Effective Communication as a Tool for Good Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

A critical element of governance is how citizens, leaders and public establishments relate to one another in order to make things work. Without a structure communication systems and procedures which permit the two-way communication between nation and citizens, it is sensitive to assume how nations may be responsive to public requirement and prospects. The ability to communicate effectively with citizens is one of the major functions of good governance. This study investigates effective communication as a tool for good governance in Nigeria. The survey research method was adopted and questionnaire was used as data collection instrument. Using the convenient sample of 500 respondents. Findings showed that the flow of information between the government and the citizens was not adequate and the extent to which the media have discharged their duties towards ensuring adequate flow of information between the government and the citizens. The study recommends that journalists should show more prominent obligation toward objectivity, stability and collective accountability in the inclusion as well as information dissemination.

Keywords: *Effective communication, Mass media, Good governance*

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INTRODUCTION

Communications can be regarded as indispensable to the e development of state capability, accountability, and responsiveness. Governments in advanced countries are acutely awake to the wish of the people to communicate, impact, and keep their legitimacy, and often construct elaborate buildings of press offices, and information ministries to carry out their functions. But in many developing countries, governments lack communications capacity, and the development of the communications function is hampered by a combination of weak incentives lack of professional training and communication infrastructure, and lack of supportive legal framework (Ihola as cited in Isabelle, 2015).

(Gap, 2009) Governance has been defined as the structures and processes that ensure accountability, openness, receptivity, public order, solidity, value and integrity, empowerment, and broad participation (Mcloughlin, & Scott, 2010). Governance also refers to the standards, qualities, and rules of the game that are used to monitor public affairs in a direct, participatory, comprehensive, and responsive manner.

.http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/geqaf/technical-notes/co ncept-governance. Good governance is referred to not only as government but also as justice, political parties, parliament, media and civil society according to The UK Department for International Development (DFID, 2016). Access to information and government transparency are very important for enabling voters to watch and hold government to account for its actions. But in many developing countries, governments lack communications capacity, and the development of the communications function is hampered by a combination of weak incentives lack of professional training and communication infrastructure, and lack of supportive legal framework. http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/commgap1.pdf

Communication drives better governance, including improving communities and the ability to communicate their needs and good performance (Mike, 2012). It can help people understand their freedoms and shape their ability to speak openly, and it can also give the masses direct information about the government's portrayal and the facts needed to hold the government accountable. Better communication between citizens and government has also been recognized for promoting responsiveness to people's requests, resulting in good public services. The media are generally set up as a key, which can change or block the provided reform. The proponents of communication maintained that, the media could be an area of relatively sub-installed state reform, which development experts may identify and recognize the role of the media regardless of whether in print style, television, radio or web print. If the media serve as effective agenda setter, watchdog and gatekeeper effectively, it will contribute to democratic governance and be accounted for.

Since the emergence of the first newspaper in Nigeria in 1859, through the anti-colonial struggle in political independence, the era of military rule in Nigeria, up until the current Fourth Democratic Republic, media have remained critical in Nigeria's democratic processes. For this reason, (Onyisi, 2016) believes that exercising of opinion is only through communication via the mass media. Okon, (2014),
listed standards that characterized governance
in cutting-edge societies, particularly that:

- The thrust of governance nowadays is no longer founded on the will of the people however on private greed and the self-aggrandizement of political actors.
- Governance in its existing nation has deepened poverty and widened inequality.
- Elections and campaigns are marked with the aid of sizable violence.
- The residents are grossly disappointed and appear to have misplaced belief in the Nigeria.

In an attempt to bring good governance in Nigeria, past government have organized tour in which officials from the Federal Ministry of Information along with press from different media houses, assessed the development of the projects of difference Federal and state authorities (Dunu, 2013). The tour was used by the media to evaluate the performance of elected officials at the federal and state levels. The arrangement for such exercise was made in Section 22 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution, subsequently: The press, radio, television and other broad communications organizations will always be allowed to maintain the major objectives outlined in this section as well as the public authority's obligation and responsibility to individuals.

Statement of Problem
Good administration centered on the prerequisite of all commitment of its people based on the dynamic development of information and trade between individuals, government and various players, including liability and responsiveness (DFID, 2006; Kaufman, 2007; Zeitel, 2013). By putting correspondence, data distribution, as major parts of administration and good connection among correspondence as well as adequate organization as anticipated. However, little has been known as to whether or not citizens are actively involved in government decision makings and electoral matters as it concerns their personal affairs and that of the nation in general; and whether the media perform their functions of ensuring adequate flow of

communication between government and citizens. In this context, the study sought to find out whether there is an adequate flow of communication between the government (elected representatives) and the citizens (masses); To determine whether Nigerian citizens participate in the decision-making process on political issues and the extent to which the Nigerian media has fulfilled its legal duties to ensure an adequate flow of communication between the government and citizens.

Research Questions

The following research questions served as guide in this investigation

1. What is the extent of communication flow between the government and the citizens?
2. What is the level of awareness about the programme and activities of government
3. What is the extent of citizen participation in ensuring good governance?
4. What is the perception of respondents on the level of effectiveness of the media in discharging their duties towards ensuring flow of communication between electorates and elected officers?

Review of Related Literature

The media system is incredibly pivotal and precious during a popular society. Hence, McNair (2002) stresses that "in popular political systems, the media function as transmitters of political communication appearing outside the media institution itself and as transmitters of political communication created by journalists. McNair (2002) enumerates 5 media functions in a popular society.

- They should inform residents about what is happening around them (media "detection" or "observation" elements).

- They need to be educated about the meaning and significance of" current realities"
  (the significance of   this skill shows the
    soberness with which intelligencers insure their
       Neutrality, as their value as preceptors
       involves a
       professional separation of
       the subjects dealt with).
- The media must provide a stage for public political dialogue, work on the elaboration of the "global assessment" and transmit this assessment to the population. In general, where it comes from, this

should include providing spaces for expression of contradiction, without which the popular concept would have no value.

The media have to provide a level for public political converse, paintings at the improvement of the "usual evaluation" and bring this evaluation to the people. In general, this encompasses the availability of space for the expression of the contradiction, without which the idea of famous junction could have no value. (McNair, 2002). To use Mikhail Gorbachev's famous phrase, there must be a certain degree of "openness" to the activities of the political class if the "public opinion" of the people is to influence decision-making. McNair (2002) points out that the advocacy function of the media can also be viewed as a persuasive function in which people can participate in decision-making and have access to the media and other information networks through which the advertising is carried out.

Communications Role in Governance

The Department of International Development (DFID, 2006) and the World Bank (2006) promoted the concept of governance as foremost on the development agenda. This acknowledges that citizens, civil society, and political groups have a right to have a say in how society is governed, how state resources are distributed and spent, and the ability to hold government accountable for policies and their outcomes. Citizens and their representatives will require knowledge to make educated decisions, as well as open communication channels in both directions - from the government to the people and from the citizenry to the government. According to Kaufman's (2007), there is a strong link between communication and governance, and media serve as monitors.

The World Bank (2006) defines Communication for Development as a process that facilitates the exchange of knowledge to achieve positive change in people's lives and promotes two-way communication between citizens and government, which is a democratic approach to which defines governance as "the methods and structures by which a country's authority is exercised". It is the process of selecting, holding accountable, monitoring and replacing governments; it also includes the government's ability to effectively manage resources and deliver services, and the formulation and implementation of appropriate laws and regulations, and respect for institutions who control economic and social relations. The positive benefits of communication are most evident when the

basic requirements for democracy and good governance are in place; for example, when there are mechanisms in place to hold the government accountable, such as elections, and when the government is willing to listen. There is also a need to ensure that conducive factors are in place to ensure that voices are heard and that citizens are given the means to hold the government accountable.

Communication therefore has a number of roles in promoting good governance. It can improve communities' ability to identify and articulate their needs and measure government performance. It can enhance the responsiveness of governments by improving citizens' understanding of their rights and increasing their ability to participate in public dialogue. Therefore, communication is considered essential to all components of government capacity, accountability and responsiveness to citizens. Besley and Burgess (2012) found that in areas where the circulation of newspapers in the local language is higher, governments are more receptive, leading to increased political pressure, competition and higher voter turnout.

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the social responsibility theory, which assigns six basic roles to the press, highlighted by (Cassata and Asante, 2019, p.78), include:

- Providing information, conversation and discussion on open issues.
- Instructing and illuminating the general population to make it equipped for self-government.
- Protecting the privileges of the person against government through its guard dog role.
- Maintaining the financial harmony of the framework by uniting purchaser, merchant and promoter.
- Providing showbiz.
- Remaining autonomous of outside pressures by keeping up with its own monetary independence.

Great administration and popular government blossom with the rule of informed electorate settling on mindful decisions and choices. The press are not just key roads for giving the necessary information; they likewise figure out what is accessible in the public area through their social obligation work.

Therefore, the mass media, as the fourth estate of the realm, have a responsibility to function independently and act as a watchdog by serving as a link between the government and the ruled (citizens). In other words, it is the duty of the media to monitor government activities and policies and relate them to the masses thereby enhancing equal participation of all citizens in the affairs of the country. Media check the excesses of the government as well as ensure accountability and transparency in activities and policies of government so as to achieve sustainable national development. Therefore, the media can help with standardizing popularity based culture in Nigeria assuming they viably discharge their social responsibility.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted the survey design, with the use of questionnaire as the major instrument for data collection. The study population comprised residents of Yewa South Local Government Area of Ogun state, Nigeria. Yewa South Local Government is indeed gifted with huge area of land area of 629 km² and a population of 168,850 going by census population (NPC, 2006). Using the convenience sampling technique, a sample size of 500 respondents was drawn from the population.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings
The researcher distributed a total of 500 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents, but 476 were returned, giving a response rate of 95.2% and a loss of (27) 4.8%. Hence, data presentation, analysis and interpretation were based on the 476 copies that were duly retrieved.

Research Question One: What is the level of awareness about the programme and activities of government?

Table 1: Respondents views on the level of awareness about the programme and activities of government

Item	Frequency	Percentage%
Yes	383	81%
No	93	19%
Undecided	0	0%
Total	**476**	**100%**

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 1 above shows that 383 (81%) of respondents revealed that they were aware of the programmes and activities of government while 93 (19%) said No.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of communication flow between the government and the citizens?

Table 2: Respondents views on whether information flow between the government and the governed.

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	127	26.7%
No	241	50.6%
Undecided	108	22.7%
Total	476	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 2 above shows that 127 (26.7%) of respondents agreed that there is flow of information between government and the citizens and 241 (50.6%) majority of the respondents said there is no flow of information while the remaining 108 (22.7%) were undecided.

Research Question Three: What is the extent of citizen participation in ensuring good governance?

Table 3: Respondents views on the extent of participation in decision-making concerning political matters

Item	Frequency	Percentage %
Very high	205	43.1%
High	123	25.8%
Low	148	30.1%
Very Low	0	0%
Total	476	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 above shows that (43.1%) participated very high and (25.8%) participated high, while (31.1%) participated low in political matters and governance.

Table 4: Respondents views on Citizens participation in electoral matters and governance.

Item	Frequency	Percentage %
Most often	116	24.4%
Often	247	51.9%
Rarely	113	23.7%
Very Rare	0	0%
Total	476	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 above revealed that (24.4%) of respondents participated Most often and the majority of the respondents (51.9%) indicated to have participated often in the electoral processes while (23.7%) of respondents indicated rarely.

Research Question four: What is the perception of respondents on the level of effectiveness of the media in discharging their duties towards ensuring flow of communication between electorates and elected officers?

Table 5 Respondents' views on the level of effectiveness of the media in discharging their duties

Item	Frequency	Percentage %
Very high	130	27.3%
High	208	43.7%
Low	138	29.0%
Very low	0	0%
Total	**476**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 5 above revealed that, (27.3%) of respondents said the effectiveness of the media in discharging their duties is Very high, and (43.7%) said it was high while (29%) said it was low.

Discussion

The study examined effective communication as a tool for good governance in Nigeria. Both communication and administration work together instead of as tactful cycles - correspondence can serve to stir the populace and the public authority to their individual responsibilities. Similarly, further developed administration can give the opportunity and space essential for further developed correspondence. From the data presented above, although majority of the respondents affirmed that they are well-informed about programmes and activities of government, they were also quick to observe that the flow of information between government and citizens was insufficient. This could be attributed to the nature of communication that exists between government and the masses through the media which is top-down instead of top-down and down-top. Accordingly, participation in decision-making was also low. The result further shows that the media need to do more in the discharged of their duties towards ensuring sufficient flow of information between the government and the citizens. This could be as a result of unfavourable conditions which hinder the media from performing their duties.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It can be concluded that discussion and information between the government and its people is seen as not sufficient enough. Meanwhile, top-down and down top communication will be better than vertically trickled top-down approach. This can be achieved through a responsible mass media. For the media to effectively carry out their responsibility and act as intermediary between the government and the governed, they must operate in a free and conducive environment. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are necessary:

1. The government should ensure there is good governance, there should be active and frequent participation of Nigerian citizens (masses) in decision-making concerning political matters. This can be enhanced by establishing local media through which the masses make their views known to government and also measure government performance.

2. The government should ensure enough flow of information between elected leaders and citizens should be top-down and down-top (two-way) and not vertically tricked top-down approach.

3. The media need to show a greater commitment to fairness, balance and social responsibility in their reporting and dissemination of information, especially towards government and citizens.

4. For the media to effectively carry out their responsibility, they must be allowed to operate freely by the government.

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