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Influence of Media Staff Welfare on Effective Journalism Practice in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

An abstract is written along 100-200 words with a single space. Abstract content must explain the subject matter discussed in the article, the method used, the results or findings and conclusions. Abstracts are written in only one paragraph. This study examined the influence of media staff welfare on effective journalism. The study explored how media staff especially journalists' welfare are poorly handled by media owners and managers, therefore hampering their effective practice of the profession. The study reviewed scholars' opinion and empirical studies. Abraham Maslow Hierarchy of needs theory and functional/Efficiency theory were also used as the theoretical framework of this study. The study recommended that media ownership managers should fulfill their duties which is to motivate journalists through good and attractive welfare packages; this is because it could encourage and drive them to stay on the side of truth, objective news, reporting, and fairness and give them courage to practice investigative journalism even in the face of intimidation and attacks; good working conditions should be provided for journalists. It is also important that hard working staff are appreciated for their work etc.

INTRODUCTION

Mass media means technology that is intended to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public. The most common platforms for mass media are newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet. The general public typically relies on the mass media to provide information regarding political issues, entertainment and news.

The responsibility of the mass media as social institution cannot be over emphasized, it is not therefore not an overstatement to point out here that society and the functionality of government and its agencies are the reason the mass media exist. This means that the mass media have the responsibilities that are meant to keep society in peace, unity and progress. The media bind society together, provide socialisation, entertainment, information and education without which society will virtually collapse.

The mass media depend on society for survival. McQuail (2006) opines that they are dependent on economic and power structure of society and can be controlled or limited by those who own them. Secondly by their content, media are assumed to have potential for significant influences and that the particular ideas and values conveyed by the media can exert significant social exchange regardless of the nature of ownership. There is a clear indication suggesting a great emphasis on the influence of media production and reception on social factors, indicating that media messages function to influence its immediate physical environment. According to Rodney (2009), the media in performance of their traditional function of editorialising, information, correlation and socialisation, participates in the social life of the society.

The mass media serve as conveyors of information and have the capacity to shape public perception an issuesof importance. Nwagbara (2010) affirms that journalists in Nigeria have been described as a bastion of people's cogitation, which impacts on the public sphere, a realm where private individuals meet to address societal questions with the state. In the struggle for democracy and expansion of the public sphere in Nigeria, the media have been immensely active in bringing these to function. In spite of the challenges faced by the Nigeria media, they have been veritable platforms

for the dissemination of information, education to the citizenry, modelling of people thoughts and criticism of the state. It is in this light that it has been argued that the media being described as a watch dog is in recognition of its watchful and critical role against the bad practices of the government and private individuals. The media has been responsible in holding the citizenry, particularly the political leaders accountable in Nigeria (Omocral, 2016).

McOuail (2000) technically summarises the role of the Media in sustaining the public sphere by saying, the media have an obligation to the wider society in making sure news is truthful, objective, accurate, fair and relevant as well as having the capacity to broaden the confreres of the public sphere. The media help to shape public perception, public opinion and the process of dialogue in society (Lunat, 2008). The forgoing affirms the significance of the media, as well as the drivers of the media who are the journalists.

The media serve as a conveyor for critical rationality, objectivity, informed opinion as well as machinery for governmental checks and balances, especially now some countries like Nigeria is processing a critical democratic experiment.

Inspite of those immeasurable roles performed by the Nigeria journalists and media, it is disheartening that the staff welfare package of journalists is too poor, especially when compared with the risks and hazards associated with journalism in Nigeria (Olarinjan, 2008; Assay, 2009; Arogundade, 2011). It has been observed that the Nigeria journalists both in private and government owned media are poorly remunerated. Assay (2009) wrote on the staff welfare of journalists in Nigeria. He observed that journalists in the country are among the least paid in the world. In addition to not being adequately remunerated journalists in most news organisations have to endure long periods without salaries because their employers cannot find the money to meet their obligationsb to them. While there have been criticisms on men and women of the press on the issue of brown envelope syndrome, there is also need for attention to be paid on the poor welfare package of these journalists in Nigeria. There is need to address the problem of poor staff welfare for journalists and media workers in Nigeria, and other parts of the world.

METHODS

This study adopted the library/ desk research method and it relied mainly on secondary sources such as books, articles and online sources and previous researches of other scholars. This paper was an explanatory of conceptual review on the subject matter of discourse.

DISCUSSION

Worthy of note is that mass media are aspect of society that depend on economic and power structure of society and can be controlled or united by those who own them. The mass media are a means of communication that operates on a large scale, reaching and involving virtually everyone in society to a greater or lesser degree. They are media charged with the responsibility of gathering and disseminating information, to heterogeneous audience. Among other functions, the mass media are charged to perform information, education and entertainment responsibilities. The mass media serve as a conveyor for crucial rationality, objectivity, informed opinion as well as machinery for governmental checks and balances. The media help to shape public perception, public opinion and the process of dialogue in society. This affirms the significance of the media. It is noteworthy that the drivers of the media are journalists. And these drivers (journalists) need to be adequately taken care of so as to drive the information machinery of society with zest, vigour and wholeheartedness. In Nigeria, this is hardly the case as Nigeria ranks among the countries with poorest welfare packages for journalists and media workers. This trend need to change if we must make real progress in other sectors.

The journalism profession is one by its very nature, bedevilled with risks, threats and hazards. More often than not journalists have to go through different unpleasant conditions and experiences to source news and information. Hence, it is said that journalism is not for the fainthearted. Journalists are typically regarded as the livewire of mass media organisations. This is because they provide the necessary ingredient for media production news and information. Journalists, through their duties, inform and educate the public and enhance the development

of society. They set agenda for governance, hold leaders accountable, expose unwholesome practices in society, provide information in crisis, and draw attention to development needs and areas of society. Following the vast responsibilities journalists have to deliver and the risks associated with the job, the welfare of journalists should be paramount and adequately attended to by media organisations and the government. Welfare matters relate to adequate remuneration, good and safe working environment, health insurance, allowances, pension, health facilities, insurance schemes, and training opportunities. However, in Nigeria, the welfare and working condition of journalists is poor. Journalists continually lament non – commensurate remuneration, delayed or non – payment of salaries, non – provision of pension scheme, poor working conditions, and unavailability of insurance policies. Worst still, most media organisations also do not pay salaries, as well as benefits like pension, insurance and other statutory compensations. This unfortunate welfare conditions for journalist in Nigeria is evident in private and publicly owned media organisations, cutting across, the various media categories whether print or broadcast or online media outfits.

Poor welfare conditions for journalists manifest in financial intimidation, threats, physical pressure and psychological dangers as well as social and emotional risks for them and their families. Add all of these to the terrors of impurity that they suffer in the hands of overzealous security officials, political element and economic forces. Journalists' welfare has to be given adequate attention to make them more dedicated to their jobs. Attractive welfare packages will encourage journalists to practice investigative journalism even in the face of intimidation and attacks. From the foregoing, it is reasoned that the provision of welfare packages for journalists as they practice in their beats will encourage them to be more efficient.

CONCLUSION

The media cannot be mentioned today without giving credence to journalists. So, going by this, it becomes crystal clear that journalists are the frontiers and staff of the media whose welfare matters are to be highly considered for effective and efficient performance. It is sad to state that owners have neglected and underestimated journalists and their welfare packages thereby hampering their effective journalism practices especially in the case of Nigerian journalists. There is an urgent need for an improved welfare packages and journalists should have a special salary structure to compensate for the risks involved in the profession

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