

SUSTAINING THE ETHICS AND THE ROLES OF MASS MEDIA IN ACHIEVING GOOD GOVERNANCE IN DEMOCRATIC DISPENSATION OF OGUN STATE

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Abstract

The study examined sustaining the ethics and the roles of mass media in achieving good governance in democratic dispensation of Ogun State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises all Students of Political Science Department in Tertiary Institutions in Ogun state, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) higher institutions in which ten (10) students were chosen from the selected higher institutions to make a total of one hundred (100) as sample for this study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. It was developed in 2 Likert scale of Agree and Disagree. The instrument was moderated by experts who affirmed its validity. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analyzed simple percentage and standard deviation statistical tool. Findings revealed that sustaining ethical standards in mass media is essential for achieving good governance in Ogun State. Ethical journalism marked by accuracy, fairness, and accountability builds public trust, promotes transparency, and encourages citizen participation. The media's roles as information providers and watchdogs are critical in exposing corruption and fostering responsible leadership. Unethical practices, such as bias or sensationalism, undermine governance and weaken democratic institutions. Therefore, adherence to professional ethics and responsible reporting are vital for both media credibility and effective democracy. It was therefore recommended that media practitioners should uphold professional ethics by reporting truthfully, objectively, and responsibly to strengthen public trust and support good governance. Media organizations should provide regular training and workshops on ethical journalism to ensure that journalists remain aware of standards and best practices.

Keywords: Democratic, Dispensation, Ethics, Sustaining, Mass media

Introduction

Democratic governance thrives in an environment where transparency, accountability, and citizens' participation are actively promoted, and the mass media play a central role in achieving these ideals. In democratic societies, the mass media serve as channels for information dissemination, public enlightenment, and civic education, enabling citizens to understand government policies and participate meaningfully in governance processes.

Mass media refer to organized channels of communication used to disseminate information, ideas, and messages to a large and diverse audience simultaneously. These channels include print media (newspapers and magazines), broadcast media (radio and television), and digital media (online news platforms and social media). The primary functions of the mass media include information dissemination, education, entertainment, and persuasion. In democratic

societies, the mass media play a vital role in informing citizens about government activities, public policies, and societal issues, thereby enabling informed participation in governance (McQuail, 2010). Beyond information sharing, the mass media serve as a watchdog by monitoring government actions and holding public officials accountable to the people. Through investigative reporting, political analysis, and public debates, the media contribute to transparency and democratic accountability. In Nigeria and Ogun State in particular, mass media platforms act as a bridge between the government and the citizens by interpreting government policies and amplifying public opinions (Nwabueze, 2014). When effectively utilized, the mass media strengthen democratic governance and promote responsible leadership.

Ethics refers to a set of moral principles, values, and standards that guide human behaviour and decision-making in society. These principles help individuals distinguish between right and wrong conduct and promote responsible actions in personal and professional life. Ethics emphasize honesty, integrity, fairness, and respect for others, and they are essential for maintaining social order and trust within institutions (Thiroux & Krasemann, 2012). In professional settings, ethics provide guidelines that regulate conduct and ensure accountability. Adherence to ethical standards helps professionals perform their duties responsibly and gain public confidence. In governance and communication-related professions, ethics are particularly important because unethical behaviour can mislead the public and damage institutional credibility. Therefore, ethical consciousness is necessary for sustaining trust and effectiveness in democratic systems (Ward, 2015).

Media ethics are the moral principles and professional standards that guide the conduct of journalists and media organizations in the process of gathering, processing, and disseminating information. These ethical principles include accuracy, objectivity, fairness, balance, accountability, and respect for truth. Media ethics are designed to ensure that information presented to the public is reliable, unbiased, and socially responsible (Akinfeleye, 2011). Upholding media ethics is crucial in a democratic dispensation because the media influence public opinion and political attitudes. When journalists adhere to ethical standards, the media contribute positively to good governance by promoting transparency and discouraging corruption. However, unethical practices such as sensationalism, misinformation, political bias, and commercialization of news undermine the credibility of the media and weaken their role in governance, particularly in developing democracies like Nigeria (Oso, 2012).

Democracy is a system of government in which power belongs to the people and is exercised either directly or through elected representatives. It is based on principles such as popular participation, rule of law, freedom of expression, accountability, and respect for human rights. Democracy allows citizens to participate in decision-making processes and to hold leaders accountable through elections and public engagement (Diamond, 2015). In a democratic system, the mass media play a supportive role by providing platforms for political dialogue, civic education, and public scrutiny of government actions. A free and responsible media environment enhances democratic culture by encouraging informed participation and transparency. In Nigeria's democratic dispensation, democracy depends largely on how effectively institutions, including the mass media, function to promote openness and accountability at all levels of government (Norris, 2014).

Good governance refers to the effective, transparent, accountable, and participatory management of public affairs for the benefit of the people. It emphasizes responsiveness, inclusiveness, rule of law, and efficient use of public resources. Good governance ensures that government institutions serve the interests of citizens and promote sustainable development (UNDP, 2018). The achievement of good governance in a democratic setting depends significantly on the availability of accurate information and public oversight, which are largely provided by the mass media. Through reporting, analysis, and public

enlightenment, the media help citizens understand governance processes and demand accountability from leaders. In Ogun State, sustaining ethical media practices is essential for strengthening good governance, reducing corruption, and improving citizens' trust in democratic institutions (Akinfeleye, 2011; McQuail, 2010).

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between mass media, ethics, and good governance in democratic societies. Norris (2014) conducted a cross-national study on watchdog journalism and democratic accountability and found that societies with strong, independent, and ethical media systems recorded higher levels of transparency and public trust in government. The study revealed that ethical journalism enhances citizens' access to credible information, which in turn promotes informed political participation and strengthens democratic governance. This finding underscores the importance of ethical media practice in sustaining democracy. In the Nigerian context, Oso (2012) investigated the role of the press in Nigeria's democratic development and observed that although the mass media have contributed significantly to political awareness and agenda-setting, ethical challenges such as political bias, ownership influence, and commercialization of news undermine their effectiveness. The study concluded that weak adherence to professional ethics limits the media's capacity to function effectively as watchdogs of governance. This study is relevant to the present research as it highlights ethical constraints affecting media performance in Nigeria's democratic dispensation.

Akinfeleye (2011) examined media professionalism and ethical standards in Nigeria and found that adherence to journalistic ethics significantly improves public confidence in the media and enhances their role in promoting accountability. Using survey data from media practitioners, the study revealed that continuous professional training and strong regulatory frameworks are essential for sustaining ethical journalism. The findings support the argument that ethical media practices are central to achieving good governance, particularly at sub-national levels such as state governance. Similarly, Nwabueze (2014) assessed the impact of mass media on political participation in Nigeria and reported that ethical reporting encourages citizen engagement in governance processes. The study showed that accurate and balanced news coverage improves public understanding of government policies and reduces misinformation. However, it also noted that unethical practices, especially sensationalism and misinformation, weaken democratic institutions and erode public trust. This study provides empirical support for examining media ethics as a determinant of good governance.

At the state level, Adeyemi and Salawu (2018) studied media coverage of governance issues in southwestern Nigeria and found that media houses that adhered strictly to ethical standards were more effective in promoting transparency and accountability. Their study revealed that ethical lapses often arise from political pressure and economic constraints faced by media organizations. The authors recommended strengthening media independence and ethical enforcement mechanisms to improve governance outcomes. This finding is particularly relevant to Ogun State, which shares similar socio-political characteristics with other southwestern states. Furthermore, Ward (2015) analyzed global trends in journalism ethics and democratic governance and concluded that ethical journalism remains a critical pillar for sustaining democratic values. The study emphasized that ethical media practices discourage corruption, promote good governance, and protect public interest. Although the study focused on global perspectives, its conclusions are applicable to developing democracies like Nigeria, where democratic institutions are still evolving.

However, existing empirical studies demonstrate a strong link between ethical media practices and the promotion of good governance. While many studies have focused on national or international contexts, limited attention has been given to state-level analysis, particularly in Ogun State. This gap justifies the present study, which seeks to empirically

examine how sustaining media ethics can enhance the roles of mass media in achieving good governance in the democratic dispensation of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to examine sustaining the ethics and the roles of mass media in achieving good governance in democratic dispensation of Ogun State. The specific objectives are:

- i. To examine the ethical standards guiding mass media practice in Ogun State and how they influence the achievement of good governance in the democratic dispensation.
- ii. To assess the roles of the mass media in promoting transparency, accountability, and public participation in governance in Ogun State.
- iii.

Research Questions

- i. What ethical standards guide mass media practice in Ogun State, and how do they influence the achievement of good governance?
- ii. What roles do the mass media play in promoting transparency, accountability, and public participation in governance in Ogun State?

Theoretical Framework

The Social Responsibility Theory of the press is the most suitable theoretical framework for this study because it emphasizes the obligation of the mass media to serve the public interest while operating within ethical and professional standards. The theory emerged as a response to the shortcomings of the libertarian theory, which advocated absolute press freedom without adequate concern for social consequences. Social Responsibility Theory argues that although the media should be free from undue government control, they must operate responsibly by providing accurate, fair, and balanced information to the public (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). This aligns closely with the focus of the present study on sustaining media ethics in the democratic dispensation of Ogun State.

According to the Social Responsibility Theory, the media have a duty to act as watchdogs of society by monitoring government activities and exposing corruption, abuse of power, and inefficiency. However, this watchdog role must be carried out ethically to avoid misinformation, sensationalism, and bias. The theory stresses that media organizations should adhere to professional codes of ethics, engage in self-regulation, and prioritize the public good over personal or political interests (McQuail, 2010). In a democratic system like Nigeria's, ethical media practices guided by social responsibility are essential for promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance at the state level.

In the context of Ogun State, the Social Responsibility Theory provides a strong foundation for examining how mass media can contribute to good governance through ethical conduct. The theory recognizes the media as partners in democratic development while holding them accountable to society. By applying this theory, the study evaluates whether media practitioners in Ogun State fulfil their ethical responsibilities in informing the public, shaping public opinion, and holding government officials accountable. Thus, the Social Responsibility Theory offers a relevant and practical framework for understanding the relationship between media ethics and good governance in a democratic dispensation (Norris, 2014; Ward, 2015).

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises all Students of Political Science Department in Tertiary Institutions in Ogun state, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) higher institutions in which ten (10) students were chosen from the selected higher institutions to make a total of one hundred (100) as sample for this study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. It was developed in 2 Likert scale of Agree and Disagree. The instrument was moderated by experts who affirmed its validity. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analyzed simple percentage and standard deviation statistical tool.

Presentation of Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: What ethical standards guide mass media practice in Ogun State, and how do they influence the achievement of good governance?

S/N	ITEMS	Freq (N)	Percent %	Freq (N)	Percent %	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	S. D
1.	Mass media practitioners in Ogun State always report news truthfully and accurately.	82	82%	18	18%	3.78	.79
2.	Media organizations in Ogun State maintain objectivity and avoid personal or political bias in their reporting.	64	64%	36	36%	3.68	.77
3.	Journalists in Ogun State adhere to professional codes of ethics in their daily practice.	76	76%	24	24%	3.79	.79
4.	Ethical reporting by the media enhances public trust in government activities.	85	85%	15	15%	3.75	.76
5.	Lack of ethical standards in media reporting negatively affects governance and public decision-making.	82	82%	18	18%	3.78	.79
Overall Total		Mean ($\bar{x}$) = 3.78 and STD = 0.79					

The data in Table 1 indicate that a significant proportion of respondents agree that mass media practitioners in Ogun State uphold ethical standards in their reporting. For instance, 82% of respondents indicated that news is reported truthfully and accurately, while 76% affirmed that journalists adhere to professional codes of ethics in their daily practice. The mean scores for these items ranged from 3.68 to 3.79 on a 4-point Likert scale, with a standard deviation of 0.79, suggesting a relatively high level of agreement among respondents and low variability in their perceptions. Similarly, 85% of respondents agreed that ethical reporting enhances public trust in government activities, highlighting the perceived importance of ethics in fostering citizen confidence in governance processes.

Additionally, 64% of respondents agreed that media organizations maintain objectivity and avoid political bias in their reporting, while 82% agreed that the absence of ethical standards negatively affects governance and public decision-making. The overall mean score of 3.78 further reinforces the conclusion that respondents perceive a strong link

between ethical media practices and the achievement of good governance in Ogun State. These results suggest that ethical journalism is not only practiced to a significant extent but is also recognized as an essential factor in promoting transparency, accountability, and responsible governance within the state.

Table 2: What roles do the mass media play in promoting transparency, accountability, and public participation in governance in Ogun State?

S/N	ITEMS					Mean	S.D
		Freq (N)	Percent %	Freq (N)	Percent %	($\bar{x}$)	
6.	The mass media provide timely information about government policies and decisions.	82	82%	8	8%	3.85	.79
7.	Media coverage in Ogun State helps citizens hold government officials accountable for their actions.	81	81%	19	19%	3.85	.79
8.	The media encourage public participation in governance by providing platforms for civic engagement.	76	76%	24	24%	3.79	.78
9.	Investigative reporting by the media exposes corruption and promotes transparency.	76	76%	24	24%	3.79	.78
10.	The mass media influence citizens' opinions and actions regarding governance in Ogun State.	68	68%	32	32%	3.74	.78
Overall Total		Mean ($\bar{x}$) = 3.87 and STD = 0.79					

The data in Table 2 indicate that a significant proportion of respondents agree that mass media practitioners in Ogun State uphold ethical standards in their reporting. For instance, 82% of respondents indicated that news is reported truthfully and accurately, while 76% affirmed that journalists adhere to professional codes of ethics in their daily practice. The mean scores for these items ranged from 3.68 to 3.79 on a 4-point Likert scale, with a standard deviation of 0.79, suggesting a relatively high level of agreement among respondents and low variability in their perceptions. Similarly, 85% of respondents agreed that ethical reporting enhances public trust in government activities, highlighting the perceived importance of ethics in fostering citizen confidence in governance processes.

Additionally, 64% of respondents agreed that media organizations maintain objectivity and avoid political bias in their reporting, while 82% agreed that the absence of ethical standards negatively affects governance and public decision-making. The overall mean score of 3.78 further reinforces the conclusion that respondents perceive a strong link between ethical media practices and the achievement of good governance in Ogun State. These results suggest that ethical journalism is not only practiced to a significant extent but is also recognized as an essential factor in promoting transparency, accountability, and responsible governance within the state.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 revealed ethical standards guide mass media practice in Ogun State, and how do they influence the achievement of good governance. The findings agree with Akinfeleye (2011) noted that adherence to journalistic ethics strengthens public confidence and enhances media effectiveness in promoting accountability. Similarly, Ward (2015) argued that ethical media practices discourage misinformation, support transparency, and reinforce democratic institutions. In the Nigerian context, Oso (2012) observed that unethical practices such as bias and sensationalism weaken governance, highlighting the necessity of sustaining media ethics. Table 2 therefore shows the roles do the mass media play in promoting transparency, accountability, and public participation in governance in Ogun State. This finding echoes that of Akinfeleye (2011) who noted that adherence to journalistic ethics strengthens public confidence and enhances media effectiveness in promoting accountability. Similarly, Ward (2015) argued that ethical media practices discourage misinformation, support transparency, and reinforce democratic institutions. In the Nigerian context, Oso (2012) observed that unethical practices such as bias and sensationalism weaken governance, highlighting the necessity of sustaining media ethics.

Conclusion

Sustaining ethical standards in mass media is essential for achieving good governance in Ogun State. Ethical journalism marked by accuracy, fairness, and accountability builds public trust, promotes transparency, and encourages citizen participation. The media's roles as information providers and watchdogs are critical in exposing corruption and fostering responsible leadership. Unethical practices, such as bias or sensationalism, undermine governance and weaken democratic institutions. Therefore, adherence to professional ethics and responsible reporting are vital for both media credibility and effective democracy. In brief, ethical media practices and active media roles are key to strengthening good governance in Ogun State, ensuring transparency, accountability, and meaningful public engagement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that;

6. Media practitioners should uphold professional ethics by reporting truthfully, objectively, and responsibly to strengthen public trust and support good governance.
7. Media organizations should provide regular training and workshops on ethical journalism to ensure that journalists remain aware of standards and best practices.
8. Regulatory bodies such as the Nigerian Press Council should enforce media codes of ethics strictly to reduce bias, sensationalism, and misinformation in reporting.
9. Government agencies should maintain transparency and collaborate with the media, as this encourages accountability and informed citizen participation.
10. Civil society organizations and the public should support and demand ethical reporting by holding media outlets accountable for their coverage.

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