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INSTITUTIONALISING DEMOCRATIC NORMS THROUGH THE USE OF FOI ACT FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING BY JOURNALISTS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Freedom of Information (FOI) is a fundamental and democratic right of citizens to freely access information without institutional or legal encumbrances which has become a global scale for measuring development across the globe. Despite the adoption of the law by developed and developing countries, it is still bedevilled by underutilisation making access to valuable information by journalists for investigative reporting a serious challenge (Dunu and Gregory 2014). This paper situates the FOI bill in the context of journalism practice to determine its level of exploration for investigative journalism in performing the social responsibility of holding government accountable to the people as stipulated in Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution as amended thereby, promoting transparency, good governance and development. In conducting the study, qualitative methodology was adopted using thematic analysis to analyse the study findings. A population of ten correspondents of national media organizations in Kwara State were purposively selected based on their availability and convenience of the researchers (Signh and Masuku 2014). Findings revealed that there is a higher degree of awareness about FOI Law among journalists but they have not substantially demonstrated required professional will in accessing valuable information through it, while cost implications, ownership lack of support, presumed patronage and gratifications were identified as eminent challenges in the utilisation of the Law. The study however recommends integration of FOI request as a journalist performance index, part of criteria for promotion and further advocacy on the Nigeria media owners to support any journalist being prosecuted for using the FOI to make request in the line of duty, as this would promote expected development on a large scale in Nigeria.

Keywords: Freedom of Information, Investigative Journalism, Democracy, Ownership, Development

Introduction

Globally, public access to information for decades has been considered as a standard of civilization and important machinery for people's liberty, its importance perhaps necessitated

the United Nation General Assembly 59th resolution in 1946 that recognised freedom of Information as a fundamental human right and the foundation of all freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated. The right to information was recognised as underpinning all other human rights, because without information, people cannot effectively protect and promote their own rights (UN 59th Resolution).

Therefore, recognizing right to Information as an enabling right by developed, developing and underdeveloped countries should not be perceived as a new trend rather a democratic instrument to establish information access mechanism and by extension granting power to the people in actualizing their political, civil, economic and cultural rights (Bilal 2012). Right to information bears different status globally. For instance, in Alibania, it was passed in 1999 and recognized as "Law on Right to Information for Official Documents", Angola, 2006, "Access to Administrative Documents", in United States of America, Australia and Nigeria, it is known as Freedom of Information Act. As at 2015, over 100 countries around the world have enacted Freedom of Information Laws known by different names. In effect, most of the world's 7 billion people now enjoy a legal right of access to information and the total number of people living in countries with FOI laws now stands at over 5.8 billion (MRA 2015).

Contemporarily, freedom of information is often thought about as more of an issue for the media, and it is indeed essential to drive effective democracy through media access to solid data and reliable information from governments and its institutions, so that their stories are fact-based and thorough thereby, imparting useful information on the public. In the words of Justice William O. Douglas, cited in (Jane, Mike & Edward, 2013), "The press has a preferred position in our constitutional scheme, not to enable it to make money, not to set newsmen apart as a favoured class, but to bring fulfilment to the public's right to know".

Also, important to recognize is that right to information is a tool which can be used by all members of society to empower ordinary members of the community to better participate in their own governance and development. With more information about what governments are doing, what services they provide and what programmes they are implementing, members of the public can engage with the development activities around them at their own pace and in their own way.

After immense pressure from the media professionals including Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigeria Guild of Editors and civil society organizations (CLOs) in 2011, the Nigerian government under the leadership of President Goodluck signed FOI Bill into law and Nigeria became the 9th country to adopt the law in Africa and among the over 90 countries in the world to have passed this bill.

The Act, according to Media Rights Agenda (2011), is indeed very explicit in its mission, which is simply to make public records and information more freely available, provide for public access to public records and information, protect public records and information to the extent that is consistent with the public interest and the protection of personal privacy, protect serving public officers from adverse consequences for disclosing certain kinds of official information without authorization and establish procedures for the achievement of those purposes and; for related matters.

FOI Act was considered as a legal instrument that would not only protect journalists but would radicalise reportorial and investigations of the news media. It built high expectation among the citizens of Nigeria in promoting democratic process and make government more responsible to the society. Surprisingly, the expectations that journalists will explore this powerful investigative tool for effective utilisation has become a mirage in the last 10 years. As noted by Enonche (2012) cited in Olubunmi and Obinana (2014), Nigerians since 2011, have FOI as vital tools to uncover facts in fighting corruption to hold government officials and institutions accountable. He further opined that given the enabling power of the FOI instrument, the critical question should be, are Nigerian journalists making use of this important tool effectively and credibly? The prevailing circumstances in the usage of the law by journalists provides no hesitation to conclude that media practitioners are yet to fully maximise the law to persistently unveil covered issues being hidden from general public interest.

In September 2017, Special Adviser to Nigeria President, Muhamadu Buhari, on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina brought to the fore the underutilisation of the law by openly challenging journalists at a roundtable discussion to mark the International Day on Universal Access to Information, organised by European Union in collaboration with the NUJ averred that civil society organisations are maximising the usage of FOI law to get valuable information while the media who should claim the ownership of the law appeared to be sleeping on duty.

Statement of the Problem and Study Relevance

Mass Media from time immemorial has been considered as market place of idea and watch dog of the society (Akinfeleye, 2003), with its constitutional responsibilities of promoting and protecting public right to know. To appropriately discharge such responsibility as the conscience of the society, globally, nations are providing legal instruments and protection for the media to freely access information through the law interchangeably used as "right to information", right to know or freedom of information". This law for decades has gained acceptance in most of the world democratic nations including Nigeria but its explorations in extracting quality information for public consumption by the journalists in Nigeria has been unsettling communication scholars, policy maker and concerned citizens. Eunice and Charles (2014), is of the concern that obviously FOI law in Nigeria is going through a trial by those who were supposed to be the major beneficiaries (Journalists), concluding that, this is worrisome as most Journalists are either unaware of the provisions of the law or have not utilized or tested the provisions of the law in their newsgathering or information sourcing.

Akupe (2016), in his evaluative study of the Freedom of Information Act on Journalism Practice in Nigeria examines the level of preparedness on the part of the core agitators who are journalist and maximizing the provisions of the act towards effective journalism practice. The study identified as a challenge, its workability in a country like Nigeria, where there is penchant for violating laws with impunity without remorse. Olubunmi (2015), established that reported instances of testing the law in Nigeria, have mainly emanated from civil society organisations. Dunu and Gregory (2015), in their study of Nigerian journalists' knowledge, perception and use of the freedom of information (FOI) law in the South East Geo-Political Zone pointed out that despite the awareness, professional application of the law remained a substantial challenge in Nigeria. Nearly all these studies and other array of studies have

established the journalist 'perceptional' trend, attitudes and understanding of freedom of Information law and its indispensability with modern journalism practice. This study intends to situate the FOI in the context of "investigative journalism" and reflects FOI exploratory differential capacity between investigative and routine journalism.

The Following Research Questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of awareness of FOI law among journalists?
2. What is the degree of journalists' knowledge on the fusion of FOI and investigative journalism?
3. To what extent are the journalists utilizing FOI law in investigative reporting?
4. What are the challenges confronting Journalists in Kwara State in exploring FOI for Investigative Reporting?

The study only assessed the usage of the FOI law for investigative reporting by journalists in Kwara State, North Central, Nigeria, to review and explain the level of awareness of FOI among journalists, its prospect for professional investigations and challenges with a view of providing further clue on better way of approaching issues in media profession regarding free accesses to information in Nigeria to strengthen democracy, deepen Nigeria journalists versatility about the law and build a knowledge template for the regulators, government, international community among others.

Review of Literature

FOI Law in Nigeria: Historical Perspective

Agitation for the enactment of FOI law was brought to the fore in Nigeria in 1993 by the activities of civil society organizations, media and otherwell-meaning stakeholders. Their fundamental interest was to establish a legal instrument that would guarantee the public right, access to information, the objective was to establish as a legal principle the right of access to documents and information in the custody of the government (Funmilola, 2015). The FOI Bill was first submitted to Nigeria's fourth National Assembly in 1999 and its progress in the legislative process was very slow. In all, the FOI Bill spent over 11 years in the legislative process before it finally received presidential assent (Bilkisu, 2011).

Before the promulgation of the Act, Nigeria had no law which guaranteed access to public records and information. On the contrary, many Nigerian laws have secrecy clauses prohibiting the disclosure of information, for example, the Official Secrets Act, the Criminal Code, the Penal Code, the Evidence Act, etc. The Official Secrets Act, for instance, prohibits the unauthorized transmission of any information which has been classified by any branch of government as being prejudicial to the security of Nigeria. Such arbitrary classification of any information was sufficient to deprive any journalist access to relevant information necessary for public consumption.

For instance, the Evidence Act recognized that material evidence may be withheld from the court where such evidence was within government custody and constituted unpublished official records relating to affairs of the state, except with the permission of the officer at the head of the department concerned, who had the discretion to give or withhold such permission as they deem it fit. Also, the courts lacked the jurisdiction to compel a public

officer to disclose communications made to him in official confidence where the concerned public officer considered that the public interest would suffer by the disclosure.

Therefore, it was a matter that falls within the sole discretion of the concerned public officer. Overall, Nigerian public servants easily embraced the entrenched culture of secrecy and arbitrariness in civil and political administration. To obtain information from any government agency often has provento be very difficult. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo, for instance, had earlier declined the presidential assent to the FOI Bill on the grounds that it would have negative implications on national security.It was against this background that the Act came into existence. The virtue of the new law is aptly captured in its preamble which reads as follows:

> An Act to make Public Records and Information more freely available; provide for public access to public records and information, protect public records and information to the extentconsistent with the public interest and the protection of personal privacy, protect serving public officers from adverse consequences for disclosing certain kinds of official information without authorization and establish procedures for the achievement of those purposes and for related matters.'Notwithstanding anything contained in any other Act, law or regulation, the right of any person to access or request information, whether or not contained in any written form, which is in the custody or possession of any public official, agency or institution howsoever described, is established (FOI Law 2011).

The Act expressly supersedes any preceding legislation which is inconsistent with its enforcement and tenor. The Act also specifically addresses and overrides the inconsistent requirements of the Official Secrets Act as promulgated by laws promulgated in the past.

Fundamentals of FOI Law

The FOI law is no doubt explicit on the right of the citizens in accessing the law and the burden of the public intuition to provide requested information. According to the law, two categories of persons can apply for the information. It described the first as *Applicant* and the second as *public institutions*. The term 'an applicant' is used to describe any person who applies for information pursuant to the Act, it important to explain that the Act's definition of 'person' includes a corporation and persons, whether they are corporate or not, acting individually or as a group. This is consistent with the definition of 'person' as provided under the interpretation statute. Thus, it would appear that no limitations are placed on the nationality of a person who is legally entitled to request and receive information, and also have access to public records. There is no need for an applicant to demonstrate any specific interest in the information being requested and illiterate or disabled applicants may request information through a third party.

Public institutions according to the act are persons with the corresponding legal duty to provide an applicant with the information or copies of records sought. They include any public official, agency or institution as well as public institutions. A 'public institution' is defined to mean any legislative, executive, judicial, administrative or advisory body of the government, including boards, bureau, committees or commissions of the state, and any

subsidiary body of those bodies including but not limited to committees and subcommittees which are supported in whole or in part via public funding or which expends public funds and private bodies providing public services, performing public functions or utilizing public funds(MRA 2011). Public institutions in the act are further defined to include all corporations established by law and all companies in which government has a controlling interest, private companies utilising public funds, providing public services or performing public functions are equally classified as public institutions.

This right is not to be prejudiced by the existence of other contrary laws or regulation. In order to facilitate the unimpeded exercise of this right, all public institutions are required to keep records of all their activities, operations and businesses in such a manner as to enable the public to gain access to it should the need arise. In addition, certain categories of information in the possession of the public institutions are to be widely disseminated and made readily available to members of the public through various means, including print, electronic online sources and physically at the offices of such institutions. The information in these categories relate to: descriptions of the relevant institution and their functions; classes of records under its control; employee manuals and directions; judgments given in the adjudication of cases; policies, reports and substantive rules of the institution; the remuneration scheme and dates of employment of all personnel; listings of applications for any contract, permit, grants, licenses or agreements and related materials; and a description of the appropriate officer of the institution to whom an application for information is to be directed.

The published information is to be reviewed periodically and updated when necessary. The Act sets time limits within which government and public bodies are to release the requested information and fees payable by an applicant are limited to standard charges for document duplication and transcription, where necessary. As a further compliance guarantee, public institutions are mandated to build the capacity of their staff to effectively implement and comply with the provisions of the Act and to specifically ensure the provision of appropriate training for its officials on the public's right access to information or records held by government or public institutions. It is also important to note that adequate measures are taken in the law to protect government whistle-blowers (MRA 2011).

However, the law is not without exceptions, it recognizes a range of legitimate exceptions and limitations to the public's right to know, but it makes these exceptions subject to a public interest test that, in deserving cases, may override such limitations. For instance, a public authority is empowered to decline an application for information on the grounds that such disclosure will be injurious to the conduct of international affairs and defence. However, the refusal of such an application would be wrongful where the public interest in disclosing the requested information outweighs the injury expected to result from such disclosure.

Application may also be declined where the disclosure of the information would result in undue interference in the administration of justice, but like the other exception, this is also subject to the public interest test. The issue about the exceptions in the law is that whenever it is clearly demonstrated that public interest 'clearly' outweighs the protection, such institution is under obligation to provide such information. But the major constrain here is that the act never defined 'public interest'. It has become the burden of the court to clarify the concept and provide a definitive delineation of its parameters.

Judicial remedy was also explicit in the law, every applicant is empowered with a legal right to institute proceedings in the court to compel any public institution to comply with the provisions of the law.Any applicant who has been denied access to information may apply to the court for a review of the matter and where a case of wrongful denial of access is established, the defaulting officer or institution commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N500,000.

FOI, Investigative Journalism Prospects and Challenges

Investigative Journalism is not a new invention; it is a form of journalism in which reporters go in-depth to investigate a single story that may uncover corruption, review government policies or of corporate houses, or draw attention to social, economic, political or cultural trends (Konrad &Adenuar, 2010). An investigative journalist, or team of journalists, may spend months or years researching a single topic. Unlike conventional reporting, where reporters rely on materials supplied by the government, NGOs and other agencies, investigative reporting depends on material gathered through the reporter's own initiative. The practice aims at exposing public matters that are otherwise concealed, either deliberately or accidently in line with watch dog responsibility of the journalists.

Investigative journalism requires the reporter to dig deeply into an issue or topic of public interest. 'Public interest' according to Konrad refers to a quality whereby a community will be disadvantaged by not knowing this information, or will benefit (either materially or through informed decision-making) by knowing it. Sometimes, information that benefits one community may disadvantage another. Investigative journalism is not instantaneous. It develops through recognised stages of planning, researching and reporting, and has to adhere to accepted standards of accuracy and evidence. The base of an investigative story is the proactive work of a journalist.

However, according to (Aliede, 2003), cited in Akupe (2016:3) since inception of journalism profession in Nigeria, they have been struggling to achieve the needed freedom that would enable it discharge its social responsibilities creditably. The journalistic task of gathering and disseminating news has not been an easy one largely due to limited freedom occasioned largely by government firm grip and control of the mass media. Uche (1989), also notes that relationship between the mass media and the government in Nigeria has been a cat and mouse affair. This implies that, the free flow of information has been trampled upon. Journalists have had no access to vital information let alone the masses. In struggling to get detailed, factual and balanced reportage, journalists have had to continue to nose around for information, exposing them to high levels of risk that got them victimised, jailed, tortured and sometimes killed.

Since 2011 that the freedom of information law was passed, it is public expectation that the journalists would use the law to focus more on investigative journalism but reversed is the case in Nigeria. Fumilola (2015), while analysing the progress on FOI in Nigeria explained that some successes recorded with regard to the implementation could be attributed to civil society organizations. The study reported that instances of testing the law, have come mainly from civil society organisations, such as National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP), Progressive Shareholders Association (PSA), Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), Civil Society Network Against

Corruption (CSNAC), Media Rights Agenda (MRA), Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), Citizen Assistance Centre, Right to Know (R2K), among others have been using the FoI Act to demand for information, accountability and good governance in Nigeria. However, majority of these request end in lawsuits (R2K, 2012).

Also, in seeking to test and evaluate the implementation of the Act, R2K since 2012 has been so persistent in making requests to Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government for copies of their statutory FoI reports as mandated by the FoI Act section 29 (1) which provides that on or before February 1 each year, every public institution must submit to the Attorney-General of the Federation a report on the Institutions implementation of and compliance with the FoI Act covering the preceding fiscal year.

The import of the study is that available evidence has shown clearly that journalists are not maximising the opportunity of the FOI. Ifoema (2014), also asserted that Nigerian journalists understand and value the FOI Act as an investigative tool, as Darch and Underwood (2010), also observed, but the Act is generally not often used by them. From their findings, it was apparent that Nigerian journalists seem not to have imbibed the culture of routine investigative journalism but rather still lean on speculative arm-chair reporting, which has continued to be the bane of journalism practice in Nigeria. As stated by Akuoe (2016), when citizens are given appropriate information through the media it helps in strengthening democracy because governments would become directly accountable to the governed.

Theoretical Underpinning

Social Responsibility Theory

Robert Hutchins (the head of Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press) once said that "Freedom requires responsibility". If the Press would be free to publish anything, it behoves on them to be willing to accept responsibility for whatever is published. This paper focuses on press freedom and agrees that freedom has a great responsibility behind it. In such a case, the best theory that would be appropriate is Social Responsibility Theory. The theory is an off-shot of Libertarian Theory and was propounded by F.S. Siebert, T.B. Peterson and W. Schramm in 1963.

Historically, Social Responsibility Theory owes its origin to the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press, set up in the United States of America in 1947 to re-examine the concept of Press Freedom. The Commission worked hard at developing what has become known as the Social Responsibility Theory (Folarin 1998). This theory, reflected a dissatisfaction with media, owners and operators and the way they distributed media messages while also accepting the following principles: the press should service the political system, enlighten the public, safeguard the liberties of the individual, service the economic system, entertain the public (provided that the entertainment is "good"), and maintain its own financial self-sufficiency.

The Commission saw the Social Responsibility Theory as being a "safeguard against totalitarianism." Hutchins' main goal was to make the owners of the press responsible and still maintain freedom of the press. The Nigerian media need to know the assumptions of the Social Responsibility Media Theory before jumping to make use of the Freedom of

Information Act. McQuail (1987) cited by Folarin (1998), gives the assumptions of the theory as follows:

(a) That media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to the society.

(b) That, through professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance, these obligations can be met.

(c) That media should regulate itself within the framework of law and established institutions to be able to carry out its responsibilities.

(d) That whatever might lead to crime, violence, civil disorder, or offence to minority groups, should be avoided by the media.

(e) That the media should reflect its society's plurality, giving access to various points of view and granting all the right to reply.

(f) Based on the principle in (1), the society has the right to expect high standards of performance from the media. Intervention can only be justified to secure public good.

(g) Accountability of media professionals should be to the society, employers and the market.

With the above principles, it is glaring that the "Freedom" carries obligations, and the Nigerian press, which now enjoy a privileged position under the new Freedom of Information Act, is obliged to be responsible to themselves first through self-regulations and Nigerians as well in carrying out certain essential functions of Mass Communication through rigorous investigative journalism an attribute which they currently have deficiency in since the death of Dele Giwa.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative approach using Key Informant Interview of 10 selected journalists in the study area in Kwara State to accesses the level of awareness of FOI law among journalist and the degree of their knowledge on the relationship between FOI and investigative journalism to determine the extent they are exploring FOI for investigative reporting and its inherent challenges. The researchers through the approach engages participants directly in a conversation to generate deep contextual, nuanced and reliable accounts on how they interpret this phenomenon in a given situation (Javaadi and Zare 2016). One cannot understand human actions without understanding the meaning that participants attribute to those actions – their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive words. The researchers, therefore, needed to understand the deeper perspectives captured through face-to-face interaction (Berger, 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 2010) cited in Adibah, Mohd-Khairieand Mustaffaa (2014).

Purposive sampling was equally adopted in selecting the informants who are State correspondents of national media organizations based in Kwara (North Central, Nigeria) with peculiar characteristics of previous FOI training to gather valuable information. Another compulsory characteristic introduced by the researchers include minimum of 7 years working experience of being a respondent in the state.

Table 1. Respondents Demography Analysis

SN	Medium	Gender	Age	Years of Experience	Number of FOI Training	Years of Attendance
1	Daily Post	Male	45	10	3	2012, 2014, 2017
2	Leadership	Male	56	20	2	2014, 2016
3	Herald	Male	61	22	2	2012, 2013
4	Blue Print	Male	35	8	1	2014
5	Daily Trust	Female	36	7	1	2014
6	Punch	Male	38	12	3	2015, 2016, 2017
7	News Direct	Male	40	8	3	2015, 2016, 2019
8	Guardian	Male	52	21	3	2012, 2013, 2016
9	AIT	Female	35	7	1	2014
10	Business Day	Male	38	8	3	2015, 2017, 2019

After careful study of responses, seven themes were mapped out for easy analysis of the assessment. The themes are: 1. Awareness, 2.Perception, 3. Request Frequency, 4. Investigative Reports, 5. Pursuance, 6. Judicial remedy, 7. Ownership Support and 8. Other Challenges.

Discussion of Findings

The eight themes mapped out would be explored to discuss the findings of the assessment of FOI usage in investigative journalism.

1. Awareness

This pattern was formulated by the researchers to understand the level of awareness and understanding of the FOI usage and through the responses, the level of awareness is high to the extent that there is no respondent that does not understand the rudiment of FOI and salient features in accessing valuable information from public institution. All the respondents demonstrated quality knowledge of the law and its importance to journalism professions. Findings in this regard reinforced the conclusion of Akupe (2016), that Journalists are fully aware of the freedom of information and strongly agreed that the FOI can aid journalism practices towards fair, balance, accurate and objective reporting.

2. Perception

Perception in this regard is essentially referring to the attitude of journalists towards the law as noted by Ifoma (2014), perceiving the law as exclusive media law that transcends fundamental human right. The responses indicated that despite the knowledge, the perception of valuing FOI as media law is on the average, despite agreeing on its strength to generate credible information from multiple sources average number still largely considered it as not exclusive media valuable law.

> **"It is as better as the general law or how best can you describe a law that will waste your time in concluding your report and most likely provide clue to institutions to frustrate your investigation" Informant 4**

3. Request Frequency

Request frequency is to determine how frequent the journalists are making FOI requests including weekly, monthly and annually, the responses indicated that journalists substantially lack the culture of requesting for information in pursuance of FOI law, the response established that only 20 percent among the respondents have applied for the FOI request between 2013 and 2018 and there was no further efforts since 2018 among the respondents despite undertaking many reports that requires information under the protections of FOI.

4. Investigative Reports

Investigative reporting as a theme was designed in the research to assess the journalist capacity in carrying out investigative reporting through FOI law, it was established through the study that journalists still preferred the anonymous sources and obtaining information in confidence through the back door, the responses of all the respondent could not provide any evidence of exploring FOI to generate information for investigative reporting rather majority provide the conventional way of accessing documents from public institutions through the open sources. It was established however that most of the information journalists are generating have limited the quality of their investigations.

5. Pursuance

Pursuance in this theme evaluates the follow up of journalists to an FOI request to any public institutions and determine if they occasionally discharge the applicant burden providing logistics for the duplications of documents requested under FOI act and responses were negative the 20 percent requests among the respondents were not replied and the applicants who are journalists abandoned the further legal process of the request.

6.Other Challenges

With the abandonment of the request by few percentages of the respondents, other two themes; Judicial Remedy and Ownership Support were negative as there could not be any link between the two with the information generated from the respondents. However, one of the themes was frequently pronounced by all the respondents while identifying other challenges. Ownership lack of support was identified by all the respondents. The pattern of other challenges was unanimously endorsed by the respondents which includes; time consuming, funding, and institutional bureaucratic impediments.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study substantially is not providing new discovery to the existing challenges but rather reinforced previous research findings regarding the use of FOI Act by journalists in different states in Nigeria (Akupe 2016). The study has shown that Nigerian journalists understand and value the FOI Act as an investigative tool, as Darch and Underwood, (2010) also observed cited in, (Dunu 2014) but the Act is gene-rally not often used by them. From the findings, it was apparent that Nigerian journalists seem not to have imbibed the culture of routine

investigative journalism but rather still lean on speculative reporting, which has continued to be the bane of journalism practice in Nigeria. The finding of the study established that the FOI Act is yet to create an impact in Nigerian journalism traditions. While in the past, journalists have had greater personal access to politicians and their aides as primary sources of information, the FOI should now substitute for such access.

However, this study must not the mistaken as the replication of (Akupe 2016) but rather a descriptive expansion to deeply understand the FOI status in journalism perception as recurring issues. In the findings of this study, curiosity of journalists to break news and inability to differentiate timing necessity between routine reporting and investigative reporting was identified as additional problem. As noted by Konrad (2010), investigative reporting can take months or years, what is important is ability to dig out valuable information that would serve the good of the public. It is also discovered through the study that exploration of FOI for investigative journalism was not tied to carrier progression which has made journalists to perceive it as inconsequential. For instance, in other profession especial law, promotion and tittles does not depends mainly on the years of experiences rather the number of the cases you might have won and the extent you have tested the extant laws, in the academic profession, it is mainly evaluation of individual contributions to knowledge. The study however recommends more training for journalists on investigative reporting to ensure a paradigm shift from the arm chair journalism and at the same time tied the performance of journalists on FOI request in investigating issues of public interest to carrier progression.

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