THE NEXUS BETWEEN MASS MEDIA, INSECURITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

It is no longer news that insecurity has eaten deep into Nigerian society posing a great danger to national development. All parts of Nigeria currently are facing one security challenge or another ranging from kidnapping, activities of bandits, Boko Haram, Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) armed robbery, human rituals, internet fraudsters, unknown gunmen etc. It is on these bases that this research tends to focus on the nexus between mass media, insecurity and national development in Nigeria. This discourse adopts the qualitative approach in identifying numerous ways by which mass media can be used as a catalyst for eliminating insecurity and accelerating national development. This paper argues that the mass media needs to utilize the power of the media to help combat insecurity and foster national development in the country. Also, for the country to curb insecurity, one of the measures to employ is to equip journalists, by training them in terrorism and conflict reporting for effective communication, curb fake news and misinformation and censor social media. With the advent of social media and digital communication, it is hoped that media organizations will make great use of the platform to foster peace and security geared towards national development.

Keywords: Mass media, Insecurity, National Development, Conflict, Peace.

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Introduction

Mass media play a vital role in peace-building and national development. The media has the capacity to teach, manipulate, sensitize and mobilize people through information dissemination (Ucheanya, 2003, as cited by Amannah, 2019). Journalists through the use of mass media (radio, television, newspaper, magazines & the internet) influence public opinion and create an agenda for people to talk about at a given point in time such as insecurity and national development. Instances of the role of media in giving prominence to issues of insecurity include news about kidnapping, banditry, activities of boko haram, Independent People Of Biafra (IPOB), herdsmen, unknown gunmen etc and concerning national development, we have the ongoing Millennium Development Goals, COVID-19 vaccine, new Naira notes redesign, routine children immunization, voters registration, electoral activities and awareness are all leading stories reported by the mass media. The mass media performs three functions; information, education and entertainment. These are the traditional functions of the mass media. Through educating, informing and entertaining the populace, the media makes members of society aware of issues relating to insecurity as well as national development. Another function of the media is persuasion. They persuade the public to act towards a particular direction at a given point in time. The media have the capacity to furnish information to the public geared towards security challenges and processes of national development. The real influence of the media concerning insecurity and national development depends solely on the media themselves, the society in which they operate and the audiences they reach (Amannah, 2019). None of these factors are the same in all societies. For instance, the media operating in an Authoritarian government cannot exercise the same power as the media in a libertarian society. But no matter how the society in the media operates, certain factors are basic in the way they influence national development.

Conceptual Clarification

Mass media: Mass media according to Asemah (2011:73) can be viewed from two angles. First, as a technological device employed to disseminate information to a large and heterogeneous audience. The devices are radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books, films, cinema GSM, etc. Secondly, the media can be seen as the social institution responsible for gathering, processing, packaging and disseminating information for public consumption. The media are an indispensable agent of development in any nation given their invaluable contribution to governance as a watchdog and partner in progress with other arms of government. According to Littlejohn & Foss (2016) cited in Siraj (2017), media allow millions of people throughout the world to be in touch with nearly any place on the globe. (Udoinyang, 2015) contends that, in a developing country like Nigeria, the mass media have been instrumental in the delivery and consolidation of the current democratic experience. Despite the current changes in communication processes the mass media remains a crucial vehicle for societal development. The media whether electronic or print, are saddled with responsibilities in our society. But the fact remains that the media contribute so much to the society. (Asemah, 2011:36)

Insecurity: This is the absence of protection or safety. It is the act of being prone, vulnerable to danger or threat to danger. According to the United Nations Development Programme (1994), human security can be seen as protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions from daily activities at homes, offices or communities. This implies that Insecurity is being exposed to threat and danger, it is also exposure to chronic threats such as disease, hunger, repression and even death. According to the Commission on Human Security (2003), Human security can also be seen as the protection of important aspects of human lives in a way that will enhance human freedoms and fulfilment. Beland (2005) defines insecurity as "the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection." It refers to a lack of inadequate freedom from danger. This implies that insecurity is an absence of peace, order and security. Achumba, Ighomeroho, and Akpor (2013)

define insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, whereas danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly, insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune. This definition means that people who were exposed to any sort of insecurity were not aware and they were vulnerable to insecurity when it occurred to them. Williams (2008) who sees security from the socio-political perspective opines that security involves the capacity to pursue cherished political and social ambitions. That is, security is socio-political as without security there can be no political stability and consequently social activities will be disrupted and national development will be at risk.

National Development: Every nation wants to progress and develop; no nation wants to remain stagnant. Nations of the world are categorized according to their level of development; developed Nations, developing and under-developed. Therefore, national development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the people's social welfare by providing basic infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, employment, roads etc. A nation is considered developed when it provides basic infrastructure for the people and every sector of the economy portrays steady growth and development. The development process must be visualized in its broadest and widest context to meet the expectations of the citizens and improve their general standard of living. It is holistic in approach; it is a process of reconstruction and development in various dimensions of a nation and the development of individuals. The concept of National Development is broad and Vaizey (2018) summarises it as "the total effect of all citizens, forces and addition to the stock of physical, human resources, knowledge and skills". It implies that development occurs when there are changes in the social, cultural and economic status of a nation.

Statement of the Problem

Insecurity has become a major challenge facing Nigeria at the moment; a nation blessed with natural and human resources yet facing severe hunger and poverty due to the challenges of insecurity. Insecurity and unemployment have driven so many especially youths who are supposed to be the leaders of tomorrow into crime such as banditry, kidnapping and demanding of ransom, armed robbery, yahoo-yahoo (internet scam), human rituals etc. This has resulted in severe insecurity in the country and led to the loss of lives and properties, some migrated to other countries and lost their lives in the process.

This shows that insecurity resulted from to government's failure to provide human and national development that will help combat this menace. The government's inability to provide basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing and employment has resulted in the rise of insecurity in Nigeria. The mass media on the other hand serve as a link between the government and the people, hence it is the role of the media to emphasize issues of insecurity and national development because without security, the economic, social and political development of a nation is at stake. So how can we curb insecurity? Foster national development and what are the roles of the mass media?

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to ascertain the nexus between mass media, insecurity and national development in Nigeria. Specifically, the study is established to:

* Highlight the causes of Insecurity in Nigeria
* The roles of the media in curbing Insecurity
* The roles of media in national development
* Proffer remedies to security challenges in Nigeria

Theoretical framework

This study is hinged on the agenda-setting theory of the mass media. The Agenda Setting Theory is a theory that postulates how the mass media make certain issues a public agenda. Agenda-setting theory was first used by McCombs and Shaw (1972). The theory explains the connection between the

emphasis the mass media give to an issue and how the public reacts to the issue (Litlejohn & Foss, 2009). The theory explains how the mass media frames an issue for the audiences and lays emphasis on certain issues. The theory also postulates how the media colour a particular event for their audience (Mastaganis & Payne, 2005). Consequently, it can be said that the mass media is responsible for shaping people's opinions and agendas. The media's influence on the audiences can be intentional or unintentional (Iyenger & kinder, 1987). The mass media do not have the complete power to control people's thinking but they have the power to tell them what to think about at a particular time by setting an agenda about a particular issue. This theory is relevant to this study because the media have the capacity to set an agenda for the audience here in Nigeria by reporting issues continuously about insecurity ravaging the country and also matters of national development. By setting an agenda and giving people what to talk about at a given point in time, the media will stir up public opinion and this will cause the relevant stakeholders to make conscious efforts in curbing Insecurity and enhancing national development.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

A lot of issues contributed to the high rate of insecurity in Nigeria today. Some of these issues shall be discussed below.

Unemployment: This is one of the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria. The rate at which unemployed youths roam the streets of Nigeria doing nothing has contributed to the current security challenges in the country. Most unemployed youths decided to venture into crimes such as kidnapping, robbery, internet scams, human rituals etc. in a bid to make a living. Adagba et al (2012), opined that the high rate of unemployment and poverty in the country especially among the youth has resulted in violent crimes. The Nigerian Bureau of Statistics has issued statistics which has shown that the unemployment rate has risen to 23.1%. The failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address the issue of unemployment, poverty and even the distribution of wealth among minorities in Nigeria is one of the reasons for Insecurity in the country (Nwagbosa, 2012). Unemployment is a threat to national development. Despite Nigeria’s oil wealth and rich

resources, it is still ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world, over 70% of the population is considered poor with over 35% living in abject poverty (Andenrele, 2014,).

Corruption: Corruption has become like a cankerworm eating very fast and deeply into Nigerian society. From politicians, civil/public servants, police, and business owners, down to the ordinary masses, corruption is now seen and accepted as a normal day-to-day way of doing things in Nigeria. In 2019, Transparency International placed Nigeria in 146th position out of 198 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index with a score of 26 out of 100. Corruption is one of the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria. The masses perceive leaders and police as corrupt. Recently there have been attacks on the Nigerian police and killing them at their duty posts by unknown gunmen mostly in the eastern part of Nigeria. The police are believed to always ask for bribes, especially on the highway from motorists. Politicians only give job opportunities to their family and friends, a qualified young Nigerian needs a strong connection to get a job, some ministries collect bribes to give jobs to candidates, the list is endless. These bring about frustration on the part of the masses and lead them to engage in violent crimes to earn a living. Corruption has contributed to the economic problems in Nigeria and is one of the reasons for insecurity and sabotaging national development.

Ethno-religious conflicts: This means a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterised by a lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation (Salawu, 2010). In Nigeria, ethnoreligious conflicts emerged as a result of distrust among various ethnic groups and religions, especially the two dominant religions (Christianity and Islam), the frequent clashes between these two religions have become one of the major causes of Insecurity in the country.

Weak Judicial and Security System: The Nigerian judicial system is weak and the security system is beyond corrupt. The behaviour and attitude of

both the judiciary and security personnel in the country are poor. Both the judiciary and security personnel in Nigeria are inadequately equipped (Achumba et al. 2013). Most of the security operatives deployed to deal with crimes lack the expertise and training, and some due to poor salaries lack the zeal and motivation to work effectively. Some security operatives are caught committing crimes such as robbery and others lending their weapons to criminals. The judiciary collects bribes and fails to convict criminals, people feel insecure when criminals and terrorists go free. All these are part of the problems contributing to the insecurity in Nigeria and hindering national development. A country so rich in oil revenue yet fails to take care of its people and improve the welfare of the judiciary and security personnel, should expect nothing less than what we are experiencing in Nigeria today.

Farmer/herders Clashes: This issue has been one of the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria which has also contributed to the current food crisis in the nation. Since the return of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, Fulani herders and farmers have been having disputes over land resources predominantly in the middle belt which has resulted in thousands losing their lives, properties and farm produce over the years. This conflict has spread to other parts of the country and also some parts of West Africa. Herders allow cattle to eat farm produce and farmers take cattle as payback, herders attack villages at night and kill both farmers and innocent people. This has been going on for years and the government has failed to curb this issue.

In addition to the factors responsible for insecurity in Nigeria discussed above, others include: politics and electoral violence, open borders, high influx of arms, terrorism, narcotics etc

Role of Mass Media in Curbing Insecurity in Nigeria

It has been observed that the mass media play a vital role in national development, whether in the area of health, sports, politics, education, entertainment, infrastructure or the security development of a nation. The mass media is seen as one of the major institutions of socialization. According to Pate (2011), he opined that the mass media is responsible for the distribution of culture in Nigeria. The mass media has demonstrated a

very powerful influence in society over the years, but how then can this powerful media be an agent of curbing insecurity in Nigeria?

The mass media has many functions in the society and some of the functions include surveillance and correlation. The surveillance function of the media assumes that the media surveys the environment keeps on reporting all the happenings in the world and provides information to the society. The media serve as the eyes and ears for those seeking information about the world. Surveillance refers to the coverage of a wide range of important topics that impact society. The correlation function of the mass media refers to how the mass media presents facts that we use to move through the world. This is done through interpretation and explanation of the happenings in the society such as insecurity.

The mass media in Nigeria need to set an agenda for themselves as well as the public to tackle insecurity. It must constantly survey the environment report issues of insecurity and report it back to the public. Usually during crises, wars or conflicts, people depend on the media to know what is happening and what might probably happen. The mass media should provide a platform that religious leaders will use to preach peace and harmony to the society and reprimand against crime and terrorism.

A lot of programmes are organised by the mass media in various forms of mass communication including radio, TV, newspapers, and the internet about insecurity and how to combat it. Such programs include "Crime Watch" on Channels television; "Crime Fighters" on African Magic Family and NTA sponsored by the Nigerian Police, "The Eagle" by EFCC, Police Diary on Radio Nigeria, and several pages of newspapers are dedicated to crime issues in Nigeria. On television, there are so many jingles, announcements and information about insecurity and how to stay safe. These are all efforts made by the mass media to help curb insecurity in the nation. The rise in insecurity in the country does not mean that all these efforts are meaningless Nwabueze et al (2013), making awareness about this menace will make the society uncomfortable for insecurity to thrive, they added.

The mass media must keep on designing more programs and features to talk against all forms of crimes in the country. The mass media must keep on reporting and publicizing the current activities of bandits in

the country, Boko haram, IPOB activities and human rituals. Continuous reporting on radio, television and newspapers will stir up public opinion and move government and security operatives into more action. The mass media also need more airtime to report and discuss issues of insecurity such as terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery and other forms of crimes. This will provide the opportunity to highlight and enlighten such crimes to society (Umoru, 2015).

The mass media in collaboration with the citizens can help fight crime in Nigeria through what is called "Citizen Journalism". This refers to the collection, dissemination and analysis of news and information by the general public, especially using the Internet. The importance of citizen journalism is crucial in fighting crimes, with the advent of the internet, people record news and occurrences happening live and post it on the internet. Channels Television has an avenue for citizen journalism on their mobile app called "The Eye Witness" where citizens can post events happening around them mostly by video and taking pictures. In the case of Bamise Ayanwole the 22years lady who was murdered and thrown away with her genitals missing after boarding a BRT bus in Lagos, the internet went agog after her dead body surfaced online by citizens who captured her and called the police. The bus driver was arrested and faced trial. Similarly, the case of Sylvester Oromoni of Dowen Collage Lagos, who was allegedly bullied till he lost his life. His video surfaced online captured by his parents seeking justice for their son. There are a lot of cases where citizens take pictures and videos of crimes and post them online and that makes government and security operatives swing into action, this is citizen journalism.

Without security, socioeconomic activities will not thrive. Foreign investors and expatriates will not want to invest in a country where they are likely to be kidnapped. Insecurity can be defeated and the mass media has a vital role to play to achieve this. Although the Nigerian mass media are faced with a lot of challenges such as poor salary, lack of basic equipment, lack of continuous training, killing and jailing of journalists etc. for the mass media to effectively contribute its quota in combating insecurity in Nigeria there must be a conscious effort to improved journalist welfare, adequate training, insurance cover especially when covering dangerous

news like banditry and kidnapping. There should also be collaboration between the media the security operatives and even the government.

The Role of Media in National Development

The media serves as an agent of change in society. They help in gathering and disseminating news and information. The mass media helps with the formation of attitudes by establishing values for the society or the nation Amannah, (2017). The mass media helps in protecting social justice, the media is not only saddled with the responsibility of gathering and reporting news but also analyzing the news in line with the need for social justice. The mass media lets people voice out their diverse opinions on governance and reforms and helps build public consensus that brings about change and social justice.

Mass media facilitate trade and help with transmitting ideas and innovations across frontiers. The mass media helps to connect buyers and sellers through advertisement. They help markets work better. The mass media is also important in fostering human development, they help bring health and education to remote villages through various means of communication, especially radio. Media are strong pillars of democracy and human development. They hold the key to the political and socio-economic development of modern society. There is no substitute for the mass media in the effective dissemination of information meant for the transformation of the nation (Ekwelie, 2006).

In terms of agriculture, the mass media helps in the mobilization of people for agricultural programmes. In Nigeria, the media informs farmers about grants, loans, fertilizers, mechanized farming, improved species and other agricultural schemes by government and non-governmental organizations. In developing countries like Nigeria, the mass media serve as a link between the government and farmers through effective communication using radio, television and even face-to-face communication. Radio has been a vital means of communication, especially to illiterate farmers. The mass media also help in the coverage of different subject matter in regards to agriculture in Nigeria such as horticulture, animal husbandry, agricultural engineering, agricultural marketing and corporative.

Media helps in educating and enlightening the masses on various programmes, especially in rural areas such as family planning, routine immunization, COVID-19 etc it also helps in educating the masses about ills in society such as child marriage, female circumcision, human rituals etc. Through educational programs such as Ulesson on African magic, students get to learn beyond the classrooms. Media helps to promote science, arts and other disciplines.

The media also helps in exposing corrupt government officials to the masses and gives updates about their court cases, like the case of DSP Kyari, Senator Joshau Dariya, Umaru Dikko, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, Lucky Igbenedion James Ibori etc, and even the corruption going on in most public service offices in Nigeria like the police and immigration officials. Various news channels keep citizens updated about corruption in the country especially by reporting court cases. The media also helps in the development of Nigeria through political communication. They educate the masses on electoral processes such as voter card registration, polling unit and how to cast a vote. They also help in covering elections and announcing election results. They organized debates and invited political parties and their candidates to come and defend themselves or present their manifesto. Media serve as a bridge between government and the people; they convey government policies to the people by explaining, analyzing and interpreting. They spark up public opinions and relay feedback from the masses to the government concerning their policies. The media known as the fourth estate of government serves as the watchdog in society. The media represent the interest of the masses checkmate the activities of the government and alert the populace on the activities of the government that will affect their lives because they say information is power and the media gives that power to the populace by informing them.

Problems Restricting Media in Curbing Insecurity and Fostering National Development in Nigeria

The following are some of the obstacles hindering media from contributing their quota to fighting insecurity and promoting national development in Nigeria.

1. Laws and decrees tend to restrict media from full expression and coverage of facts especially from state security. Most journalists are not permitted to cover and report issues in some places and this has become a problem over the years.
2. Poor salary and staff welfare. This has resulted in the "brown envelop syndrome" where journalists collect gifts and money to meet their needs at the expense of reporting facts. This has made some journalists suppress facts due to poor salaries.
3. Poor working equipment and working conditions. Most media houses lack basic equipment that eases the work of the journalists. Some have to trek to cover news stories due to lack of transportation and tend to miss out on the story.
4. Most journalists do not have insurance; this has made them avoid dangerous scenes to cover stories. Most media houses do not provide safety equipment like bulletproof vests for journalists covering crises/ conflicts etc. This has resulted in the untimely death of journalists.
5. Journalists working in government-owned media organizations are not completely free, they only report stories in favour of the government and criticism are not allowed while those in private stations tend to please their proprietors and politician friends. The journalist is always caught in a mix-up where the truth often gets suppressed due to pressure.

Conclusion

The indispensable role of the media in all spheres of life cannot be overemphasized. The crucial need for security, good governance, accountable government and national development goes hand in hand with having a strong and effective mass media to help mobilize, enlighten, and sensitize the masses. The challenges facing the mass media hindering them from working effectively can be handled, but the media needs to disciple itself from biased reporting favouring a particular religion, political party, ethnic group or region in Nigeria. The role of information in national development cannot be disputed and information is useful when it is properly disseminated. In conclusion, the mass media in Nigeria need to understand the diverse society we live in to help promote peace and harmony and encourage national development for the interest of all.

Recommendation

1. There should be remuneration and welfare improvement for journalists in Nigeria, this will motivate them to work better and this will help foster national development and curb insecurity considering the significant role the mass media play in society. Adequate training for journalists and insurance cover for them to motivate them especially when covering life-threatening issues like conflict in the interest of the public and the nation's development.
2. Security agents must continue to collaborate and work closely with journalists and media practitioners for effective crime fighting. They should not be restricting journalists from covering certain events.
3. There should be periodic lectures, seminars and symposia on sophisticated crime reporting and other issues that will enable journalists to help fight insecurity in the country.
4. The government should amend laws that restrict journalists from doing their jobs without fear. These laws infringe on their rights to express themselves and make them suppress the truth due to fear.
5. The government should see the mass media as part of them. They should work hand in hand to fight insecurity and promote national unity and development since the media serves as a link between the government and the people.
6. The media should practice self-censorship to enable them to give unbiased news to the masses because fake news and misinformation have triggered a lot of crises in the country in recent times.

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