

Secularism and Ethical Issues in Media Practice as a Bane for National Development

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Abstract

This paper addresses secularism and ethical issues in media practice as a bane for national development. In communication studies, ethics is central and critical to the overall process of journalistic engagement, especially to the credibility in the gathering, processing, and delivery of information for believability. Every profession has acts, codes, ethics, or laws guiding its activities. Whether these codes are backed by effective sanctions is also another issue. Media as a very vital sector of the society guided by certain fundamental law and ethics, which guides every action of journalists. While the laws are no doubt legal issues, which can lead to litigation and subsequent prosecution, many have argued that ethics are moral standards whose violations are not backed by sanctions. Within this context, this paper examined secularism in the Nigerian context, the forces that threaten the growth of secularism in Nigeria, ethical issues in Nigerian media and how it affects national development, and factors affecting ethical media practice and how it halted development in Nigeria. Development Media Theory serves the goal of the paper. The paper is predominantly based on information derived from the qualitative data using secondary sources such as relevant texts, journals, official publications, historical documents, and the Internet, which served as tangible sources of insight into the analysis. The paper argued that the media are very important subsystem in the social system that helps cajole and coordinate the other subsystems in the social system to enhance effective development. While the media cannot work independently to bring about development, other institutions also need the media for information dissemination, and sensitization via various mediums to actualize developmental objectives.

Keywords

Ethical issues; media practice; national development; professionalism; secularism



I. Introduction

Nigeria's societal base comprises indigenous societies ranging in scale from the smallest autonomous village tribe to the largest kingdoms and empires of precolonial Africa. Within Nigeria, there are varieties of sects ranging from the Christian and Islamic sects to those of African traditional religions, which have threatened the unity of the country from time to time. The consequences of these cultural and traditional diversities are too many. That is why Nigerian unity and secular ideals have been threatened by the absence of intense feelings of patriotism and national integration. In the process, the fragile nature of the country's unity was brought to the fore; exposing the nation to sectarian violence, corruption, intense local parochialism, sectionalism, tribalism, and other fissiparous tendencies (Aondover et al., 2023). These situations ushered in a military coup

and counter-coups in 1966 and the civil war that followed from June 1967 to January 12, 1970. The recurrent competition for control of political power between the north and south, the fear of domination of the minority by the majority, regional greed, and the porous foundations of the country, became the main causes of the many coups and the long tenure of military rule in our short history as a nation. This calls for strengthening the secular character of the country which has been weakened by these happenings (Fineface, 2012).

This calls for strengthening the secular character of the country, which has been weakened by these happenings. The time is now than ever before. There should be a conscious effort to arrest the declining fortunes of the country. Right now, the Southern and Northern parts of Nigeria are also separated. This is because few people in the South would go to Kano state for instance. Not many people in their right senses from the South would go to Maiduguri. Few people from the South would go to the North, and that should be a cause for concern for every Nigerian, that a Southerner no longer feels safe to go to the North (Sunday Sun March 11, 2012, p. 2). Nigerian constitutions like the Turkish, Indian, and others are secular. This shows how secularism is given great importance in the Nigerian psyche. Despite various undemocratic features of Nigerian politics and government, presidential democracy is functioning, and with considerable vigour. Similarly, the secular state and its ideals are embodied in the constitution, and it is being implemented in substantial measures. The question must be answered in terms of a dynamic state which has inherited some difficult problems and challenges in struggling hard to overcome them along generally sound lines (Azaiki, 2003).

Within this context, the media serve as the mirror of every society and that is why its role in development cannot be underestimated. This is why some analysts see the success of society largely depends on the independence and success of the media. Meanwhile, for the media to contribute immensely to the development of society, the media need to be socially responsible and work within the ambit of the ethical profession. Journalism is often criticized and hardly enjoys public confidence because of what the journalists do or fail to do. Every profession is a guard and guided by certain laws, rules and regulations, whether formally or only recognized as conventions. The professional must therefore maintain some decorum and keep to certain standards of integrity to earn trust, and command respect in the performance of his chosen career. However, it is safe to argue that no media house can be sure that none of its staff engages in the distortion or omission of the truth. In other cases, the trouble even starts from the top where the owners or their managers pass policies designed to help one group and to be against another. This one way or the other has impeded development in Nigeria due to polarization of the media and unwholesome practice by media personnel (Idris & Msughter, 2022).

In Africa, the evolution of the media is marked by developments and contradictions. At stake often are rights, freedoms, and responsibilities. Different constitutions have provided a prism for interrogating the mix of these elements, in a way that provides perspective on the media as moderators and transmitters, and as the Fourth Estate of the Realm. How well the media are functioning, is a subject of contestation, with variable assessments, ranging from acknowledgments of the media's centrality to development processes right from the colony, to questions about what may be the progressive erosion of the capacities and relevance of the media, due to debilitating dysfunctionalities (Yar'Adua et al., 2023).

At the heart of the debate is ethics, which is as universal as it is local in the application, with Codes at the core of the professionalism undergirding journalism practice. A symbiosis is implicit or assumed in the relationship between law and ethics. Law, therefore, is supposed to strengthen the frames for the ethical anchor of media

operations and practice, and Africa in general and Nigeria, in particular, have laws specifically targeted at the media and its practitioners. As time has demonstrated, legislations although critical for societies and governance systems, also have issues of interpretation (Owens-Ibie in Aondover et al., 2021).

Egbon (2006) observed that journalism is often criticized, and hardly enjoys public confidence because of what journalists do or fail to do. Various professions are to abide by certain precepts, certain laws, rules, and regulations, which are recognized as a treaty. The professional must therefore maintain some decorum and keep to certain standards of integrity to earn trust and respect and command respect in the performance of his chosen career. The media are to champion certain responsibility for national development, especially within the theoretical framework of ethical conduct. This approach is justified by the fact that the functions and roles of the press largely reflect on the kind of ethical behaviours of the press. Pratt and Manheim (1988) maintain that a journalist is individually responsible for his or her actions and that the media organization is responsible to a broad range of public and their interests. Asemah (2011) remarks that mass media is one of the socializing institutions in society that can facilitate the promotion of culture. That socialization through the media can standardize culture at all social levels of society.

Based on the preceding observation by communication scholars, the media have an important role to play, specifically in how individuals construct their social identities, and how they perceive differences in sex, culture, race, religion, etc. This can be achieved by shaping text produced by the media for audiences segmented by the social constructions of race and gender. The media are central to what ultimately come to represent social realities (Brooks and Herbert 2006), and the media provide a lot of information about what it means to be a woman or man and about gender roles in the public and private spheres. This proves that relationships exist between media and gender, as the former influence the later. Within this context, this paper examined secularism in Nigerian context, the forces that threaten the growth of secularism in Nigeria, ethical issues in Nigerian media and how it affect national development, and factors affecting ethical media practice and how it halted development in Nigeria.

II. Review of Literature

Theory helps us to understand how mass media operate within a particular environment. There are hundreds of mass communication theories trying to explain certain issues. McQuail (2009) categorized mass communication theories into five classes: social scientific, cultural, normative, operational, and everyday theory. Folarin (1998) on the other hand categorized them also into four normative, social scientific, working, and common-sense theories. Normative theories are concerned with how the media operate in society. It prescribes how media operate within a particular environment. McQuail (2009, p. 14) states that normative theories are concerned with examining or prescribing how media ought to operate if certain social values are to be observed or attained. In the words of Baran and Davis (2012, p. 99) normative theories “describe an ideal way for a media system to be structured and operated.”

Normative theory helps to explain the ways societal communication rules impinge on mass media structure, conventions and performance, and highlights the consequences of non-convergence between societal communication principles and mass communication principles. Within this context, it is pertinent to situate this discussion under a suitable theory of communication to improve understanding of where the media stands in society, especially in a theoretical context as explained by scholars like Baran and Davis. This is

apt because the topic under investigation focuses on ethical issues in media and how they can help in development or how unethical practice of secularism can impede development. Within this premise, Development Media Theory serves the goal of the paper.

III. Research Method

This paper is exploratory, as it utilizes, the descriptive research method whereby relevant literature, documents, and records were consulted and analyzed based on the existing literature to interrogate media ethics and power in multicultural Nigeria. The paper is predominantly based on information derived from the qualitative data using secondary sources, such as relevant texts, journals, official publications, historical documents, and the Internet, which served as tangible sources of insight into the analysis based on thematic areas. The method was used to evaluate such findings with other existing literature on the subject matter. The method help findings in the works available, check the consistency of such findings, and evaluates such findings with other findings.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1 Thematic Findings and Discussion on Secularism in Nigerian Context

It has been observed that, right from the beginning, the secular credentials of the nation have been put to test. Soon after the independence of the country on 1st October 1960, sectarian violence broke out in the Western region. It was here for the first time in the history of Nigeria that cross carpeting was born on the floor of the Regional House of Assembly. Members from different parties were crossing over from one party to another. It was followed by arson and criminalizing of politics. At the national level, the cultural and traditional diversities equally manifested, especially in the way issues were tackled in the Parliament. In the process, Nigerian secularism and unity were threatened by these happenings. Despite the spirit of the constitution and the disparate efforts of the government at maintaining and or sustaining the unity of the country by initiating, for example, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), encouraging inter-tribal or religious marriages, making sure that the Federal Cabinet is drawn from all segments of the Federation just to mention but a few. The tranquility that these policies brought has been threatened from time to time affecting the fabric of the Nigerian polity.

Such a hydra-headed monster playing such a mixed role is very pretentious and need to be checked and mated at all cost. This is a sine qua non before any meaningful negotiations can take place that will usher in peace and development in that part of the country. It must be mentioned here that Boko Haram (which means Western education is forbidden) was founded in 2002 by an Islamic cleric called Mohammed Yusuf and supported by some politicians. It had links with Al-Queda in northwest Africa. They have been involved in sectarian violence in the country which has claimed more than 30 thousand lives according to British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News report (6th Nov. 2011). The actions of Boko Haram are therefore stifling the working of secularism in this country. Contrary to the secular credentials of the country, the southerners working in the North are treated as outsiders and are given employment as contract staff in state ministries and parastatals. This is contrary to what is happening in the South, especially in Rivers State for example where, both in the ministries or government parastatals any one given job is treated in the same way whether North or South.

This is in accordance with Article 15(4) of paper two of the 1999 Nigerian constitution, which states that “The state shall foster a feeling of belonging and of

involvement among the various peoples of the Federation to the end that loyalty to the nation shall override sectional loyalties. Equally, Article 17(3a) of paper two of the constitution buttresses this stand when it says, all citizens without discrimination against any group whatsoever, have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment. In the same vein, Article 17(3c) says that there is equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex, or any other ground whatsoever.”

While the Federal Government is yet to overcome the impact or awareness created by the Niger Delta Youths and Militancy due to poverty and environmental degradation of the region caused by oil exploitations and explorations, retrogressive activities of religious outfits like the Boko Haram if not checked, will bring back the hand of progress in the country 61 years. If Western Education is forbidden can Nigeria be able to meet up with the development going on around the world in one field or the other. The country is aware of how Africa had remained backward due to a lack of knowledge in Mathematics which had helped the western world to move forward (Nduka, 2006). Before now, the country has seen how states in the North like Zamfara had formalized Islamic Law which is the mixture of the full traditional Islamic law with secular laws and values. The killing of Deborah Samuel in Sokoto State, among other incidents, are pointers or indications of secularism in Nigeria.

4.2 Forces That Threaten the Growth of Secularism in Nigeria

Religion has remained a core, largely divisive part of the politics of regions and ethnicity in Nigeria. Raw appeal to the religious persuasion of candidates for public office is common. The Bible and the Qu ‘ran have become part of the staple of playing the divide and conquer strategy in the geopolitics of the country of more than 200 million people. It has been so even before the independence of the country in October 1960. Nevertheless, the following are among the notable forces that threaten secularism in the country.

1. Religion: ethnic and political unrest had been a regular occurrence in the history of pre and post-independence Nigeria. However, it has recently triggered violence in Nigeria. The country’s Muslim and Christian communities have clashed over the proposed introduction of the Sharia Islamic Law. Hundreds have died during the fighting in Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto, Bornu States, and beyond. The Nigerian Constitution stipulates that we are Nigerians first and then Muslims and or Christians second. This is not the unity in diversity the founding fathers stood for.
2. Ethnicity: a common relation to the other relevant ethnic groups characterizes ethnicity. The division of the country in 1900 into three unequal parts ushered in an era of ethnic politics and chauvinism in Nigerian society. Ethnicity has come to be recognized as something to conserve or recapture a political identity based upon race, etc. that is why ethnicity has become an important issue confronting the country. According to Nnoli (1978), ethnicity is a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups. Ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by communal factors which may be language, culture, or both. It is this social formation that affects the performance and functioning of the leaders as they may be influenced in their actions and decisions due to their ethnic inclinations and parochial mentality. The interethnic struggle for social and economic dominance also inevitably leads to nepotism and its attendant consequences, mostly hostility in the form of interethnic violence.
3. Tribalism: this is a twin brother of ethnicity and has been the major cause of the domestic political inability in the country immediately after independence and until the

early 1990s. This is noticeable in the utterances of the leaders from the three major tribes (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo), made from time to time. This is a cause for alarm. Tribalism has been a thorn in the flesh of the country like every other African country. It has been against the development of the country and the continent as a whole. Tribalism has led to ethnic politics and the issue of marginalization. In the process, this has led equally to ethnic mistrust and under-development.

4. Political Competition for Power: the dreaded Boko Haram terrorists have only presented religious sentiments as their major grouse, the major reason for their sustained slaughter against innocent citizens, which they have failed to make public and for which notable Northern elite have sources in the North reveal recently that the terror attacks would be sustained in higher intensity. It is for this reason of power tussle or competition for power that, since Buhari resumed office as an elected president, his government has been engulfed by chaos. Beginning from the past election violence that engulfed parts of the North till date, terrorist attacks in the North have remained on increase. This happened in the first republic that resulted in coups and counter-coups that finally led to the civil war from 1967-70. This same thing repeated itself in the 2nd republic. It played itself again on June 12 which declared late Abiola the winner of the election that was annulled. This has been a re-occurring decimal in the Nigerian politics.

4.3 Ethical Issues in Nigerian Media and how it Affect National Development

Since ethical issues are supposed to be enforced personally by the individual or media practitioners, it becomes a bit easy for personnel to go against professional ethics in one way or the other. More so, the fact that ethical issues are not necessarily liable under the law like legal issues, journalists tend to violate the ethics of the profession either for individual interest, religious or ethnic interest. Adherence to professional media ethics started becoming a problem right from the inception of the profession itself. According to Agbaje, (1992, p. 42) at the beginning, “practitioners included the commercially frustrated local elites driven out of business by unfair competition from European monopolists, the unemployed, those sacked from jobs in ailing European firms, dropouts from other professions”, etc. The above shows that the forerunners of the profession, apart from the fact that they lacked the basic educational prerequisites, did not know or even see the job as a profession. Early practitioners went into the profession either to make ends meet or to obtain a meal ticket. According to Burra and Ibrahim (2016) this perception continued, even, after independence in 1960 (Aondover et al., 2022).

Despite this, modern-day media practitioners are to follow or adhere to the ethical standards of objectivity, neutrality, impartiality, and most importantly non-acceptance of gratification. Journalists are to balance stories and report them objectively without any form of ethnic, religious, or personal sentiments no matter who is involved in the event. This usually directs policymakers toward making a sound decision as regards the situation of things. Thus, the media report things as they see them, especially in the period of conflict-dominated 21st century where security agencies see media reports as a template to address security issues. In addition, as regards the non-acceptance of gratification, media practitioners are to remain highly professional and reject any form of gratification because this may affect the objectivity of their reportage. The media are not to give a favorable report to certain stories because it affects a certain group of people nor are they supposed to be culpable in killing important stories because it does not affect a certain area. A good example is the lack of proper media reportage on the killing of Deborah Samuel, a 200 Level Economics student at Shehu Shagari College of Education in Sokoto.

Unethical conduct leads to a loss of credibility in the journalism profession. Elsewhere, an ethically indicated person is very unlikely to rise to a position of trust and leadership. It dogs the perpetrator through life like an albatross around the neck. However, in Nigeria, the story is not similar. This is not good for the collective reputation as members of the global community. When a country becomes notorious for indiscipline, corruption, and crookedness, nothing will ever be believed from that country. Such a country loses international credibility. Its documents, including certificates, receipts, and news reports, will not be believed. Similarly, insecurity in Nigeria today is backed by corruption and corrupt people in every sector. Nearly 98 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty making the country the world's capital of poverty, and this often reinforces anger in the minds of people with crime impendent (Aon dover et al., 2021).

According to Oyeyinka (2013), media ownership in the African context especially in Nigeria is a mixture of both private and government ownership. Their influences on the activities of the media are unarguably profound because he who pays the piper dictates the tune. Ownership and control influence or disallow media practitioners to be objective and fearless in their reporting. Dan-Agbese (1995) contends that no publication, no matter how independent it may claim to be, can escape servicing certain stakes either knowingly or unknowingly. This interest may be commercial, political, communal, tribal, or even religious. The consequence is that the dissemination of news is secondary to certain major ownership interests.

While appreciating the impact of the Nigerian media on the emancipation of the people right from the iron grip of the colonialists to date, Kukah (1996) stated that there is indeed a thin line between economic expediency and moral standards. The media being portrayed as societal agents of dissemination of information by which people shape their opinions, and ideals and are expected to operate within the purvey of its ethical code have been criticized for falling below societal expectations which Adeyemi (2013) termed as the seven deadly sins of the media.

Corruption in the media circle in Nigeria is prevalent because of the brown envelope syndrome in media practice. Generally, the brown envelope is a monetary bribe handed out to a person to put pressure to do what the bribe giver wants. It is any form of gratification a journalist receives to cover an event, which may influence the judgment of a journalist. The event may be a press conference, an interview of any sort, a workshop, or an impromptu or organized briefing. The coinage "brown envelope" evokes the idea of criminality in the mind of right-thinking persons (Adeyemi, 2013). This nomenclature is regarded because it is derived from the underworld business of wrapping wares in business envelopes. According to Obianigwe (2009), the term "brown envelope" is also used in some African and Asian countries. The broad term that perfectly covers the practice is "envelope journalism" which referred to red envelope journalism, white envelope journalism, et cetera. More recently, however, the term "ATM journalism" is becoming popular in society and the term indicates the change to electronic transfer of bribes into journalists' bank accounts.

A study conducted by Adeyemi (2013), shows that media organizations in Nigeria cannot be absorbed in blame regarding corruption in the media because some of them do not treat staff welfare with the seriousness it deserves. In a situation where staff is paid miserable salaries and the fact that such miserable salaries do not come regularly, this sort of situation keeps journalists under constant financial pressure. Thus, the media organizations do not frown at various forms of corrupt practices in the media, which contributes to underdevelopment in Nigeria.

The Nigerian press according to Chikaire (2016) is polarized along regional, sectarian or ethnic lines with every side protecting and supporting their kith and kin. He goes on to say that in the coverage of conflict, there is recklessness and partisanship on the part of the press instead of restraint and responsible reporting of events. Ganiyu (2009) also noted that the Nigerian press has not played any vital role in resolving politically-motivated conflicts because journalists are either on one side of the conflict or the other. According to Sobowale (1995), the audience of the media also influences what the media covers. The research discovered that there is no difference in the number of news carried out by both government and private newspapers, but the former hardly publish news that will tarnish the image of the government. This can also be applied to conflict situations like Niger Delta and Boko Haram. Ugbojah (1980) also buttressed the fact that geographical location is the most paramount factor in molding a newspaper's opinion and reportage, especially in Nigeria. For example during the Kano riot, it was reported that northern newspapers never reported that state Governors were warned by traditional rulers not to allow youths owing to the volatile nature of the city. The media only focused on casualties. Miwa (1999) also argues that if geographical expression and speculations affect a newspaper's position even on volatile national issues such as ethnic and religious strife, then their roles become suspicious.

4.4 Factors Affecting Ethical Media Practice and how it Halted Development

Some analysts may want to argue that media practitioners naturally may want to abide by professional ethics to the latter; some situations beyond the control of journalists may just be the reason behind unwholesome practice amongst them. One major yardstick is the fact that sanctions are not usually accompanied by the violation of many media ethics. Unlike medicine and law, media professionalization does not include standards for professional training and licensing where practitioners can be mandated to receive long and closely monitored professional training. For example, doctors and lawyers undergo from four to ten years of specialized training in addition to completing four years of college while media practitioners are unwilling to set requirements for professional training and have strongly resisted efforts to license journalists. This gives easy room to violate existing ethics that are merely abstract and sometimes ambiguous.

In addition, the fact that media practitioners suffer from little or lack of remuneration is no more news in Nigeria. This leaves several practitioners with the only option of receiving a brown envelope that makes their reportage to be compromised. According to a recent 'revelation' by the Lagos State council leader of the Nigerian Labour Congress, Peter Adeyemi, many Media houses owe their staff several months of their hard-earned wages. Adeyemi observed that Thisday Newspaper owes its staff nine months' salary, African Independent Television owes 17 months; Daily Independent owes its workers nine months while Tell magazine has not paid its staff for eight months. Other media who are culpable are the National Mirror, NewsWatch, PM News, Daily Champion, Hallmarks, and Daily Times who are allowing staff for several months. This sorry situation is enough for journalists to engage in the unwholesome practice for survival. The fact that different media represent different ideologies and sentiments makes it difficult for its staff to report everything as it happens.

Development communication and by extension the media have fallen under critical public scrutiny and condemnation for what is generally addressed as weaknesses of unethical practices. The ugly scenario of unethical acts of the media is a serious cause for urgent attention. This appalling situation of immorality in the media has created moral and psychological fear as expressed by various sectors of the polity including opinion leaders

and veterans in the media profession. These ethical maladies are evidence of the level of decadence into which our society had sunk and a clear indication of generational imbroglio within the rank and file of the media practitioners.

Olayiwola (1991, p. 36) traces unethical practice in the Nigerian press to the pre-independence period, to independence and post-independence period, saying “the leading party newspapers were not only locked in vicious combat but also, all the media provided remarkable examples of overzealous, irresponsible, partisan and recklessness.” Thus, he believes the irresponsibility of the press was a critical factor in the fall of the second republic because the media then were unable to develop the required ethics for the profession. Uche (1989) observed that, when Nigeria attained independence in 1960, the mass media orientation shifted towards reinforcing tribal and sectional loyalty in preference to the goal of the nation’s unity, identity, and integration. The press and other media became parochial in their content. They dedicated themselves to the articulation of particular ethnic groups.

According to a study by Oghenekevwe (2004), media coverage of conflicts has escalated ethnoreligious conflict, especially the crisis that affected the Delta State around 1999. The study made use of Vanguard newspaper as a case where it revealed that the paper sensationalized its report in favor of the Ijaws over the Itsekiri people. While the conflict led to the loss of lives and billions of property, the media were reportedly culpable in the role it played in escalating the crisis. There is no doubt that conflict is a serious impediment to development and if the media did not cover it objectively, it will be difficult to channel security assistance and solutions.

Similarly, Orhewere (2003) believes that electoral conflicts are sometimes caused by partisanship in media reporting while Pate (2003) noted that there is sycophancy, bribery, character assassination, sensationalism, and deviation from the truth in political and conflict reporting. This largely may be true considering how media reported the 2011 post-election violence where media reports in some areas triggered reprisal attacks in other areas. This led to the destruction of lives and properties and further led to the backwardness of those areas affected. This is perhaps why many surveys according to Nnamdi (2000), indicated that many people believe information conveyed by Television more readily than those by newspapers or magazines.

The crisis in the oil-rich region of Nigeria has lingered for a long time. It has continued to affect the successful exploration of crude oil in that region as militant groups continue to attack pipelines which has led to gas flaring and as a result affected electricity generation in the country. The media have been continuously blamed for unethical reporting of activities in the region by different media representing different regions. While government-owned media and other media located in other parts of the country tend to report stories from the angle of the negative activities of the militants and government efforts via some amnesty programs, media representing opposition and located in the southern region usually report the inefficiency of government in handling the problem in the region which has continuously led to pipeline attacks. This has for a long time prevented a suitable solution for the region and has massively impeded development in both the region and Nigeria as a whole.

Furthermore, the media have been accused of impeding development, especially in the area of getting involved, in several development plans in Nigeria. Although the government is culpable for not giving the media a major role especially in the actualization of development programs like the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies,(NEEDS) the media due to one form of sentiment or the other didn’t play their

role of information, education, and monitoring of the program. This subsequently led to the death of the NEEDS program.

Studies by Pate (2003) on the coverage of corruption by the media also found some level of loopholes in press coverage of the menace, which impedes development. Government newspapers are found to give sensational headlines when stories have to do with opposition members. In addition, a newspaper owned by the opposition newspaper and other regions of the country always accuses the government of witch-hunting. The newspapers also do not engage in investigating reporting to educate the citizens on corruption issues and its inherent danger while also failing to dig into corruption cases unless the anti-graft bodies make a press release.

V. Conclusion

The media are a very important subsystem in the social system that helps cajole and coordinate the other subsystems in the social system to enhance effective development. While the media cannot work independently to bring about development, other institutions also need the media for information dissemination, and sensitization via various mediums to actualize developmental objectives. In a situation where the media are found wanting especially in the reportage of important development issues like those that we have seen in several cases in Nigeria, it becomes a direct or indirect impediment to the development of the society. Even though certain factors may be responsible for unethical practice by media personnel, it doesn't make such degrading acts inevitable. Media institutions are advised to organize periodic professional training, seminars, and workshops for journalists to further reinstate and improve their professionalism and also explain how important they are to the development of society. Media practitioners should also be given adequate welfare even though it is believed that media practice is more of a sacrifice than a profession, journalists have families to cater for, thus they should be paid adequately when due. This will also go a long way in addressing the issues of secularism and ethical issues in Nigeria.

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