THE MASS MEDIA: VERITABLE TOOL IN THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
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Abstract
The paper emphasizes the importance of mass media as veritable tool in creating increase conscious awareness, education and knowledge in the area of protection of human rights. It also advocates a more precise, organized, and purposeful and coordinated mass media approach to create Human Rights consciousness in the minds of populace for national Development and sustainability. Furthermore, the study proposes a guide-dog approach of journalism to Human Rights issues, problems and challenges, as well as the Development Media Theory and Agenda- Setting Theory of Mass Communication to the devastating effects of the violation and the discouragement of Human Rights in Nigeria. The paper concludes that despite the fact that the mass media play important roles in the protection of human rights is well-known to all and sundry, notwithstanding, the mass media in their diversities should work hard towards the attainment of protection of human rights which is the threshold of peace.

Keywords: Mass media, Awareness, Protection, Human rights, Peace.

Introduction
Human rights issues have become important subjects in our media today. Those rights include: freedom from unlawful imprisonment, torture, execution or fair and equal treatment, etc. The scope of the rights is civil, political, economic, social, legal, environmental or cultural rights. They are universal, inalienable, indivisible, non-discriminatory and fundamental to human existence.

Elizabeth, [2010) contends that ‘Right’ is called freedom and benefit or entitlements that are guaranteed to people naturally and are supported by law. Human rights attach to all persons equally by virtue of their humanity irrespective of their race, nationality, membership, of any particular social group. They specify the minimum conditions for human dignity and a tolerable life, Mridushi, [2010). They are neither created nor abrogated by any government and are rights of all human beings, and it entails both rights and obligations. (Mridushi, [2010) pines that such rights are ascribed “naturally” which means that they are not earned and cannot be denied on the basis of race, creed, ethnicity or gender, which includes the right to life, liberty, freedom of thought and expression, equal treatment before the law and so on.

These rights are often advanced as legal rights and protected by the rule of law. However, they are distinct from and prior to law and can be used as standards for formulating or criticizing both local and international law. The fundamental human rights of every Nigerians are embodied in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chapter IV Section 33 – 43. The citizen’s Forum for Constitution Reform (CFCR), 2004 added more fundamental human rights to existing 10. These include: rights to education, right to health, right to clean and healthy environment, spousal right, right to work under safe and healthy
condition, right to culture, right to mothers, etc (Elizabeth, 2010). These rights are fundamental, universal indivisible, independent and interrelated.

The basic idea of human development – that enriching the lives and freedoms of ordinary people is fundamental – has much in common with the concerns expressed by declarations of human rights. The promotion of human development and the fulfillment of human rights share, in many ways, a common motivation, and reflect a fundamental commitment to promoting the freedom, well-being and dignity of individuals in all societies.

These underlying concerns have been championed in different ways for a long time [the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen came in 1789], but the recent literatures on Human Development and on Human Rights have given new shape to old aspirations and objectives. Extensive use of these two distinct modes of normative thinking, respectively invoking human development and human rights, encourages the question of whether the two concepts can be viewed together in a more integrated way, gaining something through being combined in a more comprehensive vision. To answer this question, it is important not only to have a clear understanding of what the two concepts – human development and human rights – mean, but also to examine their commonalities and their differences. Indeed, it is necessary to undertake two basic diagnostic inquiries.

- How compatible are the normative concerns in the analyses of human development and human rights? Are they harmonious enough – to be able to complement rather than undermine each other?
- Are the two approaches sufficiently distinct so that each can add something substantial to the other? Are they diverse enough – to enrich each other?

The answers to both of these foundational questions are definitely in the affirmative. Human development and human rights are close enough in motivation and concern to be compatible and congruous, and they are different enough in strategy and design to supplement each other fruitfully. A more integrated approach can thus bring significant rewards, and facilitate in practical ways the shared attempts to advance the dignity, well-being and freedom of individuals in general. The idea of human development focuses directly on the progress of human lives and wellbeing. Since well-being includes living with substantial freedoms, human development is also integrally connected with enhancing certain capabilities – the range.

**Statement of the problem**

Deliberate violation of human rights is unnatural and animalistic, while its protection must be respected out of the goodness of the heart. Sadly enough however, today, there is hardly a leader or a place on the earth surface where human rights are not being grossly violated with impunity despite the efforts of the human rights activists and organizations. In fact, the world is in a regime of human rights encroachment. Such violation include: social insecurity, racial discrimination, extrajudicial killing, prejudice, forceful sterility, sale of children, women and child trafficking, sexual harassment, genocide, war crime, etc. As pointed out earlier on, there is hardly a nation or a leader who is left out.

The United States of America (U.S.A.) which was in the forefront in the creation of the United Nations (UN) and in drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is being constantly criticized for human rights violation both domestically and abroad, especially in the criminal justice system and in national security issues, as well as for its treatment of sexual orientation in the anti-discrimination law and same-sex marriage (Wikipedia). Such allegations of human right infringement, past and present include: mass killings of the native Americans, slave trade, unjustified invasion of sovereign states, CIA abuse of prisoners, humiliation and inhuman treatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and at a secret CIA prison north of Kabul in Afghanistan. (Wikipedia).

According to Amnesty International, other forms of human rights encroachment include: rape,
masturbation, illegal human experiment, unethical medical research, nudity, solitary confinement, exposure to harsh weather, e.t.c. Russia and other great nations are not left out let alone the African countries where cherished values of equality, justice, love, respect, peace, e.t.c. had been supplanted by disgusting practices of indiscriminate killings, unlawful arrest, imprisonment, torture, sexual harassment summary execution, corruptions, nepotism, and so on as a result of callousness of leaders and their agents.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is the urgent call for the extensive Mass Media enlightenment on effective Human rights practices, through aggressive public relations and advertising campaign to ensure grassroots mobilization, as well as the Government agents such as military and paramilitary to undergo compulsory comprehensive training on human right issues for national development. The study also aimed at helping people liberate themselves from the oppression of other as to create literate environments where people can express their ideas and views for human and national development.

It further pointing out that there is need for the media to be up to the task by publishing unbiased, true and healthy information so that freedom, peace and harmony will reign in the society.

Theoretical framework

Communication process theory

Kunle, [2005:25] defined communications as the process by which an idea is transferred from a source to a receiver with the intention of changing his or her behavior. Other definitions could subsist but this is good enough for the purpose of this work.

This diagram above indicates that the source has a message with an intended objective; Kunle, [2005:74] contends that the message from the source should be well articulated so that the receiver or audience who has expectations concerning an issue of importance can develop consent. The audience affected by the set objective must be identified, analyzed and classified according to their interest. People cannot be carried along without their consent because the support for any given cause must emanate from understanding which marries the articulation of the message with expectation.
Kunle, [2005:73] established that communication is a complex process. It is an exchange or sharing of information or message. As such it requires basic components to make it happen. These components are: The source, the originator of the message, the medium through which the message or information is conveyed, the receiver and the feedback which of course is the answer [the reaction of the receiver to the message, while noise is anything that interferes and causes distortion in the message such as: miss-spelt words, poor reading and listening skills, laughing and jeering are all known as semantic noise.

Development media theory

According to Raufu, [2003], “Development Media theory is a relative new communication orientation, which arose as a part of the debate on New World Information Order that indicates the need for a profound restructuring of communicating patterns. This theory places emphasis on the involvement of the grassroots in the communication flow and implies that the Press must be placed as a tool on the path of the country’s economic development.

Mequail, [1978], sum up the basic tenets of development theory as follows:

- Media must accept and carry out positive developmental tasks in line with nationally established policies.
- Freedom of the Media should be open to economic priorities and development needed in the society.
- Media should give priority to national culture and languages.
- The theory advocates socialist purposive use of Media towards achieving certain socio-political and economic goals.
- The Media under this theory, is expected to understand the views and aspirations of the masses and transmit them to government, thereby assuming the “voice of the voiceless role”

Concept analysis, definition and explanation

The mass media

The word Media refers to the mass media of communication: radio, television, newspapers, Internet, magazine etc. Some see it as new audiovisual aids; some see media as relating to library and information technology.

Betty, [2002] defined Media as a various means of communication technology such as: television, radio, newspaper, press, news reporting agencies, internet, movies, mobile devices, video games, etc
considering the word media itself, media is a plural form of medium, a term broadly understood as being in the middle. Mass in this context refers to something that is participated in by or affecting a large number of individuals. Merriam–Webster’s collegiate Dictionary, therefore, contends that the mass media are means of communication that is designed to reach the mass of the people.

**Functions of mass media by Obafemi, [1994] are:**

- Surveillance of the environment
- Correlation and co-ordination of facts
- Persuasion
- Transmission of social heritage
- Opinion Molding
- Agent of Mobilization
- Projector of self help development
- Partner in culture/tradition preservation, maintenance and substances
- Educator’s of a unique kind who give attention to economic, social and political matters

The functions of mass media are numerous to mention.

**The roles of the mass media in protection of human right**

The Media is the main source of information in today’s world. Citizens base their actions on this information. In the process of informing and educating, the Media provide inputs for the formation of ideas; hence, they constitute veritable instruments for mobilization. Today, everyone has come to be entirely dependent on the Media in the quest for knowledge on a wide range of interesting events. As the organization of society became more complex and far-reaching, the importance of the Media in the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge had inevitably increased. Often times the Media revels uncontrollably in its importance and arrogates to itself the status of kingmakers in the body-polity of the nation, and even tending to believe that being Kingmakers, they could also un-make Kings. It is her that they are bound to come into conflicts with the King himself. They provide opportunity for people at grassroots level to discover the truth about what happened in a conflict and provide opportunities for dialogue.

Reporters exert modest pressure to bring violation of human right to public notice and discourage further violence.

The mass media also help to mount pressure on government and to legitimize the complaints of individual in case where fundamental rights and freedom are not respected and also criticize the conduct of government and military forces which does not comply with standards of operations (Mridushi, 2010)

The fundamental human right

Elizabeth, [2010], a ‘Right’ is called freedom and benefit or entitlements that are guaranteed to people naturally and are supported by law. Human
rights attach to all persons equally by virtue of their humanity irrespective of their race, nationality, membership, of any particular social group. They specify the minimum conditions for human dignity and a tolerable life.

Mridushi, 2010), pines that they are neither created nor abrogated by any government and are rights of all human beings. It entails both rights and obligations which are ascribed “naturally” meaning that they are not earned and cannot be denied on the basis of race, creed, ethnicity or gender. They include the right to life, liberty, freedom of thought and expression, equal treatment before the law and so on. These rights are often advanced as legal rights and protected by the rule of law. However, they are distinct from and prior to law and can be used as standards for formulating or criticizing both local and international law. The fundamental human rights of every Nigerians are embodied in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chapter IV Section 33 – 43. The citizen’s Forum for Constitution Reform (CFCR), 2004 added more fundamental human rights to existing 10. These include rights to education, right to health, right to clean and healthy environmental, spousal right, right to work under safe and healthy condition right to culture, right to mothers, etc (Elizabeth, 2010).

These rights are fundamental, universal indivisible, independent and interrelated. The scope of human rights cut across all sphere of life which includes: civil right, political economic, social, cultural, legal, environmental, religious etc.

Universality of human rights

Universal nature of human rights means that human rights cannot be denied on the basis of race, creed, ethnicity or geographical boundary. Various rights that cannot be violated under any circumstances are listed in the International Human Rights Documents. The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights affirmed the crucial connection between international peace and security; the rule of law and human rights placing them all within the larger context of democratization and development. The wide spread ratification of international human rights agreements is taken as evidence that these are internationally shared values.

The nature of human rights

Michell, (2003), when human rights norms are in place, certain requirements are imposed on government. It requires that the conduct of government and military forces must comply with these standards. It also legitimizes the complaints of individuals in those cases where fundamental rights and freedom are not respected. Such rules constitute a standard for the conduct of government and the administration of force. They can be used as universal and non-discriminatory guideline for formulating or criticizing law and as rules for proper conduct.

Rights of the child

A child is anybody who is 18 years or below. Violation of child right is common. Such violation include sale of children, violence against children, child prostitution, child pornography, child detention, child trafficking e.t.c. The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Children was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20th of November, 1989. Nigeria like other countries ratified the convention. The African Union (AU) formerly the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted a charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child in 1990. The OAU proclaimed the 1990s as the “Decade of the African Child” June 16th of every year was set aside as the “Day of the African Child” (Elizabeth, 2010). Some of the rights of the child include right to life, right to a name, family nationality, right to rest, recreation according to his or her age, right to compulsory basic education, right to good health, protection from sexual exploitation, drug abuse, child labor, torture, neglect, freedom from discrimination irrespective of ethnic, origin, birth, color, sex, language, religion, political and social beliefs, status or disability.

Right of women

Women and girls are often vulnerable to rape,
sexual violence during armed conflict. Trafficking in women is also a form of sexual slavery in which women are transported across national borders and marketed for prostitution. In December 1979, the United Nation (UN) adopted a Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAN). The convention came into force in September, 3rd 1980. The right of women include, right to work, right to all benefits and conditions of service, right to receive vocation training, right to social security, right to family benefit right to financial credit, right to have access to adequate health care facilities, right to education formal and non formal, etc (Elizabeth, 2010).

Causes of violation of human rights

Michelle, [2003], contends that violation of human rights is to deny individual their fundamental moral entitlements. That is, to treat them as if they are less than human and undeserving of respect and dignity. Examples of violation of human rights include: genocide, rape, enforced sterilization or medical experimentation, deliberate starvation, massacres, physical and psychological torture, war crimes, hostage takings, sexual assaults, forcible relocation, purposeless destruction of property, mass expulsion, firing on undefended localities or individual.

- Violation of basic right is the root cause of many crises. When rights to adequate food, housing, employment and religious cultural life are denied and large groups of people are excluded from the society’s decision-making processes there will certainly be social unrest. For example, massacres or torture may ignite hatred and strengthen an adversary’s determination to continue fighting.
- Prevention of children from access to education or prevention of an individual from knowing his or her rights is also a form of human right violation.
- The existence of rights does not always mean that a person’s right will be protected. Most of the conflicts are sparked off by a failure to protect human rights.
- An act of human right violation will definitely give birth to another form of right encroachment. For example, as conflicts intensify, hatred accumulates and restoration of peace becomes more difficult thereby increasing human right violation (Michelle, 2003). To truly address human right violation, therefore, we must strive to understand the underlying causes of the breaches (Michelle, 2003). The causes range from underdevelopment to discrimination, political dishonesty, social and economic disorder (Michelle 2003). Breach of fundamental human rights can also be remedied by involving the court intervention or the assistance of social and non-governmental organizations which help people to know their rights (Elizabeth, 2010).

Genocide as a form of human right violation:

Chris and Normen, [2003) defined genocide as the intentional extermination of a specific ethnic, racial or religious group. Genocide is regarded as the most offensive crime if compared with war crimes and crimes against humanity group. The term include:
- Killing of members of a group
- Causing serious or mortal harm to members of a group
- Imposing measures intended to prevent birth within a group (sterility)
- Forcibly transferring children of a group to another group (Chris and Norman, 2003)

Protection of human right

Protection of human rights is to ensure that people receive some degree of decent, human treatment, justice and to live a peaceful co-existence. When human rights are protected, political stability, economical development, and peaceful co-existence among others are always the outcome. The basic aims of protecting human rights is to preserve humanity against anything that challenges people’s health, economic well-being, conflict – free society, social stability, political stability, and development. And it will enhance the principle of non-discrimination and equality among individuals and the states

Some of the international bodies that play roles in human rights protection include:
Some of the documents aimed at preserving these rights include: Universal Declaration of Human Rights; International Covenant on Economic; Social and Cultural Rights; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Charter of The United Nations etc.

Methods and tools for safeguarding human rights

Some of the tools commonly employed in places where human rights are being violated are sanctions, incentives, military intervention or humanitarian evacuation. And some of the methods include:

- Peacekeeping strategies can be used to physically separate disputants and prevent further violence
- Dialogue groups should be organized to rebuild trust after armed conflicts have ceased
- Truth commission can be established after a political transition to investigate a past history of violation of human rights.
- The root cause of violence or conflict should be adequately addressed.

Humanitarian intervention as a means of preventing further human rights violation

It is the duty of states to intervene in crisis prone or crisis-ridden areas which may lead or have lead to violation of human rights. There are two kinds of humanitarian intervention involving the military: unilateral intervention by a single state and collective intervention by a group of states. It is beneficial in that it preserves international security, promote justice and maintain International order. However, the process may cause further violation of human rights, conflict or disagreement; for instance, some states intervene because of their self-interest rather than for humanitarian concerns which can lead to inconsistent respect for sovereignty and far-reaching disagreement among states. (Mchelle, 2003).

Sanction as a tool for safeguarding human rights

Sanction is viewed as an alternative to military force. They occur when one party attempt to change another party’s behavior without the use of weapons or the military. It is also a way of punishing an offending party economically, socially or politically so as to resolve conflict without the mass suffering and sacrifice required by war (Shane, 2004).

Sanctions include travel bans, arms embargoes, trade bans, investment bans, high tariffs, etc. Sanctions even though have some benefits which can have some negative consequence such as: It may lead to great human suffering, may trigger war, help to widen conflict, convey message of indifference and hostility, the target society may retaliate by imposing sanctions on the sender when given the chance. The benefits are that, they are useful in curbing human rights violation and in limiting proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Incentives as a tool for safeguarding human rights

An incentive is a promise of reward from the sender to a target in an attempt to get the target to do or not to do something. It is effective alternative way of managing conflict.

Types of incentives

Relaxing penalties: This has to do with the removal of existing penalties as sanctions, embargoes, investment bans, high tariffs, etc in exchange for policy change. If the penalties being relaxed are thought to be disproportionate to the alleged actions or are thought to be wrongly imposed in the first place, or their withdrawal is thought to be insufficient compensation, then, the target may not see such as an offer as an incentive at all.

Conditionality: This is used to improve the recipient’s economic standing. It can be in form of financial assistance, access to technology, loans, or investment initiatives in return for certain concession. Conditionality may not be explicit e.g. in the mid-1980s, South African was discouraged
from approaching the International Monetary Fund for assistance due to its practices of apartheid. Similarly the structural Adjustment Lending program at the World Bank can place indirect pressure on a country’s military budget by requiring economic and social expenditure that will squeeze out military spending.

4. Political and Security Incentives: This involves meetings between political leaders or military which can improve the recipient government’s legitimacy. This may come in the form of visit by foreign leaders which indicate international legitimacy; joint exercise, military assistance, third-party mediation and arms-control measures.

5. Inclusion incentives: this refers to inclusion in international organizations which can grant financial, security and psychological benefit to their members such organization include, European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), e.t.c. Benefits of such incentive include: economic cooperation, peaceful relation and political cooperation. However, membership of such organization does not go for free. They stipulate certain economic, political or social conditions which may not be favorable. The spill over effect of membership of such organization is that members must be willing to cooperate on other issues whether favorable or not.

Recommendations

- There is need to adequately train government officials and members of security and police forces on how to strictly observe the basic rights of people in the execution of their duties.
- There is need for Mass Media aggressive educational and enlightenment mobilization campaign on Human rights.
- Campaign to free all prisoners of conscience, to ensure fair and prompt trials for political prisoners and to stop torture, cruel treatment of prisoners, political killings and disappearance.
- The Web can be used to gain human right information, express political opinion, and mobilize people against human right violation or to make donation or contribution to oppressed ones.
- Education about human right may be incorporated into school curricula.

Social structural changes as equality in allocation of resources, even distribution of government services must be prioritized.

There is need for the government to create a healthy atmosphere for the operation of mass media especially in the area of human rights. Absurd movies, immoral play and publications that are capable of introduce or instill negative attitude or adversely condition the psychology of the people should be censored.

Conclusion

Tejumaiye, [2004], contends that Guide-Dog journalism is derived from general disinterestedness of citizens in societal or collective problems. It is a proactive as well as reactive phenomenon to the collective will of ensuring that the society in which we live is made better for all; therefore, the Mass Media should imbibe this principle for the achievement of the said objective.

The responsibility to protect human right resides first and foremost with the Federal Government and States through public authorities and government agencies. All hands must be on deck, the individuals and international laws have a stake in protecting human rights for national development. The fact that the mass media play important roles in the protection of human rights is well-known to all and sundry, notwithstanding, the mass media in their diversities should work hard towards the attainment of protection of human rights which is the threshold of peace.

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