
CHALLENGES OF THE MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA AND THE RESURGENCE OF COUP

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Abstract

The study sought to find out whether Africa leaders adhere to the tenets of democracy, the challenges of the media and the resurgence of coup in Africa. Library Research Method was employed to gather secondary data (information). The study is anchored on Development Media Theory. It was discovered that bad governance is an offshoot of leaders unwillingness to adhere to the tenets of democracy in Africa. It was further revealed that in Africa leaders appear to be stronger than institutions of government and the will of the majority relegated to the oblivion; checks and balances are weak and there is low accountability, and widespread corruption. It was again discovered that, journalists and media organizations in Africa cannot objectively and professionally carry out the task of development bestowed on them by Development Media Theory, because of nonpayment of salaries, safety of journalist, ownership influence, powerless electorates and weak institutions . Findings revealed a link between the resurgence of coup in Africa and the challenges of the media and democracy. This is so because when the media exposes an ill in the government, the people and government institutions are expected to call government to order based on the media report. It was however , discovered that such institutions and the people no longer have the power to call government to order; the institutions are weak and power does not reside in the people but the leaders. It was discovered that, the inability of the people and institutions to hold government accountable has further deepens the challenges of the media because the media can only set agenda or expose ills in the society but cannot compel government to act. As such the media can achieve little or no result from exposing ills and setting agenda for public discourse, when the people and institutions cannot call government to order.. The resurgence of coup in Africa in the last three years (2020-2023) it was discovered was largely related to corruption and insecurity, which are products of bad leadership, bad leadership thrives because power does not reside in the people and our institutions are weak hence the resurgence of coup. This is so because with weak institutions and powerless people (electorates) and abuse of constitution and democratic principles the only way out appears to be the military taking over power. This shows the link between the challenges of the media and democracy and the resurgence of coup in Africa. It was concluded that, in Africa where there is dire need for human and infrastructural development, the media should be allowed to play its watch dog functions and Africa leaders should adhere to the tenets of democracy. It was recommended that, leaders must endeavour to ensure that power resides in the people, create room for checks and balance, ensure freedom of the press. All these can ensure accountability, reduce insecurity and military coup.

Key words : Democracy, Media, Challenges, Resurgence, Africa

Introduction

The resurgence of coup in Africa can be attributed to bad governance; bad governance is an offshoot of leaders unwillingness such agenda become public opinion. Such opinion is expected to draw government attention to such issue of national interest. The government is then expected to act in accordance with the will of the people, this is so to adhere to the tenets of democracy and the inability of the masses to make media agenda public opinion. This has further compounded the challenges of the media in Africa. Ijwo & Omula (2014) posit that, besides her traditional function of informing, educating and entertaining, the media can also give prominence to certain events with the view to bringing such event to public notice. This implies that in an ideal democracy the media is required to set agenda on issues of national interest, this is so because in democracy power resides in the people. In Africa the reverse seems to be the case as most governments prefer to act in opposition to the will of the majority there by deepening the challenges of the media and democracy. Note that the media does not have the power to compel government to act, the power to compel government to act resides in the people and government institutions. However, in the context of democracy in Africa power resides in the leaders and the institutions that are required to hold government accountable are weak. Simply put the government (leaders) appear to be stronger than these institutions. This is so because most of the heads of these institutions are appointees of the government and appear to be loyal to the government. In some cases the heads of these institutions are afraid to do the right thing because such leaders may kill them for doing the right thing. Little wonder former President Olusegun Obasonjo according to Ogunnaike (2023) states that, western liberal "democracy will never work in Africa as a system of government because it does not take into account the view of the majority of the people(parag,2)". This is a clear indication that, the will of the majority has been relegated to the oblivion by those in position of leadership. We however disagree with the view that democracy will never work in Africa. Democracy can work in Africa if leaders agree to adhere to the tenets of democracy and strengthen institutions of government. Obasonjo according to Ogunnaike (2023) further states that western liberal democracy is :

“government of a few people over all the people or the population and these few people are representatives of only some of the people and not full representatives of all the people. Invariably, the majority of the people are wittingly or unwittingly kept out.(parag.3)”.

So military taking over power from civilian in recent time in Africa has become 'common' place. because of bad leadership, bad governance as stated earlier is an offshoot of the unwillingness of leaders to adhere to the tenets of democracy. The tenets of democracy are the rules that are expected to guide the leaders, equally important is also the constitution that is expected to guide leaders. However, when these leaders come into power they jettison the constitution and the tenets of democracy, and the resultant effect is bad governance. Hence the people(masses) the media, and government institution have been 'incapacitated' by the so called leaders, the only alternative to correcting bad governance would then appear to be military takeover, hence the resurgence of coup in Africa.

The media should be allowed to play its function of informing, this is so in that, Hendricks (2022) posits that, the mass media ensures that, there is quick exchange and transmission of information to a large group of people. Hendricks continued that without the mass media it would be difficult for people who are separated by distance to communicate effectively. Unofficially the media has been recognized as the fourth estate of the realm of government. This unofficial title is bestowed on the media because of the strategic importance of the media. The media is seen as the watchdog of the society. However, in this part of the world (Africa) the dog appears to be hungry and therefore can neither bark nor bite.

Agency Report (2021) notes that; some journalists were made to work for months without salary, the problem is the same in countries like Cameroon, Zambia and other African countries. These problems and many more have made it difficult for the media in Africa to function effectively and objectively. This means that, the watchdog function of the media is also threatened by the challenges mentioned above. Ahiuma Young & Agbakwuru (2023) state that, the police in Anambra State in Nigeria on November 1, 2023 arrested Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) President Ajaero alongside other labour leaders and journalist in relation to a planned protest that was scheduled to hold in Anambra State on the said day. TVC camera man was arrested and his camera destroyed and the TVC reporter sustained injury (Ahiuma Young & Agbakwuru)

Democracy in the words of Day (2022) allows participation of citizen in charting the course of their government and their future. Participation can come in form of voting, public debate, town hall meetings and peaceful protest. In some African countries peaceful protest as a form of participation is considered an aberration especially when such protests are not in tandem with the wishes and desires of those at the helm of affairs, the EndSARS protest in Nigeria in 2020, the Libya Revolt of 2011, and #EndBadGovernance Protest in Nigeria in 2024 were examples of peaceful protests that did not end well. African leaders have refused to adopt the principles of democracy even though they have adopted democracy as a form of government. It is pretty obvious that in the context of African democracy the people are not allowed to truly participate and chart the course of their government. No matter how hard the media tries it can achieve little or no result so long as the institutions of government are weak and power does not reside in the people. This is so because the media can also set agenda and expose ills in the society but cannot compel leaders to act.

In the last three years we have witnessed seven coups in Africa, one can say with a degree of certainty that these coups are connected with bad leadership, human right violation, hunger, starvation and abject poverty, which are resultant effects of government unwillingness to adhere to the tenets of democracy.

“Africa” is one continent where individuals (political elites) appear to be stronger than institutions, and because these individuals are stronger than institutions they cannot be checked by such institutions, as such the people (masses) feel the only way to get such leaders out of power is through the barrel of the gun (coup). Little wonder in some Africa countries you find civilians asking the military to take over power, this we believe have accounted for the recent upsurge in military takeover in the continent. Redaction Africanews (2023) reports that, Africa has experienced seven coups since August 2020

Statement of the Problem

Democracy as a system of government is laden with a lot of good principles which when strictly adhered to will bring about 'quality' leadership, followership and development. Accountability, periodic elections, free press, rule of law and citizens' participation are some of the laudable principles or tenets of democracy. The hall mark of democracy is that power resides in the people, meaning that the people (masses) are supposed to have the final say. Simply put the will of the majority is supposed to prevail. A free press is supposedly expected to set agenda on issues of national interest, from such agenda people can form public opinion and such opinion is supposed to prevail over that of the few in position of authority. A free press is one of the principal principles of democracy. This study seeks to find out the nexus between the challenges of the media and democracy in Africa and the resurgence of coup in the continent.

Objectives of the Study

1. To ascertain whether African leaders adhered to the principles of democracy.
2. To find out the challenges of the media in Africa and the extent the media is able to play her watchdog function.
3. To investigate the reasons for the resurgence of coups in Africa (2020-2023) and the link between the challenges of the media, democracy and resurgence of coup.

Review of Literature

Democracy the Media and Resurgence of Coup D 'etat in Africa

Democracy as a form of government has in place lofty principles that are intended to bring about human and infrastructural development. Accepting and adopting democracy as a form of government in Africa is just one side of a coin. The other thing is adhering to the lofty tenets of democracy. This is so because the beauty of democracy as a form of government is embedded in its tenets. This implies that democracy as a form of government can only succeed when its tenets are adhered to by those elected into power. The question is that, do African leaders adhere to these principles? Below are some of the tenets of democracy. Day (2022) identifies the following as the principles of democracy

- (1) Participation of citizens- this principle of democracy gives people the opportunity to choose who represents them and also gives people a free voice to express their opinions and desire. Besides voting participation also entails public debate, town hall meetings and peaceful protest
- (2) Accountability -“People entrust power to those they elect, and they are tasked to use those powers to enrich their communities. Politicians are accountable to the people, must act consistent with their will, and have a duty not to abuse their power to enrich themselves”(Day 2022,parag 4)
- (3) Transparency- Transparency means the government should be as open as possible. This means that individuals and journalists should be able to access information from politicians and government officials, except where such information is classified for security reasons.
- (4) Political tolerance - This means that in a true democracy all citizens have equal rights and these rights must be respected regardless of who is in power. Simply put those in power must recognize and respect the rights of the opposition.

- (5) Control over the abuse of power – power can be abused when a government decides it is above the law, or when politicians believe a different set of rules apply to them. Democracy can only survive if everyone plays his role : the citizens vote at election and politicians playing by the rules and working to improve the lives of everyone.
- (6) Bill of rights- Many of the rights protected by bill of rights are what we call human rights. These are rights people are supposed to have regardless of the country they live in. Democracy is expected to promote and protect these rights.
- (7) Free and Fair Elections—It is only natural that elections will produce different results at different times. So it is important that elections are free and fair. This means that people are given good and accurate information before voting, and that they are free to discuss and debate it. It also means that on Election Day, people have equal access to the polls, that everybody's vote has the same value, and that all votes are counted.
- (8) Free Courts—The judiciary in a democratic setting is supposed to be free and independent. Day (2022) posits that, a football match would be a sham if the referee was picked by one of the teams; he maintained that democracy would be similarly shambolic if the government fills the court with its friends or disregards court decisions. An independent judiciary is required to give people equal access to independent body to resolve conflicts
- (9) The Rule of Law –This means that the laws apply equally to all the people. It also means that the government should play by the rules. It also implies that the laws are enforced in a fair and consistent way, and there is an independent body like the court to settle disputes
- (10) Accepting Elections Results-- This means that if the election result does not go the way of those in power, they must accept the result the way it is and step down..
These are some of the laudable tenets or principles of democracy that are intended to bring about good governance and development.

The study sought to find out whether African leaders adhered to these principles or not .It is glaring that in Africa leaders do not adhere to these principles, this is true in that Liedong (2017) opines that :

Africa is home to despots and sit-in presidents who either abuse their power or allow abuses to be perpetrated. Countries are run like family property and political dynasties are created by father passing power to sons. Checks and balances are weak, dissent is crushed, and alternative views are discarded, culminating in low accountability which further deteriorates leadership and enforces corruption (Parag. 13)”.

This is the kind of things you find in some if not most African countries. Abuse of power by African leaders is common place. In 2018 the then President of Nigeria President Muhammad Buhari made advance payment for purchase of planes without Legislative approval. Nwabughio (2018) notes that “It will be recalled that the President had made advanced payment on the aircraft from monies not appropriated for by National Assembly (Parag.3)”. Not only did the President abuse his power but he also breached the constitution, because such act contradicts Section 80 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria. This also shows that the President was stronger than the institutions.

There are also cases of leaders perpetrating themselves and the family members in power. This was the case of Gabon where power had rotated around a particular family for over five decades. This true in that Oso & Agbakwuru(2023) state that “Gabon's electoral authority had announced earlier yesterday that Bongo a French ally whose family has ruled oil rich Gabon for 55 years had won a third term with 64.27 percent of the vote (Parag,27)”. The action of the then President of Nigeria ,Muhammad Buhari contradicts the idea of checks and balance. One family remaining in power for over fifty years contradicts the principle of periodic elections that allows electorates elect leaders of their choice.

Corruption is another challenge that is facing democracy in Africa. This position is consented to by Liedong (2017) who states that ,corruption is common place in Africa, he continued that anti corruption efforts fail because African leaders are not honest and accountable. The inordinate desire for money and the realization that power can deliver untold wealth is believed to be responsible for most corruption cases in Africa, as such the state and the people are sacrificed to greed (Liedong 2017) . One of such case has to do with the resignation of a minister in Ghana whose house workers allegedly stole more than one million dollars in cash from her home. World News(nd) states that, Sanitation Minister Cecilia Abena Dapaah was placed under arrest in respect of suspected corruption and corruption related offences regarding large amount of money. You can imagine the level of corruption in Africa an individual having that huge amount at home. Further more Punch Editorial (2023) states that :

In a survey of 30 countries across all the regions of the world and 5.5 billion people the OSF concluded that corruption is undermining democracy in Nigeria and several other countries. Corruption manifests in every sphere of national life, most noticeably in elections, the judiciary, government agencies procurement/contract, payroll, and in extortion by security agents (Parag. 2 & 3).

It is glaring that corruption is one of the major challenges that confronts democracy in Africa. Besides the few cases mentioned, there are other cases of corruption and violence, vote buying, snatching of ballot boxes, election rigging, and many more. All these show that leaders in Africa have failed the people, because governments are not operated based on the principles of democracy. This accounts for the near collapse of democracy in Africa.

One of the core tenet or principles of democracy is free press. This means that the media are supposed to be free from government control and harassment, so as to enable the media perform their watchdog function. Nonpayment of salary and poor salary by media organizations were identified as problems that journalists in Africa have to contend with. A 30 year old journalist working with a Lusaka based community radio according to Kasama & Tembo (2022) notes that, low salaries in the private media have led to the fall of professionalism in journalism , she continued that in some cases media organizations do not give transport fare to their reporters when going to the field to cover events and such reporters depend on transport fares from the sources. Again the Chairperson of Zambia Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) according to Kasama & Tembo (2022) says “nonpayment of journalists salaries denies them objectivity and forces them to seek alternative sources of income there by compromising media ethics (Parag,15)”.

In Nigeria Okereke (2022) cited Mr. Okogene, who said the Independent Newspaper in Nigeria was unable to pay its workers for sixteen months, between 2015 -2016 . After owing Mr. Okogene for sixteen months he was sacked without pay, Non-payment of salaries is one thing that is preventing the media in Africa from carrying out her watchdog function in an ethical manner.

Ownership influence and interest is another challenge that confronts journalists and media organizations in Africa. When a media owner is interested in an issue he wants that interest to reflect in news stories about that thing. For instance if the owner is interested in a political party or candidate he wouldn't want his media organization to carry “negative” news about such party or candidate, there by suppressing the objective views of journalists in his media organization. This position is echoed in Project Reserve (nd) which states that, public media (government) are mostly used as instruments of propaganda for the government while private media owners are driven by different motives ranging from profit making, agenda setting to winning influence and political and business gain. Simply put, private media owners are mainly interested in propaganda or profit making. We are all living witnesses to the campaign of calumny by African Independent Television against Muhammad Buhari then Presidential aspirant or candidate of All Progressive Congress(APC). The documentary clearly depicted ownership influence and interest. The said documentary was aired January 2015, in African Independent Television (AIT)

This is a challenge to journalists in both public and private media organizations in Africa. In public media journalists are expected to be loyal to the government in power by supporting whatever the government feels or thinks is right. In Africa we see elements of Authoritarian Media Theory in play in most public media. The media is reduced to a stooge of government. Ownership influence and interest both in public and private media must be jettisoned in its entirety because it negates the freedom of expression and the power of the press to hold government accountable.

The safety of journalists is another challenge facing journalists and media organizations in Africa .Those in position of leadership can arrest and detain journalists that appear to carry or report on stories not in favour of the government. Lunga (2022) posits that, Zimbabwean Journalist Hopewell Chin'ono was arrested and sent to Maximum Security Prison before he was released in November 2020. His crime according to Lunga(2022) was that ,the regime of Mnangawa and the government did not want the journalist(Hopewell) to expose corruption involving the President's family. “The safety of journalists and media worker continue to be a huge challenge with increasing reports of attacks such as arbitrary arrest and detention, jailing and physical assault (Lunga 2022 Parag 3)”

In Malawi the police recently arrested Gregory Gondwe managing director of the Platform for Investigative Journalism(PIJ) and seized his computer and phones in attempt to force him to reveal a source (Lunga 2022 Parag.5)”. The case of Hopewell and Gregory shows that , there are journalists who have not given up on the public right to know. UNESCO according to Wikipedia (nd) defines public right to know as the right for people to, participate in an informed way in decisions that affect them ,while also holding government and others accountable. The journalist should endeavour to always do his or her job for the good of all, journalists however, must be careful and always apply caution, to ensure their safety.

It is quite obvious that journalists in Africa cannot perform their jobs objectively and professionally, because of problems such as: nonpayment of salaries, ownership influence and the safety of journalists in Africa. The most troubling challenge of the media in Africa is that democracy has failed in Africa. In the context of democracy in Africa power does not reside in the people (electorates), and the institutions of the state are weak, and political leaders have made themselves stronger than the institutions and the electorates put together. As such the opinion and the will of the majority do not count and the institutions cannot compel leaders to do the right thing. All these are problems that have further weakened the power of the press. This is true in that, the media does not have the power to force government to take action on ills or corruptions related matters. What the media do is to expose such ills or set agenda on issues of national interest. Through her agenda setting role the media can get the people to make such issue public opinion. In an ideal democracy when an issue becomes public opinion it is believed to be majority view, the government is therefore expected to act in accordance with the will of the majority. This is so because in an ideal democracy power resides in the people and their institutions. It is the institutions and the people that can compel such leaders to take appropriate action. What this means is that, the media can only expose ills or set agenda but do not possess the power to compel action, the power to compel government to act in an ideal democracy resides in the people and institutions of government. Where government fails to act in accordance with the will of the majority the people can protest or take such government to court, use their power of recall , organize town hall meeting etc

In the context of African democracy power does not reside in the people and the institutions of government are weak. former President Olusegun Obasonjo according to Ogunnaike (2023) states that western liberal "democracy will never work in Africa as a system of government because it does not take into account the view of the majority of the people(parag,2)". Because power does not reside in the people and because the institutions are weak, the media can hardly achieve desired result this is so because, the people and the institutions do not have what it takes to compel leaders to take necessary action on issues of national interest, neither do the media. This is a huge challenge to the media. The foregoing shows that all the mechanisms put in place to ensure good governance have either been compromised or relegated to the oblivion. It is pretty obvious that the military then becomes the only alternative left. This is true because the leaders have become so powerful that they now assume the positions of small gods. The military is said to be the only alternative because the military can remove such leaders from power without going through the institutions that have been compromised and the people whose power have been relegated to the oblivion .The use of force appears to be the only language that these leaders can understand.Hence, the resurgence of military coup in Africa in the last the three years. This has also accounted for why military coups were celebrated in most of the countries where these coups occurred.

"In Niger stadiums have been filled by supporters of the military government after its July 26th coup(Adetayo,2023 Parag.5)". . In Gabon the masses celebrated military take over because the military was able to put an end to a dynasty that started with Ali Bongo's father Omar in 1967 (Adetayo,2023).

This means that the leadership of Gabon in the last fifty six (56) years had been between Ali Bongo and his late father Omar. Again in 2021 the masses celebrated in the streets of Conakry when the Guinea military took over power from President Alpha Conde. This pattern of reaction to military takeover according to Adetayo, (2023) “is an expression of deep –seated frustration with civilian leaders in Africa(parag.6)”. Military take over gives the masses an opportunity to say the military has taken over a government that does not represent the interest of the masses, this to a large extent accounts for the support that the military gets from the masses.

The inordinate desire of political leaders to remain in power makes them to go to any length to remain in power. Such leaders are ready to rig election and make things difficult for journalists, the masses and election observers just to win election at all cost, this was the case in Gabon, This assertion is consented to by Adetayo (2023) who puts it thus:

In a country of an estimated 2.3 million people and around 850,000 registered voters, the general election held on August 26 stretched into the third day. While votes were counted, a curfew was imposed and internet access cut off. international observers had also been barred from the country. The military cried electoral malpractice as one of the reasons for the coup.(parag.6).

Cutting off the internet is a clear violation of the freedom of speech which is a principle of democracy. It is expected that, on the day of election the internet should be left on so that the masses can exercise their freedom of speech. Cutting off the internet on the day of election makes it difficult for journalists to send their reports from the field to their organizations. Cutting off the internet, barring international observers and the curfew were indications that the government was ready to massively rig the election results. Little wonder the military took over and advanced electoral malpractice as one of the reasons for the coup.

Corruption is another reason that has accounted for military takeover in Africa, This is true in that, in Mali, Burkinafaso and Guinea coup leaders according to Mahmoud & Talfouri (2023) said that, their reasons for taking over power were related to widespread corruption directed at democratically elected governments and insecurity. Coup leaders believe or accused the ruling regimes of corruption and economic mismanagement. Over the last three years (2020-2023) Africa has witness seven coups:

- 1 In Mali military took over power on August 18, 2020 from Ibrahim Boubacar
- 2 In Guinea military took over power on September 5, 2021 from Alpha Conde
- 3 In Sudan military took over power in October 25, 2021 from Abdalla Hamdok
- 4 In Burkinafaso military took over power on September 30,2022 from Paul Henry Damiba
- 5 In Guinea Bissau there was a coup attempt in February 2022
- 6 In Niger military took over power in July 26 2023 from Mohammed Bazoum
- 7 In Gabon military took over power in August 30, 2023 from Ali Bongo

It is glaring from the findings of this study that the resurgence of coup in Africa is largely due to bad leadership which is an offshoot of leaders unwillingness to adhere to the principles of democracy, and widespread corruption among political leaders in Africa.

This position is echoed in Asadu (2012) who opines that:

Understandably, sustainable development cannot occur in a place where there is bad governance. Bad governance is repressive, unilateral, autocratic and does not represent the interest of the poor and the marginalized in decision making. In short it is a corrupt government”(P.22)

Nexus Between Challenges of The Media, Democracy and Coup in Africa

There is connection between the challenges of the media democracy and the resurgence of coup in Africa. The challenges of the media in Africa has been made worse by the failure of democracy in Africa. Democracy is said to have failed in Africa because our leaders have refused to adhere to the tenets of democracy. This has made the people powerless and voiceless and our institutions weak. As such even when the media exposes corruption or sets agenda on issues of national interest it will end up achieving little or no result. This is so because the people and the institutions that are expected to compel government to take action on the corruption that the media have exposed or the agenda the media have set , do not have what it takes to do so. This is so because power does not reside in the people and government institutions are weak. The failure of leaders to adhere to democratic principles is responsible for weak institution and “powerless and voiceless” masses. The fact that power does not reside in the people , and that government institutions are weak is a serious challenge to the media, this is so because the media can keep exposing ills and setting agenda but may end up achieving little or no result. With a media that can achieve little or no result ,with a scenario where power does not reside in the people, with a situation where government institutions are weak, the leader becomes too powerful and unquestionable because all the mechanisms put in place to check such a leader are ineffective. The leaders are happy with these kind of arrangements because it favours them, these kind of arrangements only ensure bad governance. “African countries continue to face under development, a situation directly linked to leadership failure and poor governance systems(Ugwueze, 2023 parag.1)”. So the only way to get such a leader out of power becomes the use of force , hence the resurgence of military coup in Africa. Our leaders need to act fast by ensuring they adhere to the principles of democracy else more coups are bound to occur.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Development Media Theory. Development Media Theory was propounded by Dennis Mc Quail in the 1980s Ojobor (2002) cited Okunna who said:

The theory emerged in the 1980s to fill the void which became increasingly noticeable as the gap between the developed and developing countries widened. As the gap widened it became apparent that none of the classical theories of the press was strictly applicable to developing countries even though the mass media in these countries were operating according to some of the principles of the classical theories(p,14)

McQuail (1997) observes that, development media theory was intended to recognize the fact that, societies undergoing a transition from underdevelopment and colonialism to independence and better material conditions often lack the infrastructure, the money, the traditions, the professional skills and even the audience needed to sustain media institutions comparable to those of the first world or second world in which the four theories could take root .

The foregoing connotes that, development communication is applicable in countries with lower level of economic development and inadequate required resources, as such the media are required to foster development in such countries. Little wonder Ojobor (2002) posits that, development media theory puts economic development and nation building in the front burner of communication. This position found expression in Asemah, Nwammuo & Nkwa-Uwaoma (2017) who state that, “the underlying fact behind the genesis of this theory was that there can be no development without communication” This means that communication is central to development, the centrality of communication to development is hinged on the fact that, about 75% of human activity revolves around communication. It is therefore clear that “development media theory stands for the positive use of the media in national development and for the autonomy and cultural identity of a particular national society and participative communication”(Ojobor,2002,P.15).

The Assumption of Development Media Theory according to McQuail cited in Ojobor (2002,) are

- The media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy
- Freedom of the media should be open to restriction according to (1) economic priority (2) development needs of society.
- The media should give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally or politically.
- Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination task.
- In the interest of development ends, the state has the right to intervene in or restrict media operations, and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified.

The relevance of this theory to this work lies in the fact that , Africa is in dire need of both human and infrastructural development, there is therefore the need for those in position of leadership to allow the media propel the wheel of development. This the media can do by setting agenda for public discourse. Such agenda may become public opinion and such opinion can compel government to take the necessary action, for the good of all. This is important because, the media serve as interface between the leaders and the led in the development process.

Methodology

The method adopted for this study is the Library Research Method. This means that the study is based on secondary data. Library research according to IGI Global (nd) refers to the act of using a library either in print or online, to find information which satisfies or answers a question. Giving credence to the preceding point Wikipedia (nd) states that, a research library is a library that contains an in-depth collection of materials on one or several subjects. Research libraries are mainly established to carter for the research needs of researchers.

Such libraries are usually stocked with authentic materials with quality contents (Wikipedia) In research library one is able to find scholarly and nonfiction materials such as: journals, newspapers, periodicals, research projects etc. Note that in Library Research Method the researcher can also source materials from outside the library. The method is centred on the use of secondary data (information).

Discussion

The first objective of this study was to find out whether African leaders adhere to the principles of democracy or not. Finding has shown that African leaders do not adhere to the principles of democracy. African leaders are found of abusing their powers, in Nigeria for instance the then President Muhammed Buhari spent government money without Legislative approval. This is in line with the earlier submission of Nwabughio (2018) who opines that “It will be recalled that the President had made advanced payment on the aircraft from monies not appropriated for by National Assembly” (Parag.3). This shows that African leaders abuse their powers while in office. How can a President spend public fund before seeking approval, it means such leader has no regard for institutions of government or the institutions are weak. Little wonder Africa leaders appear to be stronger than institutions that are expected to check the excesses of such leaders, as such there is the absent of check and balance in most African countries. This position is consented to by Liedong (2017) who states that. In Africa checks and balances are weak, oppositions are crushed, and alternative views are jettisoned, resulting in low accountability which further deteriorates leadership and enforces corruption. This shows that African leaders have adopted democracy as a form of government but have refused to adopt the tenets of democracy.

The second objective of this study was to ascertain the challenges of the media in Africa and the extent the media are able to play their watchdog function. Finding revealed that the journalists in Africa are faced with plethora of challenges, that have made it difficult for them to play their watchdog roles objectively and professionally. One notable challenge that confronts journalist in Africa is low pay and nonpayment of salaries. Across Africa there are cases of media houses not paying journalists for months. Giving credence to the preceding point the Chairperson of Zambia Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) according to Kasama & Tembo (2022) says “nonpayment of journalists salaries denies them objectivity and forces them to seek alternative sources of income there by compromising media ethics (Parag, 15)”.

This shows that the media in Africa have not been able to perform their watchdog function objectively and professionally because of nonpayment of salary. In the same vein Okereke (2022) cited Mr. Okogene, who said the Independent Newspaper in Nigeria was unable to pay its workers for sixteen months between 2015 -2016. Ownership influence is another challenge that confronts journalists in Africa, This position is echoed in Project Reserve (nd) which states that, public media (government) are mostly used as instruments of propaganda for the government while private media owners are driven by different motives ranging from profit making, agenda setting to winning influence and political and business gain. These owners prevent journalists from disseminating objective information that does not favour them, thereby lowering the credibility of media organizations in Africa.

Another challenge is the safety of journalists; there are cases of harassment, arrest and detention of journalist in different African countries. With all these challenges journalist and media organizations in Africa cannot objectively and professionally carry out the development task that Development Media Theory bestowed on them, as such genuine and sustainable development will continue to elude Africa. One of the most challenging problems of the media in Africa is that power does not reside in the people and government institutions are weak. As such the media can only achieve little or no result.

The third objective of this study was to investigate the major reasons for resurgence of coup in Africa in the last three years (2020-2023) and the link between the challenges of the media, democracy and resurgence of coup. Corruption, insecurity, and electoral malpractice were identified as the major reasons for military takeover of power in the last three years in Africa. This position holds true in that, in Mali, Burkinafaso and Guinea coup leaders according to Mahmoud & Talfouri (2023) said that, their reasons for taking over power were related to widespread corruption directed at democratically elected governments and insecurity This is clearly true because , the inordinate desire for money and the realization that power can deliver untold wealth is believed to be responsible for most corruption cases in Africa, as such the state and the people are sacrificed to greed (Liedong 2017). In most African countries corruption and greed appear to be unchecked and are allowed to thrive because the institutions of government are weak the masses are powerless , as such what appears to be the only solution is military takeover. The link between the challenges of the media, democracy and resurgence of coup is that, the power of the media has greatly been reduced because we practice a kind of democracy where power doesn't reside in the people and the institutions of government. This shows that the mechanisms put in place to check excesses of those in power have been compromised or rendered ineffective and the leaders becoming uncheckable and unquestionable. With the leaders possessing such power, the use of force appears to be the only way to question and check such leaders and military appears to be the only “organization” with such force, hence military take over.

Conclusion

In developing countries like Africa where there is dire need for human and infrastructural development , the media should be allowed to perform its roles of a watchdog, agenda setting and the task of development ,to achieved these leaders must adhere to democratic principles, and also allow government institutions operate without fear or favour.

Recommendation

1. For democracy to thrive in Africa those in position of leadership must adhere strictly to the tenets of democracy, and our institutions need to be strengthened.
2. Leaders must endeavour to ensure that power resides in the people, create room for checks and balance, ensure freedom of the press. All these can ensure accountability, reduce insecurity and military coup.

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