

Public Perception and Role of Mass Media in Fight Against Corruption in Nigeria

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This paper examined how the Nigerian public perceived the role of the mass media in the fight against corruption. The research design used was survey, while Benin metropolis in Edo State, South-South, Nigeria, was the area of study. The two sampling techniques used were cluster sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Four hundred and fifty (450) copies of questionnaire were administered, while 418 copies representing 92 per cent response rate were retrieved. Majority of the respondents agreed that the media in the country have played a positive role in the fight against corruption. The study recommends, among others, that media professionals should be socially-responsible and abide by the ethics of the profession, so that they can fight corruption in the country without fear or favour.

Keywords: Public, Perception, Corruption, Media, Nigeria.

Although corruption has been in Nigeria right from independence, its frontiers became expanded in the 1970s, following the oil boom and today it has assumed a frightening and brazen dimension. In the 1970s for instance, the country witnessed the influx of multinational firms which came to handle many turnkey projects cutting across many sectors of the economy. This was the beginning of the oil boom. It was in this era that squandermania and kleptomania crept in. These projects, some of which were white elephants, included the expansions of oil and gas industry, road construction, power, telecommunications, hospitals, railways, airports, national identity cards, among others.

Lending credence to the above, Alli (2010:56), argues that as time went on in the late 1970s, there were allegations of corrupt practices in the construction, telecommunications and auto-mobile sub-sectors of the economy, among others. The military topshots then in collaboration with their civilian cronies were milking the country. It was during this period that Nigeria's currency, the *Naira*, was competing with the British pound sterling, while it had a higher value than the American dollar. This was also the period of the famous 'cement armada', that led to the early retirement of some military officers. Some of them got contracts to import cement into the country for construction works. About 360 ships filled with cement

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were on the high seas for months, because the Lagos ports could not contain them, making the country to be paying \$500,000 in demurrage per day as at then (Theobald, 1990:100).

By the 1980s, when the country returned to democracy, corruption had become established with the crop of politicians who were at the helm of affairs. This was exacerbated by the absence of strong anti-corruption laws and agencies. During this period, with Alhaji Shehu Shagari as the president, there was a N2.8 billion oil fund which got missing. As a result, the government had to set up the Justice Ayo Irikefe Panel to investigate the allegation. The panel claimed that no oil money was missing in the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), but testimonies before the panel showed that some chieftains of the defunct ruling party, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), were involved in the scam (Williams, 1987:107). Other mind-boggling scams of the 1980s were the rice scandal by the Presidential Taskforce on the Importation of Rice, headed by Alhaji Umaru Dikko, Shagari's Minister of Transport; and the fire that gutted the then Nigerian External Telecommunication (NET) building in Lagos.

By December 31, 1983, when the duo of Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon sacked the 'kleptocratic' Shagari administration, corruption was given as one of the major reasons for the coup. The Buhari/Idiagbon regime later set up tribunals to try some of the politicians who held public offices, especially the governors. The tribunals were regaled with tales of how a French company funded one of the major political parties as well as the wheeling and dealing by some multi-national companies and government officials which stalled the Ajaokuta Steel Development Project in the country (Alli 2010:53).

The subsequent military regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha were even worse. Ibrahim (2003:662), argues that Babangida and Abacha simply elevated corruption to statecraft. He argues further that there was a complete "prebendalization" of state power while virtually all the rules of public expenditure were violated. It was during Babangida regime that advance fee fraud (419) was alleged to have started. But one of the most outstanding cases of corruption during the Babangida regime was how he could not account for \$12.4 billion oil windfall, which accrued to the country from excess oil sales during the Gulf war in the early 1990s. This scandal has continued to be an albatross on the neck of General Babangida. The discovery which was consequent upon the report of a panel, headed by the renowned economist, Pius Okigbo, re-echoed recently.

A coalition of some civil society organizations: Access to Justice; Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre; Nigeria Liberty Forum; Women Advocacy and Documentation Centre; Human and Environmental Development Agenda; Committee for the Defence of Human Rights; Partnership for Justice; and the Nigeria Voters Assembly, under the aegis of Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project, wrote a petition to the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Mohammed Adoke, demanding for the prosecution of General Babangida for allegedly presiding over the mismanagement of the stupendous amount of money. SERAP attached a copy of the Okigbo panel report with the petition sent to the AGF, but he replied the group that he could not rely on the copy sent to him to take action and that there was no copy of the report in government archives (Anyia, 2010:8).

For General Abacha, he was said to be megalomaniac with treasury looting. Aiyetan (2005:18), captures his case vividly as follows:

On his part, Sani Abacha stole the nation blind, paralyzed the machinery of governance and pauperized the citizenry in five years of dictatorship and frenetic looting. He dipped his hands in Central Bank of Nigeria's vaults 29 times between 1993 and 1998 and stole \$1.13 billion and £413 million as well as returns from fictitious and inflated contracts which he ordered to be transferred into bank accounts abroad...he not only pocketed security votes but also engaged in direct printing of the nation's currency, among other heinous acts. By the time he died in the 1998, Abacha had corruptly enriched himself and the family by as much as \$3 billion lodged in more than 130 bank accounts at home and abroad.

Furthermore, from 1999 to 2007, when Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was the President, some cases of high-profile corruption were equally recorded. Prominent among these were the national identity card fraud involving SAGEM, SA of France; the \$180 million bribery scandal in connection with the country's Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) platform in Bonny, which involved Halliburton's subsidiary-Kellogg Brown and Roots (KBR); the 17.5 million euro Siemens-Pentascop deal; the N2.3 billion car scam in the House of Representatives and the N3.5 billion Daimler Fraud in ANAMMCO, among other (Alli, 2010:56).

Arising from the foregoing, it can be inferred that one of the major problems impeding the socio-economic development of Nigeria as a post-colonial state is corruption. An avalanche of data, both qualitative and quantitative shows that corruption breeds bad governance and lack of accountability. In other words, there is a correlation between corruption, bad governance and lack of accountability. Corruption entails the abuse of office for personal aggrandizement and selfish interests. It has caused untold hardship, grinding poverty and has also been identified as the biggest obstacle to socio-economic development (World Bank, 1997:12 and 2007:72).

According to Tanzi and Davoodi (1997:164) as well as Lambsdorff (2008:460), corruption undermines and weakens vital institutions of development; it impedes the equitable distribution of income, obstructs infrastructural development and the efficient production of goods and services in a country. In Nigeria for instance, corruption has been responsible for the ranking by the United Nations Development programme (UNDP) to be one of the countries in the world with low Human Development Index, with attendant cases of poverty, food insecurity, poor nutrition and sanitation, high rate of illiteracy, high infant/maternal mortality rate and dearth of infrastructure, among others (Adejumobi, 2010:14).

In 2005, Transparency International (TI), based on its Corruption Perception Index (CPI), ranked Nigeria to be the 13th most corrupt country in the world out of 146 countries; in 2007, Nigeria became the 32nd, while in 2008, the country took the 17th position. Furthermore, in 2009, TI ranked Nigeria as 130 out of 180 countries surveyed. On a grade point of 10, Nigeria scored 2.5. Some other African countries even fared better than Nigeria. These are Mozambique, Mauritania, Libya, Tanzania, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Togo, Sao Tome and Principe, Mali, Egypt, Algeria, Niger, The Gambia, Gabon, Benin, Zambia, Senegal, Madagascar, Liberia, Rwanda and Lesotho. In addition, a few other African countries were rated as having low corruption prevalence. These countries are: Botswana-37; Mauritius-42, Cape Verde-46 and Seychelles-54 (Akinyemi 2010:10).

However, it is worthy to note that during the administration of former President Obasanjo, some anti-corruption agencies and mechanisms were established. There are the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, through the Establishment Act (2004); the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission, through Establishment Act (2000); the Code of Conduct Bureau; the National Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative; Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit; e-Governance; the Public Procurement Bureau and the Due Process of Office, among others.

Against the backdrop of the foregoing, it is contended that the mass media have an indispensable role and an onerous responsibility in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. Apart from being the fourth estate of the realm, that is, being the fourth most important institution in the society, after the executive, legislature and judiciary, the media are also watchdogs against corruption, abuse of power, pretence and incompetence. The thrust of this study therefore is to evaluate how the public perceive the role of the mass media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, especially from 1999 when the present democratic experiment started, till date. The imperative of this is that, it is within this period that some strong anti-corruption agencies and mechanisms were put in place. And without doubt, the mass media, especially the independent print media have been at the vanguard of the anti-corruption crusade in the country.

Statement of Problem

Apart from the anti-corruption agencies and mechanisms put in place in Nigeria, especially from 1999, it is indisputable that the media have been quite pivotal to the fight against corruption in the country. Section 22 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gives support to the media, by stating explicitly that: "The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to... uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people". It therefore follows that the role of the media in promoting, sustaining and consolidating good democratic governance and accountability, is underpinned by the ability of the media to fight corruption in the country.

Furthermore, the media are expected to sensitize and keep the public informed on corruption in the society, especially grand and bureaucratic corruption. While the media are expected to partner with anti-graft agencies in this direction they should equally act as a check on the activities of these anti-graft agencies.

Some scholars like Ciboh (2010: 143), have argued that there is paucity of corruption news/information in the media, and that the media give more attention to news of politics and public affairs than corruption, while Egbuna (2007: 18), argues that the media in Nigeria have remained one of the most vocal on the continent and that their role in exposing corruption in both the public and private sectors, has contributed immensely to the fight against corruption, thereby engendering some level of accountability and transparency in the country.

Arising from these two extreme positions on the role of the media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, it has become pertinent to interrogate some issues: what constitutes corruption and how does it affect the Nigerian society; how do the public perceive the role of the media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria; does the pattern of media ownership affect the ability of the media to fight corruption, and between the independent broadcast media and the independent print media, which of them have been more vocal in the fight against corruption. These issues form the problematic of this study.

Objectives of the study

This study seeks in broad terms to ascertain the perception of the public on role of the mass media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, but specifically, it aims:

1. to determine what constitutes corruption and how it affects the Nigerian society.
2. to find out how the public perceive the role of the mass media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.
3. to determine if the pattern of media ownership affects the ability of the mass media to fight corruption in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions guiding this study:

- RQ-1. What constitutes corruption and what are its effects on the Nigerian society?
- RQ-2. How does the public perceive the role of the mass media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria?
- RQ-3. Does the pattern of media ownership affect the ability of the mass media to fight corruption in Nigeria?

Hypotheses

- H₁: The public has positive perception about the role of the mass media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.
- H₀: The public does not have positive perception about the role of the mass media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

Significance of the study

This research is significant in the following ways:

- It will expand the frontiers of quantitative research in the academia on the role of the mass media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.
- It will enable the public to contribute their quota to good governance and the war on corruption in Nigeria.
- It will provide a feedback mechanism to media professionals on how the public perceive their role in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Corruption has become one of the symbols of popular discontent in the world today, not only in Nigeria, but across the globe; stories of corruption dominate the media in both developed and developing countries. In addition, corruption has become the focus of policymakers, watchdog groups and scholars, most of whom share the belief that corruption is inimical to good governance and economic productivity. Civil society organizations like Transparency International regularly rank countries in terms of their perceived corruption status, while programmes to combat corruption have been initiated by multi-lateral bodies such as the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Western and non-western governments and other non-governmental organizations. This is because corruption has become the primary culprit in explaining the dysfunctions of government and the inequalities in governance in the developing countries especially (Smith, 2007:26).

What therefore is corruption? Transparency International, cited in Onu (2008:165), simply views corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Amaty Sen, cited by Akinyemi (2010:10), sees corruption as the violation of established rules for private gain and profit. Lipset and Lenz (2000:80), view corruption as the effort to secure wealth or power through illegal means, private gain at public expense; or a misuse of power for personal benefits. Furthermore, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption cited in the African Governance Report II (2009:214) describes some acts which constitute corruption to include the following: bribery of national public officials; bribery of foreign public officials and officials of public international organizations; embezzlement; misappropriation or other diversion of property by a public official; trading in influence; abuse of function or position, among others. The approach of the Africa Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, formulated in 2003, is similar to the UN's. Some other scholars have also written on corruption and how it has undermined Nigeria's capacity to develop to full potential (Nwankwo, 2000:14; Odekunle and Lame, 2001:18 and Onyekakeyah, 2006:65).

In an analysis of the dynamics of corruption in sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria, Oliver de Sardan (1999:29), argues that a day hardly passes without a conversation making hostile or disgusted references to corruption. He argues on that corruption has become the dominant discourse of complaint in the post-colonial world, symbolizing people's disenchantment with democracy and development, as well as their frustrations with pervading social inequality. Smith (2007: XIII), drawing a parallel between corruption, patron-clientism and Nigeria as a post-colonial state, argues that Nigeria is rife with corruption and that this can be viewed from how the poor to the intellectuals debate and analyze the issue. He also stated, supporting Oliver de Sardan, earlier cited, that discontents about corruption in Nigeria, dominate the national discourse. Furthermore, the African Governance Report II (2009:209), encapsulates its views on corruption as follows:

Corruption is a major challenge to governance and development in Africa. It erodes the capacity of the states to deliver services efficiently, provide security and maintain peace, order and social stability. When deep-seated, corruption generates poverty and turns resources-rich countries into low-income, backward societies. Many African countries are trapped in this circle of corruption, poverty and underdevelopment. Corruption is especially debilitating for Africa, the poorest continent. It undermines the ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals because resources meant for education, health, rural roads and electricity are diverted for personal use. It also increases the cost of doing business and is a disincentive for foreign direct investment.

In their contribution, Chabal and Daloz (1999:102), argue that corruption in sub-Saharan Africa pervades the entire spectrum of the society; and that this malaise can best be described as a key aspect of the "instrumentalization of disorder". They argue further that for such a country like Nigeria, corruption has reached its apogee because there is a well-oiled system of "neo-patrimonialism" in place, which continues to suit both the patrons and client of corruption. In a nutshell, the central thesis of their argument is that the post-colonial neo-patrimonial society which Nigeria has become is exacerbated by kinship ties as well as the rent-seeking attitude of successive governments in the country.

Related to the above, Bayart, Ellis and Hibou (1999:16), contend that the criminalization of politics and the state is at the heart of the level of corruption in many of the states in sub-Saharan Africa. They contend further that most of the leaders which Africa has had, some of whom are still in power, were and are nothing short of bandits who pillaged their countries' resources, without caring about the citizens. Furthermore, in a sectoral analysis of corruption in the developing countries, Spector (2005:7), observes that corruption has contributed tremendously to the undermining of good governance, economic growth and ultimately the stability of these countries and regions. He observes further that in an era when there are fears about the implications of state failure on conflict and terrorism, the detrimental impact of corruption on regime stability takes on important meaning. Uncontrolled corruption, he submits further, not only hurts the host polity, but can take a toll as well as on neighbouring polities.

In the views of Winbourne (2005: 102), there are three levels of corruption, namely: petty corruption, mid-level corruption and grand corruption. Of all the three, she argues, grand corruption has more devastating consequences on the society, because it involves formulating deceptive policies and laws which aid the looting of the state by the power elite and their cronies. She explains that grand corruption occurs when high-level officials, both public and private, engage in large-scale, and illegal transactions. Another name given to grand corruption is "state capture". This has been corroborated by World Bank (2000:70). According to the Bank, state capture refers to the actions of individuals, groups or firms, both within the public and private sectors to influence the formation of laws, regulations, decrees and other government policies to their own advantage.

Furthermore, according to Ribadu (2009:14), corruption drains Africa of about 140 billion dollar yearly, which is about 25 per cent of the continent's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). He equally asserts that between 1960 and 1999, Nigerian officials stole and wasted about 400 billion dollar; an amount of money, six times the Marshall Plan, the sum total of money used to rebuild Europe after the Second World War. This revelation has also been corroborated by the United Nation Office on Drug and Crime, cited by Akinyemi (2010:10).

Again, Ribadu (2006:10), also states that corruption is responsible for the perpetual collapse of infrastructure and institutions, the endemic poverty in Africa and the underdevelopment and cyclical failure of democracy to deliver the expected dividends. Stople (2008:15), in his argument states that more attention needs to be paid to the scourge of corruption because of its devastating effects on the economy. He argues that the cost of corruption exceeds by far by the damage caused by any other crime. Langseth, *et al* (2007:17), also argue that corruption reduces economic growth, enhances inequalities and also reduces the capacity of the government to respond to the needs of the people, thereby engendering poverty in the society. They argue further that corruption distorts economic and social development by engendering wrong choices and by encouraging competition in bribery rather than in the quality and prize of goods and services and that this leads to the poor paying for the corruption of their own officials and agents of multi-national firms.

Arising from the reviews of the issues involved in corruption and its consequences in the society, especially Nigeria, it becomes pertinent to analyze other scholars on the role of the media in the fight against corruption in the society. It is worthy to note that the accountability and transparency of any government, depends on the ability of the media to

act as a check on such government. By facilitating debates and discussions on political, economic and social issues, the media enable citizens to make intelligent decisions and also call to question, those in power. The independent media for instance, inform and educate the people on democratic governance issues, parliamentary proceedings and also provide them with alternative sources of information. In addition, the popularity of the Internet and investigative journalism in uncovering and identifying abuses of power and corrupt practices, attest to the potential of the media to fight corruption in Nigeria.

O'Sullivan, *et al* (2003:12), underscore the role of the media in the society in general terms thus:

The media collectively act to provide audience with their windows on the world and with definitions of social reality. Implicit in this kind of claim is the idea that the media act as powerful agencies capable of shaping and directing public and private understanding of the world and awareness of its social, economic, moral, cultural, technological and political affairs. In this manner, the media have been termed, agenda setters and consciousness industries involved in the manufacture and management of the public, of cultural consensus and consent. That is, in providing images, interpretations and explanation of events occurring in the wider world, the modern media do not simply and neutrally provide information about that world, but actively encourage us to see and understand it in particular ways and certain terms.

According to Abati, cited by Nkanga (2010:2), corruption is a universal phenomenon because of human frailties and that while the media may not be able to eradicate it in Nigeria, they can contribute to its reduction through investigative reporting and the monitoring of those entrusted with public office. Olukotun (2010:2) agrees with Abati, that corruption, though pervasive, is not only a Nigerian problem, but the media fighting it is crucial to the deepening of democracy in the country. He argues that the Nigerian media have been quite outspoken and vibrant in the fight against corruption in both the public and private sectors of the economy.

In the views of Fritz (2005:1), a free and independent media is a *sine qua non* in the fight against corruption. He states that the fight against corruption can be carried out in two ways: firstly, by investigating and reporting on corruption. The media in this case inform the public about corrupt practices both within the government and among public officials, as well as within the private institutions to account. Secondly, by promoting the anti-corruption efforts of civil society organizations as well as supporting the actions of anti-graft agencies in the fight against corruption; and that alternatively, when official proceedings are conducted in an inept manner, the media can push for reforms by highlighting legal and institutional inadequacies.

However, Fritz concludes with a caveat; that is, journalists should be able to protect confidential sources of information if the media are to be effective watchdogs over power; and that journalists should not be compelled under civil or criminal law to identify the source of confidential information. He argues further that journalists must recognize that although anonymous sources can provide important information, there is also the risk that such sources act with self-interest; and that when an anonymous source sounds incredible, journalists

should make every effort to confirm the information by using additional sources and public records, where necessary.

Sowunmi, *et al* (2010:8), contend that the media have played a critical role in the anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria; and that their role has been quite encouraging: firstly, the media have not only raised public awareness about corruption, its causes, consequences and possible remedies, but have also investigated and reported incidents of corruption, thereby assisting the anti-graft agencies. They contend further that by fighting corruption, the media have contributed to some form of openness and transparency. Furthermore, Ayoola (2010:8), supports the above by stating that for democracy to survive and be deepened in Nigeria, the role which the Nigerian media have played so far should be further strengthened. He argues that the media must continue to champion government accountability and the need to have a conducive environment for freedom of speech and participatory democracy.

In the views of Alawode (2005:5), the Nigerian media, especially the independent print media have been unrelenting in exposing corruption and that this segment of the media has really contributed to the anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria. He argues that it was through the collaboration of the independent press with the anti-graft agencies, that it (the independent press), was able to expose the corrupt practices of some highly placed public officials like a former Inspector-General of Police, Tafa Balogun; a former Senate President, Adolphus Wabara; a former Minister of Education, Professor Fabian Osuji, two former Ministers in the Health Ministry, Professor Adenike Grange and Mr. Gabriel Aduku on the alleged N300million unspent allocation, as well as exposing the inflation of the cost of refurbishing the official residence of the Speaker of Representatives by Mrs. Patricia Etteh, a former Speaker of the House, to the tune of about N600 million.

Some other scholars like Shelia Coronel, as cited by Nwabueze (2005:16), have argued that an important tool in the hands of the media to fight corruption is investigative journalism. She argues that investigative journalism helps both officials and citizens on the notion of accountability and transparency; and so by investigating public officials, this brand of journalism not only names and shames them, but such exposes also show that corruption and the abuse of power are not acceptable.

Furthermore, concerning the question of whether the pattern of media ownership can affect the ability of the media to fight corruption, this can be subsumed under the influence of media ownership on the editorial content. This has been a subject of intellectual discourse and research to determine if media ownership determines the editorial content. Although some scholars have argued there is no discernable correlation between media ownership and the editorial content, some others have equally argued that media ownership determines editorial content.

According to Fritz (2005:1), public media are characterized by a lack of complete independence from the state. He argues that in spite of the existence of internal statutes ensuring the editorial independence of public media, the direct connection between the state/government and public media may interfere with the ability of such media to investigate corruption, within the state/government sector. This has been corroborated by the World Bank (2002:48), in a 97-country study, which showed that state-owned media tended in general, to be less-effective than the private media in fighting corruption and being critical of some unwholesome government policies. But the private media, Fritz continues are able to

scrutinize the activities of the government because they are “in principle- independent”, from the government. He argues that the liberalization of the media is one of the best ways to facilitate the democratization process; but that the private media are handicapped by conflicts between the owner’s interests and the principle of independent reporting.

However, the foundation of the perception of how media ownership determines the editorial content, seems to have been laid by Karl Mark, when he stated in his *German ideology*, cited by McQuail (2010:95), as follows: “The class that has the means of material production has control at the same time over means of mental production so that, thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.” This market theory therefore, situates a direct link between economic ownership and the dissemination of message which goes to affirm the legitimacy and the values of a ruling class. Today, these views seem to have been given vent to, by the concentration of the independent media with nation-wide coverage in the hands of the political/business elite all over the world, including Nigeria.

McQuail (2010:79), buttresses the above by arguing that whoever owns and controls the media can choose, or set limit to what is to be done. The Marxist theory moreover, tends to emphasize the ideological effects of media in the interest of a ruling class, and to legitimize the dominance of capitalism and the subordination of the working class. D’Jankov *et al* (2002:90), follow suit by arguing that though ownership may not be a significant determining factor in the editorial content, it plays some visible role in the editorial content. They argue that government media for instance, would distort information and disseminate half-truths to the public about the government, even when it is glaring that such governments are not performing. It is important to note that there is dearth of quantitative studies on corruption in Nigeria. This study will be a modest attempt to fill in that gap.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the perception theory. According to Akpan (1993: 14), perception ordinarily is a process; that is, the means by which we learn about the world. In the process of perceiving, individuals select stimuli (information) from the external world and at the same time, mix and blend them (stimuli) with internal stimuli, which are within them (individuals). It follows therefore that in attempting to make sense out of the world, individuals have two sources of information available to them: the elements they have with them (the past, their attitude, their personality, etc) and those elements presently existing in the external world (other people, their words, messages, surroundings and so on). Human beings thus, create the vision that influences their world view.

Folarin (2005), also supports the above by saying that perception depends on a complex of variables such as psychological disposition, past experiences, cultural expectations and social relationships. It is therefore based on these elements of the perception process that will inform the way that the public will perceive the role of the media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study used the survey method. It is quite appropriate in gauging people’s perception on an issue; moreover, it is an effective method for collecting data for the purposes of describing a population that is too large to be observed directly. According to Babbie

(1998:259), survey is an excellent method for the measurement of attitude and opinions of a people, within a large population. The researcher using this method is therefore interested in the accurate assessment of the characteristics of a people (Osuala, 2005:292).

The residents of Benin City constituted the population of this study. According to the 2006 census figure, obtained from the National Population Commission (NPC), Benin City has a population of 374,515. The sample size for the study was 450 subjects drawn from three zones in Benin metropolis- Ugbor, Ugbowo and New Benin. The choice of this sample size was informed by Wimmer and Dominick's view (2011:93) that in a univariate study such as this, a sample size of at least 450 is satisfactory.

Two sampling techniques were adopted-cluster sampling and purposive sampling techniques. The cluster sampling technique was used to divide Benin metropolis into three zones. The researcher relied on the data obtained from the local government officials in Benin and listed the 100 registered number of streets alphabetically, using Microsoft Software. From the data, it was discovered that Ugbor has 32 streets, Ugbowo 38, while New Benin has 30. Furthermore, the research while still using the cluster sample technique chose five streets from each of the zones, yielding 15 streets in all, while five houses were selected in each of the streets, yielding 75 houses. Six copies of the questionnaire were administered in each of the 75 houses; this amounted to 450 respondents. The study used tables and simple percentages for other questions, while means scores were used for Likert and semantic differential scales. Furthermore, Chi-square was used to test the hypothesis.

Discussion of Findings

Out of the 450 copies of questionnaire administered, 418, representing 92 per cent of the response rate were retrieved. Concerning the level of education of the respondents, 107 (25.6 per cent) were secondary school leavers; 103 (24.6 per cent) were undergraduates; 187 (44.8 per cent) were graduates, while 21 (5.0 per cent) were postgraduate students.

RQ-1: *What constitutes corruption and what are its effects on the society?*

The above question were posed to the respondents in order to ascertain what they actually understand by the word "corruption", and what they think are its effects on the society, like Nigeria. This became necessary because it is obvious that corruption is nuanced in many dimensions and perspectives.

Table 1: Respondents' Perception of Corruption

	Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
a	Bribery	138	33
b	Inflation of contract	112	26.8
c	Advance fee fraud (419)	68	16.3
d	Election rigging	100	23.9
	Total	418	100

The table shows that 138 of the respondents, representing 33% perceived corruption to be "Bribery"; 112 (26.8%), said "Inflation of contract"; 68 (16.3%), said "Advance fee fraud (419)"; while 100 (23.9%), said "Election rigging".

Table 2: Respondents' Perception of the Most Negative Effect of Corruption in Nigeria

	Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
a	Poverty	298	71.3
b	Lack of basic infrastructure	120	28.7
	Total	418	100

From the table above, 298 of the respondents, representing 71.3% said the most negative effect of corruption in Nigeria is "Poverty"; while 120 (28.7%) said "Lack of basic infrastructure".

As a follow-up to the above, some other relevant questions were also asked. The researcher asked the respondents, their perception of the level of corruption in Nigeria. From the responses, 312 of the respondents, representing 74.6% said corruption was "very high"; while 106 (25.4%), said it was "high". Also, the researcher asked the respondents if corruption was a major problem in Nigeria. All the respondents- 418, representing 100% said "Yes".

RQ-2: How do the public perceive the role of the mass media in fight against corruption in Nigeria?

To answer the above research question, the Charles Osgood semantic differential scale was the basic statistical procedure adopted.

Table 3: How the Public Perceived the Role of the Mass Media in the Fight Against Corruption in Nigeria

	Items	Strongly Agree	Fairly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Fairly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Item	Total score	Mean score
	+	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	-		
a	Important	358	49	13	-	-	-	-	Unimportant	418	6.8
b	Inspiring	97	116	83	74	48	-	-	Uninspiring	418	4.9
c	Satisfactory	115	86	163	54	-	-	-	Unsatisfactory	418	5.8
d	Supportive of democracy	283	79	56	-	-	-	-	Unsupportive	418	6.7
e	Challenging	301	85	32	-	-	-	-	Unchallenging	418	6.6

To get the mean score for the two opposed binary attitudinal values of "important and unimportant", we did the following:

$$\frac{358 \times 7 + 49 \times 6 + 13 \times 5 + 0 \times 3 + 0 \times 2 + 0 \times 1}{418} = \frac{2854}{418} = 6.8$$

To get the mean score for the two opposed binary attitudinal values of "inspiring and uninspiring", we did the following:

$$\frac{97 \times 7 + 116 \times 6 + 83 \times 5 + 74 \times 4 + 48 \times 3 + 0 \times 2 + 0 \times 1}{418} = \frac{2030}{418} = 4.9$$

To get the mean score for the two opposed binary attitudinal values of "satisfactory and unsatisfactory", we did the following:

$$\frac{115 \times 7 + 86 \times 6 + 163 \times 5 + 54 \times 4 + 0 \times 3 + 0 \times 2 + 0 \times 1}{418} = \frac{2352}{418} = 5.6$$

To get the mean score for the two opposed binary attitudinal values of "supportive of democracy and unsupportive of democracy", we did the following:

$$\frac{283 \times 7 + 79 \times 6 + 56 \times 5 + 0 \times 4 + 0 \times 3 + 0 \times 2 + 0 \times 1}{418} = \frac{2791}{418} = 6.7$$

To get the mean score for the two opposed binary attitudinal values of "challenging and unchallenging", we did the following:

$$\frac{301 \times 7 + 85 \times 6 + 32 \times 5 + 0 \times 4 + 0 \times 3 + 0 \times 2 + 0 \times 1}{418} = \frac{2777}{418} = 6.6$$

The results from the table above show that the respondents agree that the role of the media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria is important, inspiring, satisfactory, supportive of democracy and challenging. This tends to justify the views of Sowunmi et al (2010:8) and Alawode (2005:5).

Furthermore, the researcher asked the respondents which among the government media and the private media, have the capacity to fight corruption, especially bureaucratic corruption. From the responses, all the respondents- 418 (100%), said "private media". This reinforces the view of Fritz (2005:1) and the World Bank (2002:48). The researcher also asked the respondents, which between the private print media and the private broadcast media can fight corruption better. From the responses, 222(53:1%) of the respondents said that "private print media"; 114 (27:3%), said the "private broadcast media"; while 82(19:6%), said they were "not sure". For the majority of the respondents who chose the "private print media", this tends to resonate with the views of Sowunmi et al (2010:16). Sowunmi et al (2010) noted that TELL and The News magazines and many of the private national daily newspapers have been at the forefront of the fight against corruption in Nigeria. They equally argue that private broadcast media in Nigeria may not go the whole hog to fight corruption in the country because they depend solely on advertisements, some of which come from the government and also that the government remains the sole regulator of broadcasting in Nigeria.

RQ-3: Does the pattern of media ownership affect the ability of the media to fight corruption in Nigeria?

To answer the above question, the Likert scale was used.

Table 4: Respondents' Perception of how the Pattern of Media Ownership Affects the Ability of the Mass Media to Fight Corruption in Nigeria

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Score	Mean Score
	5	4	3	2	1		
The pattern of media ownership affects the ability of the mass media to fight corruption in Nigeria	204	183	31	-	-	418	4.4

To calculate the mean score for the above, we did the following:

$$\frac{204 \times 5 + 183 \times 4 + 31 \times 3 + 0 \times 2 + 0 \times 1}{418} = \frac{1845}{418} = 4.4$$

The result from the table above tends to resonate with D'Jankov (2000:18), who found out the effect of media ownership on some social and economic policy outcomes, especially corruption.

Hypotheses

H1: The public has positive perception about the role of the mass media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria

H0: The public does not have positive perception about the role of the mass media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

Decision Rule: Accept H0 if $X^2_{cal} < X^2_{tab}$ and reject if otherwise.

Options	O	E	O-E	O-E ²	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
Very high extent	112	77	35	1225	15.91
High extent	187	77	110	12,100	157.14
Low extent	79	77	2	4	0.05
Very low extent	7	77	-70	4,900	63.64
Don't know	0	77	-77	5,929	77
Total	385				313.74

$X^2_{cal} = 313.74$, $df=4$, $\alpha=0.05$, $X^2_{tab} = 9.488$.

Since $X^2_{cal} (313.74) > X^2_{tab} (9.488)$, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the public has a positive perception about the role of the media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The thrust of this study was to ascertain how the public perceived the role of the media in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, especially from the outset of the current democratic dispensation in 1999. It was from this period that the country witnessed the establishment of some anti-graft agencies, mechanisms and agencies, such as the EFCC and ICPC, among others. The study further sought to determine what constitutes corruption and how it affects the society, especially Nigeria; and if the pattern of media ownership affects the ability of the media in Nigeria to fight corruption.

The findings from this study demonstrate that corruption exists highly in Nigeria and it is perceived in different ways; its negative effects on the country were also noted. However, the respondents noted that the media have played positive role in the fight against corruption in the country. Furthermore, while the respondents all agreed that the private media have fought corruption in the country, more than the efforts of government owned media. Majority of the respondents said the private print media have fought corruption more in Nigeria than

the private broadcast media. When Chi-square was used to test, if the public has positive perception about the role of the media in the fight against corruption, the result was upheld. The respondents also noted that the pattern of media ownership can impair the ability of the media to fight corruption in Nigeria

This study therefore recommends as follows:

1. The independence of the media is a sine qua non to the fight against corruption in Nigeria. Therefore, the indispensable position of the media in Nigeria as enshrined in Section 22 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, should be respected by the government so that the media can hold the government accountable to the people.
2. Media practitioners should be socially-responsible and abide by the ethics of their profession. This will make them to fight corruption without fear or favour.
3. Media owners should be pay journalists living wages so that they will not be susceptible to "brown envelopes". This has been identified as one of the factors making most journalists to be corrupt, thereby impairing their ability to report the truth.
4. The media should partner with anti-graft agencies in fight against corruption in the country.

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