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PRINT MEDIA AND THE REPORTAGE OF CORRUPTION CASES IN NIGERIA: INADEQUACY OF CONTENT ANALYSIS APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, newspapers have influenced politics, shaped culture, played important roles in businesses, served as research materials and affected the daily lives of people. Consequently, this paper looks at how reliable newspaper content is as a source of information for research purposes. To achieve this, this paper examines four national dailies in Nigeria-ThisDay, The Guardian, The Vanguard and The Punch, from October 1 to 31, 2017; analyzing how the newspapers covered some corruption cases involving Mrs. Patience Jonathan, Mrs. Diezani Alison- Madueke, Col. Sambo Dasuki, retd. and Mr. Abdulrasheed Maina for a period of one month. The main finding in this paper is that the four dailies only focused on corruption as misappropriation of funds and money laundering, not discussing other aspects of corruption like extortion, favouritism etc. Based on the findings, the researcher concludes that newspaper content is not the most reliable source of information for research because of sensationalism, prejudice and willful biases in reportage. The researcher recommends that journalists should thoroughly research their subjects of discussion before publishing so as to present balanced and detailed reports on which researchers can base their studies.

Keywords: Reportage, Corruption, Biases, Content, Sensationalism.

Introduction

The quest for a normative definition and content characterization of news, especially in tabloids has been a recurring theme in scholarly discourse (Kerunga et al., 2020; Chama, 2017). While hard news stories have become the major characterizing feature of professional journalism, soft news mostly reside in sensational/tabloid journalism. As a result, values such as proximity, impact, oddity, and relevance, tend to be given less importance (Muchangwe and Gondwe, 2020; Bunce et al., 2016).

Media communication generally comprises of Print and Electronic. However, the emphasis of this research is located within the print medium of communication. Print media which comprises of newspapers, magazines, community newsletter, wire services, brochures, flyers and other publications has an important role to play by delivering information mostly on a daily basis. This information is not only important in spreading current happenings to the public; it also has a significant impact on the society.

Over the years, newspaper have affected the daily lives of millions by serving as a reliable source of knowledge and information shaping culture, influencing politics, opinion, attitudes, conduct and even moral values.

Brief History of Newspaper in Nigeria

Newspaper is made up of a folded book of paper with a weekly or daily publication based on subject and content. It is a scheduled publication which contains current happenings, editorials opinions, entertainment, advertising, criticism, persuasion, advice, cartoon, weather and many other features. The editorial page contains editorials written by an editor and columns that express the writer's personal opinions. Newspapers are mainly funded through paid subscriptions and advertisement.

Newspaper reporters in Nigeria are usually poorly paid and newspapers survive financially mainly on paid advertisements by multinational companies owned by "powerful" people in the society. This makes the newspaper cautious in many cases, in reporting in-depth stories of crimes or suspected crimes (Odorume2012). They sometimes carry stories that portray corrupt persons in a favourable way. Afolabi (2015:7) stated that the print media in Nigeria started as far back as 1840 when the European missionaries founded community newspaper to spread Christianity. This later led to the founding of West African Pilot by Dr. Azikiwe in 1937. It was gathered that the Nigerian newspapers which existed then helped with the achievement of Nigeria's independence in 1960.

As at today, Nigeria has several newspapers like the Nigerian Tribune which was founded in 1949, This Day, The Punch, The Vanguard, The Guardian, The Sun and many others that are both national, regional and local newspapers.

In 1859, Rev. Henry Townsend, a Briton of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Abeokuta used his printing press to produce "IweIrohin", which was the first newspaper in Nigeria published in Yoruba language.

This study focuses on newspaper content as an important action of the print media because, whether good or bad, it can be a mighty power to reckon with in the social political and cultural construct of the society. It is a powerful means of communication and an important medium of mass communication.

A sample of corruption articles from four national newspapers in Nigeria form the basis for this research. The newspapers which are ThisDay, The Guardian, The Vanguard and The Punch were selected because they have the most successful publications in terms of circulation and readership within Nigeria, whether in print or online, (Odorume, 2012:5). Four corruption cases on Mrs Patience Jonathan, MrsDiezani Alison-Madueke, Col, Sambo Dasuki, retd. And

Mrs Abdulrasheed Maina, covered by the newspapers from October 1 to 30, 2017, were studied to show the sufficiency and reliability of it reportage. That corruption exists on a very large scale in Nigeria is no more news. The more intensified the fight against corruption, the more the number of reports on massive corruption in the country. That is why the researcher chose to look at how some newspapers in the country covered some of the corruption cases.

Summary of Corruption

The word 'corruption,' in recent times, may be one of the most contemporary subjects. Yet, it is difficult to give a simple definition of corruption because it comes in different forms.
Khatamar (2015) opined that corruption is when an authority or a powerful party does something wrong through any means that is illegitimate, immoral or incompatible with ethical standards. He categorized corruption as:

- Petty corruption, which is small level of corruption which directly affects the poor and is usually committed by people like policemen, judges, etc.
- Grand corruption involves mismanagement of colossal amounts of money amongst higher levels of government.
- Systematic or endemic corruption mainly occurs due to the weakness of an organization or process

On the other hand, (Kaba 2018) said corruption is when persons in government and non-governmental organizations are dishonest in their political, social and economic activities.
In addition, (Amini – Philips & Ogbuawu, 2017:13) wrote that anybody in an organization in Nigeria, whether private or public, who violates the rules and regulations on how to deal with customers and colleagues by taking undue advantage of them, either by asking or demanding for gratification in whatever form, is corrupt.

Theoretical framework

This paper is anchored on the Social Marketing Theory which seek to promote socially valuable information and acceptable behavior (Kotler and Zaltman1971:3-12). It "assumes the existence of a benign information provider seeking to bring about useful, beneficial social change"(Baran and Davis 2012: 335). It tries to integrate marketing ideas, principles, tools, techniques and socially acceptable concepts to promote communication that will benefit society. Social marketing theory is useful in designing, planning, implementing and evaluating social campaigns using information sharing as it mail objective. It uses creativity rather than depending on public service announcements, to give out information. It tries to understand social and psychological factors which bring resistance to change in society. The theory, with social intervention as its main objective, helps to increase acceptance, response and practice of any social idea directed at a particular target group.

Overview of Content Analysis

Content analysis has contributed greatly to social-scientific inquiry (through mass communication) since communication scholars devised it and have used it the most, (Adepoju, 2003). (The main unit of analysis used in content analysis is either written or recorded messages). There are many definitions of content analysis.

Modern content analysis according to Adepoju (2003:13) can be traced to world II, when types of popular songs played on European radio stations were monitored by the Allied Intelligence

Units. After the war, content was used by researchers studying propaganda in newspapers and radio. It also became an important subject to be taught in journalism courses.
Kerlinger (2002) opined that content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measurable variation while Walizer and Weiner (1978), defined it as any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information.

Berelson (1971:65), opined content analysis is a research method which focuses on the actual contents and internal features of media. It is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes phrases, character or sentences within text to quantify this presence in an objective manner.

Communication is essentially about consequence on society. That is why content analysis looks at the interaction between two or more people in order to find out what transpired and their consequences.

Public communication may need to be analyzed to find out the nature of the messaging between the public and the organizations. In a society where man receives different kinds of information through the media of mass communication, the content of the print media, television channels and radio broadcast need to be revealed.

To conduct a content analysis on a text, the text is broken down into manageable categories like word, sentence, phrase and it is then examined with either conceptual analysis or relational analysis. The results are used to make inference about the messages within the texts, the writers, the audience and even the culture and time in which these are a part. Content analysis can show intentions, biases, prejudices and oversight of authors, publishersas well as other persons responsible for the content of materials.

Uses of Content Analysis
Perhaps due to the fact that it can be applied to examine any piece of written or occurrence of recorded communication, content analysis is currently used in a number of fields, ranging from marketing and media studies, to literature and rhetoric, cognitive science, and many other fields of inquiry.

Additionally, content analysis reflects a close relationship with socio-and psycholinguistics, and is playing an integral role in the development of artificial intelligence. The following list adopted from Bereleson (1971) offers more possibilities for the uses of content analysis:

- Reveal international difference in communication content
- Detect the existence of propaganda
- Identify the intentions, focus or communication trends of an individual, group or institution.
- Describe psychological or emotional state of persons or groups

Types of Content Analysis
There are two types of content analysis: Conceptual and Relational Analysis. Conceptual analysis can be thought of as establishing the existence and frequency of concepts - most often represented by words and phrases – in text. For instance, say one has a hunch that their

favourite poet often writes about hunger. With conceptual analysis one can determine how many times words such as "hunger", "hungry", "famished", or "starving" appear in a volume of poems. In contrast, relational analysis goes one step further by examining the relationship among concepts in a text.

Returning to the "hunger" example, with relational analysis, one could identify what other words or phrases "hunger" or "famished" appear next to and then determine that different meanings emerge as a result of these grouping.

Theoretical influence on Relational Analysis

The kind of analysis that researchers employ will vary significantly according to their theoretical approach. Key theoretical approaches that inform content analysis include linguistics and cognitive science.

Linguistic approaches to content analysis focus analysis of texts on the level of a linguistic unit, typically single clause units. One example of this type of research is Kerlinger (2000), who developed an automated procedure which analyzes each clause in a text and assigns it a numerical score based on several emotional/psychological scales. Another technique is to code a text grammatically into clauses and parts of speech to establish a matrix representation.

Approaches that derive from cognitive science include the creation of decision maps and mental models. Decision maps attempt to represent the relationship(s) between ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and information available to an author when making a decision within a text. These relationships can be represented as logical, inferential, causal, sequential, and mathematical relationships. Typically, two of these are compared in a single study, and are analyzed as networks. For example, Berelson (1971) used logical and sequential links to examine symbolic interaction. This methodology is thought of as a more generalized cognitive mapping technique, rather than the more specific mental models approach.

Mental models are groups or networks of interrelated concepts that are thought to reflect conscious or subconscious perceptions of reality. According to cognitive scientists, internal mental structures are created as people draw inference and gather information about the world. Mental models are a more specific approach to mapping because beyond extraction and comparison, they can help analyze and construct mapping representations.

To create the model, a researcher converts a text into a map of concepts and relations; the map is then analyzed on the level of concepts and statements, where a statement consists of two concepts and their relationship. Krippendorf (1980) asserts that this statement makes possible the information, as well as social shared cognitions.

Data Presentation/Analysis

This section of the study deals with the results of the content analysis of four national dailies in Nigeria and their reporting of corruption cases for a period of one month (from October 1 to October 31, 2017) which involved four citizens of Nigeria. The national dailies are This-Day, The Guardian, The Vanguard and The Punch. And the corruption cases are the cases involving Mrs Patience Jonathan, Mrs Diezani Alison-Madueke, Col. Sambo Dasuki (retd) and Mr Abdulrasheed Maina.

Table 1: Frequency of Reports on P. Jonathan Corruption Cases

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Headline
ThisDay	01	14.29	(Oyedele, 2017) Senate C'tte asks Stanbic, Zenith Bank to unfreeze Patience Jonathan's accounts
The Guardian	02	28.57	(NAN,2017) Patience Jonathan sues EFCC for N2bn (NAN,2017) Patience Jonathan accuses EFCC of witch-hunt
The Vanguard	04	57.14	(Nnochiri, 2017) EFCC to take over assets belonging to Patience Jonathan foundation (Umoru,2017) Senate orders bank to unfreeze Patience Jonathan's accounts. (Umoru, 2017) Patience Jonathan: Senate summons Magu, MDs of seven banks (Ujah, 2017) Magu out to destroy my family, Patience Jonathan cries out
The Punch	00	00	NONE
Total	07	100	

Table 2: Frequency of Reports on Alison Madueke's Corruption Cases

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Headline
ThisDay	02	33.33	(Ogunmade, 2017) AGF: Bringing Alison – Madueke home to face trial unnecessary (Iriekpen, 2017) Alison-Madueke asks court to compel AGF to extradite her to Nigeria
The Guardian	01	16.67	(NAN, 2017) Court to hear Alison – Madueke's application on October 30
The Vanguard	02	33.33	(Anaba, 2017) Money Laundering: I want to be in Nigeria for trial – Diezani (Anaba, 2017) Diezani seeks to be joined in money laundering case
The Punch	01	16.67	(Ramon 2017) Order AGF bring me back to Nigeria, Diezani tells court.
Total	06	100	

Table: Frequency of Reports on S. Dasuki's Corruption Cases

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Headline
This Day	01	20	(Enumah, 2017) Court orders Jonathan, Dasuki to testify in Metuh's trial today
The Guardian	01	20	(NAN, 2017) Court rules on Dasuki's application to stay Metuh's trial
The Vanguard	03	60	(Nnochiri,2017) Jonathan, Dasuki ask Justice Abang to hands off Metuh's trial (Nwafor, 2017) Metuh's trial: Again, court fixes October 31 for ex-president Jonathan, Dasuki to appear (Nnochiri, 2017) Dasukiquerries order allowing FG to shield witnesses' identities, ask court to stop trials.
The Punch	00	00	None
Total	05	100	

Table 4: Frequency of Report on A. Maina's Corruption Cases

Newspaper	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**	**Headline**
This Day	00	00	None
The Guardian	01	25	(NAN, 2017) Buhari fires ex-pension boss, Maina, queries Head of Service
The Vanguard	01	25	(Daniel & Joseph, 2017) N17bn pension fraud: Police, EFCC speak on Maina, Interpol
The Punch	02	50	(Adetayo, O. 2017) ICYMI: INTERPOL, court issue fresh warrant (Ojoye, 2017) N2bn fraud: Maina on the run
Total	04	100	

Discussion of Data

From tables 1,2,3,4, above, the four dailies covered a total of 22 corruption cases on Jonathan, Alison – Madueke, Dasuki and Maina from October 1 to 31, 2017. Jonathan had the most coverage with a total of 7, followed by Alison – Madueke who had 6; Dasuki had 5, while Maina had 4.

'The Vanguard' had the most coverage on Jonathan, which was four times, followed by Dasuki, three times, Alison-Madueke, two times while Maina was covered once.
'The Guardian' had the most coverage on Jonathan, which was twice while Alison-Madueke, Dasuki and Maina had one coverage each.

'ThisDay' had the most coverage on Alison-Madueke: two times; Jonathan and Dasuki had one coverage each while Maina had one.

'The Punch' had the most coverage on Maina: two times, followed by Alison-Madueke was covered once, while Jonathan and Dasuki had none.

Findings

The researchers found out the following:

The four dailies, in the one month of study, focused on corruption cases involving misappropriation of funds and money laundering, not discussing other aspects of corruption, since corruption is a broad subject. See headline in tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Most of the dailies relied on each other for source of stories, showing that there was not enough research before publishing the stories. This also leads to repetition of stories and oversight. Where the headlines are the same, as shown in tables 1,2,3,4, the main story is different, or vice versa.

Some of the dailies used a particular picture, especially of Patience Jonathan, Alison- Madueke and Maina more than once. The photograph of Patience Jonathan that was used had her mouth wide open, portraying her as loud, uneducated with no decorum (Nnochiri 2017). "Jonathan ask Justice Abang to hands off" showed only the photograph of former President Goodluck Jonathan. So also, in "Court orders Jonathan, Dasuki to testify in Metuh's trial today", (Enumah, 2017). This portrays bias and oversight on the stories.

Most of the dailies used words negatively in writing some of the cases, painting a negative picture in the minds of the readers. For example – "succor came the way of the former first lady after senator Samuel Anyanwu, PDP, Imo East… that accounts not encumbered by any legal process be re-opened", (Umoru, 2017). This was part of the story on the senate ordering the banks to unfreeze Patience Jonathan's account.

Also, one of the dailies reported "…Alison – Madueke wants the court to ask the Attorney General of the Federation, AGF, to bring her back from UK, where she has been since 2015", (NAN, 2017). While another paper read, "Diezani, who was named in the charge but described as 'being at large", (Anaba, 2017). This portrays the political prejudices and biases of some journalists, news editors and publisher.

The Punch had the least-coverage of all the corruption cases which offered no materials for content analysis. This also shows oversight in the reportage of this newspaper.

Some of the headlines like "2bn fraud: Maina on the run", (Joye, 2017), "Money laundering: I want to be in Nigeria for trial – Diezani", (Anaba, 2017) and "Metuh's trial: Again, court fixes October 31 for ex-President Jonathan, Dasuki to appear", (Nwafor, 2017), did not give an in-depth explanation of the stories, which shows prejudice and oversight.

The dailies quoted Patience Jonathan more than the three other persons, for example, "…Magu is out to destroy my family", (Ujah, 2017), "…EFCC is witch hunting my family", (NAN, 2017), "Magus's vindictive disposition towards my family is portraying the

organization as an agency for revenge", (NAN, 2017). This showed bias, prejudice and misrepresentation. This shows how different words are selected to express a particular view of what is being reported.

Conclusion

Based on the above findings, the following conclusion is reached: Most newspaper contents do not constitute a reliable source of information for a researcher.

By focusing mainly on money laundering and misappropriation of funds on the individuals reported in the corruption cases, media coverage can be said to be unbalanced, one-sided and not portraying corruption in totality.

Repetition of stories by the various dailies happens mostly when journalists are in a hurry to meet deadline, or the newspaper house is trying to save cost. Nevertheless, this limits the source of information the researcher gets from newspaper content. It can also mislead and misinform the audience because error in one daily will be repeated in others. These repetitions of stories portray oversight by the reporter, editor and publisher in the dailies.

The picture of patience Jonathan used repeatedly by some of the dailies can be misleading by portraying her as loud, uneducated and a common woman. In the case of Dasuki, where only Goodluck Jonathan's picture was used, though Jonathan was mentioned in the headline, the photograph did not fully match the story; that made it biased, misleading, misinforming, and unbalanced. Such content analysis, if used for research, does not portray reality.

Using words inappropriately showed bias, propaganda and lack of objectivity, as a result, misleading. Stories should be explained in detail by providing additional information to help the reader understand the point of the article, especially when dealing with complex stories. Journalists are largely responsible for what readers get to learn about corruption in the nation. Depending on the way they portray corruption, reader's perception will be shaped accordingly. Also, some writers and editors of news may not be totally objective because they sometimes construct a subjective picture of reality, selecting and organizing information in a way that it reflects their intention.

Recommendations

Given the findings and conclusions reached, the following are suggested:

Newspapers in Nigeria should give adequate coverage of corruption to show that corruption is a broad subject and not just about money laundering and misuse of public funds.

To get a detailed explanation of corruption and other related matters, reporters and editors should include more of feature articles, editorials, research, and interviews with experts in their coverage so that newspaper contents can be seen as factual and reliable.

Newspapers should continue to give adequate coverage to corruption and other matters in a balanced manner, not just focusing on dramatic occurrences and neglecting other areas.

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