

REPORTING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA'S GOVERNANCE: HOW HAS THE MEDIA FARED? OPINION OF JOURNALISTS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

Corruption is a menace in Nigeria, and if not checked, undermines a nation's or society's development. One of the media's key responsibilities, as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution, is to hold the government accountable. Consequently, this study examined the media's performance in reporting and communicating corruption in Nigeria's governance. The study's objective was to examine the current approach to corruption reporting, identify areas for improvement, and propose a practical solution. The study adopts a qualitative design, using focus group discussions as a data collection method. A purposive sampling technique was employed. The study population was 83, which is relatively manageable; therefore, a census was adopted. The Social Responsibility Theory served as the theoretical underpinning. Data were presented and analyzed qualitatively or descriptively. Findings indicated that there is effective reporting of corruption in Nigerian governance, but also note a flawed approach in reporting corruption. Based on the findings, this study concludes that the media in Nigeria have been reporting cases of corruption. However, the current approach to reporting corruption is incurably flawed; this was attributed to political interference, limited investigative capacity, ethno-religious biases, and a lack of continuity in reporting corruption cases. The paper, therefore, recommends a proactive investigative reporting approach to corruption within Nigeria's governance system.

Keywords: Reporting, corruption, media, governance, journalists

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Corruption narratives evidently exist in countries all over the World, probably with varying magnitude. Corruption is a pervasive and deeply entrenched problem in Nigeria's governance, affecting various sectors and impacting citizens' lives. Suntai and Shem (2022), in describing corruption and its effects, said, "Corruption is a global pandemic. This is because it manifests in various forms and shades in all the countries of the world. However, it is more endemic in most developing countries like Nigeria."

In Nigeria's governance, corruption is endemic and a household name, manifesting through embezzlement of public funds, bribery, and other dishonest practices, which often erode public trust and hinder development. Robust, emphatic, and forceful propositions have been made by scholars in support of this statement:

One monster that has ravaged the socio-economic fabric of the Nigerian society over the years is corruption. All efforts to tame this monster seem to have defied all strategies and tactics. Despite the notoriety the word 'corruption' has attained and its globally acclaimed disruptive and despicable consequences on peoples' lives and their respective society. Corruption has not only become a household name, but also a way of life in Nigeria. (Odionye & Yare, 2018).

In contradistinction, the development of a nation is perceived to be proportionately tied to its level of corruption. Consequently, Oyeode (2017) argues that "It is recognised by development scholars that the level of reduction in corruption has a very direct link to the level of economic development of nations in the world". This is further corroborated by the indices of the World Bank and the IMF. For instance, the World Bank's 2017 Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals has shown that the number of Nigerians living in extreme poverty of less than \$1.90 has exceeded that of every other country in the world. The recent revaluation by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicates that the growth rate of the Nigerian economy, along with those of two other large economies in Africa, like Angola and South Africa, which were not performing up to their potential, was holding down the continent's economic viability. This is perceived in all ramifications as alarming and forms the crux of this study.

It would then be apposite to state, by the evaluation of Iredia and Garba (2024), "the Global Anti-Corruption Watch-dog, Transparency International has in the last two decades consistently scored the country exceedingly low in its Corruption Perception Index. In the 2018 ranking, Nigeria was put up as the 148th most corrupt nation in the world" (p.87)

While one would argue against or controvert these indices emanating from the various international bodies, one thing is certain and should be a source of worry. Particularly, when these indices point in one direction, painting a gloomy image of Nigeria.

The citizens of Nigeria need to know how corruption has persisted in the governance architecture and its effect on the nation, citizens, and different sectors of the society. This onus lies with the media, christened the fourth estate of the realms, constitutionally empowered with the surveillance and watchdog roles for the society, as well as holding the government accountable. To that extent, the media has played a frontal role in reporting corruption in Nigeria. However:

Corruption as earlier established, has for long been a major obstacle to Nigeria's economic growth and development hence the consistent calls for the intensification of the fight against the cankerworm. But the reality, the thrust of the fight has not been assimilated by the people because they have not been appropriately mobilized against it through the instrumentality of effective communication. (Iredia & Garba, p. 90)

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Corruption is a menace in Nigeria and needs to be dealt with squarely, either by reducing it to the barest minimum or by completely eradicating it. Corruption, according to Lumumba (March 24, 2023), "has killed more people than diseases put together in Africa". This amplifies the magnitude of corruption and how pernicious the effect is on the individuals and society in general.

The above assumption has been supported by the measures of the international anti-corruption perception agencies. Nigeria ranked 154th least corrupt nation out of 180 countries in the World (corruption perception index reported by Transparency International, 2021). In the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Nigeria was ranked 140th out of 180 countries. It scored 26 out of 100 on the index, according to Transparency.org, 2024.

The mass media in Nigeria have played a fundamental role in informing the public on issues of corruption. Over the years, the mass media have not relented in this fight against corruption, but it seems not to have made an appreciable impact in the reduction of the magnitude or level of corruption. This is attributed to the fact that more high-profile corrupt cases are revealed within a given time frame, and as clearly shown by the indices of the ranking of the different anti-corruption perception ranking bodies.

In light of the foregoing, the need arose to critically examine the methods and approaches employed by the mass media in reporting corruption in Nigeria. The question then becomes, "How has the media fared in reporting corruption cases in Nigeria's governance?" Here lies the core focus of this study.

2.1 Objectives of the Study

The study's objectives were to:

1. Examine the current media reporting approach to corruption in Nigeria's governance.
2. Identify gaps in the current approach to reporting corruption in Nigeria's governance.
3. Propose a workable solution and approach for reporting corruption in Nigeria's governance.

3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is pegged within the framework of the Social Responsibility Theory. The social responsibility theory was developed by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm in 1963. It, however, emanated from the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press, established in the United States in 1947 to re-examine the concept of press freedom as outlined in the libertarian or free press theory.

The core tenets of this theory are, first, the recognition of the fact that the media plays a leading role in informing citizens in Nigeria's governance system. Secondly, since society has created an enabling environment for press freedom to thrive, it is, therefore, expected that the press must act responsibly. Accordingly, Pavlick and McIntosh (2011, p. 260) posit that "the theory rests on the notion that the media play a vital role in informing citizens in a democratic society and, as such, should be free from most governmental constraints to provide the best, most reliable and impartial information to the public". Pavlick and McIntosh, further inform that "to

operate effectively in this environment, the media must exercise self –restraint and act responsibly”. The presupposition is that freedom placed obligation on the media.

Similarly, Hasan (2014, p. 170) reiterated that “these obligations were expressed in the words, informative, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance”.

Therefore, the theory is relevant to this study because it calls for responsibility on the part of the journalist and the media. Thus, journalists and the media should proactively give accurate, truthful, and balanced corruption-related information in Nigeria. Being responsible means using the right approach and methods to tackle reporting corruption.

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Governance

Governance involves the process by which a country or organization is governed, regulated, and operated and entails the processes by which the officers of the state are kept in check. It is the practice or condition of dominating a location. To that end, Cambridge Dictionary informs that “governance is the manner in which organizations or countries are conducted on the highest level and systems of doing so”. Fukuyama (2013) conceptualises “governance as a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not”. (p.3)

In summation, governance is a decision-making process. It also implies the wielding of power by elected or appointed state or national officials to help organize the affairs of a state or country. Governance may be the activity of a government, but also of other organizations such as corporations, non-profits, or even world organizations, with a wide variety of structures, including democratic or private boards of directors.

4.2 Corruption

The entire institution of corruption can be described as being a pest in the system of governance of Nigeria. Various definitions have been made on what exactly is actual corruption. This is informative as Sownmi et al. (2010, p.8) argue that “Corruption may not be easy to define but, according to Tanzi (1998), it is 'generally not difficult to recognize when observed”. This emphasizes the fact that corruption is perceived differently by different people. However, it is apposite to present a few definitions for a clear understanding of the term corruption.

Stople (2008) adds that, “the United Nations Convention against corruption has accepted that corruption is a multi-faceted, dynamic and flexible phenomenon, hence does not define, but describes corrupt practices. This brings out the complex nature of corruption”. Godknows (2018, p.44) has a similar conceptualisation of corruption in the form of what it takes to be. “The author says that the second income syndrome in Nigeria is corruption” (p. 44). In a sense, the above suggestion by Godknows reflects the current corrupt practices in Nigeria, but in another sense, it is perceived to be glorifying corruption, as the notion of income is taken as legitimate earnings of citizens, yet corruption is considered an illegal and unlawful practice.

It is said that the easiest definition of corruption has been given by Salisu (2000), who argued that “corruption is the misuse of the public resources to the personal ends” (p. 8). To support the foregoing, Sowunmi et al. (2010) affirm that “most high-income nations are determining corrupt behaviour as unjust and actually criminal” (p. 9).

4.3 Corruption and its Hydra-Headed Problems in Nigeria

In Nigeria, corruption is a well-known problem; it is complex and penetrates every institutional structure—both government and private—across all areas of life and communities. It is omnipresent: it can be seen, felt, and observed. Corruption and its related effects have been a subject of discussion. Muhammed (2013) states thus: “The threat of corruption has been discussed at various levels, yet this ugly incidence keeps surviving with us in all of our endeavours, despite several efforts to curtail it”. According to Chiakaan, Gapsiso & Oliver (2023),

the negative impacts of corruption in the lives of nations throughout the world can be seen by a blind person. Corruption is perhaps the most important factor that is impeding the accelerated socio-economic transformation of developing or less developed countries of the world.

Also, examining the negative effects of corruption, Oyeboode (2017) states that “Development scholars acknowledge that the level of reduction in corruption has a straightforward link to the level of economic development of nations in the world”. The extrapolation is that corruption in all ramifications has significantly contributed to underdevelopment in developing countries worldwide. Ironically, corruption is more prevalent in developing countries than in developed nations. Professor Lumumba (2017) was eloquent and, without mincing words, informed that “corruption has killed more people than civil wars in Africa”. This encapsulates the multifaceted impact of corruption experienced in various developing nations across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and, by extension, the world.

4.4 Effect of Corruption

Corruption inherently has serious effects on a nation's economic, political, social, educational, health, and bureaucratic spheres. According to Kupoluyi, Nwaodike, and Ntiwunka (2020), “effects of corruption in Nigeria include loss of government revenue, negative national image, poor governance, brain drain, electoral malpractices, poor investment climate, business failure, unemployment, and poverty”. Additionally, it is important to note that corruption subverts and weakens economic growth, discourages foreign investment, and restricts access to essential services. It erodes public trust in institutions and governance. It perpetuates and exacerbates poverty and inequality by diverting resources from public services and development. Corruption promotes dishonesty and weakens social cohesion. The harmful impact of corruption worldwide is widely acknowledged. Corruption is likely the most significant obstacle to the rapid socioeconomic development of developing and less-developed countries (LDCs).

4.5 Manifestations of Corruption in Nigeria

In Nigeria, corruption is seen to have taken many forms, including bribery and kickbacks. Bribes are often used to speed up transactions, access services, or avoid penalties. Embezzlement involves government officials and others in authority misusing public funds for personal gain. Fraud includes financial scams, contract inflation, and other deceptive practices. Favoritism and nepotism result in decisions based on personal connections rather than merit. A lack of accountability means those involved in corruption usually face little or no punishment, creating a culture of impunity. Other types of corruption include exam malpractices, internet fraud, and various dishonest activities. Efforts to combat corruption are ongoing

4.6 The Anti-Corruption and Anti-Corruption Agency Fight.

It is important to note that Nigeria has, over the years, developed institutional frameworks and institutions basically to probe and take those who commit corruption crimes to book. Such entities are the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), and not to mention the Civil Society Groups, which also help in raising alarm. Also, the anti-corruption advocacy by international agencies such as Transparency International and the World Justice Project has played a significant role in terms of determining the degree of financial credibility of public officials by creating awareness among the people with the ultimate aim of creating financial transparency in their administration. Other measures involve attempting to recover stolen assets. It is an effort of the international anti-corruption groups to restore and repatriate stolen funds in Nigeria.

It also involves awareness creation by the anti-corruption agencies. These consist of a sequence of initiatives that are strategically organized and implemented to make people aware of the impact and the dangers of corruption and promote ethical behaviour. Nevertheless, they have been noted to face some challenges, such as poor institutions, ineffective monitoring and enforcement, political goodwill, and politicization of anti-corruption efforts and political witch-hunting.

4.7 The way corruption reporting in Nigeria ought to be.

The process of reporting corruption in the Nigerian governance should involve researching and sharing information regarding corruption, such as bribery, embezzlement, and fraud in government and other institutions, and follow-up investigation and reporting of progress. The media in Nigeria must get rid of the old forms of reporting that it has been employing for a long time. In a keynote address at the 12th Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Association of Communication Scholars and Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN), December 3-4, 2025, at MBB Events, Effurun, Delta State, with the theme of “Corruption, Governance, and Media in Nigeria”, Nwoko said that “the Nigerian media should cease to act as spectators of corruption and assume a proactive decisive role in dealing with corruption”, which he termed as a serious threat to democracy and good governance in the country. The way forward in reporting corruption in Nigeria, proposed by Nwoko (2025), is supposed to involve the following,

The media ought to facilitate investigative journalism that should uncover the underhanded transactions and set them under the fire until responsibility is attained. Another important point that he made was that communication, when planned deliberately, can be a means of cultural re-orientation and social transformation.

The audiences of media are expected to work towards strengthening integrity and service values, educating citizens on their rights and duties, emphasizing open leadership, and assisting in establishing a culture where corruption cannot be acceptable in society. Notwithstanding these revelations, little is known about individual-level traits that can predict the possibility of citizens reporting corruption, especially in Africa. The foundation of the research is previous studies (Asomah et al., 2024; Oboro-Offerie et al., 2025).

Over the years, the Nigerian media has contributed greatly through its watchdog role, but the performance is flawed by political influence, ownership, and control of media, legal restrictions, and resource capacity, which have resulted in the media either doing shallow or politicized coverage instead of delivering regular investigation and exhaustive reporting.

The above points to the vices of corruption reporting in Nigeria. So, there is a strong necessity for a considerable change. Corruption should be investigated and reported by the media comprehensively. In the light of the foregoing, corruption should be reported in this way:

i. Investigation and Exposure:

This is the case that media houses should adopt more investigative reporting to unravel and publish reports on corrupt acts like fraud, theft, and bribery.

ii. Scrutiny of Agencies:

The efficacy and legality of the anti-corruption agencies and law enforcement bodies should also be reported by the media in order to offer societal supervision.

iii. Public Mobilization:

Through exposing corrupt practices, media coverage is supposed to instigate the anti-corruption agencies, prosecutors, and other agencies to intervene, which can be by opening an investigation or legal proceedings.

4.8 How the Media Has Fared in Reporting Corruption

Nigeria has had a very complex and even paradoxical role of the media in reporting corruption. As much as it is a watchdog, in that it exposes cases and holds people accountable, it also has a few ills, such as financing, intimidation of journalists, and failure to reach a large and diverse audience. The media has also not been spared in other cases where it has been compromised or has taken part in entertainment rather than proper investigative reporting. The media have, however, contributed positively. They are not limited to include the following.

- i. **Revealing Corruption:** media houses have been very instrumental in exposing high-profile corruption.
- ii. **Inciting Anti-Corruption Agencies:** Reports in the media can prompt action by the anti-corruption agencies, such as the EFCC and ICPC, and trigger the beginning of investigations and prosecutions.
- iii. **Facilitating Transparency and Accountability:** The media can contribute to spreading awareness on corruption and its processes that would lead to the people demanding more transparency and accountability in their leaders.
- iv. **Technological Impact:** Social media and related digital means have created an opportunity to communicate faster, reach more people, and make citizens participate in the fight against corruption.
- v. **International Attention:** International coverage and support on the worsening acts of corruption in Nigeria has been achieved through the media coverage.

Although the media can be used to expose corruption, it has its constraints in terms of getting the general population to rise and take actual steps and responsibility. The media has been identified and accepted by scholars as contributing positively in Nigeria, but this has not come easily. As an illustration, journalists who uncover corruption in Nigeria risk their lives a lot through being harassed, intimidated, and killed. Several media houses are having a hard time with finances, a factor that may restrain their ability to conduct investigative journalism and deep reporting.

Certain media houses have been accused of being partisan, sensational, or politicized. Some media houses prefer to deal with entertainment and sensational news, instead of the serious investigative reporting of corruption, thereby discouraging the people from addressing the issue.

5.0 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

A study conducted by Tashkent in 2024, titled "The Role and Impact of Reporting Corruption: A Study of Public and Government Attitudes in Uzbekistan," was co-funded by the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme. The objective of the study was to assess public and government attitudes toward corruption. The study highlighted corruption as a societal albatross. According to UN estimates, corruption, bribery, embezzlement, and tax evasion cost developing countries about \$1.26 trillion annually. Since 2016, Uzbekistan has implemented systemic reforms to fight corruption, including establishing an Anti-Corruption Agency, simplifying public services, and fully digitalizing public procurement. This study used two main research approaches: (1) quantitative— a computerized telephone survey of the population's attitudes toward whistleblowing, and (2) qualitative— focus group discussions and expert interviews to gather key insights into public perceptions. Findings show that public understanding of corruption includes: abuse of official position, receipt of monetary gifts by civil servants, and misappropriation of goods and services intended for public consumption. Receipt of valuable gifts by civil servants, preference in employment for family members/relatives (nepotism). The study concludes that a stronger understanding of corruption is needed among officials, experts, and the public, along with enhanced anti-corruption measures, with a key recommendation of strengthening social responsibility in the fight against

corruption by raising awareness and encouraging participation both inside and outside the public sector, amongst others.

In another study, Akani (2017), titled “The Media and Corruption in Nigeria, published in the International Journal of Scientific Research in Education. This paper seeks to examine the role of the Media in the fight against Corruption in Nigeria. The data collection was based on two sources. The Primary sources included interviews and personal discussions, while the Secondary sources involved a review of existing literature, Newspapers, Magazines, Official bulletins, and Gazettes. It was discovered that no government can objectively sanitize society without a profound involvement of the Media. The study, therefore, suggests that the fight against corruption in Nigeria cannot be successfully won without the active participation of the Media. This is because of their ability and capacity to unravel those things that are beyond the purview of the people. Most important is their watchdog role, which subjects public officials to democratic norms.

Sowunmi, Raufu, Oketokun, Salako and Usifoh conducted a study in 2010 titled “The Role of Media in Curbing Corruption in Nigeria. The study examines the role of media in curbing corruption in Nigeria as well as the problems encountered in the process of performing this role. The study revealed that corruption has been and continues to be a destructive element in the governance of Nigeria and perception of the country in the comity of nations. The study showed that poverty, threat to life, undue interference by government, harassment, injury, and lack of laws to protect journalist are the major obstacles to the media in their fight against corruption. Passage of the freedom of information bill, training in investigative journalism, and good remuneration are recommended for the media to be effective in the fight against corruption.

6.0 METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative design, utilizing a focus group discussion as the primary data collection instrument. According to Kumar (2011), “Focus groups are a form of strategy in qualitative research in which attitudes, opinions or perceptions towards an issue, product, service or programme are explored through a free and open discussion between members of a group and the researcher. Both focus groups and group interviews are facilitated group discussions in which a researcher raises issues or asks questions that stimulate discussion among members of the group” (p. 157).

The registered population of journalists in Rivers State, according to the Secretary of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Ernest Ikoli Press Centre, Rivers State Chapter, is 300. Given that the research involved corruption reporting and the sensitivity of the topic, only journalists who have reported cases of corruption were selected, resulting in a population of 83. The rationale was that journalists who are actively involved in reporting corruption are assumed to have detailed knowledge of the complexities involved in such reportage.

In summation, the population of the study stood at 83, and this was considered relatively manageable, hence a census was adopted. Accordingly, Kothari (2004) posits that “a complete enumeration of all items in the ‘population’ is known as a census inquiry” (p. 55).

The purposive sampling technique of the non-probability method was employed. Three focus group sessions were conducted with different participants, each consisting of 6 to 12 participants. The participants for the three focus group discussions were all journalists who have at least reported a corruption-related story. The duration of each session was 35 minutes, allowing for meaningful engagement and the collection of valuable information. Data were presented qualitatively or descriptively to identify themes, patterns, and meanings.

6.1 Focus Group Data Presentation and Analysis

Q1. How has the current corruption reporting approach contributed to reducing corruption

Participants in the three focus group discussions acknowledged that the media have contributed to exposing corruption cases and raising awareness of corrupt practices. The majority of participants also believe that the media have done well in reporting on corruption cases in Nigeria. However, four participants disagree, arguing that if the media had truly performed well, the manifestation of corruption would be minimal; instead, cases of corruption are increasing at an alarming rate. These four participants further contend that for the media to be considered credible in reporting corruption, there must be a proportional relationship between the extent of their corruption coverage and the actual level, degree, or magnitude of corruption prevalent in the country.

Q2. What are the current approaches to reporting corruption by the media

The participants were divided in their views: some argue that the current media reporting of corruption in Nigeria is no different from the traditional, reactionary method of reportage. While other participants vehemently disagree, saying that the current approach involves investigative reporting, not just informing the public and raising awareness. It goes beyond that. Most participants in the focus group discussion also recognized factors, such as political interference, ownership by groups and individuals with vested interests, and control over the media as challenges faced by journalists. Additionally, threats to journalists pose another challenge.

Q3. What approach to reporting corruption would you suggest that will ameliorate the level of corruption in Nigeria

There were valuable insights shared regarding the most effective way to report corruption in Nigeria. Participants offered several suggestions, including the following:

- a. Proactive investigative reporting with a follow-up reporting to its logical conclusion. This proactive investigative reporting is aimed at forestalling corrupt acts from being executed
- b. Collaborative intelligence gathering involving the security agencies.
- c. An approach devoid of Political interference.
- d. Journalists should desist from skewed reporting of corruption cases.
- e. Acquire appropriate skills to follow up on corruption cases to its logical conclusion.
- f. Uphold integrity, continuously holding governments and public officials accountable and transparent in the discharge of their responsibilities.

7.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first finding of this study shows that the media played its watchdog role, acknowledged its role in sensitization and awareness, and, through its content and portrayal, stimulated the anti-corruption agencies into action. This finding is supported by Hasan (2014, p. 170), who reiterated that “these obligations were expressed in the words, informative, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance”. This also aligns with one of the core tenets of Social Responsibility theory, which emphatically states that the media plays a leading role in informing citizens. Often, reports on corrupt practices by government officials have provided the starting point for a series of consequences, such as the launch of an investigation or judicial proceedings. Based on the majority of the viewpoints of the focus group discussants, further findings indicate that the media have made valuable contributions to curbing corruption, but emphasis was not made about the extent of the reduction. This hinges on the fact that despite the efforts by the media in exposing and reporting corruption cases, there is continuous perpetuation of corruption in Nigeria. The question then is, what justification is there that the media has done well in their reportage and exposition of corruption?

The second finding, which focuses on the current approach to reporting corruption in Nigeria, indicates a polarization of participants' views on this, as some say the current corruption reporting approach is no different from the usual conventional reporting. Nevertheless, others say, the current approach to reporting corruption ends up inconclusively, as there tend to be no follow-ups on the cases after one or two reports from the media. The import of this is that the current corruption reporting approach is faulty because it tends to make heroes out of corrupt officials instead of villains; hence, it has not produced the desired result, which is to reduce the menace of corruption to the barest minimum. Further, this is a testament to the inefficiency of the current approach to reporting corruption by the media in Nigeria.

Lastly, the focus group discussion on the best approach for reporting corruption in Nigeria was insightful, as valuable and far-reaching recommendations were made:

1. Proactive investigative reporting with a follow-up reporting to its logical conclusion. This proactive investigative reporting is aimed at forestalling corrupt acts from being executed.
2. Collaborative intelligence gathering involving the security agencies.
3. An approach devoid of Political interference.
4. Journalists should desist from skewed reporting of corruption cases.
5. Acquire appropriate skills to follow up on corruption cases to their logical conclusion.
6. Uphold integrity by continuously holding governments and public officials accountable and ensuring transparency in the discharge of their responsibilities.

The implication is that, even though the current approach to reporting corruption is considered relatively effective in exposing corruption and creating awareness, it has failed in its proactive steps to prevent corrupt acts from being executed. The study carried out by Sowunmi et al. (2010) revealed that training in investigative journalism and good remuneration are recommended for the media to be effective in the fight against corruption.

8.0 CONCLUSION

This study examined how the media have fared in reporting corruption in Nigeria. The focus group discussion, used as a data collection tool, provides valuable insights, as shown in the data presentation and analysis. Based on the findings above, the study concludes that the media in Nigeria has contributed to exposing corruption and informing the public about cases of corruption. This means that the media is recognized for fulfilling its statutory role as society's watchdog, but has failed to reduce the rate of corruption. Further findings indicate that the current approach to reporting corruption is flawed, as it remains similar to the traditional reactionary pattern of reporting. Additionally, the study also concludes, based on the findings regarding the focus group participants' opinions on the preferred approach to corruption reporting, that a hybrid proactive strategy, which would uncover plans for corrupt practices before they occur, along with collaborative intelligence gathering. The study also found that follow-up reporting on ongoing corruption cases is minimal; however, it identified challenges such as political interference, media ownership by groups and individuals with vested interests, and media control by these groups.

This study advances existing literature beyond confirming known challenges as the manuscript addresses a highly relevant and socially significant issue—media reporting of corruption within Nigeria's governance system. It focuses on journalists in Rivers State, and contributes context-specific insights that are valuable for media scholars, policymakers, and practitioners. The topic is timely and aligns well with contemporary debates on media accountability and governance.

8.1 Recommendations

1. That media houses and journalists should improve on the quality of investigative reporting while covering cases of corruption.
2. The language of reportage should be such that condemns corruption instead of sensationalizing it, thereby making corrupt officials heroes.
3. Journalists should pursue follow-up reporting on corruption cases to their logical conclusion; this way, citizens stay informed about the origins and resolutions of such cases.
4. The study also recommends that the hybrid of proactive investigative reporting be adopted as a method for reporting corruption.

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