

Panel
NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS AND THE PRACTICE OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

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ABSTRACT

The paper is an appraisal of newspaper practice of investigative journalism in Nigeria. The rationale behind the study was to determine whether print media journalists in Nigeria are really practising investigative journalism and to determine the extent to which it is practised. Two theories were used as theoretical framework and they are: social responsibility theory and libertarian theory. The researcher employed content analysis as its research design, using coding sheet as the instrument of data collection. *The Sun* and *The Nation* newspapers were content analysed. Findings show that the newspapers actually carry out investigative journalism, but the extent to which they do so is minimal. The study, therefore, concluded that the print media do not pay serious attention to investigative journalism in Nigeria. Thus, it among others, recommends that the print media and electronic media in Nigeria should pay serious attention to the issue of investigative journalism as it is one of the ways that can be used to fight corruption in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria, newspapers, practice, investigative journalism

INTRODUCTION

It is the desire of the citizens to be fed with in-depth and accurate messages, with the knowledge that the mass media, in their nature, occupy the fourth estate of the realm (Okoye, 2007). Thus, the need for investigative journalism cannot be overemphasised. Government and other highly placed individuals, according to Sambe (2005) always have some information they want to conceal; with the media, on the other hand, owing it a duty to society to keep it well informed.

Investigative journalism is a veritable tool in promoting an accountable government and a responsible people. However, it is assumed that the power of investigative journalism has not been fully explored over the years. In Nigeria, it has not won many battles as it ought to have done.

Journalism is a guardian that never sleeps; it protects the freedom of the people. The media have the role of setting an agenda; they stimulate the public into prioritising issues of corruption and being aware of such issues in their daily routines.

When the media report major corruption issues, particularly those involving government officials and other senior ruling party officials, the issue is treated with value and importance and generates discourse on the issue across communities. However, one aspect to note is that, journalists should realise that they are not a court of law, but an important arm in the promotion of good governance (Asemah, 2013a). Nevertheless, how well media can perform the role of a watchdog on corruption depends on a number of factors defined by the political, economic and legal environment in which the media operate. These include media freedom of expression, access to information, ownership, competition, credibility and outreach. These are some of the key factors that have been identified as affecting the quality and effectiveness of media performance in investigative journalism (Vogl, cited in Ribadu, 2006).

The importance of journalism comes from the right to know and the people's right to opinion, which expression would not be a reality without the press. Thus, investigative reports unearth significant information about matters of public importance through the use of non-routine information gathering methods. The foregoing, therefore, implies that the print media need to always carry out investigative journalism so as to keep the society aware of certain activities, thereby exposing corruption. However, whether the print media are effectively carrying out investigative journalism is still in doubt. Therefore, the problem motivating this study is print media practice of investigative journalism in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Find out the extent to which investigative journalism is practised by Nigerian Newspaper
2. Find out the various means through which investigative stories are reported in the Newspapers.
3. Find out the kind of investigative stories published in the Newspapers.
4. Ascertain which of the newspapers practises investigative journalism more.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Investigative reports are those that unearth significant information about matters of public importance through the use of non-routine information gathering methods. Most day-to-day reporting involves investigation, but true investigative stories require extraordinary expenditure of time and energy (Kayode, 2012, cited in Asemah and Ekrikevwe, 2013). Investigative reporting means thorough, incisive reporting. It requires the investigative attitude – a curiosity and pungent nose for news, a lot of hardwork and the ability to tell a story in terms of what it means to the reader (Kayode, 2012). The foregoing implies that investigative reporters seek to uncover materials that people want to hide. Some cover ups are illegal and some are legal, but abusive. This explains why Fang (2005, p. 171) contends that investigative journalism often results into some kind of positive actions or steps being taken. This perhaps also explains why Nwabueze (2009, p. 93) contends that investigative journalism is the

branch of journalism, which entails digging deep into happenings, events and developments to expose that which some people would prefer to hide. According to Word Bank (2003), cited in Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2013), investigative journalism entails reporting on matters of importance, which some people or organisations may prefer or wish to keep secret. In a similar vein, Dominick (2002), cited in Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2013) describes investigative journalism as the art of reporting that unearths important information about matters of public importance, through the use of non-routine information gathering methods.

According to Waisbord (n.d), investigative reporting is distinctive in that it publicises information about wrongdoing that affects the public interest. According to Wikipedia (2011), cited in Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2013), an investigative journalist is a man or woman, whose profession is to discover the truth, and to identify lapses in issues through whatever media may be available. Investigative journalism attempts to get at the truth. It is very similar to standard news reporting, except that the people at the centre of the story will usually not help you and may even try to stop you doing your job. In many other cases, governments, companies, organisations and individuals, try to hide decisions or events, which affect other people. The investigative journalist digs into such issues and brings them to public glare. When a journalist tries to report on matters which somebody wants to keep secret, this is investigative journalism. This perhaps explains why Weinberg (n.d) describes investigative journalism as the act of reporting through one's own initiative and

work-product, matters of importance to readers, viewers or listeners. Nwabueze, cited in Asemah (2011a) says that the investigative journalist stands out in the crowd of reporters. This is because he is engaged in an activity that requires both ruggedness and fitness to accomplish. The investigative reporter is not just someone or any reporter that is concerned with going after press release, attending press conferences and briefings on any event that is newsworthy, just to remain relevant. He is engaged in the journalism of "outrage". Outrage at unfairness, outrage at abuse and exploitation by the powerful. He functions in many capacities and does the work of a police, court, parties and parliaments. He is not just a passive recorder of events, but a complete watchdog of the society, who barks when it is right, proper, expedient and called for (Nwabueze, cited in Asemah, 2011a).

A careful analysis of the definitions shows that investigative journalism is all about revealing important issues in the society; the issue must not necessarily be negative; it may also be positive; it entails reporting issues that will interest majority of the people. This shows that any issue can be investigated by the journalist, in as much as it is an issue of public interest. The investigative journalist must identify and bring out such important issues, whether in the government circle or public organisations, to public knowledge. The journalist digs deeply into such an issue and brings it to public glare. Thus, the investigative reporter can be likened to an operative of an intelligence service, the State Security Service, for example.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on two theories; these are: social responsibility theory and libertarian theory.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THEORY

Social responsibility theory is an offshoot of libertarian theory. The theory sprang up in the middle of 20th century. Okunna (1999, p.35) cited in Asemah (2011, p, 146b), describes it as a modern theory because it was born in the twentieth century. According to McQuail (1987), cited in Asemah, Edegoh and Ogwo (2013), the social responsibility theory owes its origin to an initiative- Commission on Freedom of the Press. Its main impetus was a growing awareness that in some important respects, the free market had failed to fulfill the promise of the press and to deliver expected benefits to the society. The theory has a wide range of applications, since it covers several kinds of private print media and public corporations of broadcasting, which are answerable through various kinds of democratic procedures to the society. The theory tries to reconcile independence with obligations to society. In it, the press is to be responsible to the society by carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication (Ojobor, 2002, p 11). While the theory emphasises the need for an independent press that scrutinises other social institutions and provides objective, accurate news reports, the most innovative feature of social responsibility theory was the call on the media to be

responsible (Baran and Davis, 2003). Owolabi (2007, p. 162), cited in Tsegysu and Asemah (2014) contends that "to achieve freedom and responsibility of the press, there must be an independent body to regulate media practice.

The foregoing implies that social responsibility theory rests on the notion of free press acting responsibly. The press, which enjoys a privileged position under the government, is obliged to be responsible. The theory implores media practitioners to ensure representation of all facets of the society. This means that it is obligatory for the journalists to ensure that his good image is maintained in the society and should consider the coverage of rural areas as part of the responsibility (Asogwa and Asemah, 2012; Asemah, Edegoh and Ogwo, 2013). Oluagbade (2003), cited in Asemah (2011b) defines communication ethics, as the basis for conforming to recognised standard; of course, the point of communication ethics is to prevent good men from going bad. Ethics emphasises responsibilities of the media in the packaging of their contents. The theory is relevant to the study because it reminds the journalist of his duty to the society; he must not sensationalise stories or use the media to cause confusion in the society and he must engage in truthful journalism. Social responsibility according to McQuail (2005, p. 170) has written or unwritten obligations clear in the freedom of publication as well as general ethical and moral principles relating to truth and justice. The theory is relevant to the study because it calls for responsibility on the part of the journalist. Thus, the journalist

should be able to use the mass media to carry out investigative journalism in Nigeria

LIBERTARIAN MEDIA THEORY

The libertarian theory calls for press freedom; instead of press censorship. The theory assumes that if the press must function well, it must be free; it must be free from government control and influences. Okunna, cited in Asemah (2011, p.145b) argues that libertarianism, as a philosophy believes that people are rational beings capable of thinking for themselves and of distinguishing truth from falsehood. This philosophy, therefore, advocates that people should be left free and given access to all types of ideas from which they should freely choose. The libertarian theory of the press advocates that the mass media should be owned by anybody who has the means and desires to do so. Libertarians believe that the media should be liberated from government control so that they can provide a free market place of ideas for the enlightenment of the people (Galadima and Asemah, 2012)

Thus, the fundamental assumption of the theory is that, people should have access through the media to all kinds of information and opinions, from which they are expected to make the right decisions by applying their rationality. This implies that in the libertarian theory, there is press freedom. The journalist, to a great extent, enjoys press freedom under the libertarian theory. Therefore, the main purpose of the media in the libertarian theory is to inform, entertain and to sell or make profit, thereby, helping the minorities and individuals to discover the

truth, and have equal access to the media as well as the rich. Milton, cited in Asemah (2011a) argues that "truth and falsehood should be allowed to grapple and let a winner emerge." James Madison, cited in Asemah (2011b) expresses his views on the importance of a free press thus:

Nothing could be more irrational than to give the people power and to withhold from them, information without which, power is abused. A people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with power, which knowledge gives. A popular government without popular information or means of acquiring it is, nothing, but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps, both.

Thus, libertarianism simply connotes liberty, which is freedom. In the libertarian theory, man is regarded as a rational, intellectual and a reasonable human being; truth is not centred on power as in the case of authoritarian theory (Asemah, 2012). The theory calls for responsibility on the part of the journalist; the journalist who enjoys press freedom should remember that the freedom carries concomitant responsibility (Asemah, 2013b; Asemah, Nwammuo and Edegoh, 2014). The theory is relevant to the study in that it lays emphasis on the need for press freedom. When there is press freedom, the media can effectively practise investigative journalism.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In 2006, a survey of one hundred newspapers by Arizona State University

students showed that newspapers care about investigative stories, but they frequently do not back that up with resources that reporters say they need to do indepth work (Houston, 2010). Hillary (2010) agrees that there is a dearth of investigative journalism in Nigeria. He identifies the reasons to be fear, laziness and inferiority complex in the Nigerian press. The Nigeria Press Council (NPC) in 2012 held a workshop on the impact of Freedom of Information Act on investigative journalism in Nigeria. It was observed that despite the law, most public institutions do not have a tradition of proper record keeping. Also, most state government are not showing commitment to the implementation/utilisation of the Act because it is viewed a federal law. Alawode (2008) argues that in Nigeria, the independent press, by which we refer to the newspapers and the news magazines owned and operated by individuals, have been actively involved in checking the excesses of governments as well as others in positions of authority. Of course, the story of the Nigerian mass media, especially the print media, can be said to be a story of struggle since the late nineteenth century when the first newspaper *Iwe Iroyin fun awon egba* was established in Abeokuta in present day Ogun State.

Alawode (2008) says the most focused and far-reaching war against corruption in Nigeria could be said to have started during the regime of the erstwhile President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, especially with the establishment of the two Anti-graft bodies: The Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and

the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The establishment of the two bodies provided great impetus for the press to perform the constitutionally ordained role of effectively watching over the activities of the government, so as to ensure efficient service delivery. Staphenurst (2000) posits that governments have little difficulty in providing information to the public that reflects well on itself. The problem arises, by contrast, when the information reflects the opposite.

The history of corruption in Nigeria is strongly rooted in the 29 years of military rule, out of 54 years of her nationhood since 1960. Successive military regimes subdued the rule of law, facilitated the wanton looting of public treasury, decapitated public institutions and free speech and instituted secret and opaque culture in the running of government business. Corruption became the dominant guiding principle for running affairs of the nation, Nigeria. The period witnessed a total reversal and destruction of every good thing in the country (Ribadu, 2006). The media can also unearth major cases within a broader social climate where graft, involving the abuse of entrusted power by government officials and persons in positions of authority are involved. This media intervention empowers the public to demand accountability in the use of the nation's resources. The media stimulate investigation into alleged stories. The media are seen to play an advocacy role, which highlights the need for the observance of the law and social justice (Asemah, 2013a). As noted by Sowunmi, Raufu, Oketokun, Salako and Usifoh (2010):

The role of the media is critical in promoting good governance and controlling corruption. It not only raises public awareness about corruption, its causes consequences and possible remedies, but also investigates and reports incidences of corruption. The effectiveness of the media in turn depends on the access to information and freedom of expression, as well as, a professional and ethical cadre of investigative journalists.

The above assertion shows that the media, whether print or electronic, have a crucial role to play in the fight against corruption and this can be done through investigative journalism, not only in Nigeria, but the entire globe. The assertion further shows that the effectiveness of the media depends on certain factors. These factors determine the extent to which the media can be used to fight against corruption, so as to bring about development in any given society. Besley, Burgess and Prat, in the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank (2002, p. 45) contend that the mass media can play a key role in enabling citizens to monitor the actions of incumbents and to use this information in their voting decisions. This, according to them, can lead to government that is more accountable and responsible to its citizens' needs. However, there are some factors that hinder effective practice of investigative journalism by journalists; the factors as identified by Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2013) are:

1. **Proprietorial Interference:** This is the problem of ownership interest. This is a problem that often arises from the interference of the owners of the media house. There are instances when media owners determine what should be reported to the public. The owners of a media house have influence not just by direct intervention or by establishing lines that cannot be crossed; they set the tone, they decide which markets to target, they control editorial budgets and they hire and fire their editors, who are their representatives in the media world. Thus, the editor's powers can be constrained when the owners insist and impose policies on the media house.
2. **Media GateKeepers:** The gatekeeper decides which information will go forward and which will not. In other words, a gatekeeper in a social system decides which of a certain commodity, materials, goods and information, may enter the system. Important to realise is that gatekeepers are able to control the public knowledge of the actual events by letting some stories pass through the system, while keeping others out. Media gatekeeping shows that decision making is based on principles of news values, organisational routines, input structure and commonsense. As noted by the National Open University of Nigeria (2011):

In the media world, a number of gatekeepers exist to ensure that standards and expectations are met. This process involves the selection and modification of sentences, paragraphs and even stories, while

others may be paraphrased, shortened or deleted all together. This is the job of editors, who serve as a major check for all news stories prepared for public consumption. In doing so, they create limitations for the investigations of certain topics, people and situations.

3. **Political Interference:** According to Yaroson and Asemah (2008), cited in Asemah (2011b), the political arrangement in any given society goes a long way in determining the communication behaviour of its members. This implies that the prevailing political situation in any given country has direct bearing on the pattern of communication. Akinfeleye (2008), cited in Asemah (2011b) concurs when he contends that a polity that is politically unstable with idiosyncratic media policies cannot seriously harness the potentials of media development.

4. **Limited Access to Information:** Freedom of information as a concept describes the opportunity of both the media and the citizenry of a nation to have maximum access to information of both public and private institutions. The concept, as noted by Rodney, in Okon and Udoudo (2010, p. 2) developed out of the basic right to freedom of opinion and expression, enshrined in Article 19 on Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which also includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek and receive and impart information and

ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” The major principle of freedom or access to information is that information generally belongs to the citizenry and that people create the government, which amasses the information, hence, the information belongs to the public and each person is entitled, at all times, to complete information about the affairs of government and the official acts of public officials and employees. This implies that information is a public property, which should be made available to the citizenry at all times; failure to make the information available is a breach of the rights of the citizens.

5. **Threats to Life:** In the course of investigating issues of relevance within a society, the journalist is often faced and exposed to various hazards and dangers. According to Osungbohun, cited in Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2013), the Committee to Protect Journalist in 1991 reported that there were 1262 cases of attacks against journalists; out of this number, 267 of the cases were recorded in Africa.

6. **Official Secret Act:** This acts as the comprehensive legislation on the restriction on access to Nigerian government- held information and it concerns itself with the prevention of spying and sabotaging the nation’s strategic installations. Section 1 of the Act makes it an offence for any person to transmit any classified matter to a person to whom he is not authorised, on behalf of the government. It is also

an offence under this section, for any person without being authorised by government to obtain, reproduce or retain any classified matter. Also, a public officer who fails to comply with any instructions given to him on behalf of government, as to the safekeeping of any classified matters, which by virtue of his office is obtained by him or under his control, is guilty of an offence of the Act. When a journalist comes in contact with a classified document and publishes it, he is prima-facie liable for the offence. The Nigerian journalist finds himself between the devil and the deep blue sea in that, while state security matters are secrets to be kept away from the public, the media are not organs for keeping secrets, but for leaking and publishing them (Asemah, 2011, cited in Galadima and Asemah, 2012).

7. **Constitutional Provisions:** Even though press freedom is guaranteed in the constitution, it limits the proclaimed freedom to itself (Constitution). That is, the journalist is not assured of the freedom. Even though it is guaranteed in the constitution, there is no statutory backup in Nigeria. There is freedom of expression, but not freedom of the press. Journalists do not enjoy the fundamental human right to practise as provided for in the Nigerian Constitution, partly because, instead of protecting these rights without the force of law as in the US first Amendment, these rights are not only qualified, but also curtailed by the

same Constitution. Section 39 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution qualifies and tactically curtails freedom of expression and of the press. Subsection two of section 39 places prior restraint on the ownership of the media for the exercise of freedom of speech, particularly on the broadcast media.

Chigbo (2007) observes that section 39, subsection 3 validates and justifies any law made for the purpose of preventing disclosure of information received in strict confidence while in the service of the state in government or in the armed forces and the police or the state security service or otherwise, required by the courts. Section 45 of the Constitution further limits the exercise of freedom of expression and of the press. It totally abrogates all the rights and gives constitutional backing to all laws made in the interest of national security (defence), public safety and public order (seditious law), public morality (obscene publications), public health (advertising) and the purpose of protecting the rights and freedom of other individuals in the society (law of defamation). This however shows that even though press freedom is guaranteed in the Constitution of Nigeria, it is only a mere say as there are technicalities used by government in most parts of the world to cynically avoid what has been guaranteed in the constitution. Thus, when a journalist freely airs out his opinion on any issue especially as it affects the government, the journalist has no basis for defence

because press freedom has no legal protection as it is only a mere constitutional statement (Chigbo, cited in Asemah, 2011b).

8. **Ethnicity:** There are many ethnic groups and tribes in Nigeria. At least, there are three major ethnic groups and several hundreds of both major and minor tribes - the Yorubas, Kanuris, Idomas, Etunos, Urhobos, Itsekiris, Isokos, Ijaws, Beroms, Jukuns, etc. The people exhibit these shades of divisions in so many spheres of life. We have an ethnically divided society and when an event takes place in the society, most investigative journalists are always unable to transcend those ethnic affiliations.

METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study is quantitative research method. The quantitative design adopted for the study is content analysis. Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and qualitative description of the manifest content of communication.

The researcher content analysed *The Daily Sun* and *Nation* newspapers to determine whether they pay attention to investigative journalism. The period of study was from January to June, 2013.

The population of the study is the total number of publications of *The Sun* and *The Nation* newspapers from January to June 2013. This gives a total of 362 editions for the two newspapers under study. These newspapers were chosen because they have a nationwide coverage. The sample size for the study is 78. This was arrived at, using the Bourley's method of sample size determination. According to Osuala, cited in Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo and Okpanachi (2012), using a sample that is too large is a waste of resources. The systematic random sampling technique was used to select the newspapers. The units of analyses were features, columns, articles, news stories, editorials and cartoons. Unit of analysis is the smallest element of a content analysis. The content categories were concerned with how the study outlines investigative journalism practice into significant and objective categories.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

A total of 72 editions of the two newspapers were analysed. This includes 36 editions of *The Sun* newspaper and 36 editions of *The Nation* newspaper.

Table 1: The number of investigative stories reported by the newspapers within the study period

Month	Frequency		Total	
	The sun No. %	The Nation No. %	No. %	
January	16 (25)	14 (20)	30 (22)	
February	9 (14)	12 (17)	21 (16)	

March	12 (19)	9 (13)	21 (16)
April	13 (21)	17 (24)	30 (22)
May	5 (8)	8 (11)	13 (10)
June	8 (13)	11 (16)	19 (14)
Total	63 (100)	71 (100)	134(100)

The table above shows that between January and June, 2013, *The Sun* newspaper reported a total number of 63 investigative stories and *The Nation* newspaper reported 71 investigative stories. In January, *The Sun* reported 16 while *The Nation* reported 14. In February, *The Sun* reported 9 while *The Nation* reported 12. In March, *The Sun* reported

12 while *The Nation* reported 9. In April, *The Sun* reported 13 while *The Nation* reported 17. In May, *The Sun* reported 5 while *The Nation* reported 8. In June, *The Sun* reported 8 and *The Nation* reported 11. These imply that, both newspapers reported investigative stories in all the months of the study period.

Table 2: The genre of stories which appeared in both newspapers

Variables	The Sun		The Nation		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Straight News	13	(21)	24	(34)	37	(28)
Feature	15	(24)	12	(17)	27	(20)
Editorial	11	(18)	8	(11)	19	(14)
Interview	8	(13)	11	(16)	19	(14)
Cartoons	7	(11)	5	(7)	12	(9)
Column	9	(14)	11	(16)	20	(15)
Total	63	(100)	71	(100)	134	(100)

From the table above, both newspapers reported investigative stories in all the genres, but in different proportions. For straight news, *The Sun* had 13 while *The Nation* had 14. For feature, *The Sun* had 15

while *The Nation* had 12. For editorial, *The Sun* had 11 while *The Nation* had 8. For interview, *The Sun* had 8 while *The Nation* had 11. For cartoons, *The Sun* had 7 while *The Nation* had 5. For Column, *The Sun* had 9

and *The Nation* had 11. Features had the highest percentage- 24% while cartoons had the lowest percentage-11%

Table 3: The size of space allocated to investigative stories.

Variables	The Sun No. %	The ation No. %	Total No. %
Over full page	8 (13)	6 (9)	14 (10)
Full page	21 (33)	24 (34)	45 (34)
Half page	25 (40)	30 (42)	55 (41)
Less half page	9 (14)	11 (16)	20 (15)
Total	63(100)	71 (100)	134 (100)

The table above shows space allocation to investigative reports in the selected newspapers. *The Sun* allocated over a full page to 8 stories while *The Nation* did the same to 6 stories. *The Sun* allocated full page to 21 stories while *The Nation* did so

to 24 stories. *The Sun* allocated half page for 25 while *The Nation* offered same to 30 stories. *The Sun* allocated less than half a page to 9 stories while *The Nation* allocated same to 11stories.

Table 4: The positions of investigative reports in the newspapers

Variables	The Sun No. %	The Nation No. %	Total No. %
Front page	40 (64)	45 (63)	85 (63)
Back page	7 (11)	9 (13)	16 (12)
Inside page	16 (25)	17 (24)	33 (25)
Total	63 (100)	71 (100)	134 (100)

From the table above, *The Sun* placed 40 stories on the front page while *The Nation* placed 45. The Sun placed 7 stories on the back page while The Nation placed 9. The Sun placed 16 stories on the inside pages

while The Nation placed 17. These indicate that, most of the investigative reports in both newspapers were reflected on the front pages.

Table 5: The kind of investigative stories reported.

Variables	The Sun		The Nation		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Political corruption	6	(9)	8	(11)	14	(9)
Misappropriation of resources	18	(26)	23	(31)	41	(28)
Professional Misconduct	10	(14)	8	(12)	18	(12)
Violation of rights	26	(37)	29	(34)	55	(37)
Terrorism	4	(6)	3	(5)	7	(5)
Others	6	(9)	8	(10)	14	(9)
Total	70	(100)	79	(100)	149	(100)

In the table above, the frequencies were not presented to tally with the conventional total because of the peculiarity of the issue analysed. In one investigative story, there could be a reflection of more than one crime or corrupt practice. However, from the table,

there is a wide range of crime and corrupt practice reports. For both newspapers, the violations of rights which include human and organisational rights has the highest number of reportage, while terrorism has the least reportage

Table 6: The newspaper that reports investigative journalism more

	January No. %	February No. %	March No. %	April No. %	May No. %	June No. %	Total	Percentage %
The Sun	16 (25)	9 (14)	12(29)	13(21)	5 (8)	8 (13)	63	47%
The Nation	14 (20)	12 (17)	9 (13)	17(24)	8 (11)	11 (10)	71	53%
Total	30	21	21	30	13	19	134	100

The *sun newspaper* reported 63 investigative stories with 47% and the *Nation newspaper* reported 71 investigative stories with 53%.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings show that the newspapers practise investigative journalism. With the frequency recorded, it shows that the newspapers actually carry out investigative journalism, but the extent to which they do that is very low. The number of investigative reports does not tally with the rising rate at which corruption is practised in the nation. It cannot be categorically stated that the newspapers exclusively utilised the power they were endowed with, to expose crime and corrupt practices. Alawode (2008) corroborates this when he says that the print media still have a lot to be done in the fight against corruption, especially if Nigeria must join the 20 most developed economies in the world.

However, discovery from the data on space allocation does not encourage applause for the newspapers. The highest percentage of stories is allotted half a page in both newspapers. In some cases, photo takes a good fraction of the limited space. To a large extent, there is a relationship between depth and length of reports in the print media. The researcher

found out that the investigative reports that were lengthier gave more thorough approach to the issues in question. Okoye (2007) also points out the importance of in-depth reports "it is the desire of the citizens to be fed with in depth and accurate messages with the knowledge that the mass media is the fourth estate of the realm". If the public discovers the information they get is limited, there will be an outburst of distrust in the source." In 2006, a survey of one hundred newspapers by Arizona State University students also reported that newspapers care about investigative stories, but they frequently do not back that up with resources that reporters say they need to do in-depth work (Houston 2010).

Furthermore, to judge the level of prominence, the researcher focused on the page placement of investigative stories. A good percentage was placed on the front and back pages. This could be due to the fact that back and front pages are important in the sales of newspapers. Basically, the front pages are meant for headlines and the back pages are columns. Investigative stories have the capacity to draw the attention of the public. People respect moral order, especially for others, and in the end prefer justice to expediency. It is clear that the essence of investigative reporting is to find itself or to

have basis for accessing or regulating moral conducts in relation to duty, obligation and moral responsibility to the society.

The findings further show that investigative stories were carried out in various journalistic genres. In both newspapers, investigative journalism appeared in news, features, columns, editorials, cartoons and interviews. In *The Sun*, features, followed by news are most used, while in *The Nation*, news, followed by features is the mostly used genres. Cartoons had the lowest frequency. The findings also show that the newspapers reported several stories. This includes: political corruption (election rigging), misappropriation of resources (bribery, money laundry), armed robbery, embezzlement, theft and fraud), professional misconduct (unethical practice and incompetence) terrorism and violation of rights (human and organisational -rape, kidnapping, murder, injustice, slander, contempt). More attention was devoted to the reports on violations of human and organisational rights and less attention was given to terrorism. This is a challenge. Over time, terrorism has been a serious issue in Nigeria. Although, there are several reports on the activities of terrorists, but very little has been done in unearthing the deep, but vital information that will help subjugate terrorism. Information like: their hide outs, strategies and particularly their sponsors need to be given serious attention.

The agenda setting theory of McCombs and Shaw comes to play here; the elements involved in agenda-setting include the quantity or frequency of reporting; prominence given to the reports-through

headline display, picture and lay out in newspapers, magazines, films, graphics or timing on radio and television; the degree of conflict generated in the reports and cumulative media specific effects over time. Accordingly, agenda-setting implies that the media pre-determine what issues are regarded as important at a given point in time in a given society. Although, the theory does not ascribe to the media the power to determine what people actually think, it does ascribe the power to determine what the public are thinking about. The role and functions of the press in the society aid in identifying and setting the tone of public debate on issues; findings also show that *The Nation* newspaper reported investigative stories more than *The Sun newspaper* with a percentage of 53% to 47%.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examines the performance of print media in the area of investigative journalism. The researcher employed content analysis as the research design while coding sheet was used as the research instrument. Findings show that the print media practice investigative journalism; but the reportage is unimpressive when compared with the challenge posed by the high rate of corruption in Nigeria. In ascertaining the level of prominence accorded investigative reporting, it was also discovered that the page positioning of most investigative stories is on the front pages. However, the degree of space allocation to most investigative stories is relatively inadequate. It was also shown that the

various journalistic genres in which investigative stories appear are: news, features, columns, editorials, interviews and cartoons. Feature, news and editorial are mostly used while cartoons are the least used. The study also reveals that the kind of investigative stories the print media report are: political corruption, violations of rights, misappropriation of resources, professional misconduct and terrorism. Violations of rights are the most dominant issues reported while terrorism is the least reported. Finally, *The Nation* newspaper was discovered to practise investigative journalism more than *The Sun* newspaper.

Based on the findings, therefore, the paper concludes that the extent to which the print media practise investigative journalism in Nigeria is low. Based on the findings and conclusion, the paper recommends that:

1. investigative journalism takes more time and experienced journalists to

produce, therefore, journalism bodies and press houses should organise formal trainings that all certified journalists should undergo. This will “open their eyes” to the rudiments and intricacies of investigative journalism.

2. Press houses and Journalism bodies with their agenda setting power should intensify the struggle against factors that inhibit the practice of investigative journalism.
3. Journalists should imbibe the principle of social responsibility of their profession and shun unethical practices. Press houses should maintain strong commitment to investigative journalism. The legislative arm should pass favourable laws that will aid easy access to information, freedom of expression and publication, protection of news sources, and most importantly aid the enforcement of such laws.

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