# Analysis of Foreign Aid-Induced Investigative Journalism Practice in Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study was conducted to analyse foreign aid-induced investigative journalism practice in Nigeria. It used quantitative approaches that combined content and document analyses. Published investigative stories from journalists trained from the independent media extractions that benefited from media development assistance in 2014 and 2017 constitute the study population. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select samples from the population and content categories and rubric scale were the instruments of data collection. The study revealed the gains and consequences of international media development assistance on investigative journalism practice in Nigeria and recommendations are suggested to the concerned stakeholders based on the conclusion.

## Keywords

Foreign aid, independent media, journalists, media assistance, investigative journalism, media development in Nigeria

## Introduction and Motivation for the Study

There are discourses on the volume and impact of foreign aid on African development. The discourse recognising an inverse impact of foreign aid on African development is however dominant, though most studies could not identify the manifold of factors that produce aid ineffectiveness in the continent (Andrews, 2009). Meyers (2014) identifies the technological, economic and socio-political drivers of media explosion in Africa; however, the scholar recognised the significant but untold role of donor aid in the

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African media-boom causal mechanism. From the initial ten commercial broadcasters in the continent in 1985 when state ownership of media stations was dominant, independent television stations are now more than three hundred, while there are well above two thousand radio stations with proven private and community ownership. This explosion, with accompanied private print media ownership, occurred side-by-side, increased foreign aid. That was the period when the American government and foundations for media support expended more than 600 million dollars to assist media establishments around the world. Since then, there has been an annual increase in the amount that donors give to support media development in the developing countries, with an annual estimate of 560 million dollars (Meyers, 2014). With proven donor support, unrestricted availability of data and high-tech communication, investigative journalists round the world are creating networks of support and growth, which are helping them to expose international crime, shady and illegal business deals, environmental degradation, and many other difficult stories through collaboration. To be specific, many online networks, grant-making groups, professional associations, training institutes, and reporting centres as offshoots of this global support for investigative journalism are in 47 countries (Kaplan, 2013).

Apart from the US government, the European Union, USAID, and the Japanese government (Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA)) are notable among the donors to media development in Africa. However, these donors are said to wield in return, potent economic, political and ideological control over the recipients (African countries) of the donation (Eugenie, 1992 and Bourgault, 1995, cited by Meyers, 2014). Kaplan (2013), in his report for the International Centre for Media Assistance on strategies for supporting global investigative journalism, corroborated the existing conversation by identifying globalization, international aid and the efforts of journalism groups as the catalysts for the growth recorded in global investigative journalism practice.

Extending the positions of Meyers, Eugenie and Bourgault on the magnitude and potency of the attendant political, economic and social controls that donors and donor-countries exercise on the countries and media organisations receiving aids especially in the developing countries, this study seeks to determine the extent that journalists trained or empowered by donor agencies wrote and published sensitive socio-political issues before foreign aid intervention; and the extent to which they wrote and published sensitive socio-political issues after foreign aid intervention. The study is specifically interested in determining whether donor agencies actually influenced the policies, orientations and journalism practices of Nigerian journalists and media organisations that received supports from particular donor agencies.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:
1. To what extent did the trained journalists write and publish on sensitive socio-political issues before training and foreign aid intervention?
2. To what extent did the trained journalists write and publish on sensitive socio-political issues after foreign aid intervention?
3. To what extent did the issues relate with accountability and corruption or both?

## Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided the study:

**H₁:** Will media outlets' philosophy determine their reportage of sensitive socio-political issues before the foreign aid?

**H₂:** Will donors' philosophy determine the reportage of sensitive socio-political issues reported by the media outlets after the aid implementation?

## Foreign Policy and Foreign Aid

The foreign policies of countries like the United States of America, United Kingdom, and other countries, especially on media assistance play significance roles in shaping media practice and performance across the globe particularly in Africa (Apodaca, 2017). Apodaca, citing Palmer and Morgan (2006):

> The objective of foreign policy is to influence foreign governments and shape international affairs to suit the state. Generally speaking, states have two overarching goals in their dealings with other states in the international system: to maintain and protect the status quo or to change the status quo. As a tool of foreign policy, foreign aid is provided to a recipient country as either a reward for some behaviour or as an inducement to change behaviour.

This is evident in the media assistance from these countries to the African nations. Recent development and trends in foreign aid to independent media outlets in Africa and Nigeria in particular have shown that these aids are primarily targeted at changing behaviours in development issues—corruption, accountability, democracy and press freedom. Becker and Hollifield (2008) state that although the western assistance programmes have been predicated on the assumption that development of free, independent media peopled by professionals leads to–or at least contributes to–the development of democracy, the evidence to support that assumption is not robust. Kumar (2006), a senior social scientist at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in

Becker and Hollifield (2008), clarifies that the dominant western perspective lying behind media assistance projects "is based on the underlying assumption that independent media contribute to the building of democracy and to economic development." This assistance is aimed at the journalistic practice of the professionals and the media outlets. While media assistance projects are mostly towards the individual media worker (journalist), the ultimate goal, as reflected in Figure 1 (page 7), is the improvement of the operation of the press system in the country with the outcome of achieving a goal that will result in the term press freedom. Supporting this proposition, Myers (2014) notes that the investment in the media industry is done by the foreign "investors" whose returns are not financial but political gains as manifested in the trends in Africa. Myers says, "the indirect investment in the media environment and in public service media was made by foreign government donors… this investment took many forms and was normally behind the scenes. The return on investment for donors is obviously not financial but arguably political." Myers corroborates the position of Kumar (2004) who posits that, going by what has been operating over the decade, USAID's media assistance was unarguably a tool of foreign policy:

> Independent media building has served US national interests. In many countries, support to independent media created political space that enabled the United States to pursue specific foreign policy goals, such as holding of elections, promotion of human rights, or political reconciliation.

Apart from the United States of America and other similar governments, some organisations from the West play vital roles in the training of African journalists towards philosophies of those foreign organisations that provide aids. Examples are the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the African Media Initiative (AMI) whose aims include ensuring peace in Africa through what they refer to as "training in responsible journalism."

The foregoing testifies to the fact that foreign policy of the "privileged" countries like the United States of America is meant to exercise some control over the "less privileged" countries by investing in the media of these less privileged countries. Media houses in Africa and Nigeria in particular have received foreign aid (fund, training, materials) from organisations like MacArthur and Ford Foundations. The soft aid comes in form of training while the hard aid comes in form of fund and materials aid. The media outlets that are beneficiaries of these grants are expected to live above board by focusing their reportage on accountability, transparency, and good governance in the country by helping to reduce corruption (McArthur Foundation, 2017). All these themes constitute the focus of MacArthur Foundation, for instance. The story is the same for the Ford Foundation but with differing perspective as it focuses on poverty reduction, dignity of all people and strengthening of democratic values (Ford Foundation, 2017).

## *Ensuring Media Development through Human and Infrastructure Capacity Building*

Infrastructural capacity building as an investment in the media includes efficient use of technology to gather and distribute news and information, appropriate to the local context. Donors towards media development in Africa are not only governments, private sector organisations such as AFSC and AMI as pointed out above as well as multilateral organisations such as Ford and MacArthur Foundation are also deeply involved. In line with its objectives of helping to fight corruption in Nigeria, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation declared about $9 million in funding to advance accountability and anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria. This, according to *the Premium Times* (2017), constitutes "grants that are part of the Foundation's *On Nigeria grant-making*, which seeks to reduce corruption by building an "atmosphere of accountability, transparency, and good governance in the country." *The Premium Times* reports that MacArthur Foundation aims to achieve this by giving (financial) support to non-profit organisations. With particular reference to the media industry, the foundation is set to focus on enhancing investigative journalism and reducing corruption in the electricity and education sectors, two services that Nigerians report as being critical but difficult to access due to corruption. In essence, investigation, advocacy, accountability, and transparency constitute the focus of the Foundation (*Premium Times*, 2017).

The International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR), had in May, 2017, announced the names of 15 Nigerian journalists to participate in the second phase of its investigative journalism training programme tagged "Open Contracting Reporting Project (OCRP)". The OCRP, an initiative of the ICIR in collaboration with the Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC), was funded by the MacArthur Foundation. The aim was to build the capacity of Nigerian media houses to sufficiently report and investigate budget and procurement issues in order to bring about transparency in contracting processes (ICIR, 2017).

The ICIR (2017) reports that the capacity building programme symbolises the most robust support and recognition for investigative journalism as a mechanism for promoting accountability, transparency, and good governance in Nigeria. Citing the West Africa Coordinator for the McArthur Foundation, Kole Shettima, who announced the grants, the expectation of the foundation on the grants was to help in strengthening Nigerian-led anti-corruption efforts and reduce "petty" corruption. Primarily, the grants were meant to support trainings for journalists on investigative field work and data-driven reporting in Nigeria media space.

## *Investigative Journalism, Accountability and Good Governance Issues in Africa*

Globally, the watchdog role of the mass media is acknowledged as a veritable means towards good governance. With their investigative power, mass media has a requisite for democracy and good governance. Good governance seems to be elusive in Nigeria like most other democratic countries in Africa even though good governance is entrenched in the 1999 constitution as possible criterion for democratic governance. But even with the constitutional provision and financial resources in Nigeria, it is still searching for good governance. Media's potential to contribute to good governance depends on the extent the media reflect and enforce the principles of good governance as an institution (U 4 Brief, 2011). To achieve good governance, the mass media should not just report happenings in the society; they should probe further and unveil the biggest issues and people behind stories. They need to do more than ordinary reporting. This is investigative journalism. Investigative journalism distinguishes itself from regular journalism by its depth and subject matter, often involving crime, political corruption or corporate wrongdoing; it plays an essential role in a country's governance by keeping corporations and government accountable (U 4 Brief, 2011).

It is very demanding, time consuming and cost intensive. Therefore, it needs some incentives and proper funding for it to succeed. Also, it is a kind of reporting which involves gathering of avalanche of information, visiting many places and meeting new people to produce a good report. Naturally, poor remuneration of journalists, poor capacity building by the media houses and other social-cum-political factors are obstacles militating against investigative reporting in Nigeria. This trend further provides room for external financing of investigative journalism in the country. With sufficient funding provided by these foreign donors, "practitioners will be encouraged to carry it (the practice) to any level, if only its objective can be achieved. A good incentive will motivate journalists to work effectively in spite of intimidation and threat posed on them by the political class" (World Good Governance 2017 Report).

## *Review of Empirical Studies*

Existing evidences to support the influence of donors' assistance in terms of training and funds to independent media outlets in developing countries manifest in the monitoring and evaluation of the goals and targets of the donors. Becker and Hollifield (2008) examined the assumptions behind western governmental and nongovernmental organisations' investment in media development towards the institutionalization of democratic institutions and liberalized economic administration. Beyond this purpose, the scholars equally investigated dominant views of the donors about democratization and existing forces that shape the media environment of the countries they supported. The emerging outcomes were that donors' assumptions about the governance and media ecosystems that facilitated the assistance are

contradictory and imperfectly developed as well as lacking substantial scientific evidence to support them. Noske-Turner (2013) examined evaluation activities conducted by donors after media assistance interventions. According to the scholar, evaluation activities were entrenched with hypothetical claims such as free press, democracy or empowerment. These claims were categorised as first outcome of media assistance by the scholar. Access to information or opportunities to participate in various media engagement constituted the second result through which donors believed they have affected media development. Examples of activities that established changes in the receiving media outlets' countries and evidence suggesting continuous uses of information, changes in relationships, and changes in culture are placed as third and fourth outcomes of media assistance intervention.

Specifically, Noske-Turner (2015), after examining 47 evaluation documents of programmes and projects of donors between 2002 and 2012, concluded that the evaluation conducted by the donors rarely generated useful and insightful evaluations. This conclusion was premised on the fact that most evaluation reports were initiated or commissioned by donors followed by the implementing agency or project team. Apart from this, a significant number of the evaluations were done within short periods after the intervention. He discovered that only 32% of the report actively adopted specific indicators while others suggested the application of indicators in the future phases. Surprisingly, 28% of the reports indicated the use of indicators set by donors or the project organisation while two reports used the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) as indicators.

Another study has also established that entrenching freedom of expression and opinion constitute key concepts considered by media assistance donors or organisations to frame their efforts towards the institutionalisation of sustained human rights in conflict-states or transition countries on the level of individual journalists (Thomass and Drefs, n.d). In conflict-states or transition countries, donors usually clustered their specific goals into high quality journalism, plurality within the public discourse, free flow of information, fostered trust and internal goals regarding the media development sector (Thomass and Drefs, n.d). On the other hand, journalists perceived media assistance donors' intervention as bigger ideals, bigger structure, adequate capacity building and the right input into their media ecosystem. Bigger structure comes with journalists having right framework of their newsrooms and sources, while coaching, mentoring and counseling would enhance capacity building, ending conventional training. Journalists also expected that media assistance donors' goals would encompass receiving professional standards, digital safety and legal support (Thomass and Drefs, n.d).

## Theoretical Basis

The study relied on Structuration and Goal Orientation theories. Structuration emerged from the Anthony Giddens' criticism of social theory (Turner, 1986). The theory wants researchers and scholars to understand the intersections among knowledgeable, capable human agents, wider social systems and structure, with the specific reference to agents and structures. Thus, the theory is emphasising the power of agents and strategic position of structures in having desirable results from a collection of activities on a specific goal orientation. Situating this within the context of donors--media outlets relationship during media development assistance intervention, it means media outlets and journalists could be monitored by the donors using philosophies entrenched in vision and mission statements, extant rules, resources and principles associated with such assistance (Turner, 1986). The resultant impact would be absolute or slight influence or otherwise on the news gathering and publishing routines of the outlets. However, Goal Orientation Theory helped the researchers in formulating research questions one and two on the donors, journalists and media outlets' rationales for involving in media development assistance processes while Structuration Theory's propositions largely drove formulated hypotheses and research question three.

From the Goal Orientation perspective, donors are dishing out financial aid, technical support and training to media outlets in Nigeria and other African countries with the intent of actualising their different mission and values related to socio-economic and political advancement. In specific terms, donors are supporting journalists and their organisations towards better people (including journalists) and better media organisation, which will later contribute to sustainable socio-economic and political institutions. On the other hand, journalists and media outlets pursue individual and corporate goals orientation. Journalists are aiming at developing their investigative journalism reporting skills by mastering challenging situations, while the outlets anticipate understanding of the best global structure practices on investigative journalism. Having learnt, both the journalists and the outlets are expected to demonstrate and validate their competencies through evaluation (Walle, Cron and Slocum, 2001).

## *Methods*

Document and content analyses helped in examining journalists' performance from the 'outside' using manifest and latent contents which were analysed to understand the extent to which foreign aid influenced their practices (Carlsnaes, 2004).

Eighty-one (81) investigative stories published by journalists trained from the independent media extractions that benefited from media development assistance in 2014 and 2017 constituted the population. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select stories reported by the journalists before (2013

and 2016) and after (2014; August, 2017) the aid. The selection of the stories was aided with the use of Boolean search in which AND/+ and media outlets' names were added to the names of the journalists (Olawoyin Oladeinde AND *Premium Times*). In 2017, 12 journalists out of the 15 trained were selected. In 2014, 3 journalists were found out of the 40 coached. In both years, the selected journalists reported 81 investigative stories.

Content categories aided by code sheet were used together with rubric scale as the main instruments of collecting relevant data from the population. Content categories were employed because we intended to understand and verify specific investigative news reports written by the journalists prior to the aid and after it. On the code sheet, we devised *accountability*, *crime*, *economy*, *education*, *corruption*, and *other* as content categories. These categories were the sensitive socio-political issues involving untouchable newsmakers because they hold certain offices or are in highly placed positions in Nigeria.

**Table 1:** Operational Definition of the Six Content Categories

| Content Categories | Operational Definition | Example |
|---|---|---|
| *Crime* | Criminal activities involving impervious newsmakers because they hold certain offices or are in highly placed positions | |
| *Education* | Educational problems involving untouchable newsmakers because they hold certain offices or are in highly placed positions | *INVESTIGATION: Inside Lagos school where pupils learn under inhuman conditions.* (November, 27th, 2017 Premium Times) |
| *Corruption* | Financial or budgetary issues involving untouchable newsmakers because they hold certain offices or are in highly placed positions | |
| *Economy* | sensitive economic issues involving untouchable newsmakers because they hold certain offices or are in highly placed positions | |
| *Accountability* | Poor governance or administration involving untouchable newsmakers | In Ambode's Lagos, Citizens Have No Right to Know Govt. Budgets, Spending. (October, 14th 2017, Premium Times) |
| *Other* | Other societal issues involving untouchable newsmakers and citizenry because they hold certain offices or are in highly placed positions | |

Rubric scale is an explicit set of criteria that helped us in clarifying our expectations regarding the investigative news reported and making the trained journalists and their media outlets accountable for their performance (Jonsson and Svingby, 2007). Rating rubric scale was adopted. *Topic disentangle*, *material usage*, *analysis and presentation*, and *Freedom of Information Act* were criteria of investigative news developed to assess the performance of each journalist before and after the training.

## Screenshot of the Rubric Rating Scale



Each criterion was measured using task, level of performance and scores. We intended to comprehend journalists' degree of understanding issues reported by using *topic disentangle*. *Material usage* exemplifies appropriate use of available human and material resources. *Analysis and presentation* represents individual journalist's ability to mine relevant data and present complex information in simple ways to the readers. By *FOI Act application*, we aimed at understanding the extent to which the journalists invoked the Act in their efforts at getting relevant information from the sources likely to hoard such information.

### Inter-rater Item-Total Statistics

| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Topic Disentangle | 7.25 | 1.114 | .741 | .816 |
| Material Usage | 7.17 | 1.061 | .786 | .771 |
| Analysis and Presentation | 6.92 | 1.538 | .770 | .828 |

### Intra-class Correlation Coefficient

| | Intra-class Correlation[b] | 95% Confidence Interval | | F Test with True Value 0 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | Value | df1 | df2 | Sig |
| Single Measures | .678[a] | .370 | .882 | 7.319 | 11 | 22 | .000 |
| Average Measures | .863 | .638 | .957 | 7.319 | 11 | 22 | .000 |

Two-way random effects model where both people effects and measures effects are random.
a. The estimator is the same, whether the interaction effect is present or not.
b. Type C intra-class correlation coefficients using a consistency definition-the between-measure variance is excluded from the denominator variance.

In addition, mission statements of the donors and benefited media outlets were analysed thematically and converted into discrete variables using values ranging from 1 to 7. The emerging themes from the donors' and media outlets' mission statements were constantly reviewed and summed up. Donors' statements were added up under *Social Development*, *Economic Development* and *Political Development* while media outlets' statements were captured under *Social Development*, *Economic Development*, *Political Development*, *Cultural Development*, *Accountability*, *Good Governance*, and *Other* (civilised nationalism, ethnic diversity, dignity of the people, peace and true federalism promotion) as labels in the SPSS. This was done with the intention of knowing how philosophies (derived from mission statements expected to drive their workings or operations) of the donors and media outlets determined the investigative news reported, based on the understanding of donors' influence and media outlets' freedom.

Headlines were the first units of analysis on the conceptual level while specific contents of the stories constituted the second units of analysis at the relational level. The conceptual level of coding the stories represents word occurrence in the headlines that establishes the category as crime, education, economy, corruption, accountability or other (not in the main categories) stories. The relational level signifies single or co-occurrence of accountability and corruption within a category (relational). Out of these levels, relational level was structured into content categories comprising accountability, corruption and both sub-categories. For content categories, the researchers coded stories for each journalist while the inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa. Inter-coder reliability for the 6 conceptual categories was calculated using Cohen's kappa and was found to be acceptable ($k= .806$). The reliability of the relational categories was $k= .25$. This represents a moderate strength of agreement.

One of the researchers formulated the rubric rating scale while the other two researchers independently verified the descriptions under the task and level of performance using excellent =4, good =3, fair =2 and poor =1 ratings. The inter-rater reliability using intra-class showed the reliability of the rating scale at .863 of Cronbach's Alpha. It should be noted that *FOI Application* task of the rating scale was removed when it was discovered that it had low reliability. This decision improved the inter-rater reliability of the scale from Cronbach's Alpha .650 to .863. The sourced data were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics to know the influence of donors on media outlets' philosophies and investigative news reported.

**Table 2:** Inter-Rater Reliability of Rubric Rating Scale

| Criterion | Reliability |
|---|---|
| *Topic Disentangle* | *(α=.816)* |
| *Material Usage* | *(α=.771)* |
| *Analysis and Presentation* | *(α=.828)* |

## Results

The generated and analysed data indicate that the trained journalists reported 81 sensitive socio-political issues before and after their training. Thirty-three issues (41%) were reported by the journalists and published by the media outlets before the training, while 48 issues (59%) were published after the training. This indicates that the fund received by the media organisations and training of the selected journalists improved coverage of sensitive issues by 18%. Further analysis shows that before the training, issues around accountability were mostly investigated and reported followed, by corruption. About 45.5% of the 33 stories focused on accountability, while 21.1% were corruption-oriented. Journalists and the media outlets also reported issues on accountability and crime after the training. Both categories accounted for 29.2% of the 48 issues reported after the training, followed by economy which had 22.9%.

**Figure 1:** Sensitive socio-political issues reported before and after training and foreign aid intervention
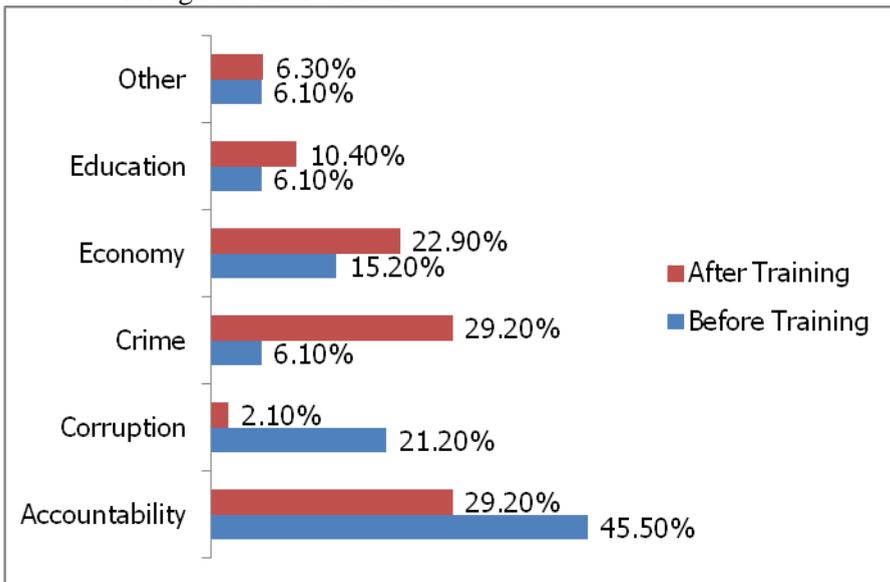


Within the main issues reported, relational issues –accountability, corruption and combination of the two reigned. The journalists frequently emphasised these relational categories in their core issues reported. Accountability resonated 13 times before the training and within the same period, it permeated 6 times in the economic issues reported, while accountability and corruption were embedded in the corruption issues 4 times.

**Figure  2:** Issues  Related  with  the  Investigative  News  Reported  Before
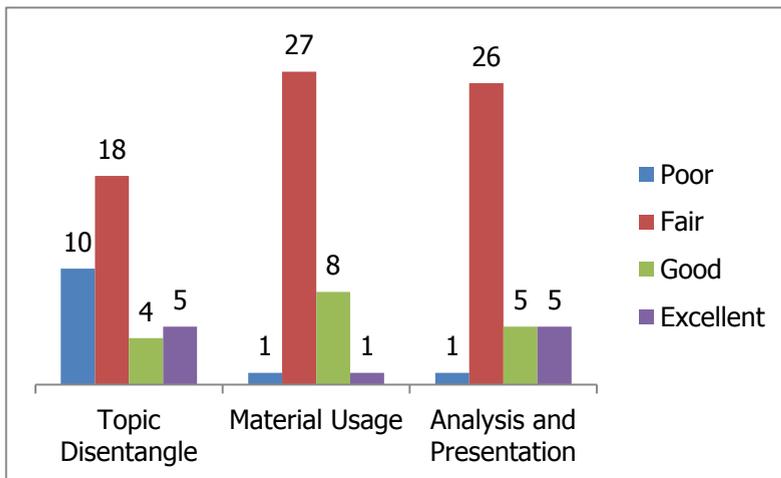Training
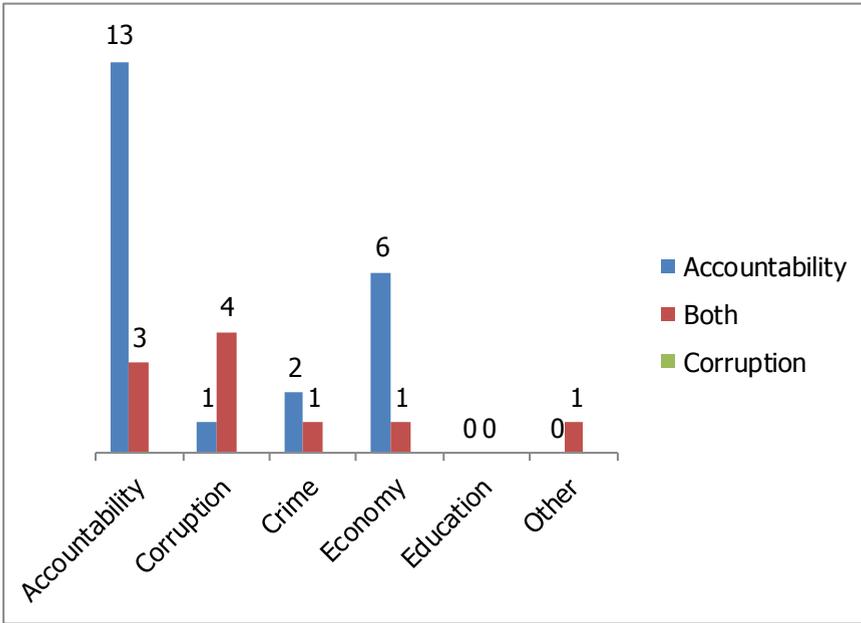


The  data  in  the  above  Figure  2  indicates  that  accountability  and  corruption
were  mostly  considered  by  the  trained  journalists  as  the  basis  of  reporting
sensitive  crime  and  economy  issues.  The  data  also  establish  that  making  public
officials  and  people  responsive  and  responsible,  and  corruption  elimination,
occupied  the  journalists'  minds.

**Figure 3:** Issues Related with the Investigative News Reported after Training
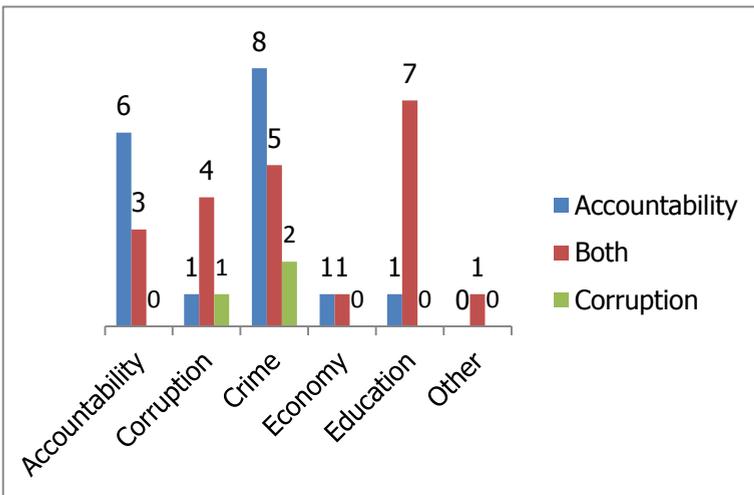
Journalists' performance based on topic disentangle, material usage and, analysis and presentation of the issues reported before and after their training was striking. In dealing with the various issues and understanding their components towards better reportage, our analysis indicates that the journalists received fair rating across the tasks. They were 27, 26 and 18 times fair under the material usage, analysis and presentation and topic disentangle respectively.

**Figure 4:** Journalists' Performance before Training



Data in the above Figure 4 indicates abysmal performance of the journalists before the training. The result is an indication that the journalists actually needed training before they could write sensitive, investigative stories.

**Figure 5:** Journalists' Performance after Training
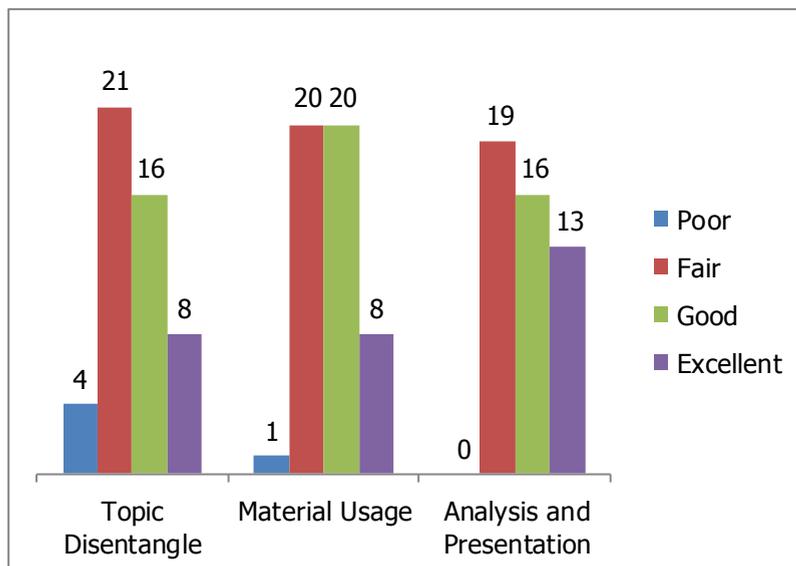


These results have established that if the media assistance in forms of training and funding continue, Nigerian journalists and their media outlets are more likely to report sensitive national issues when they receive external support than walking alone.

## *Hypotheses Testing*

**Table 3:** Media outlets' philosophy determines sensitive socio-political issues reported before the foreign aid

**a.   Before Training in 2014**

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | **46.000ᵃ** | **7** | **.000** |
| Continuity Correction | | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | **9.635** | **7** | **.210** |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | **.057** | **1** | **.811** |
| N of Valid Cases | **46** | | |

a. 15 cells (93.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02

**b. Before Training in 2017**

**Chi-Square Tests**

| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 94.640[a] | 42 | .000 |
| Continuity Correction | | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 35.706 | 42 | .742 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1.702 | 1 | .192 |
| N of Valid Cases | 46 | | |

a. 53 cells (94.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02

Media outlets' philosophy related with investigative news reported before the foreign aid in 2014 and 2017. The most remarkable result to emerge from the data is that donors' mission did not influence media outlets' reportage after the aid in 2017, despite the significant reportage of sensitive issues, while it accounted for the coverage in 2014 when the issues reported were fewer.

**Table 4:** Donors' philosophy determines sensitive socio-political issues reported by the media outlets after the aid implementation

**a. After Training in 2014**

**Chi-Square Tests**

| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 92.000[a] | 9 | .000 |
| Continuity Correction | | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 25.999 | 9 | .002 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 7.352 | 1 | .007 |
| N of Valid Cases | 46 | | |

a. 15 cells (93.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02

**b. After Training in 2017**

**Chi-Square Tests**

| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 9.781[a] | 18 | .939 |
| Continuity Correction | | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 8.786 | 18 | .964 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .866 | 1 | .352 |
| N of Valid Cases | 46 | | |

a. 25 cells (89.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02

In 2014, donor's mission statement influenced the sensitive socio-political issues reported by the media outlets after the aid implementation (training). This is an indication that Ford Foundation's focus on poverty reduction, dignity of all people and strengthening of democratic values in Nigeria and

other countries predicted issues reported by the journalists and published by the media outlets.

## Discussion of Findings

Media assistance fund received by the media organisations and training of the selected journalists improved the coverage of sensitive issues. Primarily, journalists and media establishments increased their coverage and depth of investigative journalism after training and foreign aid respectively. This aligns with Goal Orientation Theory which emphasises interconnectivity between principals and agents towards the actualisation of specific goals. Specifically, media outlets and journalists have demonstrated and validated their competencies in reporting investigative news and delivering on what the donors wanted (Walle, Cron and Slocum, 2001). The findings have also confirmed what Thomass and Drefs (n.d) discovered in their media assistance evaluation in which journalists perceived the donors' intervention as bigger ideals, bigger structure, adequate capacity building and the right input into their media ecosystem. By bigger ideals, journalists believed that freedom of expression, human rights and Article 19 would be restored and sustained. Bigger structure comes with journalists having the right framework of their newsrooms and sources, while coaching, mentoring and counseling would enhance capacity building and end conventional training. Journalists also expected that donors' goals would encompass receiving professional standards, digital safety and legal support.

Accountability, corruption and crime issues were mostly investigated and reported; accountability and corruption equally resonated with these issues. These findings support the view that mass media do not just report happenings in the society but equally carry out in-depth analysis of critical subject matters involving crime, political corruption or corporate wrongdoing with the main intent of keeping corporations and government accountable (U 4 Brief, 2011).

As expected, donors' and media outlets' missions influenced issues reported at different degree and period. This result reverberates with structuration theory's intersections among knowledgeable, capable human agents, wider social systems and structure proposition. Thus, the finding has improved knowledge on the extent to which donors' structure could impact media establishments' own structure towards the attainment of desirable results from a collection of activities on a specific goal orientation.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has further strengthened confidence on the impact of foreign media assistance on independent media's workings and journalists' performance in developing countries especially Nigeria. The study has shown that media organisations and journalists can only improve on their reportage of

critical national socio-political issues when there is support from donors. This study provides additional considerable insight into the monitoring and evaluation of key stakeholders in the media assistance development aid in Nigeria. Based on the findings and conclusion reached, the following are suggested as managerial and policy recommendations.

1.  Media organisations should ensure that sensitive socio-political issues are reported every time, not only when there is foreign assistance from international and independent donors.

2.  When it becomes practically impossible to equip journalists with the needed knowledge and skills towards adequate reportage of investigative news by media outlets, media managers could devise a strategic plan that will mitigate donors' intervention on what gets reported and published. This could be best determined through cost-benefits analysis on the donors' focus statements, and justifications for giving funds or training journalists.

3.  Donors and training organisations could develop *Journalist's Rubric Ratings Scale (JRRS)* for monitoring and evaluating individual journalists after training together with the general monitoring and evaluation of media assistance intervention funds on investigative journalism in developing countries. This will generate robust data for faster and better decisions making within the media development assistance, foreign aid industry.

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