

Promoting Good Governance through mass media in the South-East Geo-political zone

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Abstract

The research work focuses on promoting good governance through mass media in the South-East geo-political zone. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study is made up of indigenes of the South-East geo-political zone comprising Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Abia and Ebonyi states. Using simple random sampling techniques, five hundred respondents from political class, civil servants and students were sampled for the study. The instrument for data collection is the questionnaire which has eighteen (18) items designed to elicit information on promoting good governance through mass media in the South-East zone. The instrument was validated by experts in Mass Communication at Federal Polytechnic Oko and experts in Public Administration at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. The mean statistics was used to analyse the data collected. The findings of the study showed that implications of lack of good governance in the South East are insecurity of lives and property, corruption in public and private sectors, dilapidation of public infrastructures, massive unemployment, abuse of fundamental rights, and electoral frauds among others. It was also discovered that mass media can be used to promote good governance through dissemination of information on government policies, promotion of transparency in government by exposing corrupt practices, dissemination of information on government activities that impede good governance among others. The paper concluded that the media is indispensable in promoting good governance by educating, informing and creating awareness on policies and programmes of the government. Relevant recommendations were made.

Keyword: Good Governance, Mass media, insecurity, corruption, Professional training and capacity building.

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Introduction

Good governance and mass media are interwoven. Mass media helps to promote good governance in the society. Nigeria, like other developing countries, is a media society and almost every member of the population is exposed to atleast, one medium. The mass media are many things to many people and serve a variety of functions, depending on the interest and needs of specific individuals. Tethey (2010), has given the functions of media to include; dissemination of information to the people, education, entertainment, watchdog and defence of democratic society. On a positive note, the Nigerian media have contributed immensely in cross-fertilization of ideas, norms and values that have promoted democracy and good governance. All aspect of good governance are facilitated by a strong and independent media within a society. Only when journalists are free to monitor, investigate and criticize the public administrations policies and actions can good governance take hold. Independent media are like a beacon that should be welcomed when there is nothing to hide and much to improve. Indeed, this is the concrete link between the functioning of the media and good governance. The media allow for ongoing checks and assessments by the population of the activities of government and assist in bringing public concerns and voices into the open by providing a platform for discussion.

A free and critical media is essential to the growth and development of any democracy. As watchdog of the society, the media owe it as a duty to monitor governance closely and hold public office holders accountable to the people who elected them as required by the constitution. Given the appropriate situation, the media are key factors in the overall strategy to promote good governance, rule of law, ensure probity and accountability, wipe out illiteracy and eradicate poverty. The concept of good governance is not in any way new. Yet, it is commonly used in contemporary political and academic discourse, yet it is a generic concept. According to Oni (2009), good governance exhibits a high degree of transparency, there is openness in the conduct of the business of the state. A closely related variant of good governance is accountability, such government is restrained by the governance rules.

It is unfortunate that Nigerian governments over the years, including the democratic ones of the past 24 years, have not had the people as the center piece of their administration. For at no time in the history of this country since the outbreak of the civil war in 1967 have the security of life and property, and the stability of the nation been threatened as we have it now. Okafor,

Omenka and Okeke (2013), observed that, there are massive corruption in both the private and public sectors of the economy, dilapidation of public infrastructure including facilities for education and health care, massive unemployment, insurgency and terrorism, which have made many parts of the country unsafe. Nigeria is gradually moving back into debt trap, with local debt alone put at 77 trillion naira, (Odey 2010). This is a sad situation just a few years after the country paid off its foreign debt. Odey (2010), presented a pathetic scenario when he lamented that: The countless billions that providence poured into our national coffers in the last ten years (2000-2010) would have been enough to launch this nation into the middle rank of developed nations and transformed the lives of the poor and needy.

Good governance cannot be sustained where electoral frauds have become the norm. Ayeni and Esan (2018), asserted that electoral malpractices such as multiple voting, impersonation, manipulation and falsification of results which had led to legal actions, electoral conflicts and violence have continued to threaten democracy and good governance in Nigeria. Jega (2015), asserted that a series of badly conducted elections could create perpetual political instability and easily reverse the gains of democratization. The Nigerian government acknowledges that controversies over highly rigged elections have been the forerunner to political violence and instability in Nigeria (FGN, 2014).

The media remains a strong instrument for promoting good governance in Nigeria. The media is an avenue through which people are acquainted with the events around and beyond them. It makes people in a particular society to be aware of what happens within and outside their environment. Thus, the media denotes connecting people and mirroring the society as well as reflecting on their daily occurrences (Akpomera, 2013). The media succinctly involves the use of newspapers, magazines, television, radio, internet, etc to enlighten and disseminate information to the people. The media however, serves as the mirror through which members of the society visualize the political activities in their country. Thus, through the media, people are informed, entertained, educated and sensitized on political events of their land and beyond.

The media is quite indispensable in promoting good governance in the South-East region of Nigeria and beyond. Dissemination of information to the people is the basic role of the media in diverse societies (Barikui, 2007). As the basic source of information to the people, the media informs the citizenry on their political, economic and social rights as citizens of Nigeria. Through media prints like newspapers, magazines and media electronic gadgets like television, radio, internet etc, the people are informed and notified on their democratic rights as stipulated

in the constitution of Nigeria. Through the information disseminated to the people by the media, people get to be aware and have the knowledge of their rights thus adopting, observing and exercising their political rights as citizens of Nigeria. Citizens knowing their political rights will make them ask questions on government policies, programmes, and activities which no doubt promote good governance. The media has helped to expose many corrupt public officers in Nigeria, in so doing, it helps to promote transparency and accountability in governance. According to Jibo and Simbine (2003), the news, a Southern based newsmagazine, which first reported the fact that Salisu Buhari had forged his age and educational qualification to clinch the exalted position of a speaker, pursued the allegation until Buhari was forced to resign and was subsequently tried and convicted. Hence, Dunu (2007), maintained that the media plays a crucial role in promoting good governance, through information and creating awareness. Corroborating this view, Orisa (2011), opined that the main focus of the media is to disseminate information to the general public on the issues that impede good governance such as political violence, corruption, ethnicity, godfatherism, religious intolerance and leadership conflict.

Onyeanus (2015), emphasizing the importance of the media as the watchdog of the society that helps and guides the people on their responsibilities as citizens of Nigeria. The media directs and guides the citizens on their duties and responsibilities towards adopting, respecting and exercising their democratic rights that promote good governance. Tejumaiye (2006), observed that the media does not only give the people news and information but helps them do their jobs as citizens, challenges the people to get involved, and enlighten them on issues and events so that they can make civic decisions such as voting during election, paying their tax, reporting criminals to police, protecting public property among others which help to promote good governance in the society.

According to Ottong and Bassey (2009), the media is the mouthpiece of the people in every democratic society as it mediates between the people and the government. When the rights of the people are being abused by the government, the media through its materials and gadgets (television, radio, newspaper etc) work on behalf of the people. Thus, the media shuns the government on her obnoxious acts and infringement on the people's rights thus defending and protecting the rights of the people in the country. That is why Njoku (2005), reiterated that the media is among the forces that shape and continue to define the establishment of democracy as a system of government by defending the rights of the people thereby promoting good

governance. Moreover, quality media in Nigeria will encourage adequate participation of the citizenry in political governance and also help to arouse public opinion on the political affairs of the country. The citizens will equally be made to have a full feel of democracy as they will be free to air their views and feelings about the governmental activities in the country.

However, the dearth of manpower, availability of unprofessional media manpower, lack of media facilities, poor funding and unfavourable government policies have continued to limit the media in its role as the watchdog of the society. The media in Nigeria is faced with the problem of insufficient manpower. This has consequently hindered the media's effective protection of citizen's rights as well as deepening democracy and promoting good governance (Onyeanus, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Good governance is the only tool that can bring about dividends of democracy in the South-East geo-political zone. However, the reverse is the case in Nigeria. There is massive corruption in both the private and public sector of the economy, unemployment, insecurity of lives and property as a result of terrorist's attacks. Nigeria is gradually moving back into debt trap with local debt alone put at 77 trillion naira. Good governance cannot be sustained where electoral frauds have become the norm. Electoral malpractices such as multiple voting, impersonation, manipulation and falsification of results which had led to legal actions, electoral conflicts and violence have continued to threaten democracy, good governance and national unity in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the indicators of lack of good governance in the South-East?
2. How can the mass media be used to promote good governance?
3. What are the impediments of using mass media to promote good governance?

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The researcher chooses the design because it seeks to obtain information that describes the existing phenomena by asking questions on the topic of study through the questionnaire. The population is made up of indigenes of the South-East geo-political zone comprising Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Abia and Ebonyi states. Using simple random sampling techniques, five hundred respondents from political class, civil servants and students were sampled for the study.

The instrument for data collection is the questionnaire which has **18** items designed to elicit information on promoting good governance through mass media in the South-East geo-political zone. Other data were collected through interviews and ministry of information. The instrument was first validated by experts in Mass Communication at Federal Polytechnic, Oko and experts in Public Administration at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State.

The reliability of the research instrument was determined through measure of internal consistency of the items. The Cronback Alpha was used to establish the internal consistency of 0.80 and it was considered reliable. For data analysis, the research questions were answered using mean. Mean of 2.5 and above is said to be high and effective and those below 2.5 are said to be low and ineffective.

Results

The following are the results of the data analysis:

Research Question 1: What are the indicators of lack of good governance in the South-East?

Table 1: Mean rating score on the indicators of lack of good governance in the South-East.

S/N	ITEMS	Error! Filename not specified.	REMARK
1	Insecurity of lives and property	3.8	Accepted
2	Corruption in public and private sectors	3.4	Accepted
3.	Dilapidation of public	3.3	Accepted

	infrastructures		
4	Massive unemployment	3.3	Accepted
5	Accumulated local debts	2.9	Accepted
6	Inflation in the economy	3.4	Accepted
7	Abuse of fundamental rights	3.8	Accepted
8	Electoral frauds	3.3	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The result presented in table one shows that items 1-7 were rated high by the respondents. This was clearly indicated from their respective mean scores of 3.8, 3.4, 3.3, 3.3, 2.9, 3.4, 3.8 and 3.3 which are above the criterion of acceptance fixed at 2.5 and above. It means that the indicators of lack of good governance in the South-East include insecurity of lives and property, corruption in public and private sectors, dilapidation of public infrastructures, massive unemployment, accumulated local debts, inflation in the economy and abuse of fundamental rights and electoral frauds.

Research Question 2: How can the mass media be used to promote good governance?

Table 2: Mean rating scores on how the mass media be used to promote good governance.

S/N	ITEMS	Error! Filename not specified.	REMARK
9	Dissemination of information on government policies	3.8	Accepted
10	Media informs the citizens on their rights as stated in the constitution	3.3	Accepted
11	The media helps to promote transparency in government by exposing corruption practices	3.4	Accepted
12	Media disseminate information	4	Accepted

	on government activities that impede good governance		
13	Media is the watchdog that guides the people on their civic duties that promote good governance	2.9	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2013

The result presented in table two shows that items 9-13 were rated high by the respondents. This was clearly indicated from their respective mean scores of 3.8, 3.3, 4 and 2.9 which are above the criterion of acceptance fixed at 2.5 and above. It means that the mass media can be used to promote good governance through dissemination of information on government policies, informing the citizens on their political rights as stated in the constitution, helps to promote transparency in government by exposing corrupt practices, disseminate information on government activities that impede good governance, and act as watchdog that guides the people on their civic duties that promote good governance.

Research Question 3: What are the impediments of using mass media to promote good governance?

Table 3: Mean rating scores on the impediments of using mass media to promote good governance.

S/N	ITEMS	Error! Filename not specified.	REMARK
14	Dearth of media manpower	3.3	Accepted
15	Availability of unprofessional media manpower	3.4	Accepted
16	Lack of media facilities	2.9	Accepted
17	Poor funding of mass media industry	3.8	Accepted
18	Unfavourable government policies	4	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2013

The result presented in table three shows that items 14-18 were rated high by the respondents. This was clearly indicated from their respected mean scores of 3.3, 3.4, 2.9, 3.8 and 4 which are

above the criterion of acceptance fixed at 2.5 and above. It means that the impediments of using mass media to promote good governance include dearth of manpower, availability of unprofessional media manpower, lack of media facilities, poor funding of mass media industry and unfavourable government policies.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the analysis of research question one shows that the indicators of lack of good government in the South-East are insecurity of lives and property, corruption in public and private sectors, dilapidation of public infrastructures, mass unemployment, accumulated local debts, inflation in the economy, abuse of fundamental rights and electoral frauds. These findings are in line with Okafor, Okeke and Omenka n(2013), who observed that massive corruption in both the private and public sectors of the economy, dilapidation of public infrastructure, massive unemployment are some of the indicators of lack of good governance in the South-East zone of Nigeria.

The result of the analysis of research question two shows that the mass media can be used to promote good governance through dissemination of information on government policies, rights of citizens as stated in the constitution, promotion of transparency in government by exposing corrupt practices, dissemination of information on government activities that impede good governance and acting as watchdog that guides the people on their civic duties that promote good governance. These findings are in line with Dunu (2007), who asserted that the media plays crucial roles in promoting good governance through information and creating awareness. Corroborating this view, Orisa (2011), opined that the main focus of the mass media is to disseminate information to the general public on issues that promote good governance and also some of the activities of the citizens and government that impede good governance.

The result of the analysis of research question three shows that the impediments of using mass media to promote good governance include dearth of media manpower, availability of unprofessional media manpower, lack of media facilities, poor funding of mass media industry and unfavourable government policies. These findings are in agreement with Onyeanusi (2015), who maintained that the media in Nigeria is faced with the problem of insufficient manpower that has hindered its roles in promoting citizen's rights as well as deepening democracy and good governance.

Conclusion

The mass media is an avenue through which people are acquainted with events around and beyond them. Through the media people are informed, entertained, educated and sensitized on political events of their country and beyond. The media is quite indispensable in promoting good governance by educating, informing and creating awareness on the policies, programmes of the government. It guides the people on their responsibilities as citizens of Nigeria. However the dearth of manpower, lack of media facilities, poor funding and unfavourable government policies have continued to limit the media in its roles as the watchdog of the society and this has consequently hindered the Media's effective roles in deepening democracy and promoting good governance.

Recommendations

Based on the issues highlighted above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Agencies and professional associations charged with the responsibility of regulating media practice in Nigeria should ensure that Nigeria media work towards promoting democracy and good governance.
2. There should be more professional training for media practitioners; such capacity building should include not just professional ethics but also courses on political education to enable them to understand the political and social dimensions of media products in a country.
3. Corruption that will influence media practitioners to promote authoritarian government, ethnicity, sectionalism, class interest rather than national interest should be avoided.
4. As a tool for promoting good governance, media reach should be expanded to reach both rural and urban areas. The expansion of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) network is a welcome development that should be emulated by other media houses too.

5. Philanthropists, government and non-governmental organizations should give the media houses the necessary support through funding and provision of infrastructural facilities.

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