

# Mass Media and Unsustainable Development in Nigeria: A Critical Investigation

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**Abstract:** Globally, mass media are among the catalysts behind sustainable development. This is as the industries set and shape government agenda, expose utopic policies, clueless governance and proffer the necessary ideas and knowledge that ensure sustainable development. The decades of predatory governance, corruption, despotism and their resultant unsustainable development characterizing the Nigerian state however questions the existence of these lofty roles of the mass media. This paper therefore investigates the expected roles and connection between mass media and unsustainable development in Nigeria. The paper analytically justifies the argument with evidences, unveils the underlining rationale behind the role of mass media in Nigerian unsustainable development, and proffers axiological panacea to poor mass media performance in Nigeria. The study finds that Nigerian mass media largely promote the egoistic interest of those in government and their cronies, and this jeopardizes sustainable development. The study therefore concludes that mass media in Nigeria largely neglect its responsibilities towards Nigerian nation, and thus operate below global expectations of communication industries.

**Key words:** Mass media; Unsustainable; Development; Critical; Investigation

## Introduction

Unsustainable development has finally become endemic in Nigeria. This unpalatable condition hinges on poor politics and governance which are the fulcrum and catalyst of backwardness in civil societies. But the monitoring, criticism or censure of politics and governance in civil societies are largely the responsibilities of the mass media. The centrality of the mass media in civil societies are so important that one of the former United States President, Thomas Jefferson, once observed that if he is caught in the midst of choices over whether the civil society should have a government without the mass media or mass media without a government, he will prefer the latter (Abati 1). This is because the mass media are the global daises that inform right decision, shape quality governance, monitor adequate implementation and foster sustainable development.

The mass media also communicate the contents of governance to the masses and public opinion to the government (Dunu 179). And this important communication informs policy formulation and ensures adequate implementation that translates to sustainable development. The essential nature of mass media in civil societies is also evident in the fact that the industries are the platforms expected to stir necessary civil disobedience, positive revolution, removal of despotic and predatory governments and restoration of sustainable development trajectory, which according to John Locke, is the right of the masses when social contract is reneged (Appadorai 25, Nwoko 82-83).

Sadly, the case is different with Nigerian mass media. For despite the decades of predatory governance, tyranny, oppression of the masses, purposeful neglect and unsustainable development in Nigeria, the organizations largely resort to building a docile, feeble and tepid society where poor, clueless and utopic governance not only prevail, but face little or no challenge and criticism. This notwithstanding, Nigerian mass media have been commended severally by successive governments for their positive contributions to peace and stability in the country. Yet, starring at these mass media commendations and their massive programmes

are decades of unsustainable development. This becomes a pointer to the fact that Nigerian mass media are deficient in their constitutional responsibilities. Consequently, this paper outlines the role of Nigerian mass media in the prevalent unsustainable development in the country as well as the rationale behind poor mass media performance in Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Analysis**

Unexplained concepts are largely misnomers that obstruct understanding and knowledge (Chinweuba 39). But analysis unravels the meanings lurking in a concept and creates better insight and understanding for the audience. Hence, there is need to analyze mass media and unsustainable development which are outstanding concepts in this discourse. Mass media are channels through which information is passed to numerous, scattered and heterogeneous audiences in different locations (Abone 293). It is the modern means of communication that simultaneously and sometimes instantaneously reach a large scattered heterogeneous and anonymous audience, across distance and time, with the aid of technical communication devices (Santas and Ogoshi 75). In this sense, the mass media are technical communication industries that use the television, radio, newspaper, magazine, Bulletin, internet, etc, channels to educate and transfer information, ideas and knowledge to larger audiences in diverse locations.

From this understanding, it stands that mass media comprise of publishing and broadcasting institutions that inform the public through print and electronic means (Chinweuba 74). These print and electronic organizations however are what the society largely calls the press (Olisa 63; Okoro 13). The press or mass media are therefore channels of information characterized by journalistic processes of gathering, selecting, processing and transmission of useful information, ideas and knowledge to the public. Based on the important position the mass media occupy in human society, the industries are also referred to as news industries or public news services. Because of their importance in discussions and decisions on matters of national importance, the mass media are also regarded as the fourth estate of the realm.

Unsustainable development, for its part, is when positive growth or change in a civil society is short lived. In other words, unsustainable development connotes growth in every sector of a country for a short period of time. It also points at a situation where available resources in a country are not maintained for a long or lasting period of time. Unsustainable development too, points at a state of defunctness, redundancy, retrogression or underdevelopment.

Truly, unsustainable development is when a country's functional structures, social, cultural, political, economic, religious, educational and technological institutions are unable to retain or maintain maturity. Maturity in this context points at full, enough, necessary extent, state of adequacy and sufficiency propelled by mature human capital and cultural, social, political, economic, educational and technological institutions. Based on these connotations, the United Nations 2005 World Summit Outcome (WSO) observes that unsustainable development is absence of lasting growth and prosperity in the areas of socio-politics, economy, culture and environmental protection (1). Thus, unsustainable development is a situation in which the societal systems and institutions are continuously feeble, collapsing and unsatisfying to human wants and aspirations. From all these, unsustainable development could again be understood as a condition replete with decreasing skill, knowledge, capacity, and creativity.

### **Cradle and Basis of Mass Media in Nigeria**

Mass media came into existence from the time people became conscious of the merits of communal living, and started living in communities. Man at this time became aware of the need to inform, integrate and educate the members of the community. This however makes information, integration and education the bedrock of communication and mass media. In such primitive societies, sentinels bear the responsibility of reporting dangers to the inhabitants of the society. And decisions of council of elders were circulated to the members of

the society through some form of media. More still, story tellers and Jesters were local media that entertain the people, and shape their perceptions of the world and relationship with others. All these communication channels largely involve the use of local instruments like gongs, minstrels, sculptures, carvings, paintings, drawings, etc to reach the people. They also involve the use of natural existents; rivers, streams, stones, etc., and animate objects like: dogs, birds, snakes, bees, etc, as well as signs and marks on tress, ground, walls, etc to reach the members of the community. With the growth and complexity of human societies, coupled with advancement in science and technology, these roles and means have taken a new dimension. This dimension consists in the use of modern mass communication devices and gadgets to pass information to wider audience “en masse”.

The basis of the mass media in Nigerian society however is predicated on natural and civil laws. Natural law is a general rule found by reason, by which man is also empowered to gather information necessary to preserve his own life (Hobbes 223 & 224). From this natural law dimension came the United Nations declaration and subsequently African charter on human rights. The African charter as adopted in 1986 and ratified in 1990 states among others that every individual have the right to receive information, to express and disseminate his opinions within the law (Aghamelu 156). The United Nations declaration however formed section 24 of 1960 constitution of Nigeria which supports freedom of expression; to hold opinions, receive and impart ideas and information without interference, own, establish and operate mass media for the dissemination of information and opinion within the confines of the law (Momoh 1). This provision of the law was reiterated in sections 25 of 1963 Republican constitution, 38 of 1989 constitution, 40 of 1995 constitution, and 39 (1) of 1999 constitution. These constitutional provisions indeed underscore the establishment and operation of mass media in Nigeria. As such:

The only institution imbued with the ability to furnish the citizens with ... information is the mass Media. The duty of the media is for the entire society to be informed accurately and adequately of all the events and developments affecting the interests of every section of the society...so significant is the media's role that the media has been dubbed the very "oxygen" of the society (Dunu and Uzochukwu 321).

### **The Expected Role of the Mass Media in Nigerian Society**

Based on constitutional provisions, the responsibility of the mass media bothers on ensuring sustainable development through dissemination of balanced and objective information. In fact, the industries are expected to be the major sources of quantity and quality information needed to enlighten the public on issues concerning sustainable human existence. Along this line, it is expected that mass media programmes, discussions, debates, and analysis stand as the pivot of societies' sustainable growth and development. Thus, the mass media are looked upon to reinforce the fabrics of Nigerian society and consciousness of the people towards the polity with adequate information (Okoro 12). For without adequate and proper information, rumours and speculations will be the order of the day, and human relationship in civil society will be suspicious and unstable.

Beside the conventional schools however, the educational orientation and intellectual development of the public rest on the mass media. As such, the industry is tasked with the duty of inculcating the ethical needs of the society, knowledge of civil duties, rights and responsibilities, means of potential and opportunity discovery, as well as self and national actualization in the public. In this way, the people are more informed about tenets of human existence and sustainable development.

The responsibility of the mass media also extends to enhancing the prevention of undesirable consequences in the society through its programmes. Thus, the mass media are meant to focus

on news programmes relevant in the society; news that impedes social disorder and facilitates positive and sustainable social change. In Nigerian nascent democratic setting where the odour of military regimes still hover, and the boundaries between various spheres of life are not strictly defined but overlap and often generate conflict among principal political actors and ethnic groups, the mass media are expected to moderate this conflict to ensure stability. In this manner, the mass media are generally expected to place interest in promoting culture of peace, positive virtues, values, and stable polity that will guarantee sustainable development in Nigerian society. Along this line, mass media are meant to champion the facilitation of individual and national adjustment to the positive realities of life. As such, the industries are expected to emerge as the catalyst propelling desired human perceptions, thinking, behaviour, public discourse, and socio-political action (NOUN13).

Indeed, the mass media is burdened with the task of setting the agenda for sustainable development. This is in the sense of creating awareness of topical issues in development, initiating people and national oriented projects and motivating public opinions that will inform government decisions on such matters. Thus,

The mass media are the platform for vigorous public discussions, exchange of information and opinion that essentially pave way to citizen's right exercise of duties, choices and decisions, citizens' continuous active participation in the development of the society, as well as their formation and expression of opinion on current matters of public importance (Godwin 366).

In this agenda setting function, the mass media are also expected to create awareness of socio-political and economic realities, to “connect the government to the governed”, service the populace, and contribute to Nigerian general development (Ate 1). With this essential platform therefore, “what people would have ignored under uninformed condition”, can be attended to by frequent release of motivational information on mass media discussion platform to the public (Umechukwu 152). Thus, the mass media should not only provide the public with issues to think and deliberate, but guide them to make decisions and proffer solutions that are socially lucrative. And above all, the mass media are expected to be the vigilant “watchdog” of public interest. For their duties include surveillance over public good, governance, government functionaries and state actors. In this way, the mass media exercise social control over government and her policies, monitors implementation of constitutional stipulations, quality execution of people and national oriented projects and ensuring sustainable development (Ayakoroma 688). These lofty roles are universal and in consonance with critical observations on mass media in human society.

### **Some Philosophical observations on Mass Media in Human Society**

The philosophical observations on mass media are existential models for modern mass media. And the justification of the mass media, based on these observations, rests on mass media active positive functions in human society. Among these philosophical observations are those of McLuhan Marshall, Jean Baudrillard, and Frankfurt School championed by Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Habermas. McLuhan Marshall's observation revolves on what constitutes mass media (positive human and societal change). He envisages mass media as the message and extension of humanity (McLuhan 515). This is in the sense that mass media hold the function of extending human sight, hearing and touch through space and time. Thus, electronic media, McLuhan holds, open up new vistas for people and enable them to be instantly everywhere. As such, the mass media are viewed as a global village; in which awareness of events and sustainable development are speedily available. Along this line, McLuhan's observation conceives mass media as environments. This is as mass media have all the effects geographers and biologists have associated with environments such as influencing and shaping the occupants (McLuhan 515).

McLuhan's observation is thus premised on the conception that mass media have the duty of crossing barriers, erasing old categories and probing around to ensure sustainable growth of human society. Based on this, McLuhan's remark advocates that mass media mean change. For when something is communicated; a message is transferred, the recipient has changed in some manner or degree (McLuhan Eric 30). To adequately attend to the lofty function of transformation of human sensory experiences and social order, the mass media, according to this observation, must be rich and objective in data and information. In all these, McLuhan's observation tasks the mass media with playing critical role of stimulating greater consciousness of the people and participation, as well as the emergence of new social order and new forms of culture. This means that the mass media with the present technology fail in its duties when it supply the society with vague and shadowy information and poor reception, instead of meaningful information needed to make meaningful sense of realities.

Advancing McLuhan's observation in his work, "Requiem for the Mass Media", the French Philosopher Jean Baudrillard documents that man is largely dependent on mass media. And mass media with its technological structure affect and shape human thought process, attitudes, feelings and life. This is evident in the audience subsequent reaction after mass media encounter. Like McLuhan, Baudrillard demonstrates that mass media should serve some ultimate emancipation end in human society. Based on this, Baudrillard's observation affirms that modern mass media hold the duty of creating a new world of values, meaning, activity, social organization, thought and experience. This duty extends to playing a critical role in the sustainable development of the constitution and new post modern society. Along this line, mass media must therefore not only be concerned with relaying information to the public but with interpreting human conditions and aiding people in approaching the world meaningfully through the lenses of their outputs.

Similarly, the Frankfurt school critical observation stresses the role of the mass media in shaping human thought, behaviour, influencing politics and managing human society. Based on this position, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno present a model of mass media that is instrument of power; social, political and economic control. This model was critically advanced by Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Habermas who are convinced that mass media exist for the sustainable development of human society.

### **Mass Media and Unsustainable Development in Nigeria**

Mass media in Nigeria are mostly agents of government and political elites, on whom they depend to operate (Eze 215). This is largely why the industry refrains from criticizing the government and those connected to it. This is also the rationale behind mass media restriction, repression or denial of citizens' dissent or opposite opinion on critical issues in governance. This is as well the major reason behind the endemic predatory governance, "undemocratic democracy", despotism and unsustainable development prevalent in Nigeria. As such, the masses are hindered from knowing the proper and correct perspective to critical issues in governance (Ekwo 11). The masses are too deprived of conducive environment necessary for actualizing their potentials and dreams.

Deliberately, most Nigerian mass media operators distort and upset the pictures and dissent voices, or the whole electronic mechanism to undermine critics of government and the present unsustainable development. Largely therefore, Nigerian mass media build a docile society devoid of criticism and challenge, where high level corruption and oppression of the masses thrive among those in government. This is why the same mass media are active in long reflection and justification of the poor ideologies, policies, little or no achievements, draconian legislations, government oppression and negligence of the masses, numerous taxations of the public, egoistic political considerations of the government of the day and their consequent unsustainable development.

There is also the issue of protocol journalism in which some government officials are deliberately shielded from vital questions and investigations by mass media practitioners either based cowardice or in return for remuneration, kindness or consideration (Dunu 195). In line with this, the traditional mass media investigation of endemic unsustainable development fostered by false campaign promises, abuse of office, breach of the constitution, abuse of power, utopic policies, etc is poorly attended to, thereby rendering these socio-political and economic ills as norms in Nigerian context. In fact, the Nigerian mass media are largely bias, and extremely commercializes news and commentaries on governance. This makes the industries vulnerable to blackmail journalism, where most of the mass media investigations and reports are sponsored by powerful elites. As such, the Nigerian mass media are mainly active and objective when the news bother on minor or inconsequential issues in governance, on issues engineered by powerful politicians and government actors, on corrupt politicians with little or no connection with the incumbent government, on corrupt low rank “god fatherless” public and civil servants, and when the concerned mass media are connected to powerful elites, political parties or opposition politicians who stand to defend and protect them. The Nigerian Press Council in awareness of this situation and its resultant unsustainable development remarks:

The Nigerian media have fallen victim of manipulations by government and politicians. We are being witnesses to the fallen standard of journalistic profession and its negative contributions to nation building through a hackneyed uncouth and indiscrete reporting of events and issues... ethnic polarization of the media houses and consequent undue influence on power and political tussles. As a result, in the moment of crisis, the media become ready tools for those actively involved in the crisis of power (Aghamelu 157).

Consequently, history have little records of Nigerian journalistic activities that held past politicians, government officials or state actors accountable, and stir public opinion against inordinate political and economic desires of government officials. These are little indeed compared to avalanche of anti-societal and sustainable developmental activities which mass media industries have swept under the carpet. Thus, the certificate saga of president Muhammadu Buhari, his alleged impersonation and persistent breach of rule of law, lopsided governance, alleged marginalization of Igbo people and federal Government islamization agenda, issues of Fulani herdsmen, indigenious people of Biafra (IPOB) and *Boko Haram* terrorists, among others, have received little or no attention from the Nigerian mass media.

Besides, the Nigerian mass media largely disseminate edited, censored and often misleading reports on governance through government paid media correspondents (Dare 6). And on many occasions when government approval over reports is delayed, Nigerian mass media personnel often over censor reports for fear of reprisals from government (Dunu 192). This has characterized the Nigerian mass media industries with consistent factual inexactitude; a situation where information is incomplete with some missing facts because it is deliberately distorted. As such, Nigerian mass media are replete with sponsored, stage managed or censored news and broadcasts, meant at times to tarnish the images of dissidents and oppositions and to deceive the public on the reality on ground.

To please the government, Nigerian mass media is active in conferring endless status on state actors and government officials, projecting them as “Excellencies” and “incomparable achievers” (Ekwo 11). On this note, the mass media consistently magnifies and praises their little achievements in other to build support for them in the citizenry. Consequently, greater journalistic writings, commentaries, editorials, articles, reviews, columns, broadcasts, discussions, etc. fail to probe shrouded issues and negligence in governance which portend dire consequences to the masses. Such probe would have helped in dealing decisively with problems of corruption, ethnicity, and unaccountability, abuse of power and public office as

well as unsustainable development. By this unprofessional trend therefore, the Nigerian mass media demean themselves, and portray the industries as sycophants and “lap dogs” of the elites and government of the day. Hence, the global community now views journalism as practiced in Nigeria as unscientific, biased and “hogwash of exaggerations and speculations where facts are distorted to suit the ends of government and those who own the media” (Dukor 286). It is in regret of this impression that Afe Babalola remarks that Nigerian reputation is at the lowest ebb, and urges the mass media to resolve toward exposing and combating corruption at all levels (20).

On other occasions however, the mass media is merely satisfied with the phenomenological account of governance and not its analytic and implicative aspects. This is more pathetic as most of these mass media are not concerned about the truth of the matter but rumours and unfounded speculations (Aghamelu 160). And to please the government of the day still, the Nigerian mass media refrain from thorough publicity of alternative policy proposed by the opposition parties, civil societies, interest groups or dissidents. As such, the public is blocked from knowing the real facts surrounding state policy formulations and governance. With these and more unprofessionalism, Nigerian mass media foster the falling standard of governance and its resultant unsustainable development in the country.

### **Evidences of Unsustainable Development in Nigeria**

The justification of the argument so far predicates on the glaring endemic unsustainable development, which is largely the visible result of mass media redundancy and negligence of duty in Nigeria. This unsustainable development is evident in the consistent decades of systemic, institutional and infrastructural collapse. Thus, the social, cultural, political, economic, legal, security and technological institutions are moribund, and the structures accommodating them are fast dilapidating lacking maintenance. This have heightened spate of unemployment and mass poverty. Coupled with these are non diversification of the economy, consistent economic recession, scarcity of basic commodities, endemic corruption, poverty, mass hunger and low life expectancy. The Aljazeera news of Tuesday, March 24, 2020 supports this view when it reiterates decades of United Nations report that greater percentage of Nigerian population live below poverty line of one dollar in a day.

Within the context of Nigerian unsustainable development also is the education sector, which is fast deteriorating because of poor funding, poor staff emolument, negligence and incessant strike. In the same vein, health institutions and services are regrettably below global expectation. And there are evidences of excruciating socio-economic struggle among the masses in order afford the daily meals. This have created general frustration, anger, demoralization and disenchantment, leading to widespread hate speech, tension, terrorism, banditry, agitation, threats of secession, militancy and reckless loss of human lives in the country. The Nigerian consistent unsustainable development is as well visible in the general absence of good housing, welfare packages, inadequate social services and basic amenities for the greater population. This was why Dalhatu and Bagaji document that unsustainable development in Nigeria deprives the citizenry of quality education, good housing, industrial and technological feats and advancement, comfortable life; and thereby renders the people as cannon fodders for terrorism, banditry, insurgency, militancy and agitation (15).

Indeed, the harsh socio-economic situation resulting from endemic unsustainable development in Nigeria is the catalyst behind the spate of “brain drain” syndrome in the country (Akintoye and Opeyemi 16). Thus, those with connection leave the country in droves, and thereby create conspicuous shortage of human capital. Based on all these evidences fostered by the mischievous silence of the mass media, Nigeria is globally viewed as a failed and stateless state where life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short (Hobbes 186).

### **Rationale behind the Role of Mass Media in Nigerian Unsustainable Development**

Mass media organizations in Nigeria are owned by state and federal governments, politicians

and elites connected with the political system. As such, ownership influence has been a major factor affecting mass media performance and position on critical issues in Nigerian society. This influence is strengthened by the recruitment process, dismissal and remuneration of the staff of mass media organizations which depend on these proprietors. As such, journalism in Nigeria largely hangs on the maxim; “he who pays the piper dictates the tune”. Thus, the organizational confidence and responsiveness of mass media staff in Nigeria is influenced by the media proprietors, who establish the industries for their egoistic interests (Danjuma 165). This is why mass media reports, documentaries and commentaries on governance and other critical issues in Nigerian like unsustainable development are highly dependent on ownership structure and interest in the political system (Edogbo 33).

Because the mass media is the only source of news for wider heterogeneous audience, successive Nigerian governments view it with bias. Since most of the leadership gained power through the services of the mass media, government functionaries are aware of mass media potentials in rousing people's consciousness and changing the trend of governance. Since they want to stay in power for long, these officials threaten the mass media with repressive laws, policies and declarations that force premium on shallow and sensational reports and make “scapegoat” from dissident media practitioners. As such, Nigerian mass media personnel, according to Sommerland in Ugborajah are “walking on razor's edge” (133).

Consequently, the industries perform with regulated freedom, ensured through repressive instructions, pronouncements, decrees and laws such as; official secrets Act of 1962, Newspaper amendment Act of 1964, Newspaper prohibition circulation act of 1967, defamation Act No. 11 of 1976 and public officers (assumed protection against false publication) decree No. 4 of 1984 (Aghamelu 156-157). Evidently, occasions where the mass media have performed outside censorship have been met with severe punishments ranging from fine, revocation of licenses of the industry, detention to prison sentences for personnel involved (Idemili 48). Occasions when any of the mass media loyalty to the government is doubted is also met with severe punishments. Such was the lot of Africa Independent Television (AIT) and Raypower radio station that were threatened since 2015 and whose licenses were revoked on June 6, 2019 by President Muhammadu Buhari's government. As such, underperformance of mass media in Nigeria is propelled by fear; of loosing the license of operation and means of livelihood. Agba however draws attention to the fact that this fear has been there since independence as the first republic mass media organizations were also under the siege of government pronouncements, laws and decrees (196).

In Nigeria however, ethnic and political rivalry visible in cultural and political divides also pervades the mass media. Thus, the polarization of the mass media along these divides negatively affects the industries objectivity to issues concerning governance and sustainable development. In fact, some of the mass media manipulate these issues to suit their divide, or to avoid reprisal attack from the affected divide. Similarly, the fear of reprisal attack also renders mass media organisations that are neutral from these divides redundant. Indeed, mass media in Nigeria are pressured from every angle; the public, political parties, interest groups, government and state actors. This pressure has largely resulted to occasions where the mass media is coerced to take side, and report critical issues in governance in a way that promotes the interest of the stronger force and not general sustainable development.

A further investigation into the unprofessionalism of mass media in Nigeria reveals other driving forces. These are the forces of poverty and greed which breed every kind of social dysfunction in an individual; such as the feeling of financial insecurity and irrational pursuit of wealth (Fukuyama 5). There is poor remuneration for many journalists, and some of them with trailing history of poverty show the tendency to live above this deplorable condition. Some others could not however control their greed (Chinweuba 42). Corruption is therefore a monster that has eaten the fabrics of mass media organizations in Nigeria. It threatens



investigative and objective journalism and results to Nigeria's unsustainable development. Alluding to this fact, Santas and Ogoshi allege that Nigerian mass media practitioners on critical assignments have been corrupt on several occasions by receiving bribes, and engaging in host of other unethical behaviours in the discharge of their duties of reporting news events (82). The result has been deliberate killing of news stories, writing fictitious stories and making favourable commentaries just to promote the image of the concerned political figure or government functionary.

Against the ethics of the profession therefore, a great number of mass media practitioners and their organizations have political and pecuniary interests. These are also propelled by most Nigerian cultures where one's social status, worth and recognition are measured by the amount of wealth one has accumulated and how politically one is connected (Chinweuba 42). As such, the accomplishment of high social status in Nigeria mainly goes with amassment of tremendous wealth and craves for political appointments. These also underscore the present journalism of self-aggrandizement, replete with machinations to compromise critical issues in governance in order to achieve egoistic aims. Consequently, most Nigerian press run a docile journalism, while some have become part of the exploitative system, and lack moral will that ensures objectivity.

However, it is evident that mass media in Nigeria are not well equipped with modern communication equipment. As such, poor antiquated and mainly analogue electronic devices and gadgets are still being used to investigate and disseminate information in the present technology driven world. This is coupled with poor infrastructure, transportation facilities and remunerations which have greatly hindered their quick response to issues and events pertaining to sustainable development. In fact, the government and some proprietors of these mass media organizations have overlooked technological transformations that characterize mass media in the modern world. This unfortunate condition has negatively affected the quality of mass media investigation of issues and dissemination of news reports pertaining to the present Nigerian unsustainable development.

#### **Axiological Panacea to Poor Mass Media Performance in Nigeria**

To discharge their functions creditably, Nigerian mass media need to be truly independent, and must be availed a free environment. This will largely enable the industries to approach journalism with public interest. For sustainable development can only be facilitated by a strong, pluralistic and independent mass media within a society (Dunu 184). To foster the quality of free press in Nigeria, repressive decrees and laws affecting objective and free journalism has to be abolished. Too, the bodies regulating mass media practices; Nigeria press council (NPC), Nigerian Union of journalist (NUJ), Nigeria Guild of Editors (NGE), and National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) which serve as the "watchdogs" of the press need a paradigm shift from mere "witch-hunting" and vendetta czars to quality control architects. Thus, these bodies should embark on constant publicity of values, laws, regulations and ethics specific to mass media practices. They should as well beef up their duty of protecting the rights and privileges of mass media practitioners and industries. These will redirect the mentality of most journalists which revolves on material gain in exchange for important investigations and reports pertaining to illegal activities behind unsustainable development.

Consequently, the Bodies in-charge of press regulation must shake off political influences, bribery, and remain resolute in sanctioning inaccurate journalism, corruption and unethical practices perpetrated by mass media practitioners. The ability of the regulatory bodies to sanction media practitioners will indeed serve as a deterrent to "bad eggs" in journalisms and boost professionalism. Along this line, all legal frictions inhibiting the prosecution of earring members should be addressed, and professionalism in journalism should be reinforced or rewarded. To foster the quality of mass media in Nigeria, strict adherence to professional practice should be encouraged through constant orientation and re-orientation of mass media

practitioners in workshops, seminars and conferences. This will as well ensure enhanced and balanced journalism evident in consistent observational tendency and ability to get clues and make required deductions and meanings from existent facts and assumptions.

Insecurity has also plagued the effort of the mass media to discharge its responsibilities towards curbing unsustainable development. Thus, successive governments, stakeholders, individuals, and anti-social groups; Niger Delta militants and *Boko Haram* terrorists, consistently issue threat to mass media organizations, thereby hindering the free practice of journalism. Such threats have on many occasions manifested leading to the death of many journalists. Santos and Ogoshi for instance, report that on April 26, 2012, a suicide bomber hit This Day Newspaper office in Abuja, and on April 27, 2012 bomb blasts again hit the same This Day Newspaper office, and those of The Moment and The Sun Newspapers in Kaduna killing many journalists (82). If the insecurity of journalists is not quickly addressed by the government, the confidence needed to report issues that will sustain national development will continue to elude the press.

In similar vein, mass media owners should be mandated to secure life and health insurance for journalists attached to their organizations. Knowing that there is something to depend on in the case of injury or death will definitely boost confidence of journalists in their jobs. However, Nigerian government should eschew the habit of persecuting journalists and mass media organizations whose loyalties are in doubt. For this have for long wasted society's talent, resources, and hampers their objective reportage on issues behind Nigerian unsustainable development. Such journalists should rather be encouraged to indulge in more balanced and fair journalism. Truly, there is great need to discourage mercenary character in Nigerian mass media, for development without a balanced, objective and credible mass media will always lack sustenance.

### **Conclusion**

The assessment of the mass media in Nigerian context rests on natural and constitutional right bestowed on the industry to receive and impart information necessary for sustainable development. This right presupposes that the mass media as the fourth estate of the realm remain non partisan in upholding the truth for the general interest and good of the society. This entails that great amount of balanced, detailed and fair reports are expected from the mass media, as well as ideas and knowledge necessary to initiate and sustain growth in every sector of Nigerian state. It as well entails that mass media industries remain transparent, "investigative and objective in the collection and dissemination of information, comprehensive in the coverage and reportage of events and issues, and educative and informative in the process of mobilization" (Okoro 13). These mean that efficient and effective approaches in publication, monitoring government activities, exposing corruption, raising the socio-political consciousness and awareness of the people, and promotion of developmental programmes in a political state ensure sustainable development (Nwodu & Ukozor 2).

Sadly, these lofty functions are inadequate among Nigerian mass media. And worst still, most activities of these mass media industries cause great concern, and elicit negative criticism from the public. These negative criticisms are more pronounced as Nigerian mass media engage in activities that are largely far from public interest, public good and sustainable development. Such activities include display of sycophancy, hypocrisy, trivialities, sentiments, bias, exaggerations, lies, shallow and sensational reports and extreme commercialization. This is accompanied by unethical political polarization along ethnic loyalty, political parties, sectional groups and selfish interests (Dukor 287). The consequences of these have been mutual distrust and disbelief from the Nigerian public as well as unsustainable development of the society which largely rests on mismanaged, ineffective and inefficient mass media.

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