MEDIA COVERAGE OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
SUN AND NEW NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT
The study examines the coverage of corruption issues by the Nigerian Newspapers. It samples two Nigerian Dailies – Daily Sun and New Nigerian Newspapers for the period of one year – June 2013 and May 2014 when corruption was believed to be at its highest peak in Nigeria. At the end of the study, it was discovered that the newspapers did not indeed fulfill their statutory responsibility of watch dogging the society. The coverage was not significant compared to other stories like politics and economy; prominence was also not given to the stories. It was also deduced that the stories are not in-depth as there was little investigation and follow-up enough to set precedence for public discourse. The study therefore suggests that the media embarks on massive sensitization campaigns as well as intensive investigative reporting in order to, not only expose corruption but to follow up the case to its logical prosecution.

Introduction
Bribery and corruption defined by Sternberg (2002:21) as incentives offered to encourage someone to break the rules of the organization he normally represents and deliver (unfairly) favourable outcome, is perhaps the most important factor that is impeding the accelerated social economic transformation of developing and less developed countries (LDCS) of the world.
Nigeria often referred to as the “giant of Africa” is without contradiction caught up in the nest of corruption and other official malpractices. Today there is hardly any public or political office holder who does not have a certain corruption case leveled against him. The trend has eaten deep into the fabric of the society. It has become order of the day in Nigeria.
According to Nwaoble (2004) Nigeria is one of the very few countries in the world where a man’s source of wealth is of no concern to his neighbors, the public or the government. Wealthy people who are known to be corrupt are regularly counted and honored by communities, religious bodies, social clubs and other private organizations. This implies that people who benefit from the largesse of these corrupt people rarely also question (Lydia, 2014)
The media have a very crucial role to play in the fight against corruption in any country. The media according to Asemah (2009) are agents of social change that can bring about positive attitudinal change in the audience (readers); they set agenda for the people to follow in any society. The mass media are crucial to opinion formulation and eventual outcomes of events. The media are champions in the crusade against corruption (Bello
they act as the eyes, ears and voices of the public, drawing rights often at considerable personal risk. Through their work they can encourage governments and civil society organizations to effect change that will improve the quality of people’s lives. The mass media apart from informing, entertaining and educating their audience also serve as watch dog of the society. This study therefore sets out to find out whether the media has been able to perform its statutory function of watch dogging the society by exposing corrupt practices in Nigeria.

**Problem of the Study**

Inspite of the great role the media is expected to play in the fight against corruption in the society; it is however observed that there is still a marginal disproportion of coverage and reportage of corruption in developing countries like Nigeria. This research is set to analyze how often the press cover corruption issues in the country and what level of impact do they give to such issues?

Does the press present the effects of such violations to the public and what role they play in exposing such issues based on their coverage?

For instance, according to Lustgorten and Debix (2005) the media’s preference for flashy audience grabbing and ratings-soaring image or story makes them to be non-chalant in matters which are of interest to the public owing to their inability to peruse events in detail (Bello H., 2014).

**Research Objectives**

1. To examine the frequency of corruption coverage by the press in Nigeria.
2. To determine the prominence given to corruption stories by the Nigerian press.
3. To analyze the depth of corruption issues by the Nigerian press.

**Research Questions**

1. How frequent does the Nigerian press carry corruption issues?
2. Does the Nigerian press give prominence to corruption stories?
3. How in-depth are the press in reporting corruption issues in Nigerian?

**Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the corruption coverage in editorials, News, features, cartoon, pictures, adverts, letter to the editors of the Sun and new Nigerian newspapers for one year each - between June 2012 and May 2013. These will be analyzed and used to show the ways through which the press can bring corruption issues to public attention.

The reason for choosing these newspapers is that, both of them command national circulation and readership as well as represent different regional ownership - while New Nigeria based in the North is owned by the government, the sun by a southerner chief Orji Uzor Kalu. The year 2012 -2013 was also selected because during the period there were a lot of issues surrounding corruption that befall the country, mostly emanating from the national assembly and the oil subsidy regimes.
Corruption in Nigeria

The destructive impact of corruption in the lives of nations throughout the world is acknowledged. Corruption is perhaps the most important factor that is impeding the accelerated social economic transformation of developing and less developed countries (LDCS) of the world. In fact, it is recognized by development scholars that the level of reduction in corruption has a very direct link to the level of economic development of nations in the world.

Corruption is a world-wide phenomenon, element of corruption is found in almost all countries of the world. However, it must be said that the incidences of corruption are much more prevalent in developing countries like Nigeria as noted by Anderson H. Etal (1999:316) “The condition of these countries are such that corruption is likely to have different causes and consequences than in more developed countries are more conductive to the growth of corruption (Lydia, 2014).

In Nigeria today, there is hardly any public or political office holder who does not have a certain corruption case leveled against him. The trend has eaten deep into the fabric of the society. It has become order of the day in Nigeria. This phenomenon cuts across both the executive and the legislature which is supposed to check the executive arm. The case that readily comes to mind is the case of a legislature, Faruk Lawan captured on camera allegedly collecting bribe to influence the oil subsidy probe. Other cases are that of a former minister of Aviation, now senator elect, Mrs Stella Oduah alledged to have been involved in contract inflation in the purchase of vehicle; the popular $20billion unaccounted fund by the NNPC, N2billion police pension scam to mention a few.

Seeing the place corruption occupies in the Nigeria System, the former president of Nigeria chief Olusegun Obasanjo, initiated the economic and financial crimes commission (EFCC) under the chairmanship of ACP Nuhu Ribadu. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) effort even though commendable has proved to be ineffective. This is because as attested by its leadership, the fight against corruption is too big to be left in the hands of the anti-graft agency. Since inception, the commission has been able to successfully prosecute highly placed government officials as well as those in the private sector accused of corrupt practices.

The mass media apart from informing, entertaining and educating their audience also serve as watch dog of the society.

Theoretical Framework

This paper will be hinged on the Social Responsibility Theory. This paper will be hinged on the Social Responsibility Theory. The social responsibility theory which was propounded in the year 1963 by F.S. Siebert, T.B. Peterson and W. Schramm owes its origin to the Hutchins commission on freedom of the press, set up in the United states of America in 1947 to re-examine the concept of press freedom as enunciated in the libertarian or free press theory.

The major premise of the social responsibility theory is that freedom carries concomitant obligations and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under the government, is
obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication (McQuil, 2005). Therefore, the theory is relevant to this study because it calls for responsibility on the part of the journalist and the media. Thus, journalists and media should be used to fight corruption in Nigeria.

**Methodology and Design**

The research design used in this research is content analysis and the research approach adopted in this work is both quantitative and qualitative content analytical method. The relationship among the sampled newspaper will be designed with the aid of tables and accompanying notes. The stories, picture, headlines, editorial, lifters, opinions, etc. will be analyzed to ascertain their authenticity and meaning. Owing to the fact that the study is on corruption issues, these texts will be analyzed to find answers to the research questions. Finding out who said what, to which, why, to what extent and with what effect?

For the purpose of this paper, the sampling technique to be used is systematic sampling method. Systematic sampling method is a statistical method involving the selection of elements from an ordered sample frame. “New Nigeria and The Sun edition of June 2012 to May 2013 will be studied and content analysed, editions of both newspapers during the study period will form the total population of the study.

i-The Sun = 336  ii- New Nigeria = 336  ==  672

The numbers above are generated from the daily editions (Monday to Sunday) of the newspapers within the stipulated period (i.e. edition are studied, it is understood that each month has four weeks and every week has five editions on two weekends. This further means that for every month there are 28 (June 2012-May 2013) gives the total of 336. The units of analysis are news stories, features, editorials, picture news, type of headlines, cartons, letters; and the content categories are based on the placement of the stories, the length of the stories, the type of headlines accompanying the stories, and the nature of the story.

For this research work, one edition of the Sun and new Nigerian Newspapers was sampled for each month of the studied year. Weekend’s edition was left out due to the fact that they often carry entertainment stories. Therefore, for the two publications a total of 24 editions were content analyzed as the research sample, 12 editions for each year. This was used to generalize for other editions.

Elements of the sampled data were collected using coding sheets for analysis using frequency tally and calculated in percentage. Data gathered was qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed using numerical symbols to assign values for eventual interpretation.

For this research work, the instrument for data collection was coding sheets. This will enable data collected to be presented in such a way that is understandable even to the lay minds.

**CODING FORMAT:** In this coding format, a set of categories will be developed and used to code data from the selected newspaper and magazine.
Media: these are the selected publications to be analyzed for the study.
  O1 – The Sun, 02 – New Nigerian
a- GENRE: this shows the type of editorial matters being published by the selected publications. The code will be as follows:
b- News Stories (NS), Cartoons/comics (CN), Editorials (ED)
c- Placement of story: This shows prominence given to stories. Stories on Front page and back pages are usually considered the most important stories, while subsequent news stories are usually found inside the page.
The page will be coded as follows:
  01 – Front page 02 – Back page 03 – inside page

Data Presentation and Analysis
A total of 24 code sheet were designed and used in gathering the data, 12 of each of the sampled newspapers. Each instrument (code sheet) is representing an issue or publication. It is from this figure that the data technique was adopted in chapter three of the study.

Objective one: To examine the frequency of corruption coverage by the press in Nigeria (The sun and New Nigeria)
Finding: From the table below, it is obvious that the sun out weight New Nigeria newspapers in the coverage of corruption issue as it carried 50% of the total 336 corruption issues against 49% of New Nigeria this difference in volume of coverage may be attributed to the ideological leaning of the two newspapers (The sun and New Nigeria)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sun</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Nigeria</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: content coding (2013)
Source: content coding (2013)

Frequency of mention of corruption issues and non-corruption issues is below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Paper</th>
<th>The Sun</th>
<th>New Nigeria</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corruption issue</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-corruption</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>3968</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.16- The frequency of mention of corruption and non-corruption issues, in the newspaper on corruption issues are mentioned 3968 (92%) times while corruption issues are mentioned 344 (8%) times in both newspapers.

Therefore, non-corruption issues were given more coverage than corruption issues from June 2012 to May 2013 in the newspaper.

However, on a comparative basis, the Sun newspaper publish more of corruption issues when compared with New Nigeria while the New Nigeria report (164) 46% corruption issue, the Sun reports (170) 50% on corruption issues.

Objective two: To examine the prominence given to corruption issues by the two sampled newspapers (the Sun and New Nigerian newspapers)

From the table below it can be inferred that both the two papers did not give prominence to corruption issues as out of the 170 stories published by the Sun newspaper, only 9 stories representing 6% were placed at the front page, 160 stories representing 93% were at the inside pages, and 1 story representing 1% was at the back page.
The New Nigerian on the other hand published 164 stories out of which only 5 stories representing 4% were placed at the front page, 1% at the back page representing only 1% and the remaining 158 stories representing 94% were at the inside pages of the editions.

### Placement of corruption stories in both publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placements</th>
<th>The Sun</th>
<th>Total percentage %</th>
<th>New Nigerian</th>
<th>Total percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front page (01)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside page(02)</td>
<td>(160)</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>(158)</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back page (03)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source: content coding (2013)**

With the result as shown in the table and graph, it shows that prominence attached to corruption stories by both papers was low. This is because studies have shown that stories place at the front page and back page are assumed to be very important but unfortunately both studied had more of political stories placed at the front page and back page. Comparatively however, the Sun newspaper placed relatively more prominence to corruption stories as it carried more stories at the front pages than the new Nigerian newspaper as the above table testify.

**Objective three: to analyze the in-depth nature of the corruption stories by the Nigerian press (as represented by the Sun and New Nigerian newspapers)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature stories of</th>
<th>The Sun</th>
<th>Total percentage %</th>
<th>New Nigerian</th>
<th>Total percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive(01)</td>
<td>(67)</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>(74)</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against (02)</td>
<td>(80)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>(72)</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral (03)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source: content coding (2013)**

From the above table, it shows that in the Sun, 67 of the human rights stories published were in support of the basis of the story. This when calculated in percentage equals to 39% as coded 01.

In New Nigerian, 74 human rights stories had a supportive nature representing 47%. Stories that were against the story as coded 02 in the Sun were 80 in total and 46% in percentage and in New Nigerian 72 in total and 45% in percentage. Furthermore, neutral stories in the Sun in total were 27 and 13% in percentage and in New Nigerian 18 in total and 7% in percentage.
Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations
The purpose of this study was to examine the extent of press coverage given to corruption related stories or issues in Nigeria. Also to know the prominence attached and how intensive the stories were written. Direct observation was used based on systematic samples for press coverage on corruption stories by the Sun and New Nigerian newspapers for the period of a year each i.e. between June 2012 and May 2013, where a total of 12 editions representing each month of the year, consisting of Mondays to Fridays with the exception of weekend’s edition i.e. Saturday and Sunday edition.
Both publications failed to set agenda for the public in respect of the issues raised because the coverage was very low when compared to other non corruption issues. The papers did not also give prominence to the stories as the study reveals that majority of the stories – more than 90% were placed at the inside pages of the newspapers.
Comparatively however, the Sun reports more corruption stories than the New Nigerian and this might not be unconnected to the political leaning of the two papers as well as their ownership pattern, as the Sun is privately owned by Uzor Kalu, while the New Nigerian owned by Government.

Recommendation:
- The media should partner with governmental agencies charged with fighting corruption as well as local and international organizations to sensitize the general public on the effects of corruption in the country.
- The study also recommends that the mass media should embark on extensive investigative journalism in order not only to expose corrupt practices in Nigeria, but also adequately follow up the stories earlier reported up to its logical conclusion.
- Findings of the study show that the corruption stories carried were shallow as majority of them were written using the straight news format, correspondents and contributors should engage in writing more of articles, interpretation and investigation features which are believed to be more insightful and factual and which could provide the reader with different perspectives

REFERENCES