

# Newspaper Readers' Perception of Campaigns for the Eradication of Corruption in Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study undertook a critical appraisal of newspaper readers' perception of campaigns for the eradication of corruption in Nigeria. It was motivated by the continued perception of Nigeria and Nigerians in the international arena as very corrupt, thus, raising questions regarding the expected impact and effects of newspaper campaigns in the fight against corruption in the country. Relevant literature to the topic was extensively reviewed to reveal the current thinking on the role and effectiveness of newspaper campaigns in the crusade against corruption in Nigeria. The area of study was six States' Capitals selected from the six geo-political zones of the country and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), arriving at a population of 3,304,110 (three million, three hundred and four thousand one hundred and ten) from which a sample size of 400 was obtained by calculation using the Taro Yamane formula. For the methodology, survey design was adopted, where a structured questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Four research questions were asked and four research hypotheses were subsequently formulated and tested. The four null hypotheses were rejected, thus upholding all the alternative hypotheses. The data collected were presented in percentage frequencies, Likert's 5-points scale and analysed with the statistical tool of Chi-Square and Spearman rank correlation. Results obtained indicated that newspaper readers' perception of the performance of the press in the anti-corruption campaign is independent of the respondents educational qualification; that Newspaper readers exposure to newspaper campaigns on corruption had a significant impact in terms of contributing to their attitudes and behaviours regarding corruption; that Nigerian newspapers used their editorial columns effectively to crusade against corruption; that Nigerian newspapers' performance of their surveillance role in the campaigns to eradicate corruption in Nigeria was significant. However, it is still recommended here that Nigerian journalists need to be much more encouraged, protected and motivated to consistently campaign against corruption in the country and that their reports must be made to reach the rural areas where over 70% of Nigerians still reside and where every citizen of the country comes from.

**Keywords:** Media , Corruption ,Image ,perception ,Newspaper

## INTRODUCTION

One monster that has ravaged the socio-economic fabric of the Nigerian society over the years is corruption. It has not only become a household name, but also a way of life in Nigeria. All efforts to tame this monster seem to have defied all strategies and tactics. "Every society, present and past, show strong abhorrence for corrupt practices even though corruption is extant in all societies, no nation wants to bear the stigma of the ignominious reputation of being notorious for rampant corruption" (Amadife, 2007:18). Yet, in spite of the notoriety the word 'corruption' has attained and it's globally acclaimed disruptive and despicable consequences on peoples' lives and their respective societies, Momoh (1999: 115) rightly notes that:

If there is anything which operates efficiently, uniformly and smoothly all over the country, it is the ... engine of machinery of corruption... The phenomenon of corruption seems to be our official ideology, our lingua franca, and the universal language which is spoken and understood in every nook and cranny in Nigeria.

The prevalence of widespread and in most cases, large scale corruption in Nigeria has robbed a highly significant proportion of its citizens of the wisdom to recognise the need for patriotism, dignity of life and respect for core values and other general value-laden beliefs and practices. As a result, the country has drifted into extreme poverty and moral regression. The inherent values associated with civilized conduct which is the recognition, adoption and internalization of appropriate attitudes, behaviours, values and the disposition towards doing the right things and to be seen to be doing the right things at all times have been jettisoned in preference to the senseless worship and mad rush for money and other forms of primitive accumulation of wealth.

Regrettably, Nigerians are shamelessly involved in the following forms of corruption: the 'get rich quick' at all cost syndrome, open display of poor attitude to public service and criminal neglect of public property, defrauding of the citizenry through the policy of payments for fuel subsidy, stealing and mismanagement of pension funds, imbibing the culture of seeking gratification even when one is performing his or her official duties, kidnapping, political assassinations, advance fee fraud (419), examination malpractices, armed robbery, and even committing arson to cover up the tracts of cases of monumental corruption. The pioneer

Executive Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Mr. Nuhu Ribadu (2009) while addressing the U. S. House Financial Service Committee made the following detailed frightening revelations thus:

Between 1960 and 1999, Nigerian officials had stolen or wasted more than \$440 billion dollars. This is six times the Marshall plan, the sum total needed to rebuild a devastated Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. Mr. Dariye operated 25 bank accounts in London alone to juggle money and evade law. ...the London Metropolitan Police determined that Dariye had acquired £10 million in benefits through criminal conduct in London while domestically, we were able to restrain proceeds from crimes worth \$34 million dollars. D. S. P. Alamieseigha, had four properties in London valued at about £ 10 million plus another property in Cape Town valued at \$1.2 million. £1 million cash was found in the bedroom of his apartment in London, while £2 million was restrained at the Royal Bank Scotland in London and over \$240 million in Nigeria. This is in addition to bank accounts traced to Cyprus, Denmark, USA and the Bahamas.

Corruption hurts poor people in developing countries disproportionately. It affects their daily life in many different ways, and tends to make them even poorer, by denying them their rightful share of economic resources or life saving aid. Corruption puts basic public services beyond the reach of those who cannot pay bribes. By diverting scarce resources intended for development, corruption also makes it harder to meet fundamental needs such as those for food, health, and education. It creates discrimination between different groups in society, feeds inequality and injustice, discourages foreign investment and aid, and hinders growth. It is therefore a major obstacle to political stability and to successful social and economic development.

From the foregoing, therefore, it is clearly evident that corruption and its damaging nature and impacts constitute a major threat to the survival of Nigeria as a free, independent and united nation. Pandemic and widespread corruption is a product of the actions of those entrusted with power and leadership. This has increased the level of poverty in the land, and portends a bleak future for Nigerians living and those yet unborn. According to Achebe, (1983: 25) “anybody who can say that corruption in Nigeria has not become alarming is either a fool, or a crook or else does not live in this country.” Such blunt remark and strong indictment from this well-respected scholar and others like him is perhaps, part of the reason why the Berlin-based Transparency International (TI) in its (1995-2005) perceptions index stated that “In recent times, Nigeria has held the unenviable record of being considered as one of the most corrupt countries among those surveyed”.

The Political Bureau set up by the General Ibrahim Babangida administration in an incisive report, summed up the magnitude of corruption in Nigeria extensively as follows:

It [corruption] pervades all strata of the society. From the highest level of the political and business elites to the ordinary person in the village, Its multifarious manifestations include the inflation of government contracts in return for kickbacks; fraud and falsification of accounts in the public service; examination malpractices in our educational institutions including universities; taking bribes and perversion of justice among the police, the judiciary and other organs for justice; and various heinous crimes against the state in business and industrial sectors of our economy, in collusion with multinational companies such as over-invoicing of goods, foreign exchange swindling, hoarding and smuggling. At the village level, corruption manifests itself in such form as adulteration of market goods or denting of measures to reduce their contents with a view to giving advantage to the seller. (Political Bureau Report, 1987:212-219).

Similarly, Nwankwo, (1992: 2) succinctly captures the pathetic situation corruption has plunged the nation into when he asserts that “Nigeria is a nation in socio-political ferment, a behemoth with the awesome African possibility imperilled and battered by internal decay”. Continuing, Nwankwo laments that unfortunately, this great African possibility is held by unbelievable corruption by rulers and their collaborators. Only rarely, if ever, would one find any Federal or State Ministry, Department or Agency (MDA’s) where corruption does not abound. In fact, a common and recurring picture is the usual sighting of policemen on the major roads and highways collecting bribes and extorting money with impunity from motorcyclists, transporters, and private car owners in full public glare on a daily basis. As if that is not bad enough, a visit to any Nigerian Police Station would readily reveal how the Police dispossesses the citizens they are supposed to protect of their resources and in the process continue to drag the image of the country to the mud. They openly demand for bribes for the processing of accident victim’s report, bribes for buying stationeries used for writing statements, bribes before investigations are carried out, bribes before a crime suspect’s arrest is made and worse still, bribes before citizens in their custody are taken on bail. All these happen in a country where bails are supposed to be ‘free’ and in a country spending huge sums of tax-payers’ money on an image re-branding campaign. Hardly a day goes by that we do not hear of or read about one bribery scandal or another involving those in top government positions including members of the National Assembly. Such bribery scandals include the stock market scam (Otteh –

Hembe bribery scandal), the fuel subsidy management scam (the Lawan-Otedola bribery allegations scandal), the power sector N5.2 billion mismanagement of rural electrification fund scandal (Hon. Elumelu/Senator Ugbane and eight others scandal), the Patricia Etteh N638 million Speaker's House renovation scandal, the Dimeji Bankole N2.3 billion car purchase scandal), the N54 million bribe-for-Senate confirmation of Ministerial appointments allegation scandal and the Police Pension fund scam. All of the examples mentioned above provide an incomplete picture of the disturbing scale of corruption in Nigeria.

Corruption has plunged Nigeria into dire straits and it is only fair that we all admit the reality of our pitiable condition. Nothing seems to be working in our country as hospitals become mere consulting clinics; educational institutions are poorly funded and ill-maintained; university graduates and secondary school leavers roam the streets without employment or the hope of getting any soon; those who have jobs are routinely thrown out through policies termed 'retrenchment', 'disengagement', 'down-sizing' or even 'right-sizing'. As a result, Nigeria has become a typical spectacle for the enactment of pathetic stories, a nauseating, putrefied and poorly motivating environment for sane individuals to live in. It may not be out of place for one to affirm that corruption is perhaps one of the most problematic issues that are hindering the accelerated socio-economic transformation of developing countries like Nigeria. Over the years, corruption is known to be a major constraint on the successful implementation of well thought-out plans and programmes of actions by the government for its people. Any nation where corruption exists is likely to witness high levels of inequality, high levels of unemployment, widespread poverty, violence, arbitrariness and underdevelopment. Reinforcing the call for a corrupt-free Nigeria, Hilary Clinton a former United States Secretary of States in her keynote address at the 7th Biennial US-African Business Summit laments that:

There is no doubt that when one looks at Nigeria, it is such a heart-breaking scene we see, the number of people living in Nigeria is going up, the number of people facing food insecurity and health challenges are going up just because the revenues have not been translated into positive changes for the Nigerian people.

Despite these remarks, which generally support the need for the eradication of all forms of corrupt practices and corruption generally in Nigeria through the imbibing and adoption of openness and transparency on the part of government at all levels, its agencies and officials, opinions indicate that the Political elite lacks the political will, the commitment and the collective resolve to address the perennial issue of widespread corruption in Nigeria.

In view of the seriousness of the problem posed by corruption as a phenomenon, is corruption being effectively addressed in Nigeria? Why are the strategies for fighting corruption in Nigeria not succeeding? What contributions have the newspapers so far made in regard to corruption eradication? What are the challenges facing the press in the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria? How do we position the press for greater effectiveness in the campaign for the eradication of corruption in Nigeria?

### **Statement of the Problem**

The one indisputable fact that characterises the perception of Nigeria as a nation in the international arena is that corruption is pervasive and widespread in the country and that her citizens are very corrupt. The perpetration of one form of corruption or another has become an everyday occurrence in the country and is fast eating into the moral fabric of the society threatening to destroy the entire nation.

As a result of the serious implications of corruption, successive regimes and administrations in Nigeria have devised various corruption eradication measures to contain the menace. In this connection, the Obasanjo Civilian Administration established two anti-corruption agencies namely the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). These corruption fighting Agencies, particularly, the EFCC uses coercive strategies rather than the persuasive approach in its effort to stamp-out corruption. Unfortunately, the great expectation that these anti-corruption Agencies will bring about the desired change in Nigerians regarding their attitudes and behaviours towards corruption has not materialized and the scourge of corruption has continued.

To combat this scourge, Nigerian newspapers have launched unabatedly one campaign or another against corruption through news reports, editorials, feature articles, cartoons, Public Service Announcements (PSA's) etc. These efforts notwithstanding, critics abound, who dispute the contributions of the press in the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria. They contend that the performance of the Press is very much below expectation as regards mounting a successful corruption eradication campaign. The alarming issue of the continued incidence and allegations of corruption, the seeming unanswerable question of why corruption has steadily triumphed over the deluge of the Nigerian newspapers' campaign efforts against it, the extent to which the media, particularly, the newspapers have been effective in championing the anti-corruption campaign has often been a subject of disputation in public discussions.

Beneath this disputation lies the need to ascertain, in empirical terms, newspaper readers' perception of campaigns to eradicate corruption in Nigeria.

## Research Questions

The following research questions were asked:

1. To what extent do newspaper readers' perception of the performance of Nigerian newspapers on the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria dependent on their educational qualification?
2. To what extent does exposure to newspaper content on anti-corruption issues associate with individuals' attitudes toward corruption?
3. To what extent do Nigerian newspaper editorials influence newspaper readers perception of corruption in Nigeria?
4. To what extent do newspaper readers' perceive Nigerian newspapers as effectively performing their expected surveillance role in the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria?

## Hypotheses

Based on the above research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

### Hypothesis 1

H<sub>0</sub>: Newspaper readers' perception of the performance of the Nigerian newspapers in the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria is independent of their educational qualification.

H<sub>1</sub>: Newspaper readers' perception of the performance of the Nigeria newspapers in the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria is dependent on their educational qualification.

### Hypothesis 2

H<sub>0</sub>: Newspaper readers' exposure to newspaper campaigns has no significant correlation in terms of contributing to their attitude and behaviour regarding corruption.

H<sub>1</sub>: Newspaper readers' exposure to newspaper campaigns has significant correlation in terms of contributing to their attitude and behaviour regarding corruption.

### Hypothesis 3

H<sub>0</sub>: Most newspaper readers in Nigeria do not perceive newspaper editorials as an effective tool for reducing the level of corruption in the country.

H<sub>1</sub>: Most newspaper readers in Nigeria perceive newspaper editorials as an effective tool for reducing the level of corruption in the country.

### Hypothesis 4

H<sub>0</sub>: Nigerian newspaper readers' do not significantly perceive Nigerian newspapers as performing their surveillance role in the campaign to eradicate corruption in the country.

H<sub>1</sub>: Nigerian newspaper readers' significantly perceive Nigerian newspapers as performing their surveillance role in the campaign to eradicate corruption in the country.

## Scope of the Study

The scope of the study covers 1999 to 2007 – a period when former President Olusegun Obasanjo launched the campaign against corruption in Nigeria. The study also covers only the capitals of the six randomly selected States from the six geo-political zones of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The study did not include those who reside in other cities as well as those in the rural areas of the states sampled. This is because of the huge presence of those who can read and write (elites) in these metropolitan cities and accessibility to a multiplicity of newspaper genres. Furthermore, the study was limited to only the English language type of newspapers hence it excluded the indigenous language ones. This is because the indigenous language based newspaper publications tend to be less serious in their orientations to national issues and as a result their appeal, reach and awareness-creation capacity seems to be abysmally low and encumbered. The study will specifically cover the role and performance of the Nigerian newspapers in their campaigns for the eradication of corruption in Nigeria. As a result, it will not extend to the examination of the role of the broadcast media nor that of the new media - the internet (social networking) which is fast engaging the interest and attention of media scholars globally. Finally, since it will be difficult to cover all forms of corruption plaguing Nigeria, this study has been limited to cover only political and bureaucratic corruption which when solved is believed will lead to resolving other forms of corruption in the country.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Mass Media and the Fight against Corruption

The word "corruption" clearly defies any precise, or generally recognised and accepted definition. One of the more intractable debates in the literature on corruption, that continues to rage, has been over definition (Johnston 1996, Phillip 1996, Theobald 1994). The term, in spite of its notoriety is often used as a catch-all phrase to describe wanton looting of the nation's resources, stealing, bribery, embezzlement, fraud, favouritism and other ills which any civilized, morally-upright, God-fearing or right-thinking person happens to fear or repudiate. Corruption as a concept has received an extensive attention in almost every part of the country in the last twelve



years, and particularly, since the emergence of the two anti-corruption agencies namely the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). As a result, corruption as a concept has been defined variously. Corruption can include the abuse of power to manipulate, control, and diminish other people to enrich oneself and one's family and friends through nepotism and the misappropriation of public funds (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:271). The nature, and characteristics of corruption according to Microsoft Encarta Encyclopaedia, is used to describe "wrongdoing by those in a special position of trust. The term is commonly applied to self-benefiting conduct by public officials and others dedicated to public service". The above definition is in tandem with the one offered by Lipset and Lenz (2000: 112) when they wrote that "Corruption is efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expense or a misuse of public power for private benefit".

Also, the World Bank defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gain. Corruption is a perversion or a change from that which is appropriate to that which is condemnable. Specifically, corruption or corrupt behaviour involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit (Sen, 1999: 275).

### **The Role of the Media**

If properly utilized and well-directed, the mass media can be relied upon as a potent force for achieving attitude and behaviour change. It should assist society and reflect its aspiration in the current campaign against the scourge of corruption in Nigeria. The mass media which includes the print media (press) and the electronic media (broadcast) represents a crucial resource as well as a formidable platform for propagating and inculcating the values inherent in having a corrupt-free nation. In addition, these powerful instruments are credited with the ability of performing a variety of crucial roles in a society. In fact, the mass media can be used to inform and educate the members of a given polity on the activities of the people in authority and as a result sensitizing and emboldening them with the needed courage to ask questions that require open and honest responses, and criticise and point out where those in authority have erred. Also, the mass media can be used as an important tool in exposing corruption, framing the issue as a problem of public concern, providing the necessary strategies for solving the problem and empowering citizens to confront the scourge wherever it exists. In this regard, the media as whistle blowers, agenda setters and perennial watchdogs can be very effective in reporting and exposing widespread incidence of corruption and their perpetrators and more importantly, giving a renewed impetus to the activities and actions of the two anti-corruption agencies operating in Nigeria namely, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). Walter Carrington, a former Ambassador of the United States to Nigeria seem to agree with the efficacy of the media when he says that "Reporters, Commentators, and Social Critics keep the spotlight on public figures, analysing their actions and exploring the boundaries between their public and private selves to ensure that the public knows and approves of what their representatives are doing."

Adding its own voice and giving credence to the above position, the global anti-corruption watchdog, the Transparency International (TI) affirms that by investigating and reporting on corruption, the media provides important counterpoint to the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, shedding light on the wrongdoings of public office holders and corporate executives alike. This obligatory function of the press has often met stiff resistance as those occupying top government positions deliberately become antagonistic to pressmen. This, in fact, has been the dilemma of the Nigerian journalist and the press generally since the dark days of the military till date.

The press is in the crucial business of checking the excesses of the powers that be and holding them accountable to the people for their stewardship. Supporting the above position Edeani (1993: 80) noted that:

The Press is supposed to keep a watchful eye on what the government is doing and has the obligation on behalf of the public to criticise the government whenever it thinks that the government has not performed in the public interest, the press is thereby perpetually engaged in a running battle with the government.

According to (Amadife, supra) Mass communication is a field and career of carrying out investigation, analysis, and reporting in the news media the true position of characters; events and situations for public awareness. He further contended that it is through mass communication that the public is exposed to the two sides of a coin in any matter of which one or both sides would have remained concealed. The central issue here is that:

The media performs legitimate functions for society by providing correct information, knowledge and informed opinions about the issues of bad leadership style, poor political leadership and corruption and such contributions are helpful in adding value to the conduct of democratic politics. ...the press of the 1980's and 1990's had to squarely confront the scourge of internal colonialism at the hands of those who supposedly share kingship and racial, linguistic and cultural identity with those they so callously oppress. (Nwankwo, 1999: 223)

Political leaders should know that the media is a social fact that operates responsibly and chiefly in the general public interest and is not in any way established to pursue parochial and mundane issues. As applied to the mass media, its simple meaning is that the media carry out a number of important, even essential, tasks in a contemporary society and it is in the general interest that these are performed and performed well (McQuail, 2005: 164).

### **The Watchdog and Investigative Reporting Technique**

In performing its surveillance, interpretative and investigative roles, the mass media, particularly, the news media (press) strive to cover deeper or hidden information, issues, events, and corruption-laden issues that should be of intense interest to their target audience. Investigative reporting as a concept is the in-depth news reporting, particularly, that which exposes corruption and wrongdoing on the part of government officials and big institutions (Welch et al, 2000:547). In discussing the irony of not applying investigative reports in spite of their seeming utilitarian values and usefulness to society Nwodu, (2006:7) observes that:

On daily basis, individuals in positions of authority commit untold crimes and successfully cover their tracks. Official crimes like misappropriation of public fund; award of contracts on basis of consanguinity or bond relationship, violation of human rights and judicial killings are often the common pattern of life among political office holders. But the irony is that members of the public never get to know about these crimes primarily because the perpetrators will find a way of covering their tracks.

In-depth news reporting requires the story to go beyond breaking stories to incorporate background details and trend (Folkerts & Lacy 2001: 103). Investigating and reporting social issues has been described as “the most challenging, and perhaps the most important” role in journalism (Griffin et al, 1991: 208). The idea that investigative reporting is a “powerful catalyst for change” has become widely accepted, and the reforming role of investigative journalists has been dramatized in novels and films (Protess et al 1991: 3). ... A “folklore” has grown up around investigative journalism in democratic societies. “Vigilante journalists bring wrongdoing to public attention. An informed citizenry responds by demanding reforms from their elected representatives, policy makers respond in turn by taking corrective action” (Protess 1991: 3). It is a powerful journalistic skill used to probe and dig deep into areas ordinary people would fear to stray. Properly researched and well-written investigative stories or reports are very useful in determining the hidden motivations and explanations propelling actions that are detrimental to societal growth, survival and progress. When corruption as a subject matter becomes an issue of intense media focus, the conjecture is that it has the potential impact of mobilizing media outcry that can seriously dent the image of those in authority, make them to regret their mindless and unwarranted action, cause them to lose sleep and also to lose so much political capital in so short a time and in the final analysis lead to their eventual downfall. This is because in public relations parlance, image is said to be not just everything, but it’s the only thing. Investigative reporting is largely a type of crusading journalism. Kamath, (1980:158-159) offers a helpful insight into what crusading journalism is all about:

A crusade implies not merely a cause to be fought for but steadiness and constancy, a stout heart and an unflinching interest. A crusade is not fought by writing one editorial or one news story. Perseverance, often against entrenched hostility from the powers that be, is the hallmark of a crusade.

However, watchdog or scanning the environment approach using investigative reporting technique has its good as well as negative components. It indeed depends, as a famous American publicist, Robert J. Blakely cited in Kamath, (1980:159-160) pointed out in a memorial lecture:

... In large part upon its motivations, there are newspapers that ‘crusade’ for ulterior reasons—to build up circulation or to grind an axe rather than to sharpen the sword of justice. These are contemptible. They injure the innocent. They rarely accomplish beneficial results that endure, always stopping short when the cream of sensationalism has been skimmed and never pressing to where they touch the really powerful and dangerous elements of the community...but to me the free press reaches its zenith in a good newspaper looking for a fight in a good cause on its own avenues and alleys. Few personal satisfactions can match the knowledge that one is making one’s community a better place in which to live. . .

It must be said here and now that the investigative journalistic landscape is often laced with banana peels and landmines because of the stature, connections and wealth at the disposal of those being investigated or reported upon. Why do the media play the watchdog function and not the lapdog role? The reason lies in the simple fact that naturally the average individual in most developing societies are full of suspicion of the way and manner government and its officials conduct government business (veil of secrecy) and also the realization that ordinary citizens lack the time and requisite resources to watch over all aspects of government themselves. Suspecting that the government or people within the government might be hiding something, investigative

journalists can engage public reaction and help ferment public outcries leading to new policies or the reform of old ones. Because public interest tends to wane after a story breaks, however, and because the general public has difficulty acting as a well-organized and effective political force, investigative reports aimed at triggering change by galvanizing the public have only limited potential.

### **The Concept of Perception**

The Webster revised unabridged dictionary extensively defined perception as (a) To obtain knowledge of through the senses; to receive impressions from by means of bodily organs; to take cognizance of the existence, character, or identity of; by means of the senses; to see, hear, or feel; as, to perceive a distant ship; to perceive a discord. (b) To take intellectual cognizance of; to apprehend by the mind; to be convinced of by direct intuition; to note; to remark; to discern; to see; to understand. According to Feldman (1999: 10), "Perception is the sorting out, interpretation, analysis and integration of stimuli involving our sense organs and brain." Perception is conceived and often regarded as communication. This is because people often make evaluative judgements of what is desirable and undesirable in a community based on what they feel, experience, see, read, hear or talk about. Citizens beliefs and values are therefore shaped by their perception of their world. People's thinking and beliefs also go a long way in determining their attitudes and opinions about individuals, motives, issues, events and society at large. In this regard, the mass media have been very influential agents in providing members of the society with the vital information upon which they can rationalise or critic issues and arrive at certain conclusions. When newspaper readers buy newspapers, they do so because they depend on it to know of current issues and what public opinion is regarding an issue of public significance. The media can be very helpful in examining the extent and ways in which newspaper readers affirm or disagrees about corruption. Supporting the above position, McDonald, Hession, Rickard, et al (2002) while examining perception about government actions and policies, found that such perceptions were largely media influenced. However, it is pertinent to point out that how people perceive an issue is dependent upon certain fundamental factors. According to Severin, (2001) different psychological factors influence perceptions and they include past experience, cultural expectations, motivations, moods, needs and attitudes. This simply means that certain variations exist in perceptions and behaviours of different human beings.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theories that would provide the platform, upon which this research work will rest upon, revolve around the Agenda Setting and the Social Responsibility theories. Both theories have been identified as fit and appropriate for this study. A further point is that these theories are deemed to have some form of relationship or another with the study; hence, it was used to anchor, guide and deepen the knowledge and understanding of this study.

### **Agenda Setting Theory**

According to Cohen, (1963:13) "It (the press) may not be successful in telling readers what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." Also, Okenwa (2002: 122) writes that agenda setting implies that "the mass media predetermine what issues are regarded as important at any given time in society". Put differently, the mass media can, and indeed plays a significant role in influencing the public agenda - that is, those topics, issues and events that members of the public consider important through its coverage of news reports and events. The major thrust of this theory hinges on the ability of the mass media to direct or focus the attention of the citizenry on certain problematic issues necessary for their attention and making them absolutely inevitable for discussion. A simpler explanation of the theory was reported by Welch et al when they cited Ebring et al (1980: 16-49) in their book "Understanding American Government". According to these erudite scholars, the central premise of the Agenda Setting theory, put simply, is that "The media publicize an issue, and people exposed to the media talk about the issue with their fellow citizens. Eventually, enough consider it important and expect officials to try to resolve it". Given the requisite conditions, the mass media has the capacity to highlight issues which ultimately influence the thinking of the people or shape their opinion towards a particular direction.

Thus, if Nigerian newspapers decide to cover an issue such as "Corruption in Nigeria", then it must be important and seen as such by the Nigerian people. Similarly, if a story on the conviction of a former Executive Governor of a State, a Federal Minister, a National Legislator, a State Commissioner or indeed any high profile politician or businessman on the basis of corruption receives front page or back page placement or coverage and a banner headline, it would naturally symbolize a very important and remarkable topic and probably, the most important story or event of that day.

Such corruption-laden awareness creation messages can be packaged as a feature story, an editorial, hard news, new analysis, cartoons/pictorials, Public Service Announcements (PSA's), advertorials etc. They are likely to succeed in influencing the perception of the people and shaping their opinion towards the issue of corruption when such well-articulated and well-written content are salient, given enough space, properly

highlighted and displayed in terms of positioning the subject-matter or issue over time.

### **Social Responsibility Theory**

The term “Social Responsibility” is often used in discussions to advocate the need for various organs of mass communication to view publishing for public interest as an issue of paramount importance and above all other considerations. This simply means that the media is legitimately charged with the responsibility of giving out vital information within and outside a given environment. The beauty of this theory is that it clearly demands that the media should at all times act responsibly by realizing that they owe certain obligations to the public. This form of press philosophy or normative theory according to Siebert et al (1956: 95) also holds that “government must not merely allow freedom; it must actively promote it... when necessary, therefore, the government should act to protect the freedom of its citizens”.

The theory fundamentally defined the various public expectations regarding the structure, conduct and performance of the media. It is in this regard that the theory ascribes and accepts the following roles as what the media ought to do in society;

- (a) It accepts the role of the press in servicing the economic system though it would not have this task take precedence over such other functions as promoting the democratic processes or enlightening the public.
- (b) It accepts the role of the press in providing entertainment, but with the proviso that the entertainment be ‘good’ entertainment.
- (c) It accepts the need for the media as an institution to remain financially self-supporting, but if necessary it would exempt certain individual media from having to earn their way in the market place.

Thus, if newspaper organisations while serving the public interest, convenience and necessity exploit the opportunity offered by their existence effectively, then the incidence of corruption in Nigeria would reduce significantly. This is because as the saying goes “those who are guilty are always afraid and ashamed”.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The research design adopted for any empirical study is highly dependent on the nature of the problem and the objective the study aims to achieve. The descriptive research design was used for this study. This approach deals with the systematic description of a current social problem in a very factual and honest manner. Hence, the descriptive research design was considered most appropriate and enabled the researcher to obtain information from six randomly selected states capitals/metropolis deemed to be a representative sample of the target population of this study. Such information was used to describe newspaper readers perception of the nature and prevalence of corruption as they exist in Nigeria and from it, the researcher inferred the perception of the entire newspaper readers’ in the country. Furthermore, the descriptive technique was adopted for this study because the researcher is interested in finding out the perception of newspaper readers’ on the role and seeming contributions of the press in the campaign for the eradication of corruption in Nigeria.

Therefore, the sample for this study consisted of all newspaper readers drawn from the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and the six randomly selected States’ Capitals from the six geo-political zones that make-up Nigeria. In each of the six (6) Geo-political zones, a state was randomly selected to ensure proportionate representation of all the zones. From the randomly selected States, the population for each State capital was sought for, after which the results of the various populations was summed up and used as the target population for this study. The assumption here is that the population of newspaper readers’ in a State capital is proportional to the population of that State capital. Furthermore, the greater proportion of newspaper readers is urban-based and largely found in the State Capitals as evidenced by the records of the Circulation/Distribution Managers of the newspapers in each State Capital.

A circulation/distribution manager acts as middleman or intermediary between newspaper organisations (those who produce newspapers) and the newspaper readers (those who consume it). Given that the respondents for this study are newspaper readers and constitute only those who are functionally literate (those who can read and write), the respondents for the study were categorised into seven different clusters namely top bureaucrats, journalists, the academia, trade unionists, religious leaders, those in Non-governmental Organisations and those referred to as déclassé. The declassé group of respondents are the young, upwardly mobile school leavers and the unemployed who congregate as free newspaper readers). The essence is to reach actual citizens who have regular access to newspapers, read newspapers and are sufficiently knowledgeable about the reporting and publication of corruption and anti-corruption issues in Nigerian newspapers. This group of respondents are likely to have regular supply of newspapers given their positions and statuses and they are also likely to be keen observers of issues, events, personalities and government in Nigeria. A well-structured questionnaire containing Likert type of questions was used to elicit responses from the respondents. The questionnaire was constructed in such a way that it ensured that only the relevant questions were raised to help the respondents to address the formulated research hypotheses. Since some state capitals have larger populations than others, the researcher had to allocate



a higher number of questionnaires to those State capitals known to have larger populations in relation to their counterparts with smaller ones. The rationale for this judgement was simply premised on the need to ensure fairness and equity in terms of representation of the population of such state capital. This study made use of basic descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency tables, bar-charts, pie-charts, Spearman Rank Correlation and the Chi-Square for its analyses of data.

### Research Method

The Survey Research method was used for this study. It is a commonly used communication research strategy that involves selecting individual respondents, asking them questions, analysing their responses, and then inferring how the findings apply to the entire population of interest to a researcher. Therefore, the model seems to be an invaluable problem-solving tool that can be applied statistically to survey a selected sample of respondents from some selected state capitals in Nigeria and the Abuja (FCT) in the hope that it will reliably mirror the perception of the entire population on the use and performance of newspapers on the campaign to rid the country of corruption. This method is often regarded as one of the most appropriate and effective means of conducting opinion research which deals with the feelings, perceptions, beliefs, opinions, behaviours and attitudinal dispositions of people on a given subject-matter or issue in their natural settings. Since this study revolves around human beings, their attitudes, behaviours and ways of life, the survey approach seemed most effective.

Therefore, the kind of responses that respondents provided helped in no small measure to either validate or refute the hypotheses formulated for this study. In other words, the survey method served as a useful parameter for gauging newspaper readers' perception or judgement of the Nigerian press performance in the campaigns for the eradication of corruption in Nigeria. Since the research method one adopts is consequent upon the nature of the study, the survey method was effective in collecting the evidence necessary for addressing the formulated research questions and testing the hypotheses

### Population of Study

Population means all citizens of Nigeria irrespective of sex that read Nigerian newspapers and their campaigns to eradicate corruption in the country. Nigeria has a total of thirty-six states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The country is grouped into six geo-political zones of between five and seven states. They include; South-East (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi Enugu and Imo). South-South (Akwa-ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers). South-West (Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo). North Central (Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja). North East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe). North West (Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi Sokoto and Zamfara).

The target population of this study is therefore the summation of the populations of the six States' Capitals of the six randomly selected States from the six-geo-political zones in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The rationale for using the capitals of the selected states as the target population is predicated mainly on the fact that Nigerian newspaper readers are largely urban-based. From the figures gotten from the 2006 National Population Commission census, the population is 3,304,110. The summation is represented below as follows:

$$N = N_1 + N_2 + N_3 + N_4 + N_5 + N_6 + N_7$$

Where N = target population

$$N_1 = \text{Enugu} = 722,664 \text{ (Enugu metropolis - South East zone)}$$

$$N_2 = \text{Kaduna} = 760,084 \text{ (Kaduna metropolis - North West Zone)}$$

$$N_3 = \text{Adoekiti} = 446,749 \text{ (Ado-Ekiti metropolis - South West Zone)}$$

$$N_4 = \text{Jalingo} = 118,000 \text{ (Jalingo metropolis - North East Zone)}$$

$$N_5 = \text{Asaba} = 149,603 \text{ (Asaba metropolis - South South Zone)}$$

$$N_6 = \text{Lafia} = 330,712 \text{ (Lafia metropolis - North Central Zone)}$$

$$N_7 = \text{Abuja} = 776,110 \text{ (Federal Capital Territory metropolis)}$$

### Determination of Sample Size

Because of the largeness of the population size, the researcher opted for the selection of a manageable and representative sample size that contains and reflects the particular characteristics of the population and will produce result that will stand the test of time.

Therefore, for the sake of statistical convenience as it concerns the management of complex primary data, the researcher used the Taro Yamane statistical formula to empirically determine the sample size. The formula states that:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where

n	=	desired sample size
N	=	finite population size
1	=	unity in value and it is always constant
e	=	error margin (0.05)

Consequently, with a population of 3,304,110 the sample was calculated as:

$$n = \frac{3,304,110}{1 + 3,304,110(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3,304,110}{1 + 3,304,110 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{3,304,110}{1 + 8260.275}$$

$$n = \frac{3,304,110}{8261.275}$$

$$n = 399.95$$

$$\text{Sample Size} = 400$$

The sample size n is now distributed to the six (6) state capitals and Abuja using probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling method of allocation.

$$n_i = \frac{N_i \times n}{N} \text{ for the various states.}$$

Where N = target population 3,304,110

n = sample size which is 400

n<sub>i</sub> = number to be distributed to each of the state capital with population N<sub>i</sub>

$$n_1 = \text{Enugu} = \frac{722,664 \times 400}{3,304,110} = 88$$

$$n_2 = \text{Kaduna} = \frac{760,084 \times 400}{3,304,110} = 92$$

$$n_3 = \text{Adoekiti} = \frac{446,749 \times 400}{3,304,110} = 54$$

$$n_4 = \text{Jalingo} = \frac{118,000 \times 400}{3,304,110} = 14$$

$$n_5 = \text{Asaba} = \frac{149,603 \times 400}{3,304,110} = 18$$

$$n_6 = \text{Lafia} = \frac{330,712 \times 400}{3,304,110} = 40$$

$$n_7 = \text{Abuja} = \frac{776,298 \times 400}{3,304,110} = 94$$

### Sampling Technique

The multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used for this study. This is because of the large, diverse and extremely complex nature of the population, in addition to, the absence of a sampling frame – an empirically valid listing of individuals who actually read newspapers in Nigeria. This enabled the researcher to select respondents in clusters.

### Measuring Instrument

The measuring instrument for this study is the structured questionnaire. It is the basic research instrument or means of collecting data for the analysis and interpretation of data for this study.

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This study was done to ascertain newspaper readers' perception of the press and their performance in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. This chapter analysed the data collected through the questionnaire administered by

the researcher to gauge newspaper readers' responses to the survey. Relevant questions to the research hypotheses were presented and analysed.

The data collected from the questionnaire filled by the respondents in the course of this study are presented using frequency tables, pie-charts and bar charts while the analysis of the data was done with the statistical tools of Likert's 5-points scale and analysis of variance (ANOVA) test statistics. The analysis shows whether the actual findings from the answers obtained from the questionnaire conform to the views assumed in the stated hypotheses or not. This equally provided the rationale for the researcher to make conclusive statements with respect to the subject of the study-Newspaper Readers' Perception of Campaigns for the Eradication of Corruption in Nigeria.

## HYPOTHESES TESTS

### Hypothesis 1

H<sub>0</sub>: Newspaper readers' perception of the performance of the Nigerian newspapers in the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria is insignificant.

H<sub>1</sub>: Newspaper readers' perception of the performance of the Nigeria newspapers in the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria is significant.

**Test Statistics** = ANOVA

### Means

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Responses * questions	15	60.0%	10	40.0%	25	100.0%

## Report

### Responses

Responses	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
SA	61.0003	3	15.17123
A	110.0001	3	1.72005
UD	85.9900	3	6.88110
D	45.91500	3	6.87830
SD	39.57763	3	12.00013
Total	68.49660	15	27.97141

### ANOVA

### Responses

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10252.267	4	2563.067	26.089	.000
Within Groups	957.333	10	95.733		
Total	11209.600	14			

**Source: SPSS Data Processing.**

### Interpretation

- A. A test of comparison of the mean responses from test table 1 (Report) indicates that those who Strongly Agree have a mean of 61.0003 with a standard deviation of 15.17123. Those who Agree have a mean of 110.0001 with a standard deviation of 1.72005. Those who Disagree have a mean of 45.9150 and a standard deviation of 6.87830, while those who Strongly Disagree have a mean of 39.57763 and a standard deviation of 12.00013. Those who are Undecided have a mean of 85.9900 and a standard deviation of 6.88110.
- B. Further test using ANOVA to determine whether to accept or reject the null hypothesis at a significant level of five percent (See ANOVA table) gave  $F_{\text{calculated}} = 26.089$  which is greater than  $F_{\text{critical}} = F(0.05,4,10) = 3.48$

**Decision:** Since  $F_{\text{calculated}} = 26.089$  is greater than  $F_{\text{critical}} = 3.48$ , the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) is accepted that Newspaper readers' perception of the performance of the

Nigeria newspapers in the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria is significant.

**Hypothesis 2**

H<sub>0</sub>: Nigerian Citizens exposure to newspaper reports on corruption has no significant impact on their attitudes and behaviour regarding corruption.

H<sub>1</sub>: Nigerian Citizens exposure to newspaper reports on corruption has a significant impact on their attitudes and behaviour regarding corruption.

**Test Statistics** = ANOVA

**Means**

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Responses * questions	15	60.0%	10	40.0%	25	100.0%

**Report**

Responses

Responses	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
SA	52.10100	4	1.00011
A	110.2003	4	2.10211
UD	86.6003	4	7.50008
D	43.9732	4	6.12295
SD	48.6756	4	1.11340
Total	68.3101	20	26.66114

**ANOVA**

Responses

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9766.103	4	2415.615	117.213	.000
Within Groups	207.544	10	21.003		
Total	9973.647	14			

**Source: SPSS Data Processing.**

**Interpretation:**

- A. A test of comparison of the mean responses from test table 2 (Report) indicates that those who Strongly Agree have a mean of 52.1010 with a standard deviation of 1.00011. Those who Agree have a mean of 110.2008 with a standard deviation of 2.10211. Those who Disagree have a mean of 43.9732 and a standard deviation of 6.12295, while those who Strongly Disagree have a mean of 48.6756 and a standard deviation of 1.11340. Those who are Undecided have a mean of 86.6003 and a standard deviation of 7.50008.
- B. Further test using ANOVA to determine whether to accept or reject the null hypothesis at a significant level of five percent (See ANOVA table) gave  $F_{\text{calculated}} = 117.213$  which is greater than  $F_{\text{critical}} = F(0.05, 4, 10) = 3.48$
- C. **Decision:** Since  $F_{\text{calculated}} = 117.213$  is greater than  $F_{\text{critical}} = 3.48$ , the null hypothesis(H<sub>0</sub>) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis(H<sub>1</sub>) is accepted that Nigerian Citizens exposure to newspaper reports on corruption has significant impact on their attitudes and behaviours' regarding corruption.

**Hypothesis 3**

H<sub>0</sub>: Nigeria newspapers do not use their editorial columns effectively to crusade against corruption.

H<sub>1</sub>: Nigeria newspapers use their editorial columns effectively to crusade against corruption.



**Test Statistics = ANOVA**

**Means**

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Responses * questions	25	100.0%	0	.0%	25	100.0%

**Report**

Responses

Responses	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
SA	83.3785	5	18.00715
A	118.1340	5	9.90001
UD	70.0230	5	23.70766
D	35.9700	5	4.89176
SD	34.8698	5	9.28992
Total	68.47506	25	34.55176

**ANOVA**

Responses

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	24539.315	4	6003.514	28.445	.000
Within Groups	4500.007	20	210.110		
Total	29039.322	24			

**Source: SPSS Data Processing.**

**Interpretation:**

- A. A test of comparison of the mean responses from test table 3 (Report) indicates that those who Strongly Agree have a mean of 83.3785 with a standard deviation of 18.00715. Those who Agree have a mean of 118.1340 with a standard deviation of 9.90001. Those that Disagree have a mean of 35.9700 and a standard deviation of 4.89176, while those who strongly disagreed have a mean of 34.8698 and a standard deviation of 9.28992. Those who are Undecided have a mean of 70.0230 and a standard deviation of 23.70766.
- B. Further test using ANOVA to determine whether to accept or reject the null hypothesis at a significant level of five percent (See ANOVA table) gave  $F_{\text{calculated}} = 28.445$  which is greater than  $F_{\text{critical}} = F(0.05,4,10) = 3.48$
- C. **Decision:** Since  $F_{\text{calculated}} = 28.455$  is greater than  $F_{\text{critical}} = 3.48$ , the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted that Nigerian newspapers use their editorial columns to crusade against corruption.

**Hypothesis 4**

- $H_0$ : The Nigerian newspapers performance of their surveillance role in the campaigns to eradicate corruption in Nigeria is insignificant.
- $H_1$ : The Nigerian newspapers performance of their surveillance role in the campaigns to eradicate corruption in Nigeria is significant.

**Test Statistics = ANOVA**

**Means**

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Responses * questions	20	80.0%	5	20.0%	25	100.0%

**Report**

Responses	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
SA	73.9600	4	6.37409
A	166.8500	4	11.41317
UD	42.1800	4	9.12119
D	31.7700	4	3.00116
SD	24.8600	4	5.99591
Total	67.9240	20	54.57626

**ANOVA**

Responses

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	55135.120	4	13772.135	220.131	.000
Within Groups	912.000	15	62.314		
Total	56047.120	19			

**Source: SPSS Data Processing.**

**Interpretation:**

- A. A test of comparison of the Mean responses from test table 4 (Report) indicates that those who Strongly Agree have a mean of 73.9600 with a standard deviation of 6.37409. Those who agreed have a mean of 166.8500 with a standard deviation of 11.41317. Those who disagreed have a mean of 31.7700 and a standard deviation of 3.00116, while those who strongly disagree have a mean of 24.8600 and a standard deviation of 5.99591. Those who are Undecided have a mean of 42.1800 and a standard deviation of 9.12119.
- B. Further test using ANOVA to determine whether to accept or reject the null hypothesis at a significant level of five percent (See ANOVA table) gave  $F_{\text{calculated}} = 220.131$  which is greater than  $F_{\text{critical}} = F(0.05, 4, 15) = 3.06$
- C. **Decision:** Since  $F_{\text{calculated}} = 220.131$  is greater than  $F_{\text{critical}} = 3.06$ , the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted that the Nigerian newspapers performance of their surveillance role in the campaigns to eradicate corruption in Nigeria is significant

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

**Summary of Findings**

The following results were obtained in this study:

1. Newspaper readers' perception of the performance of the Nigerian newspapers in the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria is independent of the respondents' educational level/qualification.
2. Nigerian newspaper readers' exposure to newspaper campaigns on corruption has a significant impact in terms of contributing to their attitudes and behaviours regarding corruption.
3. Nigerian newspapers use their editorial columns effectively to crusade against corruption.
4. The Nigerian newspapers performance of their surveillance role in the campaigns to eradicate corruption in Nigeria is significant.

**Discussion**

The result to our research question 1 indicates that Newspaper readers' perception of the performance of the Nigerian newspapers in its effort to rid Nigeria of corruption is quite significant and independent of the

respondents' educational qualification. The import of this result is that the Nigerian newspapers are alive to their fundamental and constitutional responsibilities and are truly spear-heading the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria. Indeed, majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the Nigerian Press is playing a very crucial role in the campaign to rid the country of corruption and should indeed be credited with whatever progress that has been made in the area of massive awareness creation, education and enlightenment amongst the citizenry on the issue of corruption and the need to stamp out the scourge. In other words, newspaper readers' perception of the Press is that it is instrumentally effective and worthy of approbation in the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria.

Again, result to our research question 2 indicates that Nigerian Citizens exposure to newspaper reports on corruption has a significant impact on their attitudes and behaviours regarding corruption. This fact does not need to be over-emphasised. It agrees with the agenda-setting theory of the media. But the only regret here is that over 70 percent of Nigerians still live in the rural areas where most of the newspapers do not reach. Hence, there is the dire need to encourage the setting up of community newspapers in our country. Media owners should also consider the inculcation of oramedia channels in their publication plans. Oramedia are the indigenous means of communication by the people amongst themselves, done through both human and non-human vehicles like town criers, talking drums, the folk songs, drama, festivals (Ugboaja, 1985; Osho, 2011).

Wilson (1999), defined oramedia or traditional media in Nigeria as the local means of communication by the rural people which essentially sustain the information needs of this segment of the population. There is nothing wrong in making town criers in our villages, newspaper vendors or distributors. Apart from creating jobs for them, it will help the newspapers to reach even seemingly inaccessible remote areas of the country, and thus, disseminate the messages of anti-corruption there. When this is done, the rural people will no longer support those traditional rulers who are in the habit of giving chieftaincy titles to people of questionable characters and means.

According to Ayodele (2013), a critical element of a country's anti-corruption program is an effective media. When journalism exposes flaws and even corruption within the various bodies of the state (the courts, police and anti-corruption task forces), corruption is put on check. If the resulting public pressure leads to a reform of those bodies, the long-term effectiveness and potential of the media to act as a counterweight against corruption is strengthened. But Ayodele (2013) quotes Sowumi et al. (2012) as asserting that the persistence of Transparency International (2002) in setting Nigeria among the bottom five nations in its annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) since 1995 is an indication that the media has not performed this role effectively.

Meanwhile, the dilution of the efforts of the Nigerian media in the fight against corruption according to Ayodele (2013), hinges on a plethora of reasons, such as lack of freedom of media professionals to access, verify and publish accurate information, and independence of media houses and their ability to access independent sources of financing. Competition, outreach and credibility of media are other important factors affecting media performance (Nogara, 2009). Each of these is examined by Ayodele (2013) accordingly as follows:

- **Freedom of expression** – Media freedom of expression is essential to investigate and report incidences of corruption in a professional, effective and ethical manner. Freedom House, which monitors the free flow of information to and from the public, measures press freedom in terms of the degree to which laws and government regulations influence news content; the degree of political influence or control over the context of the news system; the economic influences on the media exerted either by government or private entrepreneurs, and the degree of oppression of the news media. Press freedom is positively correlated with lower levels of corruption (Brunetti & Weder, 2003).
- **Access to information** – Access to information is at the heart of transparency and public accountability. 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 the public. Without reliable access to information, the media are severely limited in their capacity to exercise their public accountability function. Laws and regulations, such as “Official Secret Acts” and similar devices, are often used by governments to limit press access to sensitive information for reason of national security in order to balance the citizens' right to know and the State's right and duty to protect its security.
- **Ownership** – Private ownership is often associated with higher levels of government accountability and performance. Research has shown that government ownership of media restricts information flows to the public with negative effect on citizens' rights, government effectiveness, and corruption; alternatively, increased private ownership of the media-through privatization or encouragement of entry – can advance political and economic goals. Competition from private media assures that alternative views are supplied to voters and prevents state-owned media from distorting the information they supply too heavily so that voters obtain, on average, unbiased and accurate information. Studies carried out found strong evidence that competition in the media has a significant impact on the reduction of

corruption, and competition can even be a stronger determinant than freedom of expression.

- **Credibility** – People’s trust in independent media is essential to compel action against corruption from the authorities or the public. Media reputation in this regard is hard to establish. Journalists need to earn public trust and confidence by demonstrating their independence, objectivity and professionalism each and every day. Private media have an especially hard time to establish their credibility in Nigeria where people are more reluctant to trust new sources of political information. Government owned media have historically a wider access, especially in remote areas, and a well-established reputation. Private media, on the other hand, struggle to access important and reliable political information and have not always the freedom to publish it.

Then follows the result of our research question 3, which shows that Nigerian newspapers use their editorial columns effectively to crusade against corruption in the country. The implication here is that the Press, particularly, members of the various Editorial Boards recognise the danger posed by the widespread prevalence of corruption and the importance of expressing the opinion of their newspapers on the issue. As a consequence, corruption and corruption related-matters is receiving the priority editorial treatment it deserves. In this regard, the various newspaper editors should be given a *pat on their backs* for living up to societal expectations and the demand of their revered profession. However, they need to do more, since the rate of corruption in the country seems not to be abating in spite of the laudable efforts of the Nigerian newspaper press.

Finally, the result of our research question 4 shows that the Nigerian newspapers performance of their surveillance role in the campaign to eradicate corruption in Nigeria is quite significant. It is an affirmation that the newspapers are performing their surveillance function of alerting the citizens and the nation of the threat posed by corruption. This is very heart-warming in a country crying for development and the reduction of widespread poverty. It is a well-known fact that no country saddled with corruption will make a headway in social, economic, political, infrastructural and other areas of development. Corruption at high levels has held the country, Nigeria, down for a long time at the perils of the future of our youths and generations yet unborn. The problem has led to soaring youth unemployment and decayed infrastructures. The value system and international image have also been seriously tainted. But the mass media needs a lot of encouragement in this task.

According to Camaj (2013), media freedom has a stronger indirect effect on corruption when coupled with powerful institutions of horizontal accountability. Hence, greater media freedom should be encouraged in Nigeria and anti-corruption institutions like the EFCC AND ICPC need to be strengthened and must work in collaboration with the media in the fight against corruption in the country.

## Conclusion

The prevalence of widespread corruption in Nigeria is a time bomb for social upheavals. This is because corruption, as we earlier noted, deepens poverty; debases human rights, degrades the environment, derails development, including private sector development, it can drive conflicts in and between nations, and it destroys confidence in democracy and the legitimacy of governments. It debases human dignity and is universally condemned by the world’s major faiths. Above all, it was also observed that corruption hurts poor people more in developing countries, disproportionately. It affects their daily life in many different ways, and tends to make them even poorer, by denying them their rightful share of economic resources or life-saving aid. It puts basic public services beyond the reach of those who cannot pay bribes.

By diverting scarce resources intended for development, corruption also makes it harder for ordinary Nigerians to meet fundamental needs such as those for food, shelter, clothing, health, and education. It creates discrimination between different groups in society, feeds inequality and injustice, discourages foreign investment and aid, and hinders growth. It is therefore a major obstacle to political stability and to successful social and economic development. Thus, the watchdog and surveillance role of the media in Nigeria in checkmating this ugly monster needs to be commended. However, there is room for much improvement since the war against corruption in the country seems to be far from being won.

## Recommendations

Based on the outcome of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. The Nigerian media must be statutorily strengthened and encouraged through an Act of Law to continue their war against corruption in the country. This legitimate responsibility could be done by granting protection and immunity to investigative journalists that expose acts of corruption in the country. The gruesome murder of Late Mr. Dele Giwa, an investigative journalist who was said to be on the trail of some drug-pushers in the corridors of power is still fresh in our minds. A repeat of such ugly episode should never be allowed to happen in this country again.
2. A merit award with mouth-watering prizes should be instituted for journalists who expose monumental acts of corruption in this country. Such journalists should also be considered for National Awards. This will challenge them and their peers to do more.



3. The Nigeria government should also consider earmarking a bail-out fund to ailing but credible media organisations in the country, as it has often done in the banking sector. Such media houses that have won the hearts of the public should not be allowed to die due to harsh financial realities.
4. Government should make it an Act of Law that every media house must establish community media branches, just as banks are mandated to have some rural banking branches. The government should help the media owners financially in doing this, as it will enhance the dissemination of news to the rural folks, who still make up over 70% of our population.
5. In this age of information technology, where majority of the newspapers are online, it would do them good to create awareness for most Nigerian youths who waste precious time browsing and searching for pornographic and other irrelevant materials on the Internet, to visit these newspapers' websites and read them, in order to get better informed on happenings in society and look out for opportunities like jobs, scholarships, etc.
6. As a weapon of public enlightenment, information dissemination and education, Nigerian newspapers should maintain fair play and balance in their reportage of corruption related stories. It is expected that they must eschew biased or one-sided reporting. Therefore they are expected cling tenaciously to the ethics and tenets of professional journalism and show themselves as a beacon of light and the illuminators of the society.

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