F noted that *"politicians will always be politicians. They can promise heaven and earth during their campaigns. Once they are voted into power, they lose touch with reality. When we try to handle our tasks professionally, we are often reminded to be careful as the political office holder you are writing about is a friend to our Chairman..."* In addition, Participant B noted that *"to be candid, we try our best in reporting facts. However, there are times when you compile news, and you are not allowed to mention some names, or that some news is given priority over others due to the ownership structure of when your bosses try to curry favour from the top..."* These revelations show how the Nigerian media professionals are left handicapped due to reasons beyond their control in carrying out their roles. Finally, objective one of the study reveals that the majority of the participants were averse that the media environment was toxic and not allowing them to carry out their major functions. They opined that contrary to public opinions, journalists are professional and would function better if given the right atmosphere to operate. *"Sometimes, you cover stories that don't get reported. The majority of our stories are often published and we put these politicians on their toes. Those who deserve kudos are given, and those who deserve otherwise are also reported,"* Participant D stated. Similarly, Participant J noted that *"the Nigerian media is a strong force. Barring minor challenges, we handle our jobs professionally. We cover stories of public office holders and make the citizens aware of these stories. Elections are coming up next year, and we will also conduct ourselves professionally in the reportage of political campaign issues."* However, some of the challenges faced by these journalists in holding political office holders accountable include ownership structure, politicians being best of friends, unnecessary sanctions from the top, some media bosses being friends with these politicians, thereby affecting the level of reports, unprofessional conduct of some journalists, voter apathy, among others.

Thus, we could infer from the qualitative data from the in-depth interviews that Nigerian journalists often hold elected public office holders accountable by reporting on their performances. However, the challenges and bias hamper their tasks and affect the objectivity of their reports. Therefore, Nigerian journalists often hold elected political office holders accountable for their campaign promises of good governance.

The study's second objective sought to understand the extent to which Nigerian journalists covered and exposed the wrongdoings of political office holders, thereby performing their social responsibility role to the people. The objective was meant to first assess journalists' role in entrenching good governance and how they exposed the wrongdoings of political officeholders. The findings revealed that journalists expose the wrongdoings of political office holders to some extent. However, most of the participants agreed that it could sometimes be a daunting task. For instance, Participant E noted, *"Honestly, our role is tasking. We are expected*

to report what we see. The people depend on what we put out in the newspapers. Sometimes, you write a story and it doesn't get published. Why? The editors decided to kill it. This dampens our morale. At other times, however, some of these stories are published." Participant C shares a real-life experience and noted that

Several years back, my team reported on a farce from one of the politicians— this politician sunk a substandard borehole in his community in the South-South. Unknown to us, our Senior Editor was his (the politicians) classmate. However, the Junior Editor approved the story and it was published. As the head of the team, I was queried and transferred to another office. Sometimes we do our job by exposing these wrongdoings, but the system does not give us the express right to do so.

This experience from Participant E exposes the gatekeepers in many of these media organizations. They are enablers of the wrongdoings of the government. However, another participant, G, noted that she was free to report on the government's wrongdoings as long as it was not against journalism ethics. *"I have uncovered several stories and made my reports. And they were published. There is no limit to what you can publish as long as it is within the ethics of journalism."* However, the majority of the participants agreed that exposing the antics of politicians was a necessity, though it could come with a price. *"See, it is our duty to report these issues. As a trained journalist, you must ensure that your story is factual, objective, and balanced. Exposing the corrupt officials should not be a problem. However, you must be ready to pay the price for such to happen in this country..."* Participant I noted. In another question on the social responsibility role of Nigerian media, the participants believed that to a great extent, the Nigerian media was socially responsible and carried out its duties responsibly. However, a participant noted that the social responsibility role of journalists is done *"sensitively and rationally to prevent crisis and promote a peaceful society."* Another respondent observed that while the Nigerian media was responsible, the broadcast media was credited to be more responsible. *"We all are working for a better society. In the broadcast station, we ensure social responsibility and ensure that news is well worded not to elicit fears... I believe we handle it better."* Meanwhile, the encumbrance of this vital role, as captured in the words of a respondent, goes thus, *"... but the brown envelope and other unethical practices affected the objectivity in media reportage"*.

Finally, when asked if they were ready to pay the price for ethical journalism, some responded, *"I have paid the price before, and I will still pay more."* Another participant noted, *"this is our country. We have no other country. We will keep reporting these wrongdoings as long as it will improve the country."* Another Participant stated, *"Some people believe that journalists collect brown envelopes to change stories. It is not entirely true. We must see to it that we do our tasks well. The advent of social media has made it easier for us to spotlight government activities and present first-hand information. If the country must work, the media has a great role in it."* Evidence from the second objective of this study suggests that Nigerian journalists are willing to expose the government's wrongdoings as part of their roles in holding public officials to account for their activities. However, some powers beyond them try to sabotage their efforts. Nonetheless, they are not relenting to carry out their primary functions to the people.

The final objective of this study examined the level of credibility of news on good governance from Nigerian journalists. This was necessary to assess the social responsibility and credibility of news on good governance from the media. The findings revealed that all the participants agreed that news on governance from Nigerian media was credible. They opined that they carried out their primary duties effectively to their best abilities. They also noted that several political office holders have been put on their toes through investigative reports and are wary of media reports. Specifically, Participant D noted that *"news from the majority of the media is credible. There are several channels and processes which news passes through before it gets out to the public. If it is not credible, you would know because these days citizens also go to verify some of this information that we put out."* In addition, Participant J stated that *"...of course, you can trust news from journalists. We carry out our duties having the ethics of journalism in mind. If you open the pages of the newspaper today, you will notice that journalists are reporting the truth about the activities of these public office holders...these news are in the form of news stories, editorials, feature stories and editorial comments."* However, most of the participants agreed that the advent of digital technologies and social media, in particular, was denting the image of journalists as the advent of social media has reduced the credibility of news. *"These days, you hear of citizen journalists. How well are these people trained? Many of these mushroom online media are denting the image of journalism. People confuse their news with the ones from authentic media organizations...."* The participants were quick to add that traditional media with online media presence enjoy credibility as against the unapproved social media news outlets.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the media's role in entrenching good governance and accountability of public office holders in Nigeria. Data was gathered from ten (10) journalists who provided perspectives on the media's role in holding public office holders accountable, thereby enriching democracy. The findings revealed that Nigerian journalists often held political office holders to their campaign promises. This was achieved through constant reportage of their campaign promises after being elected into office. The media performed their watchdog role by reporting on the successes and failures of these political office holders, thereby making them (political office holders) accountable for their campaign promises. The journalists often beamed their searchlights on the activities of the government and reported corrupt ones and those who were not fulfilling their campaign promises. Thus, the findings are in tandem with the assertions of Jega (2014), who noted that for good governance and accountability to thrive in any given society, the media must provide people with access to all the information needed to guide and safeguard their electoral choices. However, journalists faced several challenges from the government and their superiors in discharging their duties. The findings of this study are in line with the assertions of Abegunde and Fajimnola (2018), who noted that some Nigerian media operators are agents of the elite groups that constitute the political gladiators. This study also found that the ownership structure affected how news and reports of good governance were reported.

Sharma and Dubey (2018) noted that citizens in democratic governments require adequate information to make decisions regarding their involvement in the State and civil society. This information from the media assists the citizens to decide sensibly and take the right course of action favourable to them. Thus, media helps people know what is happening around the

world and socialize them with the values of pluralism. By publicizing information, the media also make public services more responsive to the people. The Nigerian media has, to some extent, performed these functions. However, the findings show that some news editors who are friends with politicians do not often allow such stories to get to the public. Nigerian journalists carry out their tasks ethically and are socially responsible. Despite the challenges faced in reporting on good governance and bringing the public office holders accountable, Nigerian journalists have been ready to pay the price to ensure that political office holders are held accountable, thereby ensuring good governance.

Conclusion

Mass Media are veritable tools in entrenching good governance and accountability as they are saddled with four functions: surveillance, correlation, transmission, and entertainment. Through the watchdog and information role, the media exert more influence on government and elected political officeholders. The study concludes that although there are improvements in journalists' reportage of good governance, the Nigerian media has not lived up to its expectations in entrenching good governance and accountability. There must be a synergy between journalism and governance. The Nigerian media must live up to its role as the watchdog and fourth estate of the realm. For the Nigerian media to fully achieve its surveillance and watchdog role, they must be truly independent, devoid of governments interference.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are given based on the findings of the study:

- Nigerian media organizations should intensify their investigative reporting to continue to unearth governments' poor governance and promote good governance.
- The Nigerian media must be truly independent, devoid of heavy government interference to carry out their watchdog roles.
- The Nigerian media must be socially responsible in carrying out their tasks. Nigerian journalists must be mindful of the agenda they set for public discourses that influence the people's opinions towards governance issues.

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