

‘Retainership’ Deal as Next Level of ‘Brown Envelope’ Syndrome: Replacing Advertising as a Major Source of Revenue in Nigeria Media

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Abstract: Corruption has been the bane in the Nigeria media industry, ranging from the popular ‘brown envelope’ syndrome (BES) to the current trend called ‘retainership’ among practitioners and media houses. This study dwelt on ‘retainership’, a deal reached between media houses and governments, organisations and corporate bodies, to be covered in a positive light by media houses, thereby retaining positive image for themselves. The objectives include ascertaining the extent to which mass media in Nigeria depend on ‘retainership’ deal as a means of generating income, finding out the perception of journalists about ‘retainership’ deal between their media houses and the government, finding out the factors necessitating ‘retainership’ deal between media houses in Nigeria and state governments and government agencies, examining the problems arising from making money through ‘retainership’ deal by Nigeria media and finding out ways of generating funds for mass media survival in Nigeria. Using in-depth interview, 18 journalists of editorial ranking were sampled for the study, across radio, television, print and online media. After a qualitative presentation and analysis of data, it was found out that many media houses go into ‘retainership’ deal to sustain their day-to-day running and since advertising no longer thrives as before, organisations prefer paying heavily to media houses to distort negative information about them. In addition, ‘retainership’ deal is reached by media houses to distort information from the public domain, while the peoples rights to information is violated. It was recommended among others, that media regulatory bodies monitor media houses and prevent them from submerging information meant for the public.

Keywords: corruption, ‘retainership’, ‘brown envelope’, advertising, media house

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I. INTRODUCTION

Among some of the worst paid reporters in Africa, Nigerian journalists are seldom given money to cover travel or other expenses, let alone paid their salary on time. Affecting the way stories are reported, some of the country's most pressing events have either gone unnoticed or underreported. Amid this climate where investigative journalism is severely stifled, corrupt and illicit practices have begun to flourish. Reporters are often seen waiting for cash handouts from politicians and government officials at press conferences before rarely questioning them or fact-checking. And in a country where corruption tends to trickle from the top down, it is becoming harder for readers to distinguish fact from fiction.

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Over the years, advertising has been the major source of revenue generation for mass media survival in Nigeria. This feat by advertising was made possible by the historic metamorphosis of mass media development across the ages, which dovetailed from the pre-colonial era, through the post-independence era. Advertising, as a concept, is the paid, non-personal presentation of good, service or an idea, by an identified sponsor. By this definition, advertising co-opts mass media as a tool for presentations are made to the audience about a particular product. In addition, advertising cannot be carried out without media men involvement, considering its need for personalities in the production of advertisement copy. For this reason, mass media are paid to air and publish the ads for various products over a period of time and/or page/space, as the case may be.

As a major source of revenue for media houses, advertising became a lucrative business in the 1940s after the first Omo ad was played on the then Nigeria Broadcasting Service (NBS), now known as the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). This development became more pronounced in the 1960s when television was newly introduced, followed by subsequent developments through presentations on television and other means. Advertising became a major tool for revenue generation during politics, trade fairs until it became an everyday affair.

Corruption among journalists known as 'Brown Envelope' Syndrome (BES), has become a part of the Nigeria mass media industry (Asira and Okpo, 2013). It has been renamed as 'qua' or 'greasing of palms' among journalists practising across various media houses. This tradition has been upheld by the politicians who happen to have the rare privilege of occupying government offices and whose source of wealth are linked to the offices they occupied at various times. Since media ownership is linked with power, the quest to do the will of the owners remains an entanglement to an average journalist, such that they have to suppress the ethics and allow the will of the owners hold sway.

According to Nwabueze (2010), brown envelope is common in journalism practice in Nigeria. It is a situation whereby journalists demand for bribe or other forms of gratification before they cover any events or even publish stories from such events. Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe (2012, p. 516) also observe, "It is no longer news that the Brown Envelope Syndrome (BES) has become an albatross for the 21st century Nigerian journalist. It has been criticized by scholars in the field of mass communication who describe it as a form of inducing writers and editors with financial gratification to influence their writings in favour of the givers".

This therefore, means that the Press whose primary responsibility it is to blow the whistle on wrong doings may not be able to do so (Okunna, 1995). Unfortunately, according to Adeyemi (2013), professional bodies like the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) and others at the helm of affairs that should ordinarily ensure that practitioners adhere strictly to the ethics of their profession, seem to be also involved. The implication is that real news is watered down while irrelevant issues are overblown because the journalist has been compromised. This also leads to a decline in productivity and professionalism among journalists since they do not honestly and objectively source for news but attend to the highest bidder.

As if the BES is not enough, the wrong norm appears to have been elevated to another level called 'retainership' deal. This is the current practice where media houses are placed on regular pay by state governments and government agencies in Nigeria, in order not to be covered in a 'bad' light by the media houses. This development has led to millions of naira being spent by some state governments and government agencies, to elicit positive coverage by various media houses, and abhor any form of negative story against such governments or agencies. An example of this was shown in October 2018 when a state governor was seen in a video clip stocking some huge dollar bills in his 'agbada' gown but was later awarded as the 'Governor-of-the-year' by a major team of media practitioners.

The 'retainership' deal has taken over the functions of ads in media houses to the extent that many media houses can now survive comfortably under the sponsorship of some state governments and government agencies who pay huge amount into the coffers of such media. It is now common to watch a television station for several hours without any ad played, except for the jingles and programmes promotion sponsored by state governments and government agencies. In addition, the only ads played on such TV stations only pertain to personality profiles and or projections of particular state government or government agencies. Programmes and contents are designed to attack certain states in order to woo them over for the 'retainership' deal.

'Retainership' deal has caused cut-throat competition among the media organisations. For instance, a media organisation tends to lobby for a deal by giving negative coverage to a particular state government or individual, while luring the media team of the state to negotiations table. This has led to many of the states falling down on their knees before major media houses, to reach the 'retainership' deal for positive coverage. The dangers of this deal range from outright violations of journalism ethics to total disregard for the peoples rights to freedom of information, a primary function of journalists in the society. Due to 'retainership' deal, media houses close their eyes against gross misconducts by public office holders while framing the stories to suit the interest of such public office holders. For instance, it is a common knowledge that many media houses are paid to turn-off the stories of killings perpetrated by herdsmen, insurgents and other militia across the country. This is achieved through 'retainership' deal with the media houses, by such agencies.

The difference between 'brown envelope' and 'retainership' deal is in the levels of issuance, in that, while the former is issued to a journalist on the field of practice, the latter is issued to media houses, to subvert the accuracy of the story. The editors of such media houses become business merchants and negotiators for their media houses and afterwards, replace specific truth to outright lies, divert attention from the main issues to trivial ones, recreate versions of the same story, to cover-up the true story or total distortion of the story.

Problem Statement

Corruption in the Nigeria media industry is a known cankerworm that appears already a tolerated norm among Nigerians. Ranging from the popular 'brown envelope' syndrome (BES) to framing of stories and outright re-definition of accuracy, the Nigeria media industry has been bedevilled with high and mighty kind of corrupt practices, to the extent that advertising has been relegated to the background as a major source of revenue for mass media survival. This is evident in the survival of media organisations without advertisements, while the times and space for ads are used for programme promotions and programmes which concern state governments and government agencies that are on 'retainership' deal with media houses.

'Retainership' deal has become the next level of 'brown envelope' syndrome, such that public office holders no longer stop at giving 'brown envelope' to journalists on the field of practice but have also gone ahead to pay huge sums of money to media houses to elicit positive framing from such media houses. Against this backdrop, this study focuses on the place of 'retainership' deal as next level of 'brown envelope' syndrome, replacing advertising as major source of revenue for mass media survival in Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine ways in which Nigeria mass media can generate income without 'retainership' deal.

The specific objectives include;

1. To ascertain the extent to which mass media in Nigeria depend on 'retainership' deal as a means of generating income.
2. To find out the perception of journalists about 'retainership' deal between their media houses and the government.
3. To find out the factors necessitating 'retainership' deal between media houses in Nigeria and state governments and government agencies.
4. To examine the problems arising from making money through 'retainership' deal by Nigeria media.
5. To find out ways of generating funds for mass media survival in Nigeria.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The most popular corrupt practice in the Nigerian media is the acceptance of monetary inducement popularly referred to as "brown envelope". It is perhaps the most popular source of corruption in the media. The brown envelope as a form of financial gratification is viewed by most people as a form of bribe paid by news sources to journalists to enable the former to get favourable news coverage. The practice is not alien to other parts of the world though practice differs from place to place. For example, it is normally called brown envelope in Nigeria, but there are as well a couple of other names that the practice is called among Nigerian journalists such as "matter", "load", "eego", "chopay or choppe", "colanut". 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 the society and the term indicates the change to electronic transfer of bribe into journalists bank accounts (<http://www.enwikipedia.org/>). Corruption in the media is multi-faceted. It may come through various ways some of which were mentioned above, or it may be through what is called "Media Executives Dinner", through generous offer of expensive gift items or through various forms of either political/economic gratifications. At times, in a bid to get exclusive stories or scoop, journalists may be tempted to give bribe most especially if such stories are regarded as sought-after information.

Brown envelope, freebies or rewards and gratifications have been abhorred by media ethicists and journalistic codes of practice. Over the years, ethical issues revolving around acceptance of brown envelope by many Nigerian journalists have continued to attract endless discussion among media stake holders. In simpler term, brown envelope can be refers to as collecting a gifts or any gratification for performing journalistic duties (Adio, 2012; Aliede, 2015; Akabogu, 2015; Ojobor, 2012). Whenever collected, brown envelope has the power of influencing the judgement of a reporter to distort the definition of news (see for instance (Akabogu, 2005; Eke, 2014; Nwabueze, 2010). For Okunna (1995), she views brown envelope as "a monetary bribe handed out to an unethical journalist to pressurize him or her into doing what the bribe giver wants." She concludes that "once accepted, monetary bribes and other gifts tie the hands of journalists who then become incapable of being objective in reporting events and issues involving people who give the gifts" (1995, p.57).

Nwabueze (2010) worked on the perception of Nigerian journalists about brown envelopes and the need for ethical re-orientation. The study was aimed at finding out from practising journalists what their perception of the brown envelope syndrome is, including their views regarding why the syndrome has continued to exist in the profession. The study employed survey research design. The major findings show that the basic

reason behind the continued existence of the syndrome in journalism is the orientation of journalists. Most of the journalists see nothing wrong with the acceptance of brown envelopes (Adeyemi and Okorie, 2009).). The study recommended that the welfare of professionals should be improved to provoke a change in the perception and attitude towards the acceptance of brown envelopes.

Okoro and Onuoha-Chinweobo (2013) conducted a study on brown envelope syndrome and mass media objectivity in Nigeria. Using the survey research method, they sought to find out if journalists in Nigeria accept brown envelopes and if such action affects journalists' social responsibility and objectivity in reporting. Findings revealed that journalists in Nigeria accept brown envelopes because of poor conditions of service and lack of adherence to ethical standards. They also found out that such actions affect mass media objectivity negatively. The study recommended, among others, that the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and other relevant agencies should ensure strict application and compliance to professional ethics and standards by practising journalists (Christoper and Onwuka, 2013).

Although, the meaning of the term varies from context to context, yet it is good to mention here that, this study acknowledges the opinion of Salihu (2017) who posits that the term ' ' is applied to denote journalistic activity which involves transfer of various types of rewards from sources to the reporter. In other words, it comprises a range of incentives involving cash (brown envelopes) and other gifts (freebies) that may put the journalist's independence into question (2010, p.370-371).

Theoretical Explanations

This study is anchored on Social Responsibility Theory of the press. Many literatures, (for example, Asira and Okpo, 2013; Day, 2016; Ewelukwa, 2014; Folarin, 1998; Haruna, 2013; Ikechukwu, 2014; Macebuh, 2017). testified that the theory originated from the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press, set up in the USA in 1947 to re-examine the press freedom in the fallout of Libertarian system. Its emergence was also influenced by the findings of the Royal commission of the Press set up in Great Britain in 1949. The theory believes that freedom comes with attendant obligation. Therefore the press should be responsible to the society by ensuring the discharge of their journalistic duties with high sense of journalistic standards. McQuail (2010) avers that, the findings of the commission under the chairmanship of Robert Hutchins named the key journalistic standards that the press should seek to maintain as thus: A responsible press should provide a full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning. It should serve as the forum for the exchange of comments and criticism and be a common carrier of public expression (Ewelukwa, 2014). Thirdly, the press should give a representative picture of constituent groups in society and also present and clarify the goals and values of society. The report criticized the sensationalism of the press and mixing of news with editorial opinion. (2010, p. 170).

The social responsibility theory of the press came as an improvement on the libertarian theory. It believes that freedom comes with concomitant obligation. Thus the press should be responsible to the society by ensuring that the essential functions of mass communication are carried out. In other words, the theory serves as a means of calling the press to order, especially as it was beginning to abuse the unrestrained freedom the libertarian theory afforded it. Thus Igboanusi (2016), citing McQuail (1987:117-118), notes, among other provisions, that the social responsibility theory advocates "That media should regulate itself within the framework of law and established institutions to be able to carry out its responsibilities." Therefore, the idea of self-regulation against ethical and social irresponsibility, which the brown envelope syndrome constitutes, was a direct tenet of the social responsibility theory. It is the idea of self-regulation that made journalists to come up with codes of ethics that guide their day-to-day activities Merrill and Barney, 2018).

With regards to brown envelope collection, Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe (2012) argue that, social responsibility theory ' 'explains the fact that, media ownership is a form of stewardship rather than unlimited private franchise. In other words, the media are established to serve the intent of the public rather than personal interests. Yet the quest for personal aggrandisement seems to have infiltrated the practice of journalism in Nigeria and beyond' ' (2012, p.524). Therefore, there is need for self-regulation against ethical and social irresponsibility which the brown envelope collection has posed to journalism noble profession.

Research Design

In-depth interview design was used for this study. The interview was conducted across several media houses representing both print and electronic media as well as online media. To this end, three top editors of six media houses were interviewed. The essence of choosing the editors was because this study focused on the management level of media organisations who enter 'retainership' deal with government and governments agencies. The media houses selected for the study include Television Continental (TVC News) and Raypower FM, representing the broadcast media, while The Nation newspaper and The Punch were selected for the electronic media. For the online media, Premium Times and Sahara Reporters were selected for the interviews. In order to balance up the interviewees, three respondents were selected from each of the editorial staff of the

media houses, bringing the total to 18 interviewees. Each of the persons selected for the interview must have had at least, five years experience as a member of editorial staff, and whose opinions matter in the content of published information by each medium. The instrument for data collection was interview schedule while the questions were open-ended. Qualitative technique was used for presentation and analysis of data, while findings were drawn from the analysis, in line with the objectives of the study.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

In collecting the data for this study, 18 persons were interviewed across six media houses. Out this figure, 12 respondents were male while six were female and have served as members of the editorial board of their media outfits for at least five years. Their views were presented in line with the questions on the interview schedule, drawn from the objectives of the study.

Dependence on 'Retainership' Deal as a Means of Generating Income by Nigeria Mass Media

The dependency of mass media in Nigeria on 'retainership' deal is sacrosanct as most of the media houses are in the deal with one government agency or another. According to one of the interviewees, there is no way the media can survive in Nigeria, without 'retainership' deal, because advertising is not lucrative as it used to be before. However, one of the respondents was of the view that not all media houses engage in such corrupt practices, since they were well paid and their media stations have zero tolerance to corruption. According to another interviewee:

It is a necessity for us to seek for ways of survival since media house too are business organisations and will have to survive. But we do not have to push ourselves to take such pays ahead of any coverage in order not to jeopardize our values and services.

Media houses that indulge in 'retainership' deal do so because the management want to make quick money by selling the journalism consciousness on the altar of deceit and political and economic powers of some few individuals.

Some of the respondents were of the view that the major source of revenue for their media stations was advertising. This was expressed by a number of respondents who also claim their media houses do not indulge in such corrupt practices as 'retainership' deal, with any individual or corporate organisation. However, other respondents agree that 'retainership' deal was the only way they could access more funds needed to run their media organisations, since the 'brown envelope' collected by journalists from field does not get to the management of the media houses. One of the respondents spoke thus:

'Brown envelope' does not get to us at the office, so there is nothing we can do than trying to lure the powers that be to come and pay higher amount to our accounts, in order to project them well. Media business is a serious business that requires much money to run, so we need to take 'retainership' deal, since companies no longer bring much advertisements to us as before.

Divergent views were sought from the media moguls on the practice of collection of 'retainership' deal which has become rampant in Nigeria media. While some condemned it and opted for other legitimate means of making wealth, others upheld it since Nigeria was said to be a country where the fittest survive. One of the respondents stated:

The problem of corruption cuts across all facets of our national life, including the media industry. As we speak, information are submerged in order to please the ownership of media houses and take monies from government and private individuals to cover up their misdeeds.

Another respondent who spoke from a broadcast station also added:

'retainership' deal is a must especially now that we do not have other source of income for our media houses. As it is, the management of media stations have learnt overtime that collection of money is imminent since the atmosphere for credible journalism practice is not in sight soon.

On the other hand, most of the respondents condemned the act in strong terms. At least, more than half of the total respondents were of the view that 'retainership' deal should be stopped in media houses considering its violations of journalistic principles and ethics on one hand and human rights to freedom of expression. One of them has this to say:

One cardinal thing we should know is that 'retainership' deal should not be encouraged at all, since it promotes corruption in the media. As we speak today, most of the people in this country no longer trust what they watch or read on the media but have taken to hearing what neighbours say or what they read on the social media. This is the danger of such deals that truncate the access to information.

As if not enough, one of the respondents added:

If we should allow it go beyond this point, 'retainership' deal will kill journalism in Nigeria, worse than 'brown envelope' syndrome. It kills the information from the source down to the people. Very soon we will not hear of any negative news from some government agencies and state governments, since they just pay huge sums to the media houses and distort information meant for the people.

There are several other sources of income for the media houses, apart from 'retainership' deal. These include advertising, payment for programmes and pages, broadcast linkages to bigger stations and running advertising agencies by media stations. These were the views of the respondents who enumerated the need for media houses to look for legitimate means of earning revenue instead of relying on the corrupt practices such as 'retainership' deal.

Journalism is regarded as the fourth estate of the realm, it serves as the ear, eyes and mouth of the society. The profession is highly regarded in almost all societies. In Nigeria, the media have contributed immensely to the development of the society in all its ramifications. No wonder the Nigerian media are regarded as one of the most vibrant media in Africa (Omenugha and Oji, 2009). However, corrupt practices are negatively impacting on the profession. Corruption is a monster that should be eliminated by all and sundry. Corruption is probably the most important battle that well meaning citizens of Nigeria should fight. Nigerians need to fight the war against corruption with the same vigour the country fought for the attainment of independence and unity of the nation during the civil war.

'Retainership' deal is one major practice among media organisations across Nigeria today, considering the reactions from respondents in the above interviews. First, most of the respondents agree that their media organisations indulge in the deal, since they are also meant to operate as a separate business entity and should not allow passage of information without due payment by the clients. In addition, other respondents were of the view that 'retainership' deal has become an inevitable norm in journalism practice in Nigeria, because of the obvious attitudes of government and the people towards hardwork, resilience and integrity. Hence, those who choose to do the right things are relegated to the background, thereby giving of money to media houses to cover-up negative stories and or distort information becomes necessary. Also, the major source of generating revenue for media houses according to the respondents is advertising and this has to do with regularly involving clients and advertising agencies to enable the media houses get paid while they publicise the existence of their products.

Perception of Journalists about 'Retainership' Deal between Their Media Houses and the Government

The perception of respondents were divergent considering that the practice of 'retainership' deal cut across many media stations and most of these respondents are of top echelon in their media houses. One of the respondents had this to say:

'retainership' deal is an entanglement of one's mind such that each time you collect money to cover-up a true story or water it down, you betray conscience, human rights and professionalism. If media managers and editors support it as it is today, it will continue to infiltrate the practice of journalism across Nigeria and in years to come, it will become worse than 'brown envelope' syndrome.

One of the respondents also stated:

'retainership' deal creates criminality in the society. this is why it should not be continued. Yes, we know journalists take bribe known as 'brown envelope', but we need to discourage it, instead of promoting it to the next level where media houses now boldly get involved in this scam.

Ademoroti (2016) citing (Berkowitz L. 1980:77-9), examines the concept of perception intensely. The researcher defines perception eternally as "the synthesis of present sensation and past experience and meaning which are determined by personal, social and cultural conditioning" The most relevant aspect of perception to this work is social perception which, according to Crider et al (1983:422), has to do with the study of the ways people influence each others' judgments, actions, and decisions. The scholars believe that attitudes are fundamental to understanding social perception because according to them, they strongly influence peoples perceptions.

Corruption in the media is no doubt an ethical issue and it damages journalists' as well as media outfits' integrity and affect professionalism. The journalistic profession does not lag behind much in the practice of setting acceptable standards known as codes of conduct, but strict adherence to such codes of conduct by the practitioners is another issue entirely. Most journalism organizations are somewhat reluctant to tackle the problem headlong by implementing some of the codes of conduct of the profession like their counterparts in other professions.

Factors Necessitating 'Retainership' Deal between Media Houses In Nigeria and State Governments and Government Agencies

There are several causes of 'retainership' deal between media houses and government and corporate bodies. These were enumerated by the respondents to include; quest for corruption, need for media houses to pay salaries and bills, quest for power by politicians and ownership interest. According to one of the respondents:

Corruption is the major reason for this whole thing called 'retainership' deal. It's unfortunate this has taken over the media job in Nigeria during democracy, when we didn't witness this under the military. Youth

nowadays want to make their media organisation work at all costs, so they just go collect money from people and government to protect their interests.

In addition, other respondents enumerated other factors:

Most media houses want to make money at all costs, so they can pay salaries and bills of staff members, forgetting the ethics of the journalism profession and the interest of the people. Also, politicians want to gain and control power at all cost, they don't mind the interest of the people.

Media houses which indulge in collecting money for the 'retainership' deal collect their entitlements through various means. These vary according to media houses, since each of them has their own way of running their affairs. For instance, one of the respondents stated thus:

We collect money for 'retainership' deal through cash, so that it will not be postponed. Afterwards, we pay it into the company account. Apart from that we collect through our bank accounts which are available to those state governments and corporate bodies and individuals.

In other words, other respondents were of the view that their media houses send out their media management crew to meet state governments and corporate bodies to lure them into the 'retainership' deal, which are most of the time won. For instance, a respondent from a print medium stated:

We always send out our senior editors to speak with the media relations officers of the organisations and the spokes persons to the state governments and corporate bodies, so as to attract their attention to the 'retainership' deal, with each of the parties having its own interests in the deal.

Another respondent differed a little from the above, when he stated that the media officers of top government officials and corporate bodies seek publicity from the media and as such look for audience with the media houses in order to seek 'retainership' deal. In her words:

My media house does not go to anyone to reach 'retainership' deal, they come to us to seek for it. And when they seek for it, we have no option than to accept especially if the deal is lucrative enough to meet some of our immediate needs in our organisation. This does not mean we don't seek for cash somewhere else though.

In addition, media houses embark on witch-hunt against the governments or government agencies who are not in the 'retainership' deal with them, with a view to attract them to the table of negotiations. An example of this was stated by one of the respondents when she referred to a situation where some media houses embark on negative coverage about some states or corporate bodies, while the same media house turns the other way when it comes to states they have 'retainership' deal with. She further puts succinctly:

Media houses witch-hunt those who refuse to go on 'retainership' deal with them, that's a way of attracting them to the table of negotiations. For instance, the herdsmen killings across the country is not given optimum coverage by the media. While the same media house covers a state and bring out all the issues about insecurity, other states may not receive such negative coverage because they pay regularly into the media house's account.

On the issue of giving a balanced coverage, most of the respondents were of the view that since the 'retainership' deal is meant to grease the palm of the management of media houses, ethics, professionalism and conscience have to be sacrificed to favour the interest of the sponsors. One of the respondents stated thus:

Professionalism is slaughtered, ethics is sacrificed, while personal conscience of journalists are sacrificed all for the interest of the state governments, corporate bodies and private individuals, to the detriment of the people. 'Retainership' deal is a major form of corruption capable of killing the entire journalism industry in Nigeria.

From the analysis in the interviews, it could be deduced that the causes of 'retainership' deal by media houses is the corruption which has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria national life, which makes people to want to make more wealth on the altar of public service. Other cause identified include the need for media houses to meet up with payment of salaries and entitlements of workers as and when due, the place of meeting up with the cut-throat competition with other media houses and the 'unfaithfulness' of journalists to return the monies they make from 'brown envelope', back to the station or the editors.

It is believed in many quarters that media practitioners are guilty of allegations of bribery and corruption and that acceptance of monetary gratification affects in no small measure objective coverage of news events (Salihu, 2017). Journalists are usually accused of biased reporting and prejudice by members of the public because of their ignoring one of the most important attributes of good journalism that is, objectivity.

In addition, there several ways of making money in media houses as identified by the respondents. These include advertising as the main stay, programme sponsorship, and rebroadcasting of programmes by other bigger stations. However, because these sources of income become slow, media houses tend to get pushed into the high level of 'brown envelope' syndrome, known as 'retainership' deal, a current cankerworm taking over advertising as a major source of mass media survival. Media houses and owners tend to pursue state government and agencies, corporate bodies and individuals to the negotiations table of 'retainership' deal, such that they can make money from them on regular basis. On the other hand, other media houses have carved a niche out of this and have gone to a higher level of 'retainership' deal, where they cover other states in all negativity to the intent

that those state governments are dragged to their knees to kowtow on the table of negotiations for 'retainership' deal.

Problems Arising From Making Money through 'Retainership' Deal By Nigeria Media

Many problems arise from entering 'retainership' deal by media stations, as identified by the respondents. One of the respondents who is an editor of a major national daily stated thus:

The major problem is that of loss of trust on the media from the society. As we speak, an average Nigerian believes the media is not trustworthy when it comes to information and most journalists have lost their credibility in the minds of their audience.

Another respondent who works with a broadcast station also stated:

We have the problems of making money through the wrong means in the media today. Through 'retainership' deal, information dissemination becomes a problem because the media need to survive while the peoples hunger for information from the media increases by the day. We also have problem of loss of ethics of the profession and reaping the media of its role as the watchdog of the society.

The various problems arising from 'retainership' deal spread across ethical, societal and economic spheres, such that journalists are in the burdens of choosing to please one or all of the parties. Media houses then tend to amass wealth from the unsuspecting government and non-governmental bodies so as to cover them only in the positive light, to the detriment of the professional ethics and conduct.

Journalism is a veritable tool for information dissemination, social mobilization and control. It is a means of public education and sensitization on important issues affecting the lives of the people (Merril and Barney, 2018). The vehicle through which journalists fulfill this obligation to the society is the mass media, which comprise radio, television, films, books, sound recordings, newspapers, magazine, and internet, among others. In one way or the other, the society depends on the regular content of the mass media for information, opinion, entertainment, ideas and a range of other resources. Journalism serves as a mirror in the society, the conciliator, the gatekeeper of issues and events and as such a very important institution in every society. As watchdogs of the society, journalists are expected to bridge the gap between the government and the society (Adeyemi, 2013). In all their actions, they are to be accountable to the members of the society. Ethical conduct of journalism has to do with the need for a journalist to discharge their responsibility of disseminating information to the public irrespective of whose ox is gored, and protecting the constitutional provision about the rights freedom of expression and information by citizens as enshrined in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Since ethics is individually enforced, journalists have to bear the burden of living up to the standards or choose to undermine same for financial benefits. On a larger scale, media houses tend to bargain for 'retainership' deal, a practice that violates the ethics of the journalism profession, by extending the brown envelope syndrome to a higher one, where media houses are paid to distort, submerge or divert information for financial gains.

Ways of Generating Funds for Mass Media Survival in Nigeria

Advertising has been the major source of survival for Nigeria mass media industry. However, there are other sources of revenue generation for the Nigeria media. These according to one of the respondent were enumerated thus:

First is advertising. We go out looking for ads to place on our pages in order to raise funds for our newspaper house. We also look for sponsorship of page contents. For instance, some organisations run pages of articles which are written and published by us in order to raise funds for our organisation.

Also, another respondent from a television station stated that advertising is the major source of revenue for the broadcast stations in addition to programmes sponsorship by various organisations. According to her, "...ad is the source of funds, but we have other sources where programmes are sponsored, downlink system of a programmes from the bigger stations such as the BBC and even local stations too."

To generate funds for mass media survival in Nigeria, respondents were of the view that mass media can generate funds without going into 'retainership' deal with anyone or without indulging in corrupt practices. Some of the ways to generate revenue include; "...ownership of in-house advertising agency, organising special events, workshops and seminars across various professions, running of training schools and partnerships with other media organisations across the world." This, according to the respondents would go a long way in meeting up the financial demands in running of day-to-day activities in a media house.

On the issue of stamping corruption in the media, such as 'retainership' deal, respondents suggested the media could stand on their own without necessarily kowtowing to the super powers in Nigeria, thereby having the power to disseminate information as watchdogs to the society. In other words,

'retainership' deal can be eradicated by punishing the media house that engage in it, regular monitoring by media regulatory bodies to ensure compliance with the rules governing running of media houses, promotion

training and retraining of journalists, so as to promote learning of ethics and professionalism and giving of special grants for running costs of media stations by the government.

In addition, surmounting the problem of 'retainership' deal needs the regulatory bodies of media organisations, the professional association of journalist, the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the government. From the above interview, it could be deduce that there is need for penalty to be meted out to the defaulting media organisations whose quest for financial benefits supersedes the interest of Nigeria society.

Omenugha and Oji (2010) narrate how the issue of ethical conduct of journalists came up in a workshop that was organized for working journalists in Anambra State of Nigeria by the State Ministry of information. The journalists made no pretence about their receiving forms of payment for themselves or for their media houses to publish stories. According to them, how could they do otherwise when they receive poor and irregular salaries; some media houses do not have salary system at all. According to them, a journalist's chances of survival depend on how much she/he gets from news sources. They said that the harsh economic situation has a telling effect on their job. The Nigerian society, they noted, is corrupt thereby increasing their difficulty in being ethical in an „unethical world“ such as Nigeria. In addition, publishers, they said, complain of high cost of production and as such use that as an excuse to deny them their due wages. This finding further supports the conclusion of Hassan (2010) that in curbing the cancer of corruption of 'retainership', the NUJ and other media professional bodies need to exercise their prerogative of collective bargaining in pushing forward an attractive welfare package for members. It is after this that such bodies can have the moral authority to deal with issues of professional misconduct among members.

'Retainership' deal portends a great danger to journalism and information sector generally in Nigeria. First, there is danger of loss of information by the people, due to the fact that people do not want to tune-in or read media content, as a result of loss of credibility. Also, there is the danger of permanent silence of the people due to the fact the media only presents the fake stories to the people as against the real ones and the danger of violations of humans rights to information. This disinformation can lead to spread of civil unrests in Nigeria, considering the diverse nature of the country.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, accuracy, objectivity, balance and truth are the pillars upon which journalism practice rests. The press must strive to hold these tenets with utmost sacredness. This study focused on an extension of brown envelope syndrome (BES) by Nigerian journalists to another level of corruption called 'retainership' deal reached by the media houses as a source of revenue for mass media survival in Nigeria, instead of advertising as it has been over the years. Reaching 'retainership' deal is an activity the government and the Nigeria society seem to have given a nod to continue, to the extent that many media organisations now survive on and forgetting about sourcing for funds through legitimate means. The findings in this study revealed that media organisations have refused to tap into the several means of revenue generations and have decided to adopt the 'retainership' deal, with all the dangers it portends to the individuals, the people and the society at large. To bring this ugly trend under control, the government, media regulatory agencies, media organisations and media practitioners have to galvanize efforts in rising up to the challenge of sanitizing the Nigeria media industry.

To this end, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Media regulatory agencies such as the Nigeria Press Council and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should set penalty for any media organisation found wanting in entering 'retainership' deal. This can be done through reviews of laws and enforcement of same for on media organisations.
2. Media owners should be monitored closely to ensure they pay journalists well, including hazards allowances so as to prevent economic problems leading to taking of brown envelope and in extension discouraging 'retainership' deal by media houses.
3. Media organizations should be given grants regularly by the government in order to run their affairs. This could be in the form of loans which could be paid back after a period of time.
4. Government anti-corruption agency such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) should be empowered to bring corruption in journalism under control. This can be done by prosecuting offenders of those media houses who perpetrate 'retainership' as a source of revenue.

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