

# Journalists Perception of Their Staff Welfare Package and Effective Journalism in Nigeria (A Study of *the Guardian* and Nigerian Television Authority)

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**Abstract:** The concern over the lamentation of several journalists in Nigeria on the poor welfare package given to them, coupled with the observation that so many journalists have resorted to receiving gratification to manipulate news reports so as to make ends meet informed the need for this study. Its objectives were to find out the effect of the staff welfare package on the journalists and to evaluate if whether or not the staff welfare package influences the quality of news reports in Nigeria. The survey research design was used to gather data from respondents of both *The Guardian* and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). Some of the findings of this study were that majority of the respondents agreed that journalists had resorted to receiving gratification as a result of their poor pay and that adequate remuneration would give more balance and objectivity in news reporting. In conclusion based on the above findings, it can be said that journalists have a depleted perception towards their welfare packages. This research recommends after an intensive study that media owners should not stop at fulfilling its duties which is to motivate journalists through good and attractive welfare packages, so that this packages would encourage and drive them to stay on the side of truth, objective news reporting, fairness and give them courage to practice investigative journalism even in the face of intimidation and attacks.

**Keywords:** Gratification, Journalists, Objectivity, Perception, Remuneration, Staff welfare.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The mass media serve as conveyors of information and have the capacity to shape public perception on issues of importance. Nwagbara (2010 p.140) affirms that journalism in Nigeria has been described as a “bastion of people’s agitation, which impacts on the public sphere, a realm where private individuals meet to address societal questions with the state”.

In the struggle for democracy and expansion of the public sphere in Nigeria, the media has been immensely active in bringing these to fruition. In spite of the challenges faced by the Nigerian media, it has been a veritable platform for the dissemination of information, education of the citizenry, modelling of people’s thoughts and criticism of the state. It is in this light that it has been argued that

The media, being described as a watchdog is in recognition of its watchful and critical role against the bad practices of the government and private individuals the media have been responsible in holding the citizenry, particularly the political leaders accountable in Nigeria (Omoera, 2010 p.36).

It is in the same vein that Mathew Hassan Kukah in his democracy and civil society speech in Nigeria (1999) noted that there is no contention that Nigerian journalism is a serious participant in the overall struggle to sustain democratic culture in Nigeria (Kukah, 1999 p.287), as well as movement of people from private to public sphere.

McQuail (2000 p.150) technically summarizes the role of the media in sustaining the public sphere by saying the media have an obligation to the wider society in making sure news is truthful, objective, accurate fair and relevant as well as having the capacity to broaden the confines of the public sphere.

The media helps to shape public perception, public opinion and the process of dialogue in a society (Lunat, 2008 p.3). The foregoing affirms the significance of the media, as well as the drivers of the media who are the journalists.

The media serves as a conveyor for critical rationality, objectivity, informed opinion as well as machinery for governmental checks and balances especially now that it is passing through a democratic process (Habermas, 1962).

In spite of these immeasurable roles performed by the Nigerian journalist it is disheartening that the staff welfare package of the journalist is too poor especially when compared with the risks associated with journalism in Nigeria (Olaniyan, 2008 p.136; Assay, 2009 p.35; Arogundade, 2011). It has been observed that the Nigerian journalists both in private and publicly owned media are poorly remunerated.

Assay (2009 p.35) wrote on the staff welfare of journalist in Nigeria:

In addition to not being adequately remunerated, journalists in most news organizations have to endure long periods without salaries because their employees cannot find the money to meet obligations.

While there have been criticisms on men and women of the press on the brown envelope syndrome, there is also need for attention to be paid on the poor welfare package of these journalists. In order to ensure effective journalism in Nigeria, there is a need to address the problem of staff welfare.

#### **Statement of the Problem:**

The media is a powerful instrument needed for sustaining development and maintaining good governance. The media is seen as the mouthpiece of the common man. It criticizes the government when it is taking wrong steps, exposes the government when it is mismanaging public funds and in the same vein the media comes to the aid of a person or a group when his or their rights are being infringed upon. An effective media is required to effect positive change and the personnel's that make this happen are the journalist.

In spite of these enviable contributions of the journalist to national development, journalism in Nigeria is facing a series of challenges. Principal among these challenges is the poor welfare package of Nigerian journalists. Journalist working for both private and government owned media are poorly remunerated.

The take home of journalists is not comparable to the risks associated with the job. For instance the mass media have been targets of terrorist activities as in the case of This Day newspaper. Besides this, hostility also comes from the government. There have been situations in which journalists have been harassed and molested. In spite of the trauma which the Nigerian journalist are subjected to, the media owners and employers are insensitive to the welfare of the journalist.

This research seeks to find out the perception of journalists to their welfare package and to examine the effect of such on their work output. The study is limited to journalists working in Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), and *The Guardian* newspaper.

#### **Objectives of the Study:**

- To find out journalists' perception of their staff welfare package'.
- To examine the effect of staff welfare package on the journalists.
- To find out whether or not the staff welfare package influences the quality of news reports in Nigeria.

#### **Research Questions:**

- What are the journalists' perceptions to staff welfare package given to them?
- What is the effect of staff welfare package on the journalists?
- To what extent does the staff welfare package influence the quality of news reports in Nigeria?

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Expectancy Theory:

This theory was formulated by Victor H. Vroom in the 1960's. It explains that increased effort will lead to increased performance and increased performance will lead to the attainment of desired outcomes. This means that if one expects to make more money, then one would need to work extra hard to earn it.

Expectancy theory identifies three major factors that determine a person's motivation: Expectancy, Instrumentality and Valence.

### Expectancy:

Expectancy is a person's perception about the extent to which effort (an input) results in certain level of performance. A person's (journalists) level of expectancy determines whether he or she believes that a high level of effort results in a high level of performance i.e. journalists are motivated to put forth a lot of effort on their jobs only if they think that their effort will pay off in high performance.

Thus in attempting to influence motivation, managers (media owners or employers) need to make sure that subordinates believe that if they try hard they can actually succeed.

### Instrumentality:

Instrumentality the second major concept in expectancy theory is a person's perception about the extent to which performance at a certain level results in the attainments of outcome.

According to the theory, employees (journalists) are motivated to perform at a high level only if they think that high performance will lead to outcomes such as pay, job security, interesting job assignments, bonuses or a feeling of accomplishment. In other words instrumentalities must be high for motivation to be high.

People must believe that because of their high performance they will receive outcomes. Managers (media owners or employers) promote high instrumentality when they clearly link performance to desired outcomes by making sure that outcome available in an organization (media house) are distributed to organizational members on the basis of their performance. This boosts high instrumentality and motivation.

### Valence:

This is the importance that the individual places on the expected outcome. Although all members of an organization must have high expectancies and instrumentalities, expectancy theory acknowledges that people differ in their preference for outcomes. For many people (journalists) pay is the most important outcome of working, for others a feeling of accomplishment or enjoying ones work is more important than pay.

In conclusion, high motivation results from high level of expectancy, instrumentality and valence. So if any one of these factors is low, motivation is likely to be low. No matter how tightly desired outcomes are linked to performance, if a person (journalists) thinks that it is practically impossible to perform at a high level then motivation to perform at a high level is exceedingly low.

### Equity Theory:

One thing that is common for humans is to compare themselves to others. One theory that comes forth from this evaluation of one's self and each other is the equity theory. Nwude and Uduji (2013 p.11) explains that equity theory is a theory of motivation that concentrates on people's perceptions of the fairness of their work outcomes relative to, or in proportion to their work inputs. The theory was formulated in the 1960s by J Stacy Adams.

Redmond (2015) asserts that "when compared to other people, individuals want to be compensated fairly for their contributions (the outcomes they experience match their inputs). A person's belief in regards to what is fair and what is not fair can affect their motivation, attitudes, and behaviors."

Kinicki and Kreitner (2003) states that since equity is based on comparing ratios, inequity will not necessarily be perceived because someone else receives greater rewards. Inequity can be two sided, thus an employee can feel over rewarded when he thinks that his ratio is better than others and he can feel under rewarded when he thinks the he should get more for his work.

The equity theory is included in this study because it is interesting to see how journalists compare themselves to their peers and possibly to other workers in different organizations. These comparisons can lead to job turnover when some journalists perceive not to be treated fairly. Important is that equity theory shows that beliefs, perception and attitude influence motivation.

### **Staff Welfare of Journalists in Nigeria:**

There are a lot of expectations from the public on the activities of journalists in Nigeria. Among these expectations is that the media should do more of investigative journalism in order to expose the more, acts of corruption (Akinfeleye, 2003 p.25).

The media is expected to make elected leaders account for their electoral promises while closely monitoring the political processes in such a way that people can make informed choices at election time.

Also expected from the media is greater attention to the basic needs of the people for jobs, foods, security, healthcare, education etc. The public expects the media to set agenda for accountability, transparency, openness and good governance (Ambe and Ikonie; 2004 p.8).

In capacity building programs organized by the international press center (IPC), Lagos (2011), it was revealed that numerous journalists in Nigeria were unsatisfied with their staff welfare packages.

The journalist identified poor working conditions as a barrier to their job. According to Olaniyan (2008 p.135), the investigative journalist usually takes great risks to which many lose their lives in the process. However findings show that they are poorly remunerated.

This poor remuneration portends two things, one the journalists can readily back out of any investigation that has high implication to the person being investigated if offered money, as what he gets may not be enough.

Secondly he may refuse to follow a lead in a story when he realizes that there is danger and if anything goes wrong he will not have or leave any tangible legacy for his family. (Olaniyan, 2008 p.136). This belief was corroborated by Assay (2009 p.11) who observed that:

.....in addition to not only being adequately remunerated, journalist in most news organizations have to endure long periods without salaries because their employers simply cannot find the money to meet obligations.

What this portends is that the investigative journalist resort to various kinds of mischief to make ends meet. Olaniyan (2008 p.137) observes that,

only 4 of 14 national newspapers pay their journalists regularly, while the remaining 10 owe their staff at any point in time anything between two and eight months in salary arrears. Out of the 4 which pay regularly, only two pay well above what the federal government pays its civil servants.

With this kind of situation described above, there is bound to arise mobility of capable hands to other lucrative sectors (Adeyemi, 2009 p.57). Apart from poor remunerations, the owners of media influences the type of information transmitted in the broadcast media.

After painstaking investigation, it would be discouraging if such information is not properly published, broadcast or televised, because the media owners do not want such information in the news.

Most times owners of media influence selection of news for broadcast and at such instance, certain news bordering on scandals are stopped from being aired because of the owners affiliation with the parties involved in the scandal (Machie, 1998 p.18)

Machie (1998 p.18) further stressed as follows:

The press in Nigeria is more responsible to its owner than the society, the press owes its allegiance and dedication first to its owners instead of being socially responsible to the public. It is never critical of its owner's views whether government owned or privately owned.... However it affords to go to any length to support view of those who can buy air time or space to publish or broadcast anything regardless of the interest of the society.

Machie's assertion paints a vivid picture of how the owners of media muffle the voice of journalist who attempt to broadcast stories that have scandals as their theme- especially when such issue has a link with the media owner's political affiliation or associates.

Typical of this the Nigerian Television Authority and other government owned radio stations lack of interest in the Halliburton scandal, which robs upon some faceless top government officials in Nigeria.

No government broadcast media would fund such an exercise to the detriment of its paymaster which is the government, while private broadcast stations which may attempt such, risk their stations, being sanctioned.

A good example is the closing down of the African Independent Television (AIT) station for broadcasting and televising scenes of the Sosoliso plane crash of 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2005. (Ciboh, 2010 p.22).

Though these issues do not border on scandal reporting, it points to the enormous powers of the regulatory agency of the broadcast industry. On the enormity of these powers, Ciboh (2010 p.224) reveal that "some of those discomfited by the NBC, s exercise of power have called on the national assembly to re examine the powers of the NBC to shut down broadcast stations as the illegal and capricious exercise of such powers undoubtedly does gross damage to staff welfare of journalists and press freedom and freedom of expression. (Onwubere, 2009 p.110).

In a media roundtable on the working and welfare situation of journalist in Nigeria conducted by the international press Centre (IPC), (2011), it was revealed that some journalist claimed "they are luxuries that fly in the face of reality".

This is because increasingly, the attitude of most media proprietors is that jobs they offer are "beneficial meal tickets" to be used as the beneficiary deems fit. Under this prevailing culture, reporters who usually earn peanuts are sometimes not paid salaries for several months. (International Press Centre, 2011).

African Media Barometer AMB (2011) report on Nigeria by Frederich Ebert Stiftung further established that constraints such as dearth of resources and the lure of gratification tend to subvert the drive for accuracy and fairness in news reporting in Nigeria.

This situation according to IPC (2011) is unacceptable and it has become a major imperative to develop a roadmap for entrenched welfare in the Nigerian media through the collective bargaining mechanism.

On welfare of Nigerian journalist, Muhammed (2011) made the following observations:

- Highly skilled personnel's now shun employment in the media industry due to low pay and poor staff welfare conditions.
- Long hours of work, tight time lines and electromagnetic radiation emitted from the equipment being used combine to create an unhealthy work environment which is filled with stress induced ailment like hypertension, diabetes, ulcer etc.
- Journalists are exposed to accidents and injuries from high voltage equipment while maltreatment of producers and journalist in the hands of overzealous security agents, political thugs and disgruntled elements in society are regular occurrences.
- There is disparity in the salary package of workers in the media when compared with other federal government agencies.

#### **Plans towards New Salary Package for Nigerian Journalists:**

In order to ensure independence, objectivity, impartiality and transparency of journalist, it is ideal to place the journalists on salaries, allowances and general conditions of services at least not less than 200 percent above those paid to staff in federal and state government parastatals and private companies, as the case may be (Garba, 2011 p.2).

Such salaries and emoluments should be negotiated collectively and as necessary between the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria (BON) and other relevant stakeholders.

According to Garba (2011) concerted efforts by the union towards providing an unacceptable condition of service for journalists in the country came to force in 2006 when the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), in collaboration with the African Regional Office of the International Federation of journalist organized a workshop in Abuja, October 29- 31, 2006.

During this event, workshop participants drawn from amongst various stakeholders, considered the acceptable standards of working conditions adopted by the West African Journalist Association (WAJA), Media Employers Organization, the ECOWAS commission and the francophone intergovernmental agency (FIA) at a meeting held in Dakar, from November 8-10, 2004.

The union thereafter set up a committee headed by one of its members, who was NLC assistant general secretary Mr. Owei Lakemfa, to study the document and provide a draft framework for minimum standards conditions of service in Nigerian journalist.

This committee produced a very comprehensive and good document. The document which was adopted by the National executive council of the union in Makurdi from September 7-9, 2007 provided a baseline for agreeable conditions of services that would enhance journalism practice in Nigeria taking into account the interest of all stakeholders (Garba, 2011).

Subsequently, the NUJ convened a conference on conditions of service in Calabar from 14-15 October 2008. Unfortunately most of the major stakeholders stayed away from the meeting. Despite this, however the conference proceeded to discuss topics like enhanced conditions of service, motivators for better performance, obstacles militating against improved conditions of service for journalist, way forward and unifying condition of service for Nigerian journalist, how realistic? (Garba, 2011).

Although not much headway was made by the union in this respect, another fresh start was made by the union to ensure the provision of enhanced salary for media workers in federal government owned organization (Garba 2011).

The NUJ and the radio and theatre arts workers union of Nigeria (RATTAWU) made the following recommendations to reverse the ugly trend of poor condition of service among Nigerian Journalists;

- 300 percent increase in basic salary for all categories of media workers
- The introduction of allowances ( 40 percent of basic salary), research allowances (30 percent of basic salary), wardrobe/ laundry allowance ( 30 percent of basic salary for level 7 and above) and several others in addition to existing ones which have been reviewed upwards.

#### **Staff Welfare Package and Productivity of Journalists:**

Staff welfare package is concerned with the condition of service and the general work environment of a worker. Akinyele (2010 p.3). He also posits that staff welfare represents the reward given to the workforce for his efforts and contributions in an organization.

To Assay (2009 p.35) staff welfare connotes the remuneration given to the journalist for services they render. For the journalist to be truthful, objective, committed and fair with their news reporting they need to be adequately remunerated.

Nwachukwu (1989 p.51) and Balas (2004 p.11) affirmed that staff welfare exists inform of incentives given to workers for the job they do and it could be classified as:

- Financial
- Non financial

Financial incentives are inform of staff allowances, costume/dressing allowances, entertainment allowance etc. It exists in form of money given to the employer. One of the best ways to motivate journalists is by giving them financial incentives as at when due.

The other form of incentive which is the non financial incentive, is an important component of staff welfare as it is provided for creating good working environment for them (Akinyele, 2010 p.75). These incentives include fringe benefits like annual leave, decent office, official vehicle with driver, commendation and awards given to performing workers, and involvement of staff in some crucial policy formulation etc.

According to Akinyele, (2010 p.300) the performance of a corporate organization like the media outfit is highly dependent on the perception of the workers (journalist) on their staff welfare The staff welfare package represents a propeller which drives the activities and performance of journalists. "The productivity of the journalist is equally determined by their welfare package".

On sidering the role performed by this journalist, employers need to provide good welfare packages for them so as to increase their productivity.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey methodology. The population of this study comprises staff of the *Nigerian Television Authority* and *The Guardian* newspaper. The sample size drawn for the study was 122 journalists, 61 journalists from each organization. The journalists were selected based on their availability at the organization when the research was carried out.

Structured questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the journalists. Data retrieved was analyzed using descriptive statistics comprising simple frequency counts and percentages.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the 122 respondents drawn from the study, only 118 copies of questionnaire were retrieved from the field. 57 (48.3%) from *The Guardian* and 61 (51.7%) from *The Nigerian Television Authority*. There were 71 males and 47 females; this could probably be because there are more males practicing the profession than females.

#### **Research Question 1: What is the journalist's perception of the staff welfare package given to them?**

**Table 1: Staff welfare package commensurate with services rendered**

	Frequency	Percent
U	21	17.8
D	68	57.6
SD	29	24.6
Total	118	100.0

Table 1 shows that respondents do not agree that their welfare package is commensurate with the services they render. 21 respondents however are undecided as to whether it is commensurate or not.

**Table 2: Risks associated with journalism in Nigeria not commensurate with the salaries and allowances paid**

	Frequency	Percent
SA	72	61.0
A	46	39.0
Total	118	100.0

From table 2, respondents are of the opinion that considering the risks associated with the journalism profession, the salaries and allowances paid are too little.

**Table 3: Staff welfare package paid can compete favourably with what is paid by media organizations internationally**

	Frequency	Percent
D	41	34.7
SD	77	65.3
Total	118	100.0

Table 3 shows that respondents do not agree that their welfare package can compete with what is paid by media organizations internationally.

This finding is in accordance with the findings of the International Press Council (IPC) 2011. In a capacity building programme organized by the IPC, it was revealed that numerous journalists in Nigeria were unsatisfied with their staff welfare package. The journalists identified poor working conditions as a barrier to their job.

**Research question 2: What is the effect of the staff welfare package on the journalists?****Table 4: Journalists demand for bribe/gratification to manipulate news report as a result of their poor pay.**

	Frequency	Percent
A	65	55.1
D	15	12.7
SD	38	32.2
Total	118	100.0

Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents actually agree that they tend to demand and accept gratifications to manipulate news reports as a result of their poor welfare package. However, there were also varying responses as some journalists do not agree that they accept gratifications to manipulate news reports.

From this analysis it could be inferred that a number of the respondents believe that their poor welfare package causes them to resort to receiving gratifications, while to some others, receiving gratification could be caused by other reasons other than poor pay.

Olaniyan (2008 p.135) in his study observed journalists are poorly remunerated and this could pose great risks for the profession. This poor remuneration especially to the investigative journalist remuneration portends two things: the investigative journalist can readily back out of any investigation that has high implications on the person being investigated if offered money, and could be because what he/she gets may not be satisfactory. Also, he may refuse to follow a lead in a story when he realizes that there is danger and if anything goes wrong, he would not have or leave anything tangible for his family as they could suffer after his demise.

Some people could talk about having passion for the job, but passion does not translate to the upkeep of such person or the family. It should be noted that while journalists should have passion for the journalism profession, their welfare must not be taken for granted so it does not put them in a difficult situation.

**Research question 3: To what extent does the staff welfare package influence the quality of news reports in Nigeria?****Table 5: Appropriate remuneration will lead to difficulty in publishing subjective news report**

	Frequency	Percent
U	23	19.5
A	35	29.7
SA	60	50.8
Total	118	100

Respondents were asked if a better remuneration will discourage subjective reporting and majority agreed that it will. This means that it would be difficult to have subjective news report if journalists are well remunerated in Nigeria.

**Table 6: Poor staff welfare package of Nigerian Journalists negatively affects the quality of news report.**

	Frequency	Percent
U	23	19.5
SA	66	55.9
D	29	24.6
Total	118	100.0

Table 6 shows that respondents agree that poor welfare package negatively affect the quality of news reports. This is possible because journalists can tone down their reports if something attractive makes them do and can also hype a particular thing if there is a motivating factor.



**Table 7: Adequate remuneration leading to balance and objectivity in news reporting.**

	Frequency	Percent
SA	106	89.8
A	12	10.2
Total	118	100.0

From Table 7, it shows that the respondents are of the opinion that for them to have balance and objectivity in news reporting, then they must be adequately remunerated.

From the tables above, it can be inferred that staff welfare to a large extent influences the quality of news reports. This finding is in accordance with the African Media Barometer report by Friedrich Stiftung which explains that constraints such as dearth of resources and the lure of gratification tend to subvert the drive for accuracy and fairness in news reporting in Nigeria.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research shows that despite the immeasurable roles performed by journalists it is disheartening to find out that their welfare packages is too poor especially when compared to the risks associated with the profession and what obtains with other workers in other media organizations internationally. Most of the respondents of this study kept emphasizing that their basic salary was the constant package they received for the services they rendered as at the expense of other crucial benefits and incentives that propels workers like leave bonuses, maternity leave, and outstation allowances among others. Some said they receive some of these benefits but the frequency at which they receive such is very low.

The following recommendations suffice:

Media owners and managers should not stop at fulfilling their duties which is to motivate journalists through good and attractive welfare packages, this is because it could encourage and drive them to stay on the side of truth, objective news reporting, and fairness and give them courage to practice investigative journalism even in the face of intimidation and attacks.

Such packages can comprise insurance, training opportunities, vacation overseas, granting sick leave with salary, hazard allowance and also sabbatical leave to keep their staff motivated. This is important because when journalists are motivated, their productivity level increases through better job performance and thus contribute more to the achievement of the organization's vision and objectives.

It is also imperative for journalists to be self-motivated. They can do this by identifying training opportunities and enrolling in order to satisfy their need for personal achievement. The more trained they are, the better their work performance that will ensure better chances of growth and promotion at work.

Good working conditions should be provided for journalists; it is also important that hard working staff are appreciated for their work.

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