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SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MEDIA IN HUMAN AND NATION DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT:

The media, with specific reference to the collective entity of newspapers, radio, television and the International Network (Internet), play a very important role in development. It involves changes or advancement in a nation aimed at improving the political, economic and social lives of the people. The real influence of the media in development will depend on the media themselves, the societies in which they operate, and the audience they reach. None of these factors are the same everywhere, at all times, or under all conditions. The media in dictatorships, for example, media is not likely to exercise the same influence asit has to work in social development and do media complete its responsibility in human development. This paper focuses on the role of media in humandevelopment.The paper mentioned the role of media in development of society is depend upon their independence, freedom, and the ability to effectively communicate objective, balanced, fair and professional information to both government and the general public. There is no doubt that the topic is very wide, therefore analysis will be limited to conventional media: newspapers, radio, television and the Internet. The paper involves a comparative analysis of media contents, methods or styles of presentation, and the environment in which the media operate.

The specific objectives are to:

    a. Examine the role of media in social development.
    b. Determine the extent to which the media impact on Human development.
    c. Examine the functions of the media in nation-building.
    d. Evaluate the ways in which the media influence events in society.

The media is a tool for shaping public opinion; promoting democracy and good governance, influencing behavior; facilitating nation-building; and promoting policies that guarantee high quality of life. The media, as vanguard for political, economic and social development, represent

a functional organism that carries out a specific role in society. The role of media can be optimized or enhanced under certain conditions. Firstly, for the media to play any meaningful role in national development, they must be free and independent. Media freedom is a core ingredient both in theoretical conceptions of democracy and in the empirical measurement of it. Free press is one of the built-in mechanisms in democracy, designed to oppose destructive and divisive attitudes. Secondly, to succeed in their role, the media must be professional and objective. Factors, such as media bias, sensationalism, propaganda and distortions, negatively affect the contribution of the media in national development. Freedom of the media must therefore go along with responsibility. Thirdly, control of the media by a few individuals, corporations or governments is inimical to the media's ability to effectively carry out their role. Fourthly, for the media to succeed in their role, complementary institutions, such as the judiciary and media councils, must reinforce their activities.

At the end to conclude we can say that the media's crucial role in Human,social and national development is not in doubt. The media set the public agenda and act as the gatekeeper of public issues. They perform the watchdog role especially in political transparency and fight against corruption.As the fourth estate, the media provide the checks and balances in relation to the three branches of government, as created by the Constitution. The media must however play their role in national development in an environment that is free and independent, with fair ownership spread. Biases, sensationalism, propaganda, and media vices are inimical to media role in national development.

Introduction:

"One of the objects of a newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects."

-Mahatma Gandhi

Communication, the process of creating shared meaning through sending and receiving information, is vital for understanding and providing knowledge to people. It enables people to understand and appreciate their environment, and facilitate relationships between and among individuals and societies. Communication can be oral or written; formal or informal; verbal or non-verbal; traditional or modern. Whatever form it takes, communication is meant to convey information from one party to another. The source, message, medium, receiver and effects are the main ingredients of communication. Communication between a mass medium and its audience is mass communication. There are multiple ways by which communication is made, and these are collectively known as the "media".

The word "media" comes from the plural of the Latin word medium, and it is used as a collective noun to refer to television, radio, newspapers, magazines, films, the International Network

(Internet), etc. The media can be examined either in terms of broadcast media, or print media. Further, a medium is described as hot, meaning a high definition channel of communication, such as print or radio, which focuses on a single sensory receptor. It is cool, meaning a low definition channel of communication, such as television, which stimulates several different senses and requires high sensory involvement. In certain instances, the word "press" is used to refer to the print media, while in other instances the word "journalism" is used to describe the business or practice of writing and producing news. The phrase "mass media" is sometimes used to describe the collective entity of the media. In this study, the word media is used to refer to both the print and broadcast media as indicated above. The extent to which the media is a factor for national development has been a subject of discourse in communication literature. However, before delving into the discourse, it is necessary to define the phrase "national development", so as to understand and appreciate the issues involved in the relationship between media and national development. According to the Oxford Dictionary, development means "a new stage in a changing situation." To develop is to become more advanced. In the context of a nation, Eapen projected that three major factors must be considered in any discussion on development – economic growth, self reliance, and social justice. National development involves political, economic and social factors. Development is a qualitative change, which entails changes in the structure of the economy, social environment, and political disposition. The targets of national development are the people, because it is focused on human population. The overall object of national development is human development, the purpose of which is to enlarge people's choices for:

> …greater access to knowledge; better nutrition and health services;
> …….more secure livelihoods;
> ……….security against crime and physical violence;
> …………political and cultural freedoms;
> …………..and a sense of participation in community activities…

The media have been variously described as the fourth estate, agenda setter, watchdog, force multiplier, and gate-keeper, all in an effort to demonstrate their influence on society. Conversely, the media have been viewed as avenue for sensationalism, propaganda, and bias, factors inimical to national development.

The role of media in society is central to this study. There is no doubt that the media have an important role to play in society, but how the role is pursued and carried out is a matter of critical importance. Where the media pursue the role in the face of professionalism, truth, fairness and justice, then the society immensely benefits, but where the media become selfish in pursuance of mainly profits and personal gains, then the society is at a disadvantage.

According to Davis "The operation of a modern industrial democracy requires that those who purvey information provide information that is, in fact, not a judgmental distortion of reality and fact, but as accurate as humanly possible – or else a society can quickly, with the permissiveness of modern media, be thrown off balance"

For the media to successfully contribute to national development there are certain roles expected of them. These roles include providing checks and balances in democracy (Fourth Estate), setting public agenda, gate-keeping and watchdog.

Media as the Fourth Estate: The Fourth Estate is a phrase which refers to the profession of Journalism. The notion that the media is the Fourth Estate rests on the idea that the media's function is to act as a guardian of public interest, and as a watchdog on the activities of government. The media are therefore important components of the checks and balances that form part of modern democracy. According to Nash: There are all kinds of power centre in any democracy: the judiciary, the government mandarins, the elected representatives, the establishment, the business community, the unions. But…what binds it all together is the media. Only through the media can the governing communicate with the governed in any mass sense.
In their role of the Fourth Estate, the media guarantee the accountability of government officials and defend public interests. In modern interpretation of the Fourth Estate, the media are seen as the fourth "power" which checks and counterbalances the "powers" of executive, legislature and judiciary.

Media as Agenda Setter: Agenda setting is one of the most important roles of the media. It is defined as the process whereby the media determine what we think and worry about. Lippmann, who first observed this function in the 1920s, pointed out that the public reacts not to actual events, but to the pictures in our head. The effect of agenda-setting is epitomized in the famous Cohen's quote that the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, bit it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."The concept of agenda setting is for the press to selectively choose what we see or hear in the media. According to Ghorpade, "agenda setting is a relational concept that specifies a transfer of salience from agenda primers (media) to agenda adopters (consumers)." The power of the news media to set a nation's agenda, to focus public attention on few key public issues, is an immense and well-documented influence.

Media as Gatekeeper: Gatekeeping has been defined as the controlling of a strategic portion of a channel, so as to have the power of decision over whether whatever is flowing through that channel will enter the group or not. In other words, it involves a series of checkpoints that the news has to pass through before it gets to the public. Through this process many people have to decide whether or not the news is to be seen or heard. Gatekeepers of the media are message filters, and they include reporters, writers, editors, producers and even government officials. The concept involves every aspect of message selection, handling and control.

Media as Watchdog Closely linked to the gatekeeping role of the media is their watchdog role. The media are traditionally the watchdog of democracy, which is also linked to their status as the

fourth estate. The key assumption of the media as watchdog is that they speak for the people, represent the interests of the people, and serve as checks on the government.

The objectives of the study are:
(a) Examine the role of media in social development.
(b) Determine the extent to which the media impact on Human development.
(c) Examine the functions of the media in nation-building.
(d) Evaluate the ways in which the media influence events in society.

The Hypothesis of the study are:
The hypothesis to be tested is that media's role in Social development is dependent upon their independence, freedom, and the ability to effectively communicate objective, balanced, fair, and accurate information to both government and the public. To test hypothesis certain assumptions are made:
  a. Media access to public information and their ability to accurately transmit such information for the benefit of the public is a pre-requisite for social development.
  b. Media need to be free and independent, have the capacity to reflect diverse views, and the ability to report on various subjects, while remaining accountable.
  c. Higher media penetration promotes greater responsibilities of public and private agents.
  d. Media can be more effective if complementary institutions, such as the judiciary, reinforce their independence and quality.

Scope of the study:
        The study is limited to only four areas of the media: newspapers, radio, television and the Internet. It involves comparative analysis of media contents; methods or styles of presentation; and the environment in which the media operate. Further, it examines the role of media in the political, economic and social development in a nation development.

Media's role in national development can be analysed from political, economic and social perspectives. In the political sphere, media's role can be found in the areas of democracy and good governance, political transparency, foreign policy, human rights, war on terrorism, and public relations. In the economic sphere, media can play their role in the areas of economic policy and growth, economic empowerment, advertisements and tourism, business and investment, etc. In the social sphere, media's role cover social issues, such as corruption, criminal violence, communal conflicts, prostitution, war on drugs, population control, education, food security, and public health (especially on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and Severe Acute Respiration Syndrome (SARS)).

Media and Social Development: The World Bank defines social development as development that is equitable, socially inclusive and therefore sustainable. Social development promotes various institutions at all levels that are responsive, accountable and inclusive. It empowers the poor and vulnerable people to participate effectively in development processes. To play a role in social development, the media assist the society in tackling problems of corruption, criminal violence, communal conflicts, public health and related issues.

a. **Corruption:** Corruption has been defined as the abuse of public power for personal gain or for the benefit of a group to which one owes allegiance. Corruption is said to distort economic and social development. It does so by "engendering wrong choices and by encouraging competition in bribery rather than in the quality and price of goods and services…". The media can expose corruption in both the government and corporate sector. According to Stapenhurst, "media can act as a force against corruption in ways that are both tangible and intangible". For Ogosoo, it is the media's key role to educate society about corruption, and secondly, as watchdog, to expose the acts of corruption. Media reports can affect the reputation of key individuals. Since people care about their reputation, media attention can provide strong incentives for changing behavior, therefore reputational penalties and rewards can be powerful in ensuring accountability toward constituents.

b. **Communal Conflicts**: Secularism is the backbone of the Indian Constitution and India is a land of many religions. However, one can witness frequent communal conflicts between various religious groups. In a multi-religious society like India, the role of the mass media in such communal conflicts becomes extremely important. Two of such horrific communal riots have been the 1984 Sikh riots and the 2002 Gujarat (Godhra) riots. The coverage by the Indian media on both the incidents received intense criticisms. TheIndian media covered and reported the 1984 Sikh riots and the 2002 Gujarat (Godhra) riots. Media can go Free from bias in reporting, the media can play the role of enhancing political stability and national integration, especially in multi-ethnic, multi-religious heterogeneous societies like India and Nigeria. The media must therefore "have their fingers on the pulse of the people," because they have "a pious obligation not to jeopardize or harm the welfare of the society."

a. **Disasters**: The electronic and print media provide extensive coverage of disasters, particularly those with strong visual impact. Radio and television could broadcast early warnings, evacuation information and increase public awareness about risks and responses As a medium, one of the most basic applications of the television lies in its ability to portray the devastation of disasters, both as they occur and in their aftermath. Fry identifies major categories of disasters: natural, such as earthquake, floods, hurricanes and drought; technological, such as plane crashes, oil spills and nuclear reactor failure. A study in India compared state government allocations of relief spending and public food distribution during natural disasters. Distribution of relief was greater in

states with higher newspaper circulation. When disasters occur, the media play multiple roles:

(i) Purvey information on incidents.

(ii) They can impact news of impending disaster, convey the effects of events that have taken place or are unfolding.

(iii) Natural disaster coverage can lead to political action.

(iv) Disaster stories may evoke sympathy, community solidarity, and national action.

b. **Public Health Campaigns:**Media are very important for public health campaign, especially against epidemics and other fastspreading diseases, such as AIDS, SARS, and Ebola. Media can improve public health efforts as demonstrated by successful AIDS education campaigns in Thailand and Uganda. The recent media campaign on leprosy in Brazil which has the second highest number of cases in the world, for example, employed the nation's 13 major television stations and 2300 radio stations, resulting in a remarkable response of 600 telephone calls daily on the national helpline. Likewise, an integrated media campaign was successful in India and Nepal, resulting in 200,000 people seeking treatment of leprosy as well as helping to dispel misconceptions about it. With an estimated four million cases in 2001, India has the second highest number of AIDS in the world after South Africa. Media campaign in India involves more than 1000 broadcasts aimed at more than half the population, and more than 3500 video screenings of the programmes planned for villages. The programme involved drama, 'reality' youth show, radio phone-in on personal health (Chat Chowk), and advertising spots.

According to Quraishi, the media campaign will "head off the threat of AIDS to our country's social and economic development." In 1978, the WHO, United Nations International Children Educational Fund (UNICEF), and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) embarked on a crusade, through media campaigns, to combat infant mortality in the developing world, which averaged 200 per 1000 live births, as a result of preventable diseases such as diarrhoeal dehydration, measles, small pox, and respiratory infections. After a year of the media campaign, a sample data from 750 randomly selected families from more than 20 communities in Hunduras showed significant results in both disseminating health information and in fostering specific changes in behaviour related to treating infant diarrhoea. The mortality rates for children under five years between had decreased from 47.5% to 25%.

FACTORS INFLUENCING MEDIA ROLE IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As indicated in the integrated model, the media are influenced by several factors. Media owners define the overall editorial policy; economic factors determine the extent of investigative journalism and cultural production; sponsors influence sponsored cultural and sport events.

Integrated Model Showing the Role of the Media in Democratic Society
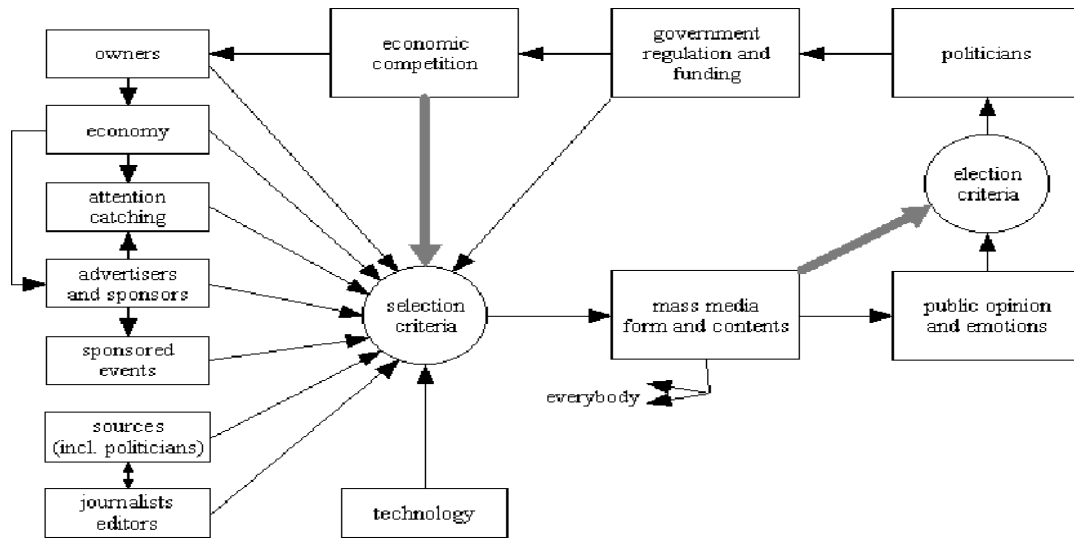
Further, editors and journalists influence through their personal engagement as well as their professional, ideological and ethical principles; technology determines the number of channels available and the formats possible; and government regulation may impose additional ethical principles.

Specific to national development, certain factors are inimical to the role of media. These factors include sensationalism, propaganda, selective and bias coverage, media freedom, ownership and, pornography and violence.

Few factors are analyzed accordingly.

a. **Sensationalism:** Communication is both dynamic and very powerful in its strong influence on the definition of that reality. News sensationalism shows that what we watch or read casually may indeed have very significant impact within our views of reality. Sensationalism may prevent the public from being knowledgeable participants in policy discussions. The sensational publication led to riots resulting in the destruction of lives and properties. The unbridled sensationalism is usually reflected in headlines, photographs, and editorials.

b. **Propaganda:** Propaganda is the systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes or actions by means of symbols. According to Doob, "propaganda can be as blatant as a swastika or as subtle as a joke." Propagandists influence rational thought by agitating emotions, exploiting insecurities, capitalizing on the ambiguity of language, and bending the rules of logic. The common techniques used by the media are word games (name-calling, glittering generalities and euphemisms); false connection (transfer and testimonial); and special appeals (plain folks, bandwagon and fear) "Name-calling" is a

common technique used by Western media, using words or phrases like "Islamic fundamentalist," "muslim fanatics or terrorist," "fascist," "dictatorship," "axis of evil," etc. The reverse is "glittering generalities", using words such as "democracy," "good governance," "Christianity," "freedom," "western civilization," "patriotism," "family values" etc. Among audiovisual media, television may be the most powerful tool for propaganda. While propaganda can serve to rally people behind a cause, it is often used to exaggerate, misrepresent or even lie about important issues

c. **Media Freedom:** Media freedom is the cornerstone of democracy. It affords the public the opportunity of discovering and forming an opinion of the ideas and attitudes of their political leaders, thereby check corrupt leadership. Conversely, it gives political leaders the opportunity to reflect and comment on the opinion of the general public. This freedom thus enables everyone to participate in free political debate, which forms the basis of a democratic society. There are, however instances in which governments deny media this freedom by deciding what to be published or broadcast, arresting media practitioners, or outright revocation of media license, but many countries are opposed to such restrictions .Without the free expression of ideas and opinions, no society can develop effectively. However, media freedom must go along with responsibility. Media practitioners must exercise high standards of objectivity, professionalism and refrain from undue personal attacks.

d. **Media Ownership:** Ownership is a central factor for media independence, because it is the owners who control information flow, and thus influence political, economic and social development. There are people who argue for the state ownership of the media, asserting firstly, that information is a public good, and for this reason many countries have made a case for organizing the media industry as a government-owned monopoly. Secondly, some argue for public ownership because of consumer protection. Private ownership is seen to corrupt the industry by serving narrow interests. Thirdly, others argue that state ownership ensures public exposure to educational and cultural information.

Critics point out that government control of the media could distort and manipulate information, undermine markets, and preclude voters and consumers from making informed decisions. World media are controlled by nine corporations,who together with 40 smaller players "produce the bulk of the world's newspapers, magazines, books, films, television and radio programs." On the balance, it is observed, the system serves mostly the business interests and those of the upper-middle classes. By and large, evidence indicates that monopoly control over information reduces the effectiveness of the media in providing checks and balances. In the World Bank Report 2002, it is indicated that state ownership of the largest five newspapers and five television stations in each of 97 countries world-wide is pervasive . "On the average, the state controls about 30% of the newspapers and 60% of the television stations…The state also owns …72%...of the

largest radio stations." The Report further noted that private ownership is mostly in family hands, not in widely dispersed shareholdings.

e. **Media Pornography and Violence:** There are over 300,000 pornographic sites in the internet. Many newspapers, magazines, books, and television stations make graphic presentations of pornographic and violent materials for entertainment. Few attempt to restrict access to adults, but in most cases children get access to such presentations. Indecency, immorality and violence are negative factors for national development, yet the media, for reasons mainly of business, engage in conveying such messages to the society. On how the media influence children, Steyer concludes that they "shape their reality…set their expectations…define their values, their behaviour."Accordingly: Everyday, children are bombarded by messages and images from the media – messages about how to behave, what choices to make and what to think. Children even try to emulate what they learn from television, video games and the Internet.To what extent is the media's influence on violence and aggression in society? According to Steyer, children do emulate the violent behaviour they see on television, movies and video games. He noted that violent content is widely used because it is one of the cheapest ways to make programming more profitable. In relation to sex, the media teach children about what is acceptable, and "in society where sex sells, children cannot escape the media's influence…Kids are not equipped with the same capacity forjudgment about sexually inappropriate behaviour so they are particularly succeptible.

CONCLUSION

The media play important roles in society. As the Fourth Estate, they provide checks and balances on the activities of the three arms of government; as agenda-setters, they influence the issues on public agenda; as gatekeepers, they decide what information gets to the public; as watchdog, they represent the interests of the people against powerful interests; and as for multipliers, they add to the combat effectiveness of military commanders. National development covers political, economic and social issues. In political development, the media particularly contribute in areas of democracy and good governance, political transparency, foreign policy and human rights. In economic development, the media provide the enabling environment for businesses and investments to flourish. In addition, they assist in empowering economically disadvantaged groups in the society; at the same time contribute to societal economic growth. In social development, the media can help fight corruption, prevent communal conflicts and provide useful information on disasters. The media are particularly useful for public health campaigns, especially against children diseases, communicable diseases, and in favor of healthy environment.

For the media to effectively influence national development, they must be free and independent. Free media provide voice for the people, build public consensus, and expose corruption in government. Likewise, they empower the poor, spur development, and ensure that people's basic social needs are met. Freedom of the media must go along with responsibility. Media can abuse

the right of freedom of expression through sensationalism, propaganda, and bias. Other factors relevant to the effectiveness of media in national development include the question of ownership, and media vices (pornography, violence etc).

Findings: The general and specific findings of this study

   a. As Fourth Estate, agenda setters, gatekeepers, watchdog and force multipliers, the media definitely have a role to play in society.
   b. The media facilitate political, economic and social development in a nation.
   c. Media determine the issues found on the public agenda.
   d. While the media play important roles in society, they are sometimes driven more by their political and economic interests, than those of the public.
   e. In military operations, while the media are capable of building public opinion (eg Kargil), emotional coverage can undermine public support.
   f. Through the effect they can have on individual reputation, the media can check the excesses of corrupt leaders.
   g. The more intense media coverage is on national disasters, the more relief materials and funds are made available by donors.
   h. In public health, media campaigns immensely contribute in the reduction of diseases, such as AIDS, SARS, leprosy, and preventable children diseases as demonstrated in India other countries.
   i. Sensationalism, propaganda, selectiveness and bias, are inimical to the role of media in national development.
   j. The lesser the freedom of media in society, the more corruption.
   k. Pornography and violence in the media contribute to indecency, immorality and violence in society, particularly among children and youths.

Recommendations:
It is recommended that:
   a. Media freedom is fundamental in democracy therefore it should be non-negotiable.
   b. Media must report the truth without undue misrepresentation of facts, sensationalism, propaganda and bias.
   c. In reporting, the media must take cognizance of national security and the welfare of the people.
   d. Media practitioners must not be influenced by the interests of ownership, both government and corporate.
   e. Ownership of the media should be spread to avoid the monopoly of a few, powerful individuals, corporations or governments.
   f. Display or transmission of pornographic and violent media materials should be controlled to reduce negative influence on societies.

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