OXYGEN OF DEMOCRACY: EXPLORING THE STATUS OF JOURNALISTS AS WATCHDOGS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The watchdog role of journalists is enshrined in Chapter II, Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended. It is, therefore, the constitutional role of the mass media to act as a watchdog for good governance by ensuring that government is responsible and accountable to the people. Sadly, several factors inhibit journalists from performing this constitutionally assigned duty. This paper examines how journalists rate their role as the watchdog of society, and how they score government on accountability. Using the Social Responsibility Theory, this quantitative paper employed an online questionnaire (Google Forms) as a research instrument to generate data from 410 respondents. The study employed a quantitative survey as previous and current media practitioners were chosen from the 6 geopolitical zones of Nigeria through a purposive sampling technique. The study demonstrates that Nigerian journalists rate their role as watchdogs of good governance, high. This study therefore recommends that being watchdogs for good governance in Nigeria, journalists should guard and reinforce the professional ethics of journalism practice.

Keywords: Good Governance, Mass Media, Nigeria, Journalists, Watchdog

INTRODUCTION

In recent times more than ever, experts have lauded the critical role of the media in informing, entertaining and mobilising citizens for change. The media have metamorphosed into a major part of our lives. Arguably, very few institutions affect human beings more than the media. Many people rely on the media for daily news, information about the world, guidance on healthy living, job search, weather forecast and much more. The influence of the media in human lives is so strong that some scholars describe this

generation as the "media generation" (Okereafor, 2022). The presence of the media almost invades us –, radio, television, film, DVDs, VCRs, cell phones, answering machines, and fax machines have become our technological friends. It appears that we are "virtually" followed by the Internet. Indeed, media have become part of our lives, and we will never be able to reverse this fact (West and Turner, 2010).

The media plays a critical role in the fight against corruption; correcting injustice and promoting good governance. The constitutions of various countries and other official documents capture this all-important Fourth Estate of the Realm, as the media is referred to. In the view of Hamada (2020), the very structure, practice, autonomy, ethical requirements, and outputs of journalism help it to fight corruption, all of which also reveal differences across geographies. From this view-point, good governance is invariably promoted by journalism. Since the return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999, with its relatively free media occasioned by democratic governance, there have been many reports of corruption by government officials. These leaks have led to some punishments for perpetrators, including dismissal from service. Unfortunately, an insignificant number of convictions have been secured in the courts.

Celebrated corruption cases by government officials uncovered by the media or accentuated by media reports abound. In an April 26, 2015, report in Premium Times titled, "Top 10 Corruption Scandals Nigeria's National Assembly Hasn't Resolved," the online newspaper listed ten "huge misgovernance and corruption issues" that were yet unresolved. They include:

1. The Maina Pension Scam: There was a probe into pension funds that affected about 141,790 pensioners. Abdulrasheed Maina, the Chairman of the Pension Reform Task Team, was accused of looting N195billion.

   The Senate set up a committee to investigate the matter. During the investigation, Mr. Maina alleged that Aloysius Etuk, representing Akwa Ibom State, demanded $100,000 from him as a bribe. A former director of pension in the office of the Head of Service of the Federation, Sani Shuaibu Teidi, who was prosecuted along with 31 others, also alleged that Mr. Etuk and other members of the committee collected a bribe of N3 billion from him. Although the Senate seemed furious about the allegation, it did not take decisive steps to investigate. The National Assembly also did not push the executive hard enough to implement its report on the pension scam and punish offenders.

2. Police Pension Fund Fraud: Five people, including a former Director of the Police Pension Fund, Esai Dangabar, were accused of misusing N32.8 billion from the Police Pension Fund. Mr. Dangabar accused some committee members of the Senate of benefiting from the loot. The Senate denied the allegation without ordering an investigation. The world may never know whether the Senate Joint Committee on Establishment and Public Service Matter, and State and Local Government Affairs indeed took bribes from the pension thieves.

3. Stella Oduah: Before her removal as Aviation Minister, Stella Oduah was embroiled in a N255 million armoured car scandal. She was accused of abusing her office by compelling an agency under her ministry to buy her expensive cars. The House of Representatives has so far failed to release a detailed report of its investigation into the matter. Although Ms. Oduah was later dropped as a Minister, other officials involved in the matter remained untouched to date.

   Recently, a Federal High Court in Abuja granted Media Rights Agenda (MRA) leave to apply for an order to compel the House to furnish it with transcripts of the proceedings of the House Committee on Aviation at the hearing of the Committee on the procurement of the two bulletproof BMW cars by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) through Messrs Coscharis Motors Limited.

4. Farouk Lawan: House of Representatives member, Farouk Lawan, was caught on tape collecting $620,000 out of a $3m bribe while his committee investigated the fuel subsidy scam. He was seen collecting the money from oil mogul, Femi Otedola. The House of Representatives referred the bribery allegation to its committee on ethics. But no report has been issued to date (Premium Times, 2015).

In exposing these cases, the media played important roles in shaping public opinion and mass action against these corruption cases. Only recently, Nigeria's Accountant-General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris was involved in money laundering and diversion of public funds allegations to the tune of N80 billion. He was relieved of his position by the Federal Government on the 18th of May, 2022, detained and granted bail while investigations continue (Daily Post, 2022).

The government's anti-corruption agencies, especially the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), have learned how to collaborate with the media to expose high-level corruption cases, and importantly, get public sympathy and buy-in in the fight against corruption. It is important to also add that the collaboration between the EFCC and the media has also led to what people call a "media trial" - a situation where convictable evidence against an accused is limited, yet the anti-corruption agency goes to press to accuse and expose the suspect and the suspected crimes, only for the courts to throw out such cases. Media-trial can also be described as a media process that declares an accused guilty, but not before the law courts. According to Shalushravansingh (2022) in Media Trial and its Impact on Evidence, media trial or prosecution is the practice of proclaiming an accused guilty without due judicial process. Media trials are pre-judicial, dehumanising, abuse of court processes and place a higher burden of proof on the accused.

This study, therefore, investigated how Nigerian journalists rated their watchdog roles in promoting good governance, and how the nation is scored in good governance based on the eight characteristics of good

governance as defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) adopted by this research.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate how Nigerian journalists rate their role as watchdog of good governance in the country.

2. To examine the extent to which journalists score Nigeria based on the eight variables of good governance.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts the Social Responsibility Theory. The Social Responsibility Theory of the press which is associated with the 1949 United States "Commission of the Freedom of Press" allows for a free press without any censorship but at the same time, it encourages that the content of the press should be discussed in the public panel and media should accept any obligation from public interference or professional self-regulations or both (Communication Theory, 2022).

The Social Responsibility Media Theory was propounded in 1956 by F. S. Siebert, T. B. Paterson and W. Schramm. The major premise of the 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. Though it encourages total freedom of the press without censorship, it, however, states that the media should be regulated according to social responsibilities and external controls. Content is also filtered through public obligation and interference. After the emergence of this theory, professionalism in the media started to be taken seriously (Ineji, Nkanu and Okoi, 2019). The theory holds the press responsible for all publications made which makes the journalist socially responsible for all publications made. This theory places a burden on media practitioners.

Baran and Davis (2012) in analysing the social responsibility theory posit that the theory highlights the necessity for a free and autonomous media capable of evaluating other social and government establishments to provide unbiased news reports. The scholars argue that social responsibility theory's most pioneering feature is the call for a responsible media necessary for furthering beneficial "Great Communities". It specified that the media should do this by prioritizing cultural pluralism, becoming the voice of all the people not just elite groups who dominate national, regional, or local culture.

Critics of the theory including Bajracharya (2018) argue that social responsibility and ethics are ethically binding. They therefore posit that legal restrictions on media that is working based on the "principle of responsibility" may not be appropriate as laws are undemocratic.

Obagwu & Idris (2019) in outlining assumptions from Social Responsibility Theory argue that media practitioners are required to be professional by reporting truthful, balanced, and complete reports of happenings to assist the public in getting informed without encumbrances from extraneous factors. These assumptions hold the media and its practitioners responsible for truthfully and accurately reporting government activities and exposing bad governance practices. It is a sacred obligation of the media to the society. The principles and assumptions of this theory make it relevant to this article.

Since this study investigated the rating of the watchdog roles of the Nigerian journalists as it relates to good governance and how well or not Nigeria is scored on good governance variables, Social Responsibility Theory came to bear as the theory underscored the importance of a free and autonomous press that is capable of appraising other societal and government establishments to deliver unbiased news reports and promote "Great Communities. It said that the media should do this by prioritizing cultural pluralism while considering national, regional and local groups and interests. Good governance requires the existence of checks and balances or accountability which the media aptly provides.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Democracy

There are different forms of government through which political authority is expressed within a geographic location. These include monarchy, socialism, federalism, communism, oligarchy, autocracy and democracy amongst others, with some rooted in the esoteric (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2023, Dahl, 1998, Boin and Lodge, 2008).

Explaining democracy, which by the way does not have a consensus definition, would probably be incomplete without referencing the classical speech about this form of government delivered by President Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War on November 19, 1863. In his Gettysburg Speech delivered at the consecration of the Soldiers National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Lincoln posited that "...this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people (democracy), shall not perish from the earth." This epic description of democracy theorises that power, legality, authority and authenticity of government rest on the people or governed. On a general note, democracy is described by scholars as a form of government that encourages the exercise of power by the people, who run the affairs of the state either directly or through validly elected representatives. Citizens play crucial roles in a democracy, as their voices dictate the tide (Dahl, 1998, Nwogu, 2015).

There are several elements which are considered necessary for a system of government to be considered or classified as a democracy or democratic. They include the rule of law, civil society and civic participation, accountability and transparency, free and fair elections, popular sovereignty, political equality, civil liberties and human rights, pluralism and political pluralism. The presence of these features and the degree to which they exist explain why there are different variants of democracy (Jarvie and Milford, 2006, Dahl, 1989, Diamond, 2004, Nwogu, 2015).

Journalist

The term "Journalist" has been variously defined. Talley (2022) argues that journalists tell stories. With their reports and stories, they talk about everything that cuts across various spheres of human endeavour. A major objective of a journalist's output is to enable the audience to make informed decisions.

Oller Alonso, Shapiro, Andresen, Anika, De Maio, Hamada, Hanusch, Hollings, Kolbeins, Hughes, Manda, Mbozi, and Spyridou, (2019), in Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS) define a journalist as a person who constantly hunts, pursues, examines, infers, and situates factual information about present events (news) across several channels, including text, audio, and pictorial formats. This is done as part of the process of disseminating this information to a wider audience than those originally conversant with it, and without an expectation of private gain from the result of this information being communal. Their work may cover an extensive range of subjects or "beats," (as is called by practitioners) such as arts, culture, entertainment, politics, business, finance, economy, crime, sports, or entertainment. Journalists can be associated with one or more news organizations or may work independently as freelancers.

In defining a journalist, the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS, 2019) made two important distinctions of a journalist – professional and peripheral:

i. Professional journalist: Someone who meets the definition of journalist and who considers their activity, income, or time as a journalist to be their main or most important occupation, whether economically, because it provides financial sustainability, or symbolically, in that it provides social recognition or professional status.

ii. Peripheral journalist: Someone whose frequent or regular work includes providing intentionally accurate news content without expectation of deriving personal benefit as a direct consequence of this information being made available, but who does not otherwise fully meet the definition of professional journalist. This class includes full-time and part-time workers as well as unpaid interns and others whose sense of "identity" or "belonging" makes them consider themselves as journalists. It may include people who work exclusively in spaces at the margins of conventional news dissemination, such as microblogging platforms, messenger apps, and other media spaces that provide social networking, video sharing or news

aggregation, or that experiment with new practices and models of doing news, but it should also include, for example, volunteers at more long-standing outlets, such as community radio stations.

Due to their "innate ambiguity", the WJS in the earlier quoted report advised the avoidance of the following concepts:

i. Citizen (or amateur) journalists (they are better referred to as Peripheral Journalist)

ii. Mainstream journalists/media (it is sometimes an antonym for "citizen journalists" or "alternative media," and "mainstream media" is often associated with pejorative judgments against news outlets or organizations of which the speaker disapproves for ideological reasons that can vary dramatically).

iii. Alternative media/platforms (sometimes used to connote non-traditional approaches to news...the sheer breadth and ambiguity of the term make it pragmatically indefinable for methodological purposes).

iv. From the above definitions of a journalist, a constant thread in the definitions is the word "news". Still quoting Oller Alonso *et al.* (2019) in WJS, the news is defined as "subject matter that consists of factual information about current affairs, analysis of or commentary upon that information, or any combination thereof." For this study, the WJS definition of a journalist was adopted.

Good Governance

For this paper, (good) governance and the eight characteristics of good governance as defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) will be adopted. UNESCAP (2009:1) defines governance as:

> The process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance…. The government is one of the actors in governance. Other actors involved in governance vary depending on the level of government that is under discussion. In rural areas, for example, other actors may include influential landlords, associations of peasant farmers, cooperatives, NGOs, research institutes, religious leaders, finance institutions political parties, the military etc. The situation in urban areas is much more complex. Actors in urban areas include urban elite, urban poor, urban middle class, elected local officials and the media. At the national level, in addition to the above actors, media, lobbyists, international donors, multi-national corporations, etc. may play a role in decision-making or in influencing the decision-making process. All actors other than the government and the military are grouped as part of the "civil society".

Good governance is understood as including some form of democratic government. Governance will have to include a minimum level of democracy to be 'good.' Good governance thus requires the existence of checks and balances (horizontal accountability), participation and elections (vertical accountability), and respect for basic human rights (which include political rights) (Amundsen, 2010).

Good governance from the above definition would, therefore, suppose that the governance process meets the needs of society and efficiently utilises public resources to meet those needs. The term governance is

multi-sectoral, applicable to different sectors and environments, whether private or public. It is also instructive to note that the term government, in the sense of elected and appointed officials, is only an actor in the concept of governance. In a general sense, everyone is a critical player in governance, and should therefore be seen thus.

Like UNESCAP, the World Bank Group through the World Governance Indicators has variables for measuring or assessing good governance. These variables are (a) Voice and Accountability, (b) Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, (c) Government Effectiveness, (d) Regulatory Quality, (e) Rule of Law and (f) Control of Corruption (World Bank, 2022).

UNESCAP (2009:1) lists eight features of (good) governance, which also serve as parameters for measuring performance or not in (good or bad) governance. These essential components are:

- **Participation:** Requires that all groups have direct or representative access to the systems of government.
- **Rule of law:** Exemplified by impartial legal systems that protect the human rights and civil liberties of all citizens, particularly minorities.
- **Transparency:** This means that citizens understand and have access to the means and manner in which decisions are made.
- **Responsiveness:** Involves that institutions respond to their stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.
- **Consensus-oriented:** This is demonstrated by an agenda that seeks to mediate between the many different needs, perspectives, and expectations of a diverse citizenry.
- **Equity and inclusiveness:** Depends on ensuring that all the members of a community feel included and empowered to improve or maintain their well-being.
- **Effectiveness and efficiency:** This is developed through the sustainable use of resources to meet the needs of society.
- **Accountability:** Refers to institutions being ultimately accountable to the people and one another.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Debate on Good Governance in Nigeria

Good governance in Nigeria is of interest to many stakeholders, including citizens, international development partners, and the larger international community. With a current population of 216,281,502 as of June 29, 2022, based on Worldometer (2022) elaboration of the latest United Nations data, and a population equivalent to 2.64% of the total world population, ranking number 7 in the list of countries (and dependencies) by population, having good governance in Nigeria is critical. Good governance is

important to give a voice to the larger percentage of the population, ensure enforcement of human rights, and be accountable for the running of government that ensures the welfare and well-being of citizens.

Good governance has also been indicated in the effective utilisation of natural and human resources, while bad governance is the reverse. Bad governance manifests in Nigeria's commonwealth (mis)management. Nigeria is heavily affected by the so-called 'resource curse' despite an estimated USD 400 billion in oil income since independence in 1960, the country has experienced…a very poor economic development, and it has a population more impoverished now than it was 50 years ago (Amundsen, 2010).

Oil has profoundly influenced the political economy of Nigeria, and most observers claim Nigeria is 'oil-cursed'. This is due to Nigeria's very poor economic development, very low Human Development Index (HDI), and persistent governance problems including unfathomable corruption and societal strife, despite substantial oil incomes over many years (Sachs & Warner 2001, p. 828; Karl 2003, p. 9; Mehlum *et al.*. 2006, p. 1117; Humphreys *et al.*. 2007, p. 94). Despite being a member of OPEC with vast oil resources the majority of its population, Nigeria is in extreme poverty…Corruption, violence, waste, and government ineptitude have all led to its lack of success and growth (Peterson, 2012).

Bad governance has taken a toll on Nigeria's national development and greatly elevated corruption and maladministration. Commenting on this issue, Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2007) states that several Western envoys approximate that at least between USD 4 billion to USD 8 billion per year was lost to corruption by Nigeria over the two terms of eight years of Obasanjo's government. This is massive. In a release at the 6th National Seminar on Economic Crime titled "Anti-Corruption Climate Change: It Started in Nigeria" by the UNODC in 2007, it was stated that "Nigeria lost billions of dollars - the livelihoods of millions of people - to foreign havens, stolen and expatriated by corrupt leaders. By some estimates close to US $400 billion was stolen between 1960 and 1999. Sani Abacha alone is estimated to have stolen the equivalent of 2 - 3 per cent of the country's GDP for every year that he was President".

The above figures embezzled through corruption are staggering, especially considering that the country is infrastructure deficient and has a large percentage of its population living below the poverty line. According to a new World Bank (2022) report, "A Better Future for All Nigerians: Nigeria Poverty Assessment 2022", "as many as 4 in 10 Nigerians live below the national poverty line. Many Nigerians – especially in the country's north – also lack education and access to basic infrastructure, such as electricity, safe drinking water, and improved sanitation".

Non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations, including journalists, noted as the 'Media' in this study have important roles to play in promoting good governance by performing traditional

functions of broadcasting independent news and holding governance actors accountable for their actions and inactions.

The Role of the Media in Promoting Good Governance

The role of the media in reporting objective news, demanding accountability from governments at national and sub-national levels and shaping public opinion are amongst the most pressing concerns of today's journalists. Quoting Gandhi in his autobiography published by Beacon Press (1993), a fundamental objective of a newspaper (media) is to appreciate and give voice to popular feelings; added to this is the need to awaken among the public feelings that are required (national development) and lastly to courageously unmask common flaws and shortcomings. Ghandi's statement accentuates the role and importance of the media in promoting free speech and good governance. Agreeing with this position, Yadav (2001) postulates that media can enlighten the public and give them the voice to speak and be heard. Continuing, the scholar posits that the essence of democracy is the governed right to know the workings of leadership, especially as the decisions impact on the people's life, liberty, freedom and possessions. The importance and influence of the media in a country's national life have, therefore, informed efforts to control and monitor the media (Udomisor, 2013).

Discharging this important role of promoting good governance has its challenges. Journalists' efforts at promoting good governance are hampered by the growing distrust by the general population of sections of the media perceived as "pro-government" or "government-media," or the government structure itself. The media therefore is in a continuous battle to prove its credibility and impartiality in discussing matters that affect the general populace.

The Challenge of Repositioning Journalism as a Mechanism of Good Governance

Repositioning journalism as a mechanism of good governance is confronted by several factors, some arising from the long misuse of the word "journalist," while others are unethical issues. It is interesting to note that there are still some disagreements on the definition of the term, journalist. Other challenges in repositioning journalism as a mechanism of good governance include the commercialisation of the profession arising from media ownership democratisation due to the rise in democracy, capitalism and communication technology. Media ownership liberalisation and the availability and access to communication technology have led to the influx of non and semi-professionals, who regard themselves as core professional journalists.

Several factors are responsible for the unethical concerns in journalism practice, which invariably affect the repositioning of journalism as a mechanism of good governance. According to Galadima and Enabu as cited by Asemah these include, "money, failure of religion, clash of interest, poor economy, lack of

facilities, ownership of media, African culture of reciprocal gesture, knowledge of the power of the press, love for favours and the love for sensation" (2009, p. 404).

Ineji, Nkanu, and Okoi (2019) also listed some unethical concerns among journalists worthy of note. They include:

- Pressure: Pressure here has been understood as any force or influence which makes a journalist feel strongly compelled to act in a manner desirable to the source of such force or influence. Pressure can be internal or external

- Poor Remuneration: A poorly paid journalist is likely to be unethical, and might collect brown envelopes, and gifts and even embark on moonlighting to make ends meet.

- Greed: It is certain that no matter the amount of money that a greedy man has, he is not satisfied so as a result of this, some journalists go against the ethics of journalism they have subscribed to uphold

- Unprofessionalism: This is occasioned by a lack of professional training on the part of the journalist who is susceptible to engaging in unethical practices.

- Lack of Principles: Journalists who lack principles are the ones who do anything provided such practices are in their interests.

METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative study. The research instrument was an online questionnaire (Google Forms), with several questions designed to collect information and data from respondents. The Google Form was created and distributed to respondents between June 22, 2022, and November 24, 2022.

The study population consisted of journalists and other media practitioners such as media programme producers, columnists, and on-air personalities who practice in Nigeria and are registered with the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Nigerian Guild of Editors and other professional media bodies. With its non-probability sample technique, purposive sampling was employed for this study. This permitted the researchers to get registered journalists with the Nigerian Union of Journalists across Nigeria. The many advantages of purposive sampling were also considered in its use including reaching difficult-to-access populations and relatively low cost in obtaining primary data. It is also important to note that the many advantages of purposive sampling are also the disadvantages of having bias which may be because of oversampling a particular network of practitioners and having respondents who may hesitate to provide details of colleagues and asking them to have ethical implications.

According to the Nigerian Union of Journalists, the total number of registered journalists in Nigeria was twenty thousand eight hundred and sixty-eight (20,868) as of July 6, 2021 (Okocha and Ola-Akuma, 2022). The sample size (N - 410) was drawn from former and practising journalists and media practitioners and was purposely sampled. The sample size of 410 was considered using a digital sample size calculator that is comparable to Cochran's formula, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. As a result, 378 or more surveys were required to achieve a confidence level of 95%, implying that the real value is within 5% of the measured/surveyed value. To accommodate the peculiarities of the geopolitical zones, the researcher utilised 410 sample-size replies.

Considering the large area and population to be covered, the data collection was virtually conducted. The electronic survey made it possible to reach respondents in all the geopolitical zones of Nigeria using the Internet and other digital communication tools. To moderate the limitations of purposive sampling, the respondents were purposively selected from the 6 geopolitical zones of Nigeria: North Central (NC), North East (NE), North West (NW), South West (SW), South-South (SS) and South East (SE). The location of the journalists who were surveyed was captured on the Google form administered to respondents (see appendix for questionnaire). The researchers deliberately targeted journalists in various locations to achieve representation (see Table 3). The results, therefore, were thoughts and opinions from all the zones.

RESULTS

To collect data on the research focus, an online questionnaire was designed, and the results were grouped and presented according to the research's central questions.

The collected data was represented using tables.

Table 1: Disaggregation by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	258	62.9
Female	152	37.1
Total	410	100

Source: Field Study, 2022

The table above shows the percentage of respondents based on gender category, with 152 females accounting for 37.1% of the total and 258 males representing 62.9%.

Table 2: Age range of survey respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
38-47	149	36.3
48-57	112	27.3
28-37	82	20
18-27	35	8.5
58 and above	32	7.8
Total	410	100

Source: Field Study, 2022

The age range of participants is represented above. Of the 410 respondents, 35 (8.5%) respondents were between 18 and 27, while 82 (20%) of the respondents were between the ages of 28 and 37. 149 (36.3%) respondents fell between the ages of 38 and 47, and 27.3% (112) respondents were between 48 and 57. A total of 32 (7.8%) respondents were 58 and above.

Table 3: Showing disaggregation by Nigeria's geopolitical zones

Geopolitical Zones	Frequency	Percentage (%)
North Central	152	37.1
North East	57	13.9
North West	53	12.9
South South	52	12.7
South West	49	12
South East	47	11.5
Total	410	100

Source: Field Study, 2022

The number of respondents from Nigeria's six geopolitical zones is represented in the table above. The highest were from the North Central with a total of 152 (37.1%). This was followed by respondents from the North East who accounted for 57 (13.9%) respondents. Respondents from the North West were 53 (12.9%), while the South East region accounted for 11.5% (47). South South region accounted for 12.7% (52) while 12% (49) were from the South West region.

Table 4: Educational qualification of respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
BA/BSC/HND	162	39.5
MA/MSc/Med	109	26.6
OND	70	17.1
Others	57	13.9
PhD	12	2.9
Total	410	100

Source: Field Study, 2022

Table 4 shows the educational level of the respondents. Out of the 410 respondents, 12 (2.9%) had a Ph.D, 26.6% (109) had Masters, while the highest educational level category was a Bachelor's degree with 162 (39.5%) respondents. OND holders were 17.1% (70) respondents and Others were 57 (13.9%). Others may include O-level certificates and trade certificate holders.

Table 5: Showing disaggregation of the different areas of journalism practice.

Practice Areas	Frequency	Percentage (%)
News/Politics/Current Affairs	124	30.2
Development	83	20.2
Feature/Opinion	71	17.3
Sports	42	10.2
Health	41	10
Investigative/Crime	29	7.1
Others	20	4.9
Total	410	100

Source: Field Study, 2022

The various areas of journalism practice by respondents are captured above. The highest area of practice is News/Politics/Current Affairs with 124 (30.2%) respondents, while the least is Others with 20 (4.9%) respondents. Others include respondents who listed PR/Advertising, Finance and Environment as their areas of practice. 83 (20.2%) respondents listed Development Journalism as their practice area, 71 (17.3%) listed Feature/Opinion, 42 (10.2%) respondents listed Sports, and 41 (10%) listed Health. Further, 29 (7.1%) respondents listed Investigative/Crime as their area of practice.

Table 6: Media platform

Media Platform of Operation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Online/Digital (Blogs, Webpages, Twitter etc.)	146	35.6
Print	96	23.4
Radio	83	20.2
TV	75	18.3
Others	10	2.4
Total	410	100

Source: Field Study, 2022

From the data collected, 146 (35.6%) respondents work for Online/Digital platforms, including blogs, webpages, Twitter and other social media platforms. Online/Digital platforms had the highest response. 96 (23.4%) are in Print, 20.2% are on Radio, while 75 (18.3%) used the medium of TV for operation. Ten (2.4%) listed others as their platform of operation. Others include respondents who are into journalism (media) consultancy and respondents who combined all or some of the platforms in their work.

Table 7: Respondents' years of experience.

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
6 – 10	143	34.9
0 – 5	128	31.2
11 – 15	69	16.8
16 – 20	32	7.8
26 years and above	22	5.4
21 – 25	16	3.9
Total	410	100

Source: Field Study, 2022

The years of experience of respondents are captured in Table 7.143 (34.9%) respondents have between 6 to 10 years of work experience, making that category the highest. The lowest category is 21 to 25 years with 16 (3.9%) respondents. 128 (31.2%) respondents have between 0 to 5 years of work experience, 69 (16.8%) have between 11 to 15 years, 32 (7.8%) have between 16 to 20 years, while 26 years and above category has 22 (5.4%) respondents.

Table 8: Respondents' rating of essential components of good governance.

Essential Components of Good Governance	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rule of Law	306	74.6
Transparency	287	70
Participation	279	68
Accountability	271	66.1
Equity and Inclusiveness	201	49
Responsiveness	186	45.4
Effectiveness and Efficiency	178	43.4
Consensus Oriented	124	30.2

Source: Field Study, 2022

Table 8 shows respondents' ratings of the eight identified essential components of good governance. 306 (74.6%) said that the Rule of Law is the most essential component of good governance. Rule of Law scored the highest among the eight components of good governance. This was followed by Transparency with 287 (70%), Participation – 279 (68%), Accountability – 271 (66.1%), Equity and Inclusiveness – 201 (49%), Responsiveness – 186 (45.4%), Effectiveness and Efficiency – 178 (43.4%). Consensus Oriented 124 (30.2%) scored the lowest among the components of good governance.

Table 9: Rating of Nigerian journalists as watchdogs of good governance

Good Governance Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Moderately rated	154	37.6
Highly rated	142	34.6
Lowly rated	82	20
No idea	32	7.8
Total	410	100

Source: Field Study, 2022

Table 9 above shows the assessment of Nigerian journalists as watchdogs of good governance. 154 (37.6%) of respondents moderately rated Nigerian journalists, scoring the highest rating. 142 (34.6%) highly rated journalists, while 82 (20%) lowly rated them. The lowest rating was 32 (7.8%) of respondents who said they had no idea.

Table 10: How Nigerian journalists fared as watchdogs of good governance between Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari administrations

Good Governance Rating between Administrations	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Goodluck Jonathan	342	83.4
Muhammadu Buhari	68	16.6
Total	**410**	**100**

Source: Field Study, 2022

From the data collected, 342 (83.4%) respondents said Nigerian journalists fared better as watchdogs of good governance under the administration of Goodluck Jonathan compared to 68 (16.6%) who said Nigerian journalists fared better under the administration of Muhammadu Buhari.

Table 11: Perception of Nigeria's performance based on the following indices of Good Governance

Indices	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
Participation	37 (9%)	127(30.9%)	161 (39.2%)	84 (20.4%)	1 (0.24%)	410 (100%)
Rule of Law	51 (12.4%)	110 (26.8%)	164 (40%)	83 (20.2%)	2 (0.48%)	410 (100%)
Transparency	54 (13.1%)	116 (28.2%)	149 (36.3%)	90 (21.9%)	1 (0.24%)	410 (100%)
Responsiveness	49 (11.9%)	97 (23.6%)	175 (42.6%)	87 (21.2%)	2 (0.48%)	410 (100%)
Consensus Oriented	42 (10.2%)	110 (26.8%)	163 (39.7%)	94 (22.9%)	1 (0.24%)	410 (100%)
Equity and Inclusiveness	56 (13.6%)	104 (25.3%)	157 (38.2%)	93 (22.6%)	0 (0%)	410 (100%)
Effectiveness and Efficiency	50 (12.1%)	108 (26.3%)	157 (38.2%)	94 (22.9%)	1 (0.24%)	410 (100%)
Accountability	71 (17.3%)	102 (24.8%)	146 (35.6%)	88 (21.4%)	3 (0.73%)	410 (100%)

Source: Field Study, 2022

Table 11 above shows respondents' perception of Nigeria's performance based on the indices of good governance.

Table 12: Political era that has fared well in good governance.

Good Governance Rating between Administrations	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Goodluck Jonathan	346	84.4
Muhammadu Buhari	64	15.6
Total	410	100

Source: Field Study, 2022

When asked about the political era that has fared well in good governance, 346 (84.4%) respondents said Goodluck Jonathan's administration, while 15.6% (64) respondents said the administration of Muhammadu Buhari.

Table 13: Possible challenges Nigerian journalists face in serving as watchdogs of good governance.

Challenges Nigerian journalists face while serving as watchdogs of Good Governance	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor work environment/equipment of Nigerian journalists	319	77.8
Widespread corruption in the society	315	76.8
The influx of quacks and pseudo-professionals into the journalism profession	289	70.5
Poor education and training of Nigerian journalists	287	70
Weak enforcement of journalism ethics	216	52.7
Lack of professional ideology	203	49.5
Inadequate collaboration by journalists with other relevant sectors like the criminal justice system	186	45.4
Others	7	1.7

Source: Field Study, 2022

Respondents had diverse views on the possible challenges Nigerian journalists face in serving as watchdogs of good governance. Poor work environment/equipment of Nigerian journalists was cited as the highest possible challenge with 319 (77.8%) respondents. Closely following is widespread corruption in the society with 76.8% (315) respondents. The lowest possible challenge cited by respondents was Others, 7 (1.7%). Some examples mentioned as Others by respondents include violation of the human and professional rights of Nigerian journalists, poor and non-remuneration of journalists leading to sensational reporting and fear of government in power. Also named was the lack of independent press and press freedom leading to insecurity of journalists.

The influx of quacks and pseudo-professionals into the journalism profession was cited by 289 (70.5%) respondents, 287 (70%) respondents mentioned poor education and training of Nigerian journalists, and weak enforcement of journalism ethics was stated by 216 (52.7%) respondents. Lack of professional

ideology was noted by 203 (49.5%) respondents as a possible challenge Nigerian journalists face in serving as watchdogs of good governance. 186 (45.4%) respondents indicated inadequate collaboration by journalists with other relevant sectors like the criminal justice system.

Table 14: Suggestions on mitigating challenges Nigerian Journalists face in serving as watchdogs of good governance.

Mitigating Challenges Nigerian Journalists Face in Good Governance Watchdog Role	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Professionalize journalism by removing quacks and pseudo-professionals	331	80.7
Provide continuous education and training on the watchdog duty of journalists	312	76.1
Provide special funds to support investigative reports	294	71.7
Enable opportunities for journalists to collaborate and partner with relevant sectors also playing watchdog roles	251	61.2
Promote independent press and press freedom	251	61.2
Provide structures that promote the safety of journalists	227	55.4
Punish unethical practices by practitioners, including delisting from the profession	223	54.4
Others	3	0.7

Source: Field Study, 2022

Table 14 above shows suggestions on what could mitigate the challenges faced by Nigerian journalists in serving as watchdogs of good governance. 331 (80.7%) of respondents recommended professionalising journalism by removing quacks and pseudo-professionals noting that it would go a long way. This suggestion has the highest numbers/percentage. The next recommendation is providing continuous education and training on the watchdog duty of journalists with 312 (76.1%) respondents. 294 (71.7%) respondents submit that providing special funds to support investigative reports would help.

251 (61.2%) respondents considered that enabling opportunities for journalists to collaborate and partner with relevant sectors and also playing watchdog roles would help in achieving the watchdog role of Nigerian journalists. Promoting independent press and press freedom was cited by 251 (61.2%) respondents, while 227 (55.4%) respondents said providing structures that promote the safety of journalists is key. 223 (54.4%) respondents stated that punishing unethical practices by practitioners, including delisting erring practitioners from the profession would help in promoting journalists as watchdogs for good governance. 3 (0.7%) respondents, representing Others, suggested that providing insurance cover for journalists and encouraging patriotism among journalists would help in achieving the watchdog role of Nigerian journalists.

DISCUSSION

The study's objectives were divided into two. The first aim was to investigate how Nigerian journalists rate their role as watchdog for good governance in Nigeria. The other objective was to examine the extent to which Nigerian journalists score Nigeria based on the eight variables for good governance.

Reviewing the first objective which was to investigate how Nigerian journalists rate their role as watchdog of good governance in Nigeria, it is important to note that globally the media, press, is considered what the Victorian writer, Thomas Carlyle called the "Fourth Estate of the Realm." This implies that the media working as a constitutional watchdog, plays a crucial role in the workings of democratic governance (Newton, 1995). In the world today, the increasing demand for the media to safeguard democratic processes and institutions and a mechanism for the promotion of good governance is documented. In Nigeria, the media has been instrumental in exposing and engendering popular action against misgovernance, mismanagement, corruption and undemocratic practices.

Findings from this study show that Nigerian journalists positively rated their role in promoting good governance as a significant number of the respondents either "moderately" or "highly" rated their watchdog role. It is a combination of the "moderately" and "highly" rated scores that informed the view of a positive rating on the watchdog role. This positive rating supports ACE's (2022) assertion that in modern politics and civilisation, the media plays a key role in promoting and maintaining openness within democratic processes, often referred to as the 'watchdog' function of the media. The media aids in preventing and examining claims of wrongdoings. This watchdog role incorporates the accountability of officials during and after their tenure and extends to the entire procedural structure or framework.

Francke (1995), a professor of communication, also supports this position with his assertion that the influence of mass media on public life, further depicted by the watchdog responsibility of the media, is presumed to be crucial to democracy. It is noteworthy that respondents also agreed, and this duty aligns with the social responsibility of the media. In other words, the position of scholars and findings from this study reinforce the premise of the Social Responsibility Media Theory that posits that the media is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication. Additionally, this theory places a burden on media practitioners by demanding socially responsible media practice, agreed to by respondents of this study.

The wider implication of the moral responsibility on the media to continue to play the watchdog role is that it helps the media to introspect, keep the government in check, give a voice to the citizenry, protect the constitution and promote democratic principles. Practitioners should constantly be aware of this burden in practising the media profession if a fair and egalitarian society is to be achieved. This is the

social responsibility of the media. On the contrary, abdicating this noble watchdog responsibility means that recklessness and lawlessness would become the order of the day. An unaccountable government is a tyrannical government. Such a government would oppress and suppress the governed. This point corroborates the assertion of Munoriyarwa, (2018) cited in Gainaka, Alsagoff and Akmar, (2020) that individuals in places of authority, whether within the government or as private individuals, hold substantial power and influence. This informs objective and astute scrutiny of their activities to measure their actions and prevent possible breaches of public trust. Therefore, the media, acting as a link between the public and the government, is equipped to execute the role of upholding the public interest by holding those delegated with governance responsibilities accountable. This underscores the significance of media freedom in fulfilling this critical societal responsibility.

The second objective of the study was to examine the extent to which Nigerian journalists score Nigeria based on the eight variables of good governance. The eight variables of good governance are participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus-oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability. The survey results showed that with a combination of "Fair" and "Good" scores, Nigerian journalists rated the West African country above average on all the eight variables of good governance. In other words, the "Above Average" rating from the survey meant that Nigeria's scores in both "Fair" and "Good" were pooled and considered as "Above Average" ratings. However, considered independently as "Fair" or "Good," Nigeria fared poorly in all eight indices according to the survey. For example, on participation, Nigeria scored 39.2% as "Fair" and 20.4% as "Good." On Rule of Law, "Fair" was 40%, while "Good" was 20.2%. Accountability was 35.6% for "Fair," while "Good" garnered 21.4%. In none of the eight indices of good governance did Nigeria score average (50%) or above when the variables of "Fair," "Good" or "Excellent" were considered independently.

Rating Nigeria as above average on all the eight variables of good governance may suggest that the country is on course to achieving good governance. Findings from the study posit that Nigeria still has a lot of room to cover in achieving good governance. Having fared poorly in the independent consideration of each of the variables, concerted efforts should be made to promote good governance. The government can use the variables of good governance highlighted in this study as a scorecard in assessing its performance. The media can also continue to play a role in this regard by constantly highlighting the need for the government to promote and ensure good governance.

Enhancing good governance is one of the ways to ensure that citizens participate or are represented in governance, take ownership of government programmes and projects, and have their rights protected by law. Also, good governance would ensure that the government uses the commonwealth to address society's needs and is accountable in that process. The absence of these has grave consequences as disquiet

and avoidable unrest would distract and detract the government from functioning well. Without a doubt, these agitations would also negatively impact national development.

Further, it is crucial to note that of the eight identified essential components of good governance, respondents did not all agree on the significance of all eight essential components in assessing good governance. They had various views on each component. For example, "Rule of Law" was considered the most essential component of good governance while "Consensus Oriented" was considered the least. Respondents did not agree that all the eight identified indices of good governance apply equally. Some were either not considered a component or considered as less essential.

Comparatively, Goodluck Jonathan's administration scored higher than that of Muhammadu Buhari in an assessment of a political era that performed well in good governance, and how Nigerian journalists fared as watchdogs of good governance between both administrations. It may be argued that the poor performance of Buhari's administration on the good governance scoresheet has also negatively impacted other areas of governance including citizen apathy and poverty rate.

On the possible challenges Nigerian journalists face in serving as watchdogs of good governance, the majority of respondents identified "poor work environment/equipment of Nigerian journalists' as the major challenge. Also, very much mentioned was 'widespread corruption in the society.'" Interestingly, "influx of quacks and pseudo-professionals into the journalism profession" and "poor education and training of Nigerian journalists" ranked third and fourth positions respectively.

The majority of the respondents stated that to mitigate the challenges Nigerian journalists face in serving as watchdogs of good governance, there is a need to professionalise journalism by removing quacks and pseudo-professionals, providing continuous education and training on the watchdog duty of journalists and providing special funds to support investigating reports. The above arguments support the positions of scholars like Gainaka, Alsagoff and Akmar (2020), Palmer, Toff, and Kleis Nielsen (2020) and Tran Thuy-Anh (2015).

CONCLUSION

The results of this survey indicated that Nigerian journalists positively rate their roles in acting as watchdogs of good governance. Nigerian journalists have played and continue to play commendable roles in advancing good governance, combating corruption, and protecting democratic systems and values. Before Nigeria's independence, the Nigerian press was vocal and active in condemning colonial rule and advocating for self-rule. The media is also credited with uncovering, reporting and highlighting public and private sector corruption and government ineptitude and malpractices. Continually, the media,

especially social media, has become a veritable platform and functional public sphere to inform and engage the citizenry. Media reports have been influential reference points in national discourse. Like some media practitioners would want to brag, "ignore the media at your detriment," many players at the corporate level, policy and bureaucracy have therefore learnt not to disregard the media.

The gate-keeping and agenda-setting functions of the media have also empowered the media to become a powerful component of governance. Social media has provided opportunities for citizens to learn, unlearn, relearn, reshape and evolve. Considered collectively (on fair and good scales), journalists in Nigeria rated the country above average on all the eight variables of good governance. However, considered independently as "Fair" or "Good" scores, Nigeria fared poorly in all eight indices according to the survey. This indicates that as an emerging democracy, a lot of work is required to enhance good governance and improve democratic outcomes. Journalists maintained that the poor work environment under which they operate is a major challenge in the discharge of their functions. They also argued that removing quacks would help professionalise the media, and give it the needed impetus to act in their watchdog role.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The subsequent recommendations will support and enhance the role of Nigerian journalists as watchdogs for good governance:

1. Media unions or guilds such as the Nigerian Union of Journalists or the Nigerian Guild of Editors amongst others should remove or delist quacks and pseudo-professionals as this would sanitise and professionalise the media.

2. Media owners and development partners should provide continuous education and training to media practitioners on the watchdog duty of journalists.

3. Media owners and development partners should provide special funds or grants to support investigative reports by media practitioners.

4. Governments (at national and sub-national levels) and regulatory agencies should promote independent press and press freedom by enacting and enforcing laws on media rights.

5. Governments (at national and sub-national levels) and regulatory agencies should provide opportunities for journalists and media practitioners to collaborate and partner with relevant sectors also playing watchdog roles.

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