### SOCIETAL IMPACT OF CORRUPTION IN THE JOURNALISM PRACTICES

**ABSTRACT**

This study examined the effects of citizen journalism on the practice of journalism in Nigeria, using the issue of corruption as a case study. Corruption poses a threat to the image of journalism profession and the ability of media practitioners to perform their duties objectively. The study is anchored on Habermas’s theory of the public sphere. It further took a contemporary look at Dennis McQuail’s democratic participant media theory and some citizen journalism scholarship. The study adopted the questionnaire and interview method of primary data collection in which 35 journalists in Nigeria were surveyed through email and phone calls respectively. Data collected were presented and analysed using tables, charts and percentages for easy interpretation. The study found among other things that citizen journalism impacts positively on the daily routine of journalists in Nigeria with a total of 22 (67%) out of 33 valid responses gathered. The findings further revealed that citizen journalism is curbing the unethical practice of corruption in Nigeria with a total of 25(75%) responses. Most journalists surveyed gave the reason that citizen journalism exposes the other side of stories. The study argued that citizen journalism has done more good than harm in the media sector and has impacted positively on the mainstream media. This impact has gone beyond news gathering and dissemination to solving the unethical issue of brown envelope journalism in Nigeria. The study recommends that traditional journalists should not view citizen journalists as a threat to the profession rather, they should partner with them to improve the profession. It also recommends that media regulatory bodies should accelerate efforts towards ensuring strict adherence to ethics in pursuit of professionalism.

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.0     Background of the Study**

As a profession that serves the interest of the public, journalists have vast responsibilities everyday facing challenges that test their ethical values and responsibility to truth telling. Despite professional code of ethic, most Journalists  violate the rules by accepting bribe (brown envelope) while covering news or features. This in some cases lower the Journalists, and the media houses  credibility and undermine it’s professional career.

Corruption is dangerous to society and can be extremely devastating to media. Therefore while acknowledging the attempt by federal government to fight corruption and economic crimes, there should be a conference call on all media practitioners and stake holders to adapt zero tolerances attitude to bribe (brown envelope) in the media, and indeed society at large.

Sanni (2007 p. 39) assert that corruption is the greatest albatross and the most virulent cog militating against good governance and national development in Nigeria. Journalist may use the media for their personal ends or for the good of the public. As human needs are insatiable, there are chances where some journalist may sacrifice the public interest for their selfish motives and ignoring social responsibility. Such behavior damages the profession integrity and reputation.

Thus journalism practices involve the gathering, packaging and disseminating of news for general public. Generally in today’s society that mass media are seen as a veritable instruments of information dissemination, social mobilization and as well as control, It is one of the means through which the public is been educated and sensitized on important issues affecting the lives of the public. And as such, journalism ethical values should be guarded to avoid the ethical pitfalls like (brown envelops) and favor, which journalist collect from their news sources called bribe. Bribe can happen in two ways i.e. journalist receiving from a news sources or journalist issuing it in order to get the needed information, Such reporting may  affect news content or dilute stories with hidden agenda.

As a noble profession, journalism demand discipline and ethical behaviour to uphold the tenets of social responsibility by the journalist, as the society depend on the mass media for survival. The public requires information Mac Bride at all (1981) posit.

This is needed in order to react knowledgeably to personal conditions, as well as be in a position to take appropriate decision. Through numerous educational programmers such as quizzes, debates and document arise; the public can be concretized on the need to accord people their proper position. Unfortunately, due to government pressure on the journalism, poverty and lack of training, many journalist engage in some unethical practices such as sensationalism, yellow journalism check book journalism, invasion of privacy particularly Brown envelop.

This study characterized the present Nigeria mass media landscape. The development affect the credibility of mass media, their audience i.e. listeners, readers, viewers etc who have all lost confidence in mass media content due to the influence of bribe on the journalists news judgment and objectivity.

Ukozor (2002) posts that ethics should give  journalists the  standard by which they can judge action either to be right or wrong, good or bad, responsible or irresponsible, That Journalists today need to know their limitation so as not to abuse the power of the media. In coronation of this view, Okunna describes ethical Journalist as a position of democracy. The impact of this, shows the essence of ethical responsibility on media practitioners for balanced, objective and accurate news reporting. In an article he captioned “Settlement Culture and the Nigerian Media”, Waziri Adio, a former managing director of the New Nigerian Newspapers, writes that on April 15, 2002, the Time magazine published a story about Nigeria entitled “The Whole Truth”, which raised fundamental issues regarding journalism ethics in the country. Written by Stephen Faris, the story alleged that the office of the Minister of Information and Orientation, Professor Jerry Gana, gave foreign journalists reference materials on Nigeria and some brown envelopes containing $400 each after a press conference. The story further alleged that the minister’s gesture was aimed at bribing and pacifying some foreign journalists that were in the habit of carrying uninformed and sensational stories on Nigeria. Adio notes that although the federal government, headed by Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, set up a panel to probe the allegation, the panel did not indict the official involved; making the then Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of the Federation, Mr. Kanu Agabi, to say that the story should have been more appropriately entitled “The Whole Lie”. Agabi said the gift of N50,000 to the foreign journalists was a normal thing, even among international media organisations. Adio, however, has a view contrary to Agabi’s understanding of the incident: As if this was not bad enough, Nigerian newspaper editorials, cartoons and columns have been making the specious argument that this is another instance of Western media bias and fixation with negative news from Africa. Perhaps fired by patriotism, perhaps motivated by embarrassment, Nigerian journalists have dumped their critical faculties on this issue. The press has chorused: this is not bribery, such practices abound even in the western world, everyone does it etc., etc. I had hoped that someone would be able to think outside the box and ahead of the pack in this instance. I pined for the contrarian view that should be the hallmark of a plural press. I am yet to come across one. And this is where the real danger lies: that we have come to the day that nearly everyone sees nothing untoward in the action of the government and the journalists who accepted the so-called honoraria. Everyone thinks this is standard practice in journalism. This incident and others like it call for a critical examination of the brown envelope syndrome, with a view to ascertaining if it truly has a legitimate place in the practice of journalism in Nigeria and indeed, anywhere in the world. What follows, therefore, is a treatise of the brown envelope syndrome and its debilitating impact on the future of journalism in the country.

Regrettably, communication in Nigeria is mainly influences by economic extremism on one hand and government pressure on the other hand. In developing nations like Nigeria, poverty debases human dignity and causes the scale of honour and trust for money through bribe to influence news as opposed to editors  sense of values. Also the wages of an average journalist is low considering the enormous task he/she performs in society. That may be seen as a contributing factor in  making him or her to compromise the profession.

Thus, recognition of this views the researcher to examine the effects of bribe on the practices of journalism.

**1.1     Statement of Problem**

Information has emerged as the most vital means of achieving development in this age. presently ,Nigeria is suffering from lack of quality and usable information from the media, media practices have lost it objectivity due to the level of bribe practices found in the media industry and the condition is worsening to such a point that if nothing drastically is been done about it, journalism as a profession will succumb to brown envelope. It is against this background that this study will try to examine the problem of bribe proffers appropriate solution.

**1.2     Objectives** **of** **the** **study**

To further the investigation properly, the researcher believed that the study will have the following objectives.

1.    To ascertain if acceptance of bribe influences the journalist sense of news judgment

2.    To determine whether bribe affects journalism practice in favour of the giver.

3.    Finally to identify factors responsible for  receiving bribe with a view of addressing them.

4.    To reveal whether journalist demand bribe as requirement to discharge their duty

**1.3     Significances of the study**

The study will have the following significances

1.    To help put motivation among journalist in discharge of their duty

2.    It will help media houses to redirect and re-oriented their staff on the effect of bribe on media credibility.

3.    It will also serve as a useful guide for future researcher that may be interested in this area of study and policy makers on communication.

4.    It will help reveal some factors that militate against journalism practices, like news, commercialization, ownership influence, and poor salaries etc on media performance.

5.    Finally, this study will help to stress the need for process freedom and right of people to know for sound media Practice in Nigeria.

**1.4     Scope of the study;**

The project topic deals with the effect of bribe among journalism practices within Kaduna metropolis with specific references to FRCN Kaduna as scope of study.

**1.5     Limitation of the study;**

This study modern journalism and the effects of bribe  which should have encompassed all the media in Nigeria, but due to poor finances and logistics, it was limited to Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria Kaduna Branch (FRCN Kaduna) which is government owned media organization. Moreover, the limitation of time made it impossible for a further research work beyond one case study used (FRCN Kaduna).

**1.6     Research Question of the study**

1.    How does bribe influences the journalists sense of news judgment

2.    How does bribe affect the quality of a journalist report

What factors are responsible for journalist receiving bribe?

3.    Could financial back ground play a role influencing the attitude of journalist towards bribe.

4.    Do journalist demand bribe as requirement to discharge their duty.

**1.7     Definition of Terms**

1.    Bribe conceptually refers to monetary gift and other incentive given gives to somebody at a point in time.

Operationally: Bribe refers to money, and other incentive given to journalist in media house, newspapers, magazine, radio and television by newsmakers to influence their news coverage as opposed to ethics of journalism profession.

2.    Effects: conceptually means impact on something

Effects: operationally means negative or positive influence of bribe on a journalists sense of news judgment.

3.    Journalism conceptually means the act of writing and printing of information or news reports for the media.

Operationally journalism refers to the process of gathering processing and dissemination of information to the heterogeneous, faceless and diversified audience by the media.

4.    Objective conceptually mean the publication of true, fair, accurate and unbiased report by journalists in their performances of information dissemination task in the society, and in line with ethical codes of the profession.

5.    Brown envelope; this is q paper cover with a gummed or tuck in flap to hold

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

*2.1 The Concept of Public Sphere*

The emerging digital technologies which bring about global connectivity through the internet space have added a new dimension to the study of the public sphere. By public sphere we mean a virtual or imaginary gathering which does not necessarily need to exist in an identifiable space, where people come together as members of the society to articulate their views to influence the political institutions in the state. It constitutes a critical element of the society because it serves as a forum in which citizens communicate relevant issues and inform themselves about developments in the society. According to Habermas (1996, p.49), “public sphere refers to a realm of social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed with access for all citizens”. The interaction between citizens, civil society, and the state communicated through the public sphere ensures the balance between stability and social change (McChesney, 2007). The public sphere travels across the private sphere and the sphere of public authority and through the vehicle of public opinion, brings the state in touch with the needs and aspirations of people in the society.

However, the fact that Habermas’s theory of the public sphere has been highly influential is what has led to the level of criticism and the extensive discourse in the literature. Susen (2011, p.52) defends this point by arguing that;

“The multifaceted forms of criticism levelled against Habermas theory of the public sphere should not be one-sidedly interpreted as evidence of analytical weakness and explanatory inadequacy; rather they should be considered as indicative of the fact that Habermas provides a useful and insightful theoretical framework for understanding the structural transformation of the public sphere in the modern period”.

In essence, what this quote means is that Herbermas’s public sphere theory provides an insight into what democratic participation looked like in old days. It is this insight that has provided the basis for a proper understanding of what we know today as the new public sphere and the transitions that gave rise to it. Narrowing this down to the context of citizen journalism, it is this model that supports the relevance of citizen journalism in our modern day public sphere and by extension democracy. This structural transformation is also reflected in Nigeria from the traditional public sphere to the modern day digitalised public sphere.

Among the criticisms against his ideology is based on the point of exclusivity and its failure to acknowledge the plurality of contemporary social sphere (Lyotard, 1984 cited in Papachariss 2002). Fraser (1990 cited in Nwofe 2012, p.3) argues that “the idea of public sphere as conceptualised by Habermas was based on the notion of its functionality as a realm for privileged men to exercise their dominance skill for it was exclusive of women and the working class members of the society”. Fraser goes further (p.4) to argue that the discussions were anchored on a bourgeois kind of decorum and protocols such that do not allow women and the working class in the society to participate as equals. In the same way, Susen (2011, p.52) points out that “an analysis limited to the study of bourgeois public sphere faces the risk of excluding other equally important public spheres from the picture”. What this means in essence, is that the bourgeois public sphere promotes a discourse of the interests of the dominant groups in the society rather than the general interest of all citizens.

Other critics doubt the existence of a true public sphere because according to Schudson (1997 cited in Nwofe, 2012), public discourse is not the soul of democracy due to the fact that it is rarely civil, unrestricted, unstructured, and too large and ultimately offers no solution to democratic problems. To understand this argument better, we will look at it from the perspective of the traditional public sphere and the new public sphere. Unarguably, both provided (and provide) an avenue for a space for people to gather, discuss and debate on the issues in the society. But this gathering most of the time does not influence political authorities. The reason for this is because the gathering lacks structure and regulation and as such, decisions reached there are not easily enforced. Second; most times people gather in the public sphere in order to just socialise and exchange ideas. What this means is that discussions and decisions are left on the space (virtual or physical) as soon as the discussant walks out of the gathering. The Natural desire to associate is what drives some participants of the public sphere and not necessarily the desire to effect change in the society.

In the mist of this debate lies the significance of the media in the quest for the extension of citizen’s rights. According to Khan, Gilani and Nawaz (2012, p.44), “media institutions are the foundations of the public sphere as these provide information and forums for public dialogue”. McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) in their study on Agenda setting posit that;

1. The media establish an agenda and in so doing are not simply reflecting reality, but are shaping and filtering public opinion and reality.
2. The media’s concentration on the issues that comprise their agenda influence the public’s opinion and agenda and this together influence policy makers.
3. The public and policy makers have the possibility to influence the media agenda as well.

In essence, what this means in the context of public sphere and the argument here is that the emergence of the media in the public sphere was highly celebrated because it came in to balance the dichotomy between the bourgeois and the working class including women in the society by providing a citizen oriented approach to information and communication. By extension, it also shows that citizens, mass media and the state/policy makers are interwoven such that one exerts a certain measure of influence on the other. Susen (2011, p.44) could not agree less in her sociological perspective of the public sphere. To her, “the importance of the public sphere rests on its potential as a platform for social integration”. The media’s entry into the public sphere paved way for a new dimension to the study of public sphere.

Bringing it down to the concept of citizen journalism and the public sphere, it is important to look at the second and third point above raised by McCombs and Shaw (1972). Since the policy makers have the potential to influence the media; the media gradually compromised its status in the public sphere and became a tool of the policy makers, sidelining the interest of the working class it evolved to protect and project. According to Kellner (2000), “as the media’s need for financial consciousness grew, the media soon became means for the state”. As this became the case, the public sought other ways to make their opinion heard in the public sphere, so this time they decided to do it themselves in the form it is known today as citizen/participatory journalism or ‘We media’. Although this point could be criticised as being exclusive just like the bourgeois public sphere; but the difference lies in the fact that citizen journalism/social media oriented public sphere is open to all independent of class who wields an internet enabled gadget to participate while the later was only for the Bourgeois in the society.

It is important also to note that according to Habermas (1989, p.27), “the bourgeois public sphere may be seen above all as a sphere of private people who come together to form a public”. Since this is the case, if the public sphere is made up of private people whose societal interdependency goes beyond their personal lives, therefore, the pubic and the private sphere are mutually inclusive in the sense that the symbiotic connectives between them are necessary for development in any society. The environment, in which one lives, imposes upon the individual a certain level of socialisation between him and the society. In line with this, the public sphere can be understood as nothing but a natural socialisation of people in the society where they come together to debate on trending issues in the society. It is natural because an individual in the public sphere, although autonomous, does not exist in isolation but in relations to other people, the media and political institutions in the state. It is this natural attribute of people to socialise and air their views that gave birth to Habermas idea of public sphere of the 17th and 18th centuries when coffee houses, local pubs and saloons became centres for public debate.

*2.2 Oramedia (African Communication System) and the Public Sphere*

“Africa as the cradle of civilisation, intellectualism and humanity possess the most unique means of communication in the world despite the modern means of communication, the new media of internet and social media of Facebook, Twitter and others” (Osho 2011, p.2).

According to Wilson (1990), “Oramedia are the local means of communication that remain what essentially sustains the information needs of the people in the rural African setting”. They reflect in various forms such as the village town criers, town hall meetings, festivals, talking drum, folk songs and other elements of cultural symbolism. Ugboaja (1980) views Oramedia as a means of communication in the villages and rural communities from time immemorial which are still relevant in modern times despite the presence of mass media. Similarly, McDonald and Hearle (1984) define traditional channels of Information as those communication methods which have been used for centuries in rural area. They are often neglected in some societies today, while to some, it still remains a powerful means of communication. Indeed, Oramedia are highly effective as a means of information and formation of public opinion in the African setting because they are rooted in the culture and tradition of people through Language, signs and objects.

Habermas’s idea of the public sphere is similar to what existed (and still exists) in the typical African society. African communications system provides a forum in the form of village assembly where individuals gather together to debate on vital issues and developments in the community. Prior to the gathering, the village town crier goes round the community with his metal or wooden gong to inform and invite the people to the village square (or what we have today as Civic centre) for discussions pertaining to the community. The town crier (today’s public relations officer) beats his gong and most often announces the agenda of the gathering on all corners of the community. By so doing, people have enough time to form a critical reasoned opinion within their smaller units such as family before coming to the gathering to voice it out. Unlike Habermas’s public sphere model that is exclusive for the upper class in the society, this village gathering is inclusive and accommodative of all irrespective of class, age or sex. Under the platform, members of the community collectively argue out issues and reach a common decision that will be implemented by policy makers. In fact, even the policy makers (High Chiefs) in the community take part in the debates after which the implementation of the decision will be executed.

The peculiar decorousness which characterise the Bourgeois class made the lower class unable to identify with or take part in the process of debate and discussion in Habermas’s public sphere theory. But this is not the same under the traditional African public sphere. The public was able to actively take part in the process as equals as it was a culture passed down to them generations ago. The people could relate with the discussions in their small community and the class gap was little or less significant because everyone was more or less on the same level. This was relevant because it ensured individual participation in policy formulation and implementation as a member of the community. The idea of Public in this context means citizenship, equality, commonality and things not private but accessible and observable by all (Papachariss 2002, p.10). Kellner (2000) also posits that “public sphere presupposes freedom of speech and assembly and the right to participate freely in decision making”. It is pertinent to know that the principal idea of the public sphere involves an open discussion of important issues in the society in which discursive arguments are used to reach a common ground.

In the African public sphere setting, decisions are reached based on the validity and authority of an argument rather than on social hierarchy. Participation here is basically based on reaching an understanding not on the reason of class or egocentric measurement of success. Even the market square serves as a platform for forming public opinion. Just as the Europeans went to the coffee shops to integrate and discuss, Africans use the market square to integrate, analyse and debate on trending issues in the community. The Market square served (and still serves) as a major source of news and information in the villages. Latest event in the community are heard first from the market before gradually spreading to other corners of the community. While the women gossiped on soft issues, the male folk discussed important developments in the community and how to go about solving it. The Oramedia is important to this study because it provides a platform to understand what the public sphere looked like before the evolution of the press and subsequently, citizen journalism.

*2.3 The New Public Sphere*

Moving further to the new public sphere, citizen journalism has emerged to support the traditional press in the dissemination of information. What this means is that while the traditional media informs the people on traditional media platforms, citizen journalism on the other hand will present those stories excluded from the mainstream on various online platforms. The implication of this is collaboration is that is provides the people not just a platform to discuss online but relevant information to ensure a stronger debate. Before the evolution of the new media, the mainstream media was seen as adequate and beneficial for the conduct of democratic movements and the sustainability of public opinion in the public sphere. The earlier press enabled the information about public events to be communicated across to the citizens, and politicians could be criticised by members of the society. But the problem of this public sphere conducted by traditional media was the vertical flow of information which gradually heightened the commercialisation of news and the media system, leading to a neglect of democratic communication roles between the citizens, the press and political institutions. In line with this, Fulya (2012, p.490) states that “earlier forms of mass communication limited access to information and discouraged active political participation as well as deliberate dialogue within the public sphere.” Participation in the new public sphere is democratised unlike what was applicable before the emergence of citizen journalism.

Looking at the new public sphere, the structural precondition for its existence rests on its communicative network. The contemporary information society, through the help of communications technologies has been characterised by the removal of spatial constraints to distanced communication. The new public sphere came as result of technological advancements which have brought in sophisticated communicative gadgets to engage in meaningful debates and discussions globally. Nawaz (2010) could not agree less; to him the platform offers global discussion and dialogue opportunities on a continuous basis. What this means is that issues could be picked up at anytime and deliberated on under the new public sphere.

The new public sphere is no longer anchored on physical spaces or territorially bound societies. It has shifted the gathering to the network space, accommodating more audience for a stronger debate and discussion. Shirky (2011 cited in Khan, Gilani and Naway 2012, p.44), argues that as communication landscape gets denser, more complex and participatory, the networked population is acquiring greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech. The process of globalisation has moved the debate from the national level to an international debate thereby enabling the emergence of a globalised civil society. The idea of public sphere has experienced some transitions. The first level is the local gathering at coffee shops which shifted to the state level due to the entry of mass media. A new transition is what we have today as the global public sphere, brought about by modern technologies which make the world a global community by connecting individuals despite background to partake in global discussions.

According to Castel (2007), “this new media system includes mass self-communication which forms a communication network that connects many people in the sending and receiving of information in a multimodal shape of communication that is able to bypass the mass media and often escape government control”. In essence, this means that the new public sphere is an aggregate of individual communications which forms a network of debate and discussions on global issues; and operatives beyond the control of the media and political institutions. Dagberg (2001,p.618) observes “an increasing number of online initiatives that promote the use of the internet to enable citizens to access a plethora of political information and express their views directly to elected representatives”. In this public sphere, membership and participation in global discussion is open to all; for example, Blogs are assessed from all corners of the world and as such engage political discussions that are rich and critical due to vast number of its participants.

The advantages of internet communication such as speed, anonymity, reach and so on make the new public sphere more (or completely) democratised unlike the old models of public sphere. In terms of anonymity, the new public sphere enjoys this benefit of online communication because according to Papacharissi (2002), “it helps one to overcome identity limitation and communicate freely and openly thus encouraging an enlightened exchange of ideas”. Although anonymity creates room for unacceptable participation, it enables individuals to express themselves freely without fear of the government. According to Khan, Gilani and Nawaz (2012, p.44), the advent of internet, the world networked population has risen tremendously. Shirky (2011) adds that over the same period, social media have become a fact of life for civil society worldwide that now involves many actors ranging from citizens, activists, non governmental agencies and so on. Today, the modern public sphere is characterised by massive number of web publishing being undertaken by citizens and civil societies to facilitate global deliberation. Pressure groups have used the internet to draw people’s attention to issues and spark deliberations at local, state and global communities.

However, there are elements that determine the existence and success of the new public sphere in our contemporary society. They include the Information and communications technologies (ICT’s) and social networking software. ICT is used reference to computers, cell phones and other gadgets that people use to communicate with one another and gain access to the internet space. These gadgets allow for communications and integration among people from different parts of the world to form a global community. Castells (2008) posits that the internet and wireless communication brings about horizontal rather than vertical network of communication and offers an organised forum for public debate and decision making. ICT gadgets bring down the public sphere to the comfort zones of people, allowing citizens to participate in critical decisions in their living rooms, offices or on transit without being physically present like that of the 17th and 18th century public sphere postulation of Habermas.

The second determinant being the presence social networking software refers to various platforms for socialisation, integration and formulation of public opinion. They involve networking applications such as Blogs, Twitter, Facebook and other web-based services that bring people together to form a public sphere, which is not limited by space or time. The significance of social networking software goes beyond socialisation and other common features; it possesses photo and video sharing capabilities which greatly strengthens the quality of analysis and discussions in the public sphere. Videos and images have a strong effect on our understanding of events; recent happenings in the society captured on camera can be brought to the public sphere for the public to discuss on it. Also participants can make personal videos representing their point of view on the issue in discuss. Such videos are found on YouTube and ranges from issues such as Gay-right marriages, animal protection laws and so on.

*2.4 Democratic Participants Theory, Public Sphere and Citizen Journalism: The Link*

Democratic participant theory was proposed by Dennis McQuail in recognition of new media developments, criticisms against the vertical flow of information and the dominance of the press by private and public monopolies. McQuail (1987, p.122) points out that the central point of a democratic participant theories rests on the needs, interests and aspiration of the active receiver in a political society. The theory emphasizes the role of the receiver in the communication process and integrates receiver’s rights to relevant information, to be heard as well as to hear in the communication circle.

The relevance of this theory to the discussion is based on the fact that in order for the hegemony and monopoly of information by the mainstream media to be broken, there needs to be a platform for a horizontal and participatory form of communication which enables people to freely take part in discussions on issues in the state. The media previously played their gate keeping role, deciding which information to shut out from people or not but as peoples need for participation grew, citizen journalism emerged through the help of technology to play an active role in the process of collecting, reporting and analysing news and information. As the media entered into the public sphere, it brought a change which gave a voice to the side-lined members of the public sphere. However the people needed more than what the media offered; they wanted to actively take part in the discussions in the society without needing an interpreter or a link between them and the state.

*2.5 Citizen Journalism: A Global exploration*

The term citizen journalism is an attempt to conceptualise the freedom given to ordinary individuals by network technology to become news producers and publishers. Bowman and Willis (2003) define this brand of journalism as “the act of a citizen or group of citizens or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news and information”. The notion of citizen journalism has highlighted how information and communication technologies have offered significant opportunity for media production and information dissemination outside the confines of established journalism and thus for bypassing the gatekeepers of the traditional news business (Hintz, 2012 in Nwofe 2012, p.12). Radsch (2013) captures the essence of citizen journalism in his definition of it as “an alternative and activist form of newsgathering and reporting that functions outside the mainstream media institutions often as repose to the shortcoming in the professional journalistic field”.

Citizen journalism therefore is the ability of someone who is not trained professionally as a journalist to actively take part in the process of gathering, investigating, reporting and sharing news and information. The intention of this participation according to Bowman and Wills (2002, p.10) “is to provide an independent, accurate, wide ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires”. The remarkable thing about citizen journalism is that its contents are different from those produced by professionals because they are produced by amateurs but stunningly enough, they still carry enough effect and influence on its audience just like the professional ones.

From a global perspective, citizen journalism through the help of social media networks has empowered people who ordinarily may not have a voice in public discourse or no socio-economic power to actively make an impact on trending debates in the society in the form of bloggers and so on. Citizen Journalism has introduced a global public sphere which has awakened the roles and responsibilities of individuals in the process of decision making. As internet usage increases, so does the level of citizen participation in political governance and decision making in the society. According to Nwofe (2012), “In may 2012, footage of Israeli settlers opening fire on protesting Palestinian civilians allegedly resulting in the death of a Palestinian man was recorded by a citizen journalist on a hand held phone camera, a footage which garnered international attention such that warranted the Israeli defence force to issue a statement saying that they were investigating the matter”. In America, the case of Eric Garner who was killed by a police officer through a Choke-hold raised a global outcry to the level of police killings in America. Also, the images and videos of the London railway bombings of July 7, 2005 were made available by citizens and it served a major news material for the BBC.

*2.6 Citizen Journalism in Nigeria: Challenges and Possibilities*

Citizen journalism is now a popular brand of journalism in Nigeria (Okoro, Diri and Odii 2013, p.5), a development which is attributed to the overwhelming use of the social media in the country. Many Nigerians have signed up for social networking sites and numerous audience driven online citizen journalism sites and discussion forums. According to Dare (2011, p.18), “as in most parts of the world, the promise of participatory journalism is being delivered faster than envisaged since the global democratisation spirit took hold”. Contrary to what is expected of a developing nation, Nigerians have been caught up by this change in the media system which has led to an increase in media participation and social media usage.

Before the advent of the internet and its full utilisation by ordinary people in Nigeria, the mainstream media of television, newspapers, radio and so on piloted and dominated the information space in Nigeria as the major source of news and information. During that time, the traditional media gave little avenue for audience interactivity and contribution. This came in form of letters to the editors as for newspapers (which most of the time were not published), phone in programs for the broadcast (which often screens out callers before linking them on air) and so on. This formed the triggers for citizen journalism in Nigeria as the mainstream media provided little or no avenues for audience participation, interactivity and undemocratic nature of the local press. Gradually, as people started embracing the internet and other networking tools, there arose a silent change and revolution in the information market place especially towards to late 90’s.

According to Dare (2011), the ability of the media to employ new media tools is predicated on the level of internet access or penetration in any country. Presumably, he further argues that a country with low internet access or penetration will be saddled with a weak participation in the media while the reverse is the case with a country with high internet usage and penetration. The major driving force of internet penetration in Nigeria has been due to high use of internet enabled mobile phones and gadgets. The internet has become an important part of mobile communication because most people have embraced cell phones as a means of communication following the failure of fixed landlines in the country during the early 2000’s. Even politicians in Nigeria have also embraced multimedia technologies to engage their supporters. Such is seen in the immediate past president’s Facebook account. Remarkably, this changing landscape has resulted to remarkable changes in the communication process in Nigeria making Nigeria the 8th in the global ranking of internet usage and penetration. From being the 19th position in the global ranking in 2007 with about nine million users, Nigeria became the number eight in 2014 within a period of period of seven years with about sixty-seven million users. Within the year 2013 and 2014, the country experienced an increase of about twelve million new users (see Figure 1.1: Nigeria). The relevance of this data in the context of this discussion is that such high level of internet usage and penetration in the country means that more people are empowered as citizen journalists to partner with the mainstream journalists. It further implies that more people are able to actively take part in discussions in the public sphere.

**Figure 1.1** Nigeria

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year(July 1) | Internet Users\*\* | UserGrowth | New Users | Country Population | PopulationChange | Penetration(% of Pop. with Internet) | Country's Share of World Population | Country's Share of World Internet Users | Global Rank |
| 2014\* | **67,101,452** | 16% | 9,365,590 | 178,516,904 | 2.82% | **37.59%** | 2.46% | 2.30% | 8 |
| 2013\* | **57,735,862** | 4% | 2,229,563 | 173,615,345 | 2.83% | **33.26%** | 2.42% | 2.13% | 8 |
| 2012 | **55,506,299** | 19% | 8,826,250 | 168,833,776 | 2.83% | **32.88%** | 2.38% | 2.20% | 8 |
| 2011 | **46,680,049** | 22% | 8,350,181 | 164,192,925 | 2.81% | **28.43%** | 2.35% | 2.04% | 10 |
| 2010 | **38,329,867** | 23% | 7,253,663 | 159,707,780 | 2.78% | **24.00%** | 2.31% | 1.87% | 10 |
| 2009 | **31,076,204** | 30% | 7,094,603 | 155,381,020 | 2.76% | **20.00%** | 2.27% | 1.76% | 10 |
| 2008 | **23,981,601** | 141% | 14,017,018 | 151,208,080 | 2.73% | **15.86%** | 2.24% | 1.53% | 15 |
| 2007 | **9,964,584** | 25% | 2,017,720 | 147,187,353 | 2.70% | **6.77%** | 2.21% | 0.73% | 19 |
| 2006 | **7,946,863** | 60% | 2,992,743 | 143,314,909 | 2.67% | **5.55%** | 2.17% | 0.68% | 19 |
| 2005 | **4,954,121** | 183% | 3,204,983 | 139,585,891 | 2.64% | **3.55%** | 2.14% | 0.48% | 19 |
| \*\***Internet User** = individual who can access the Internet at home, via any device type and connection. [More details](http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/#definitions). Source: ***Internet Live Stats*** ([www.InternetLiveStats.com](http://www.internetlivestats.com/))Elaboration of data by *International Telecommunication Union (ITU)*, *World Bank, and United Nations Population Division.* |

The political triggers for citizen journalism in Nigeria was as a result of a vacuum for investigative content and citizens engagement left by the mainstream media in Nigeria that led to a massive rise in citizen journalism. In a country with issues of political misappropriation of state funds and other internal challenges, citizens expected more from its press. The media became increasingly commercialised thereby compromising their hegemonic power over the media space, making citizens to take up the responsibility themselves. Although the media was very vibrant and daring during the military regimes, which gave rise to what we know today as ‘Guerrilla journalism’, they were also credited for setting the agenda for return to democratic rule in 1999. That period however short-lived, making people doubt their status in the society. According to Dare (2011, p.25), “with the return to democratic rule, the media went to sleep, believing their work was done”. The audience soon wandered off to explore other option which led to the origin of participatory journalism in Nigeria.

Online citizen journalism sites have contributed remarkably in setting agenda for various issues not adequately given prominence in the mainstream media. One of such cases is the April 2014 Kidnap of 216 Chibok girls by the Boko Haram terrorist sect in Nigeria. The tragedy got over one million hash-tags on twitter in less than three weeks with everyone from the first lady of the United states, Michelle Obama adding their selfies to the social media noise (Shearlaw 14th April 2015). Several protests and marches organised through the social media platforms in various cities in the country and other cases of social media mobilisation.

However, citizen journalism faces some challenges in Nigeria just like any other African country. The number one problem is power/electricity; which affects almost everyone and every sector in the society. Disruptions in power makes citizen journalists not to go online to report a story or join in a discussion when they want or even cover an incident they stumble on owing to the fact that there phone or gadget batteries might be low for this. Second amongst them is the high cost of internet network in the country. Internet access is relatively expensive to use in the country and it is bought according to Megabytes which most of the time doesn’t allow citizen journalism to thrive well; this leads us to the next point of poverty. In a country where wealth is unevenly distributed, some regions in the country live below 1USD a day which makes them unable to purchase an internet enabled phone, talk more of an internet data. According to Nwofe (2012), the gap between the rich and the poor is essentially wide as those who can afford the basic essentials of food, cloth and shelter are the majority in the society with figures as high as 60.9 per cent. This is a big hindrance to the success of citizen journalism in Nigeria.

2.8. *CORRUPTION AND THE FUTURE JOURNALISM IN NIGERIA*

*2.8.1 Brown Envelope Journalism Defined*

African Journalism is faced with a number of challenges which includes the issue of Corruption which compromises and impedes the independence in news gathering and coverage. It is an issue that affects journalism practice globally, not just in Africa and can be related to the wider issues of Journalism ethics particularly in the wake of Leveson Enquiry. Brown envelope Journalism is a major setback to media growth in Nigeria and has remains a controversial and disturbing issue in debates centred on the Nigerian press, professionalism and ethics of Journalism (see Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe, 2012; Williams, 2014). The syndrome is as a result of a gap in human ethical reasoning and a reflection of moral decadence which must be stamped out from every sector in the society, not just in the media. The Nigerian media has been credited with bringing Nigeria thus far through its vibrancy and resilience during the Guerrilla Journalism days in the military regimes of the 90’s but was caught up with a syndrome that ate deep into the global reputation they earned back in the days.

Stripped of all forms of technicalities, Brown envelope is simply the “money given to reporters or editors to persuade them to write positive stories or kill a negative story” (Nkwocha 2004, p.68). Okunna (1999, p.57), elucidates that corruption is the commonest type of bribe in journalism. To her (p.57), it is “a monetary bribe given to an unethical journalist to pressurize him/her into doing what the bribe givers wants”. She went further to say that such money “once accepted, it ties the hands of journalists who then become incapable of being objective in reporting events and issues”. Kasoma (2007, p.2) defines it as “a practice that involves news sources granting monetary incentive to journalists or media outlets in order to get an ample coverage”. The money most of the time is enclosed in a brown envelope, the reason being that the envelope is opaque and as such is secret as it does not reveal the content inside.

However, on the basis of this work, it is pertinent to point out that these gratifications at times do not come in the form of money. Sometimes it comes in other forms such as gift items or unsolicited and unmerited favour. Akabogu (2005 cited in Williams 2011, p.150) says that Brown envelope refers to any form of gift, drinks, food or even a lift from work in order to influence the journalist sense of judgement. The essence of this point is that most of the time, this gratification is not demanded by the journalist because it comes in various forms. The term Brown envelope, should not only convey the mental image of monetary bribe. Onyisi (1996, p.78) captures the essence of this concept in his definition of Brown envelope as “demanding and /or receiving gratifications to perform one’s official duties or using ones position of authority to extort gifts or other forms of gratification either directly or indirectly in any society”. The simplified aim of this act is knowingly or unknowingly, just like any bribe is to influence the journalists’ objectivity and value judgement.

Another important point to note from this study is that Brown envelope is mostly mistaken for Public Relations (PR) by those who offer the gratification. In their wrong perception and understanding of PR, they indulge in this even without a cause just to keep their reputation in tact with the journalists in case of an eventuality that will lead to them being investigated. Critically looking at this, one will realise how much of an impact the press has on the society and on maintaining accountability in the society. Journalists through this have favourable relationships with politicians (monetarily and otherwise), including others who have things as stake so as to cover up their deeds incase the need arises. Adewale (2008) explains that we now have journalists who cover ministers for years, only to report nothing but glowing attributes of the minister and his ministry while insolating the real picture of things happening in the ministry from the public. Without drifting from the line of discussion, this very act/ practice forms the basis for the emergence of citizen journalism in Nigeria as the press soon forgot their investigative journalism role and pursued other agenda’s.

Public Relations practitioners in Africa also contribute to the problem of Brown envelope journalism. According to an article by Leslie Steeves (2006), internship coordinator in University of Oregon cited in Kasoma 2009, p.20), shared an experience of two students of the University who travelled to Ghana for their internship in summer 2004. The first student has this to say about his experience;

“We went to a Ghana Telecom speech that was already over by the time we got there. The PR agent handed us a copy of the speech, and then gave us an envelope filled with money ‘for transport’.we then made our way to another event in which we received more ‘transportation money’. \_ Fellow reporter gave me half of the money and told me I could go home. She said she was going to buy a dress and that she would write the stories.I asked if this is how she earned money. She said, ‘yes, don’t worry you will make lots of money”. (Steeves 2006 cited in Kasoma 2009, p.20)

According to the second student;

“At the launching (of the Medium-Term Private Sector Development Strategy), I got to see President John Kufor speak.Just for attending the event I received 60,000 cedis (USD 7, GBP 4) so that I would write a good story. Then \_ fellow reporter went and got transcripts of the speeches and we wrote the stories off them. All the quotes from our article were taken directly from the transcript, one student wrote, implying that no effort was made to report critically and objectively”***.*** (Steeves 2006 cited in Kasoma 2009, p.20).

These excerpts show how deeply rooted the culture of Brown envelope is in African media and how public Relations practitioners help perpetuate this menace. As part of organising events, PR practitioners often allocate a certain amount of money for the press in order to sway them into reporting the event and the agency (government or private) in a positive way at the expense of investigative and objective reporting. My experience in Nigeria during my Undergraduate internship in 2010 is not far from this experience of these two students. Reporters in media establishments often refused to take the student trainee’s on assignments, reasons being that an additional reporter would reduce the money to be shared after the assignments.

Unarguably, according to Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe (2012, p.515) Nigeria media, to put it more succinctly has done well in pursuing the noble goals of watching over the safety and welfare of the people and the society who trust them. They argue further (in page 515) that “it is therefore no longer debatable that the media is largely responsible for the actualisation of Nigeria’s independence , curbing of neo-colonial excesses and the propagation of the ideals of a modern nation-state”. The media in Nigeria has a track record of exposing corrupt and inept leaders, with their pen and paper. They have fought wars for their noble country, Nigeria. However, this syndrome which enveloped them needs to be curbed and thanks to the timely entry of technologies which brought in Citizen Journalism and social media platforms.

The point of the matter lies on the fact that Journalism is an industry, which just like any industry, is a player in profit seeking market economy. Journalists themselves are members of the society with needs and challenges faced like any human with the problem of right and wrong, good or evil. This brings us to the arguments for and against Brown envelope journalism in Nigeria. Before then, it is important to be armed with some facts about the root cause. It is to note that man is a rational being and certainly does not exist in isolation with his society. Therefore, he is faced with challenges that the particular society pose for him. Due to the fact that he does not exist in isolation, must interact with people. This interaction according to Akabogu (2005 cited in Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe 2012, p.516), makes him find fulfilment and solidarity with his fellow men, which make a person act morally and ethically only when he relates himself in principle of all mankind. In essence, a Brown envelope journalist, if taken to a country where such practice is not in existence, will operate in a similar way with what is obtainable in the country and environment; as such will not demand or accept gratifications from a news source.

However, in a study conducted among 50 journalists in Nigeria by Okoro and Onuoha (2013, p.137) to ascertain journalists perception of the Corruption found that 14 per cent of the journalists agreed that Brown envelope means soliciting or accepting bribe. What this means is that a good number of journalists do not perceive the practice as a form of bribery. Rather it is seen as a prerogative of their profession as journalists; 16 per cent understands it to be money or gratification received in order not to publish a story (put more succinctly; gratification received in order to kill a story/news. While a surprising 22 per cent perceive it to be a payment for news publication. In essence, it means paying journalists to do their own official duty assigned to them.

Table: Journalists’ Perception of Corruption

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **RESPONSES** | **%** |
| Receiving bribe | 14 |
| Neglect of ethical requirement | 8 |
| Refusing to publish stories | 16 |
| Being influenced in the course of duty | 4 |
| Soliciting for gratification in order to suppress the truth | 10 |
| Accepting payment for news publication | 22 |
| Transferring of different kinds rewards  | 14 |
| A monetary bribe to an unethical person | 8 |
| Giving money to officials to perform their duties | 4 |
| Total | 100 |

***Source: Study by Okoro and Chinweobo-Onuoha (2013, p.137).***

The unethical practice of Brown Envelope is expressed informally among journalists in catchy phrases such as “Last question”, “family support”, “the boys are going”, “press release”, “hospitality”,” welfare” and ‘freebies” (See Oshunkeye, 2011; Nwabueze, 2010). In Cameroon, it is known as “Gombo” while South Africa knows it as “Check book” and many developed countries in Europe call it “Hospitality” (Okoro and Onuoha, 2013; Skjerdal , 2010; Oshunkeye, 2011). But whichever name it goes by or where, the fact remains that this unethical practice affects professionalism and credibility of the press in any society.

*2.8.2 The Nigerian press, Corruption, Ethics and Professionalism*

Corruption violates Issue 7(1&2) of the Nigeria’s code of ethics and conducts for Journalists (as revised in 1998) which states that:

* A journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribes, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish information.
* To determine payment for the publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as a fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event.

***Source:*** [*www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/WPFD2009/pdf/Nigeria.code%20of%20ethics.pdf*](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/WPFD2009/pdf/Nigeria...code%20of%20ethics.pdf) *(Nigerian press Organisation summit 1998 excerpt).*

Ethics is an integral part of human existence that is primarily concerned with the personal duties of an individual to himself and to others (Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe 2012, p.516). According to Nwabueze (2010, p.498), “professionalism cannot be divorced from ethical standards.ethics ensures that people practicing a particular profession are led to decipher what is morally right from what is morally wrong without being policed to do so”. What this means is that we cannot talk about media professionalism without talking about the ethical codes guiding the media. Nwabueze (2010) points out that ethics are not laws; they are set of guiding principles which are binding on people who adopt it as a moral boundary for the practice of their profession. The purpose of ethics in media practice is to regulate the conduct and behaviour of journalists as they go about their daily business of news gathering and reporting.

Okunna (2003, p.258) argues that only a disciplined press can make meaningful contribution to national development. Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe (2012, p.159) adds that “the implication of a non-disciplined press may not be immediate, but the end would always justify the means”. What this means is that Corruption imposes a lot of ethical burdens on media professionalism in Nigeria which may take time to manifest. Such negative impact lowers the credibility of the press as news of the day remains nothing but constructed opinions of the Brown envelope giver. It deprives the people their right to be accurately informed about the goings on in their society which is the responsibility imposed on journalists by virtue of their profession.

The code of ethics for journalist in Nigeria was first established and adopted in 1979 and was reviewed in 1998. However, the level of adherence to these codes of practice by Nigerian journalists, according to Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe (2012, p.526) is limited especially with regards to the issue of rewards and gratification. Many factors can be responsible for this lack of conformity to the codes but principal among them is the fact that in Nigeria according to Okunna (2005, p.93), there is an erroneous belief that ethics cannot be enforced. Since ethics are not laws as earlier pointed out by Nwabueze (2010, p.498), it means that adherence to it depends on the individuals personal decision to obey the code or not to. This makes journalists who are not morally sound to indulge in Brown envelope journalism not minding the ethical implication of it.

This however, brings us to another issue which is the inability of the Nigerian Press Council and other media regulatory bodies to curb the menace of Corruption. Eke(2014, p.154) stresses the need for press regulatory bodies to wake up and ensure the strict enforcement of their otherwise elaborate codes which merely exist just for the want of codes, but are not applied for efficient self-regulation. This means that media professional bodies should be serious in maintaining ethical standards, if possible, sanction defaulting journalists.

The need for an effective press control and the inability of the Nigerian press council to ensure that journalists operate according to specified codes of conduct leads us to the phone hacking scandal and the Leveson Inquiry of 2011 in United Kingdom. It found, among other things that the existing Press Complaints Commission (PCC) was not sufficient in regulating the press and recommended an independent body which will have a range of sanctions available to it. Leveson (2012, p.12) in his report pointed out “that the PCC despite having held itself out as a regulator and thereby raising expectations, is not actually a regulator at all”. According to Leveson (2012, p.12) in paragraph 44 of his report, argues that:

“In any event, such powers as the PCC have appeared to have been under-utilized. Further, even when complaints are held, the remedies at its disposal are woefully inadequate and enforceable only by persuasion”.

This argument represents a wider range of concerns raised against press regulatory bodies all over the world. Fielden (2012, p.94) in her comparative study of international press councils, captures the essence of this issue by mentioning that:

“As debates over the future of press regulation in the UK develops through the Leveson Inquiry and beyond, it is surfacing a host of thorny issues such as the very purpose of regulating the press; whether the basis for press regulation should be voluntary or mandatory or some combination; whether compliance should focus on incentives or sanctions; whether a regulatory body should primarily be concerned with compliant handling or standard auditing”.

It is important to note that press regulation as used here does not mean that the media should be delivered into the hands of the state. It only purports that freedom of the press should come with responsibilities; responsibilities built on ethics and morality which should be enforceable through its regulatory bodies. The clamour for effective regulation calls on media regulatory bodies to go beyond establishing codes of conduct to ensuring that journalists operate in accordance to those codes. A fall out of this is what led to the Corruption not just in the Nigerian media but Africa as a whole. According to Nwabueze (2010, p.515), “the failure of the media institutions to identify, shame and punish journalists that accept Brown envelopes could be described as part of the larger journalism culture that affects the profession negatively”. Baren (2004, p.487) also posits that media professionals are reluctant to identify and censure colleagues who transgress ethical obligations. The reason for this is because most of the professionals in the field are also guilty of the offence. According to a journalist who works in a government owned media (station’s name purposely withheld) interviewed and cited by Nwabueze (2010, p.515), “when a reporter files in a story, some editors expect the reporter who submitted the story to bring part of the gratification; otherwise the story may not be published”. This reason makes it difficult for professionals in the field to sanction journalists who indulge in this practice. Worthy of note is the fact that most of these editors all constitute the executives of the media regulatory bodies and as such cannot wage a fight against what they know they (or some of them) are also guilty of.

This regulatory vacuum has made Journalists in Nigeria to operate outside the ethical codes guiding them, leading to a range of arguments as opinions are divided as to the moral and ethical rightness or wrongness of Brown envelope journalism in Nigeria. To the school of thought which supports the practice, it is cultural and altruistic to be nice to visitors and invitees, arguing that it is simply a display of hospitality which they claim are in line with African culture (Onyisi 1999, p.24). Nwabueze (2010, p.498) expands the argument by saying that “the origin of the Corruption could be rooted in the culture of presenting ‘Kola nuts’ to visitors, a hospitality practice common in African societies.well meaning as the originators of that custom might be, the practice deteriorated with other values in the society”. It deteriorated and is now understood as ‘just’ gift giving, reason being that the ‘gift givers’ understands what the economy is like and the low income they receive when compared to other professionals in the country.

 Oshunkey (2011, p.12) argues differently. To her, “poverty is the root cause of the brown envelope journalism.there is a nexus between poverty and corruption.journalists in Africa are poorly remunerated and many journalist today earn less than USD3 per day, with a graduate journalist receiving about N30,000/USD200/GBP103 monthly”. Oshunkey (2011, p.12) goes further to argue that “how do you tell a hungry, weather-beaten reporter whose salary is most of the time not paid for months not to accept brown envelope?. A reporter cited in Nwabueze (2010, p.512) plainly suggests that “journalists are treated as if journalism is a charity work.people are owed for months, even when they are paid, it is peanuts”. According to Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe (2012, p.518), “publishers in Nigeria, rather than pay attractive wages to the journalists, refer to their identity cards as meal tickets”. In other words, most journalists argue that since their employers expect them to generate their salaries from their identity cards; therefore they are morally justified if they use it to make money.

Another group blames the ethical codes inherent in most African countries as being responsible for Brown envelope journalism. As seen in Omanga (2015), “such arguments have been made that we need a code of ethics that is African (‘Afriethics’) to guide journalism and nurture journalistic practice that is specific and complimentary to core Africa Values”. To this group, the codes having been mostly appropriated from foreign media codes does not take into cognisance the practical experiences of an African journalist and the social, economic and political differences between the two Continents. This makes Omanga (2015) to rhetorically ask if codes of ethics are context-specific or universal in nature.

However, those against the notion are of the view that corruption is synonymous with bribe and regardless of the circumstance and it is anachronistic to the ethics of journalism as it perverts justice, media credibility and creates disequilibrium in the society (Onyisi 1999, p.24). What this means is that when the people begin to see the media as biased, it will affect the credibility of the noble profession and will also make journalists fail in their responsibility to ensure that justice prevails in the society. This group argues that Corruption in its entirety should be expunged from the Nigerian media because it robs it of accuracy, balance and truth which are the pillars upon which they are meant to stand.

Others argue that the reason behind the acceptance of Brown envelope is beyond poor and epileptic remuneration. A reporter from Punch interviewed in Nwabueze (2010, p.512) argues that;

“Journalists use poor remuneration as an excuse, but that is not the issue. Many people are poor but they don’t steal. What of editors that are paid very well, yet they accept Brown envelopes? In fact, the bigger the income, the more money a reporter demands as Brown envelopes. Such reporter says ‘I am bigger than the amount you are giving me’. So it is basically a moral problem in the society, not just poor pay”. (Punch journalist personal interview with Nwabueze C.D in October 2010, cited in Nwabueze 2010, p.512)

The last group argues that Brown envelope does not stop a journalist from reporting objectively. To them, the nature of the news story is what decides whether Brown envelope will affect the objectivity of the report. If it is a sensitive issue like murder, rape and matters of public interest, the reporter even after collecting Brown envelope must be objective because other media will report it (Nwabueze 2010, p.513). But whichever way you look at it, demanding and/or receiving gratification to perform your duty as a journalist should be condemned because it is not just a problem to the society but also to media professionalism; that is why the ethical code of conduct for journalists abhors it in all its ramifications.

From a global perspective, Skjerdal (2010, p.378) pointed out that illicit payments in journalism practice are known worldwide but the research on it is not evenly distributed. A study by Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2003), cited in Skjerdal (2010, p.379), attempted to map out the likelihood of cash for news coverage in 66 countries across the world found that;

“Western countries occupied all the top positions of societies least likely to cater for journalistic corruption. On the other hand of the scale were Eastern and Southern countries with China being judged as the most probable society to have newspapers which would publish news for cash, followed by Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Due to lack of data, only five African countries were included in the study. Their positions on the list were (with 66 being the worst): Mauritius 40; South Africa 50; Kenya 55; Nigeria 58 and Egypt 61”. (Skjerdal 2010, p.379)

But recent studies have traced the presence of Corruption in the western media. Starting with the United Kingdom, a report by Transparency International in a report written by Robert Barrington (2015), the organisations UK’s Executive Director reveals that the “Global Corruption Barometer in 2013 found that 69 per cent of people in the UK felt that the media were corrupt or extremely corrupt”. Similarly, one of the conclusions in the organisations 2011 research on corruption in the UK was that there is simply not enough literature on the subject matter compared to its growing influence. The study suggested that there is complacency and a lack of knowledge of the extent of corruption on key sectors and institutions in UK and that policy response is incoherent and uncoordinated, leading to a culture of impunity (2011 Transparency International report cited in Barrington 2015).

The recent revelation by Peter Oborne (2015), a former chief political commentator of the *Daily Telegraph* who walked out of the newspaper, accusing the management of censoring stories about HSBC bank and tax evasion is a typical example of whistle-blowing inside journalism in UK. In fact, Aiden White (2015), the founding father of Ethical Journalism Network describes the case as “just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to corruption inside the media”. According to Oborne (2015) in his report titled ‘why I resigned from the *Telegraph*’, “the coverage of HSBC in Britain’s *Telegraph* is a fraud on its readers. If major newspapers allow corporations to influence their content for fear of losing advertising revenue, democracy itself is in peril”. It is pertinent to reiterate that Brown envelope journalism does not only include money handed to a reporter or editor; it encompasses all forms of gratification or inducement that distorts objectivity and free flow of relevant information from the press to the public. The media even in the most advanced societies for fear of losing advertising revenue and other benefits (financial and otherwise) has been turned into the reputation management arm of major corporations, which uses it a tool to cover up some of their illegal dealings. The peter Oborne’s case points to the fact that such practice in our newsrooms are not the exclusive preserve of African journalism. His work on ‘why I resigned from the *Telegraph*’ which includes other revelations can be accessed through the following link: <http://opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/peter-oborne/why-i-resigned-from-telegraph>

In China, according to Liu Xiaobo (2004), “the popular saying ‘protect yourself from fire, theft and journalists’ is an apt evidence of the seriousness of corruption in the media”. The amount of Brown envelope a journalist receives is directly proportional to his rank in the profession. As Xiabo (2004) puts it, “a journalist rate is in proportion to how renowned he/she is.naturally; famous journalists are more expensive than ordinary journalists”. The level of this practice goes to the extent that according to Xiabo (2004), “to make things more convenient, journalists now do not even need to write articles, ready to print versions of texts are given to journalists to choose which best suits them for publication by organisers of press conferences or corporate news sources”. Media establishment go as far as having a price list they charge for writing stories which most of the time are tailored propaganda, disguised as news (see Figure 1.2). The charges are categorised based on the rank of the Politian and the office he/she occupies. According to the compilation by Xiabo (2004), in China Central Television (CCTV), report praising the leader of a township costs about two hundred to three hundred thousand Yuan (GBP 20,335 – GBP 30,503), while the leader of a Xian (County) or equivalent rank costs four hundred to five hundred thousand Yuan (GBP 40,671 – 50,838). This highlights the extent the subject matter has hampered the development of the press and the society at large.

Figure 1.2

**Fees charged by some national media (Yuan)**

*Figures compiled by the author Liu Xiaobo cited in Xiaobo (2004).* *Sourced from* [*http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/3012*](http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/3012)

Most times, journalists switch roles from being the receiver of the Brown envelope to being the giver of it. The United States Authorities investigated the Wall Street journal over allegation that its bureau in China had bribed government officials with lavish gifts in return for information it could use for its articles (Williams 2013). Cases of allegations on corruption in the global media are so many that it cannot be fully explored. In the African setting, Brown envelope mostly comes from the news source to the reporter unlike the western media where the journalist can be the giver or the receiver depending on the situation. The reason for this is because African journalists are not as well paid as their counterparts in the western societies. This makes them have little or less to spare to bribe a news source just to get information.

The essence of this global analysis to the study is that is brown envelope journalism is a threat to journalism all over the world. The case study of Nigeria does not imply that it only exists in Nigeria. It exists in even the most advanced countries in the world although with varying degrees. The point is that the emergence of citizen journalism and social media can help to curb this unethical practice negatively affecting the press which is the institution of accountability and change in every society. Citizen journalism can curb this menace because it provides alternative platforms upon which citizens can be informed on important issue in the society.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study took on a two-phase empirical approach to arrive at its findings. The first phase of the primary data collection was completed through the use of questionnaires. Collins and Hussey (1997) define a questionnaire as a method for collecting primary data in which a sample of respondents are asked a list of carefully structured questions chosen after considerable testing, with a view to elicit reliable responses. This technique was chosen by the researcher due to time constraints which makes it easier to get information from large number of people within a short time. Another reason for adopting this technique is due to the unique characteristics of the sample population and the research itself. The study which has a link with corruption in the media makes it uncomfortable for the respondents to freely participate in especially without anonymity and questionnaire is the most suitable technique that can guarantee them such privacy. The questionnaire consists of open ended questions formulated based on the research questions and objective of the study. The reason for this is because closed ended questions are easier to code and statistically analyse (Gillham 2000). The questions followed a logical progression starting with simple themes and progressing to complex issues to sustain the interest of respondents and gradually stimulate question answering.

The sample population was strictly limited to traditional journalists who are currently practicing in Nigeria. A total of 35 journalists were surveyed and their responses were collected through email due to the location of the researcher who is conducting the study from UK. However, 33 responses were valid out of the 35 issued. A cover letter was attached together with an informed consent form to the survey to explain the purpose of the research and to seek their voluntary agreement to participate in the research. The cover letter and the informed consent form both bear the contact details of the researcher for those who have questions about the study or concerns about their roles in the study. A sample of the questionnaire is attached as an appendix to the work. The researcher also made available an electronic copy of the responses together with their signed consent form which was compiled and put in a disc. All of which forms part of the appendix in the study.

The second phase of the primary data collection for the study was conducted by the researcher through in-depth phone interviews. McNamara (1999) states that interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant’s experience and may be useful as follow-up to certain responses in the questionnaire. The researcher, through phone call, interviewed five journalists who are among the 35 surveyed in order to gain greater insights into the motivations and attitudes towards their responses in the phase one of the data collection (questionnaire).

Although in-depth interviews are not efficient for statistical analysis and reaching a large number of people, they are ideal for gathering honest opinions and perceptions on the subject matter being discussed. This particular method was deployed in the work to engage some of the earlier surveyed journalists in discussions which can enable the researcher get further responses beyond what the closed-ended questionnaire could contain. Electronic copies of the interviews are also attached as appendix in the work.

There are several ethical considerations which the researcher had to take into account while conducting survey. Resnik (2010), states that ethical standards promote the aims of research which includes knowledge, truth and avoidance of error. Sture (2010, p.2) notes some principal ethical issues to consider while conducting a research. They include:

Voluntary participation: the study ensured that all journalists surveyed voluntarily accepted to participate in the research. The cover letter and the consent form boldly highlighted that participation in the study was voluntary.

Consent: the participants were fully informed about the objective of the research and their roles in the study through an introductory cover letter attached to the questionnaire. Also the informed consent form contains a withdrawal section for participants who at any point wished to withdraw from the study without any consequence. The journalists who took part in the phone interview also declared their consent orally after having signed the emailed documents.

Privacy/anonymity/confidentiality: all responses supplied by the participants were anonymously given with the exception of the editor who declared his consent in writing and orally for his name and information to be used in the work. The respondents were reassured that their answers are treated as confidential and will be used solely for academic purpose of this research.

A pilot test was conducted among five journalists before the questionnaires were sent out to the participants in the survey. The purpose of conducting pre-testing in this study was to primarily ensure that all the questions in the questionnaire were fully understood without any ambiguity. Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) confirm this practice by stating that pilot studies are a crucial element of a good study design, but points out that it does not guarantee complete success in the main study, rather it increase the likelihood. The pilot study played a crucial role in ensuring that as much information as possible could be gathered through the questionnaire which is a crucial raw data collection tool deployed in the study. Making an error with five subjects could prevent the disaster of sending out invalid questionnaires to 35 participants. Feedbacks from the pilot study helped the researcher in the finalisation and administration of the questionnaire to the sample population.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation of data collected in the course of this study. According to Devos (1998, p.203), “data analysis entails the breaking down of data into constituent parts to obtain answers to research questions and to test hypothesis”. The purpose of interpreting data is to reduce it to an intelligible and interpretable form so that it can be studied and tested in relations to the research questions and objectives of the study. The results will be analysed in two phases. The first phase is the presentation of the data collected in tables and bar charts, while the second phase will discuss the findings, tracing its significance and links with the theoretical framework and argument.

FINDINGS

**Does citizen journalism impact on the day to day work of journalists in Nigeria?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| CATEGORY | Yes | No | May be |
| **Gender** |
| Male | 15 | 7 | 0 |
| Female | 7 | 2 | 2 |
|  **Total** | **22** | **9** | **2** |
| **Age range** |
| 18 – 30 years | 13 | 0 | 0 |
| 31 – 43 years | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| 44 – 56 years | 2 | 3 | 0 |
|  57 – above | 2 | 5 | 0 |
|  **Total** | **22** | **9** | **2** |
| **Educational level** |
| O’level/WAEC/SSCE | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Diploma | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| B.sc/HND | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| Postgraduate | 3 | 5 | 0 |
|  **Total** | **22** | **9** | **2** |
| **Duration of practice** |
|  0 – 5 years | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 – 11 years | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| 12 – 17 years | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18 – 23 years | 1 | 2 | 0 |
|  24 – above | 1 | 4 | 0 |
|  **Total** | **22** | **9** | **2** |
| **Work Sector** |
| Print (Newspaper) | 8 | 1 | 0 |
|  (Magazine) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Broadcast (Radio) | 3 | 5 | 2 |
|  (Television) | 9 | 3 | 0 |
|  **Total** | 22 | 9 | 2 |

FONT SIZE DIFFERENT TO ACCOMODATE TABLE IN ONE PAGE

 Figure 4.1.1 Figure 4.1.2

Figure 4.1.3 Figure 4.1.4

 Figure 4.1.5

**Interpretation of the chart**

From the responses, a total of 22(67%) journalists admitted that citizen journalism affects their daily work as journalists, while 9(27%) did not agree that citizen journalism has any impact on their job. On the other hand, 2(6%) said may be it does, or does not have any impact on their daily activities. 15(68%) out of the 22 journalists who said yes were male, while the remaining 7(32%) were female. In terms of Age of the respondents who said yes, 13(59%) were aged 18-30, 5(23%) 31-43, 2(9%) 44-56 and 2(9%) were aged from 57 and above. 4(18%) out of those who said yes have secondary school leaving certificates, 6(27%) have diploma’s in journalism, 9(40%) studied journalism at B.sc level while the remaining 3(13%) studied journalism at the postgraduate level. Looking at the journalists who said no, 7(77%) out of the nine were male while 2(22%) were female. In terms of age of the respondents who said that citizen journalism does not affect their work, journalists aged between 18-30 all admitted that it affects their work while those aged between 57 and above has the highest number of those who said it does not affect them with a total of 5(55%) out of a total of nine. Followed by journalists aged 44-56 with 3(33%) out of nine. 3(33%) of them has bachelors in journalism while 5(55%) have their postgraduate certificates in journalism. 4(44%) out of the nine have been in practice for 24 years and above, while 2(22%) have practiced for 12-17 years and 18-23 years. 5(55%0 out of nine journalists who said no works in radio stations, while 3(33%) works in television stations and 1(1.1%) of the nine are newspaper journalists.

**Analysis and discussion**

Starting with the overall response, a total of 22(67%) journalists out of the 33 valid responses from journalists said that citizen journalism impacts on their daily work (see figure 4.1.5). The obvious reason for this is the high level of internet penetration and participation in the country, which (as stated earlier) ranks number eight in the global ranking of internet usage and penetration (ILS, 2014). The overwhelming usage of cutting edge technologies to actively partake in discussions in the Nigeria’s public sphere in the form of citizen journalism is like never seen before. Nigerians by nature are politically vibrant and as such seek all avenues to contribute to debates in the society beyond the teacher-student approach to communication which the mainstream media could offer. The live coverage of Emab plaza bomb blast in Abuja by a citizen journalist in 2014 served as a major news source for Television stations and also individuals who wanted first hand information on what that happened.

Similarly, Alejandro (2010, p.9) argues that in the old days, a reporter was given a lead or went out to find a story. But today, many stories are received third hand (sometimes even fourth or fifth hand) through social media sites, so that by the time a story is assigned to the reporter, the story in one form or another is already out there in the social media universe. The reporter now has to take into consideration and find some angle to the story that is not yet talked about. What this means is that the work of journalists have changed, they no longer need to be at the scene of an event to cover an event. Mostly, it has become practice to go to citizen journalism sites to get pictures and videos to build up their story. Although there are implications of this new practice which will be discussed later, citizen journalism has radically changed the role of a reporter to adapt to the 24 hour non-stop cycle. Journalists are now forced to accelerate the traditional journalistic process in order to keep up with the pace of Bloggers and other citizen journalism sites.

The significance of this particular finding is that the result provides confirmatory evidence that citizen journalism is having a considerable measure of influence on the way journalism is done in Nigeria. This is contrary to the findings by Dare (2010, p.60), which found among other things that “citizen journalism has arrived but it is not yet fully developed with millions of citizens and legacy media yet to embrace its full potentials, arguing further in (p.9) that Nigeria still has a lot of catching up to do. Similarly, Salwau (2012, p.190) argues on the other hand that “the culture of expressing oneself through writing is yet to fully permeate into the culture of Nigerian people”. However, the available evidence suggests to the contrary, 22 out 33 journalists is an indication that citizen journalism has successfully found its way into the traditional journalistic process. This further implies that Nigerians are posting, writing and debating for them to have had an impact on the traditional journalists.

Furthermore, a total of 9(27%) of the 33 journalists surveyed did not agree that citizen journalism impacts on their daily routine. What this means is that despite the fact that most journalists have embraced the entry of citizen journalists, some still have some reservations towards engaging citizen journalism in their daily activities. Niyomukiza (2013) underscores this point by saying that “citizen journalists are not media literate; they do not care about privacy, sensitivity, balance and so on. If for example, a minister goes to the night club to relax, people with smart phones could film him and publish the story in another way with the intention to blackmail him”. The unreliable nature of citizen journalism content makes some journalists not to engage them while carrying out his duty. A typical example is the CNN iReport story on Steve Jobs. A citizen journalist falsely reported on CNN’s citizen journalism platform in October 2008 that the Apple CEO had a severe heart attack and has been rushed to the hospital.

In addition, other findings will be discussed based on the age distribution of the respondents, gender, educational background, years of working experience and job sector. The essence of this is to gain a broader perspective on the rationale behind the responses. Starting with the gender of the respondents, out of the 22 journalist who said that citizen journalism impacts on their job, 15(68%) were male while the remaining 7(32%) were female (see figure 4.1.1). A possible reason for this significant gap could be attributed to the fact that there are more practicing male journalists than female in Nigeria. A survey conducted by the Independent Journalism Centre in Lagos in conjunction with the Panos Institute of Washington and the Centre of War, Peace and the News Media of New York cited in Anyanwu (2001) established that 80 per cent of practicing journalists in Nigeria are male. The implication of this is that more male journalists are out in the field more than their female counterparts.

Looking at the age of those who admitted to the impact of citizen journalism, journalists aged between 18 and 30 recorded the highest frequency of 13(59%) out of the 22 (see figure 4.1.3). What this means is that the younger generation of journalists are more influenced by the presence citizen journalism. The simple reason for this is because this age range of journalists was born into a period that experienced a boom in technology. Since this is the case, these young journalists grew up with technology as a way of live which further reflects in their carrier as journalists. In other words, younger generation of journalists are more likely to engage citizen journalism in his/her news reporting and data mining more than older generation of journalists.

In addition, the findings further reveals that journalists with Bachelors in Journalism and media has the highest number of response among those who said citizen journalism impacts on their job with a total 9(40%) out of 22 (see figure 4.1.2). This suggests that the use of technology in a job field has relevance with educational background. The undergraduate level is where journalists are trained and equipped in the act of news gathering and dissemination. At this stage, journalists are taught how to make use of the technology available to them in order to meet up with deadline nature of newsrooms. This underscores the level of response from this category.

 In terms of those who said citizen journalism does not impact on their routine, journalists aged between 57 and above recorded the highest frequency with a total of 5(55%) out of nine. On the other hand, those who have practiced journalism for 24 years and above also recorded the highest in its category with a total of 4(44%) out of nine (see figure 4.1.3). This available evidence suggests that journalists who are older and have practice journalism for a long time does not consent to the idea of citizen journalism. The reason for this is because they view it as a threat to a profession which they have spent a greater part of their lives in. Having spent a good number of years on the paper and pen traditional journalistic process, they find it difficult to switch over to the modern trends in the profession.

However, a significant thing from the findings reveals that professional journalists at the level of postgraduate studies does not subscribe to citizen journalism. 5(55%) out of nine of the journalists who said it does not impact on their routine are journalists who have studied the profession up to postgraduate level. The reason for this is that, even though they acknowledge that it has created opportunities for journalists but they disagree on the basis of ethics. Understandably, a journalist going online to get news is unethical based on the fact that most of the stories published by citizen journalism sites are not verified. It further rubs the profession of its investigative duty and makes a journalist lazy in the conduct of his duty.

**If yes, how does it impact on the daily work of journalists?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Category | Frequency |
| Data mining | 1 |
| News reporting | 4 |
| Sourcing of news stories  | 7 |
| Speed of reporting | 10 |

 Figure 4.2

 **Interpretation of chart**

From the response, a total of 10(45%) journalists said citizen journalism impacts most on their speed of reporting, followed by sourcing of news stories with the frequency of 7(31%). News reporting and data mining has the lowest frequency in the table with a total of 4(18%) and 1(4%) respectively.

**Analysis and discussion**

Based on the responses on the area of impact of citizen journalism in the daily job of journalists, speed of reporting has the highest frequency of 10(45%), followed by sourcing of news stories 6(27%), reporting of stories 4(18%) and data mining 1(4%). According to Niyomukiza (2013), “citizen journalism has been admired for its immediacy in reporting events and its help to report adequately”. The advent of citizen journalism has largely influenced the time it takes to report an event. This is because a journalist does not need to rush to the scene of any event to video or take pictures of what happened. A citizen journalist has already taken care of that and most times hands it over to the press free of charge or posts it online for journalists to source from. This response leads us back to the position of Nigeria in the global ranking of internet users and penetration (see Figure 1.1). With over sixty-seven million active internet users, more citizens are empowered to perform the role of journalists in the society. This finding is in line with Jurrat (2011) view that citizen journalism has become regular contributors to mainstream news, providing information exactly when it is needed. Alejandro (2010, p.15) puts forward the view that “the new equation for journalists is about doing a lot more with a lot less”. Citizen journalism has made work a lot easier for traditional journalists. The essence of reducing this work load is for the professional journalists to perform better in their service to the society. A clear example of how citizen journalism has increased the speed of reporting stories in the mainstream media is the July 7, 2005 London bombings. According to Alejandro (2010, p.14), “within six hours of the London bombings, the BBC received more than 1,000 photographs, 20 pieces of amateur video, 4,000 text messages and 20,000 emails”. This shows the extent at which citizen journalism has contributed its own quota to journalism as a profession.

Narrowing it down to the context of corruption, citizen journalism has made it difficult for brown envelope journalists to accept or request gratifications on an event or issue. With such number of video recordings and pictures, a professional journalist, despite the amount of gratification being offered, will not agree to suppress a story or change the course of the story because there are uncountable number of citizens who captured the event. This links us back to one the debates earlier discussed in the literature review of the journalists who argued that the magnitude of an event determines whether Brown envelope will impact on the objectivity. Reason being that the event is already out there in the public space and as such cannot report contrary to the truth.

**How do online citizen journalism sites impact on the editorial content and the business of news organisations in Nigeria?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Category | Frequency |
| Increase in credibility | 1 |
| Increase in objectivity | 5 |
| Increase in quality of reports | 9 |
| Decrease in advertising revenue | 3 |
| Decrease in audience/readers | 14 |
| Decrease in circulation | 4 |

 Figure 4.3

Interpretation of chart

The table reveals that online citizen journalism sites are impacting on the business of news organisations in Nigeria. Their impact is most felt in the decrease in audience with a total of 14(42%), followed by decrease in circulation with a total of 4(12%) and decrease in advertising revenue 3(9%). On the positive side of the impact, increase in quality of reports ranked the highest with 9(27%), followed by increase in objectivity 3(9%) and increase in credibility 1(3%).

Analysis and discussion

Findings on how online citizen journalism sites impacts on the editorial content and business of news in Nigeria reveal that there is a consensus view on the fact that citizen journalism sites impact on the audience population of traditional press. With a total of 14(56%), the journalists surveyed unanimously agreed that citizen journalism decreases their audience/readers. This implies that the audience of traditional media has now been divided, with a considerable fraction of the population going to online citizen journalism sites. Alejandro (2010, p.5) argues that “news consumption today is not the same as the pre-satellite days when people waited for morning papers or sat down at an appointed time for the evening for the evening news on television”. A growing number of readers, viewers and listeners are going online now for their news. With a decrease in audience comes a decrease in circulation which subsequently influences advertising revenue. The large number of advertising on various online platforms today which previously belonged to traditional press are now being shared with citizen journalism sites which enjoy a greater percentage of the divide.

This decrease in the audience and advertising revenue of mainstream media has inversely enriched major bloggers in Nigeria. A clear example is the 34 year old female Nigerian Blogger who acquired a car of 24 million Naira (USD 154,000/ GBP 85,000) in addition to two other expensive cars in her garage (see <http://lindaikeji.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/yay-finally-bought-my-brand-new-2014.html?m=1>). The Blog as a whole is worth $1.2 million dollars and attracts a daily traffic of 46,200 visitors (Startscrop, 2012). What this means in the context of this particular finding is that most of the advertising revenue of the traditional press is going to online citizen journalists sites. Most mainstream media are now establishing their presence online to retain their audience and revenue. But this is not yielding the desired result because the audience prefers the open-style participatory nature of citizen journalism sites.

Going further to the issue of Brown envelope journalism, the implication of this finding is that the more the revenue base decrease, the more likely it is that they will involve in Brown envelope journalism. This finding supports the argument by Oshunkey (2011, p.12) as earlier discussed in the literature review that “poverty is the root cause of the brown envelope journalism and that there is nexus between poverty and corruption”. A critical look at this argument will reveal that the poverty meant by Oshunkey (2011) does not only include journalists but also media establishment. With little income coming into the establishment, the management will not have enough funds to pay journalists their monthly allowance and such will allow them to use their “identity cards as meal tickets” (Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe 2012, p.518) as earlier stated. And that accounts for the inability of media professionals to curb the menace of corruption.

However it is pertinent to point out that the emergence of citizen journalism, although it poses this challenge to mainstream media, brings about a healthy competition in the media sector. Mainstream journalists are working hard like never before to meet up with the challenges of breaking news before citizen journalism platforms and to provide reliable information to the public. Traditional journalists are leveraging on the fact that their stories have authority more than those on online citizen journalism platforms because they remain the professionals in the field. As such, they tend to avoid any form of negative influence that can strain their authority in the information sector.

Secondly, the survey reveals that online citizen journalism sites impact positively on the quality of their reports with a frequency of 9(27%) making it the second on the chart. The implication of this finding is that contrary to the view held by Keen (2007), citizen journalism has created opportunities for the professional journalism and their content to be better. Citizen journalism content has improved the quality the quality of reports in the mainstream media. With on the spot pictures and videos of events, citizen journalists have added to the value of contents disseminated by the traditional press. Although it could be argued that those images and videos were made by amateur and as such do not add quality to reports. But how could the media have the picture/video of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the world trade centre, showing as the second plane crashed into another side of the building and the subsequently the collapse of the building? How could the media have reported the war in Syria if not through citizen journalists and the social media? The fact of the matter is that those citizen journalism accounts of the event gave the press images and videos to use for their reports, without which the stories would have been dull.

**Does citizen journalism engender civic engagement in the discourse for good governance and accountability in Nigeria?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Category | Frequency |
| Strongly agree | 15 |
| Agree | 11 |
| Undecided | 3 |
| Disagree | 4 |
| Strongly disagree | 0 |
| Total | 33 |

 Figure 4.4

 Interpretation of chart

From the table above, journalists who strongly agree with the question has a total frequency of 15(45%), followed by strongly agree with 11(33%) and 3(9%) undecided, while those who disagreed has a total of 4(12%).

Analysis and discussion

A total of 15(45%) out of 33 journalists strongly agree that citizen journalism engenders civic engagement in the discourse for good governance and accountability in Nigeria. Technology has offered Nigerians a more inclusive public sphere to actively partake in discussions in the society. Various citizen journalism sites have become avenues for political participation and debates on the activities of those in political offices. A clear example of is the video of the Governor of Edo state who verbally abused a widow during one of his inspection tour in the state. Despite frantic efforts by the Governor’s personal assistants to make sure no camera covered it, a citizen journalists videoed it and made it viral. The issue occupied the front burner of debates in every social media platform until it was given coverage by the mainstream press. The level of discuss on the issue mounted pressure on the Governor who apologised and offered the widow a job and in addition donated a sum of two million naira (GBP 7,000) to her. What this means is that citizen journalism has provided a platform for Nigerians to have a voice in the society and influence those in political offices. What this means in the context of my argument is that with such level of citizen engagement, the discussions in the public sphere are more critical and result oriented. Such active participation makes it difficult for brown envelope journalists to influence reporting of some vital issues in the society.

**Does Citizen Journalism impact on the practice of Brown envelope journalism in Nigeria?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| CATEGORY | Yes | No | May be |
| **Gender** |
| Male | 16 | 2 | 0 |
| Female | 9 | 4 | 2 |
|  **Total** | **25** | **6** | **2** |
| **Age range** |
| 18 – 30 years | 9  | 0 | 1 |
| 31 – 43 years | 11 | 2 | 1 |
| 44 – 56 years | 2 | 0 | 0 |
|  57 – above | 3 | 4 | 0 |
|  **Total** | **25** | **6** | **2** |
| **Educational level** |
| O’level/WAEC/SSCE | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Diploma | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| B.sc/HND | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| Postgraduate | 13 | 1 | 0 |
|  **Total** | **25** | **6** | **2** |
| **Duration of practice** |
|  0 – 5 years | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 6 – 11 years | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 12 – 17 years | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| 18 – 23 years | 6 | 0 | 0 |
|  24 – above | 9 | 1 | 0 |
|  **Total** | **25** | **6** | **2** |
| **Work Sector** |
| Print (Newspaper) | 11 | 1 | 1 |
|  (Magazine) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
|  Broadcast (Radio) | 3 | 3 | 1 |
|  (Television) | 9 | 2 | 0 |
|  **Total** | 25 | 6 | 2 |

Figure 4.5.1 Figure 4.5.2

Figure 4.5.3 Figure 4.5.4

 Figure 4.5.5

Figure 4.5.6

Interpretation of chart

From the responses, a total of 25(75%) journalists said that citizen journalism impacts on the practice of brown envelope journalism in Nigeria, while 6(18%) did not agree that citizen journalism has any impact on their job (see figure 4.5.6). On the other hand, 2(6%) said may be it does. 16(64%) out of the 25 journalists who said yes were male, while the remaining 9(36%) were female. In terms of Age of the respondents who said yes, 9(36%) were aged 18-30, 11(44%) 31-43, 2(6%) 44-56 and 2(6%) were aged from 57 and above. 2(8%) out of those who said yes have secondary school leaving certificates, 1(4%) have diploma’s in journalism, 9(36%) studied journalism at B.sc level while the remaining 13(52%) studied journalism at the postgraduate level. Looking at the journalists who said no, 2(33%) out of the six were male while 4(16%) were female. Journalists aged between 31-43 all admitted that it affects their work, followed by those aged between 18 and 30. 2(33%) out of the six have been in practice for 12-17 years, while 1(16%) have practiced for 6-11 years. 3(50%) out of six journalists who said no works in radio stations, while 2(33%) works in television stations and 1(16%) out of the six works in newspaper.

Analysis and discussion

In terms of its impact on brown envelope journalism, the findings reveal that good number of journalists said that citizen journalism impacts on the practice of brown envelope journalism in Nigeria with a total of 25(75%) out 33. The reason for this remarkable response is based on the fact that journalists are not the only ones with a recording device neither are they the only ones who can write and publish. In line with this, Nwabueze (2015) in his interview with the author posits that “citizen journalists are everywhere; in fact, your next door neighbour could be a journalist”. This leads us to the Second point. A citizen journalist is anyone with a smart phone; this makes it almost impossible to offer gratification to everyone with a smart phone in order not to report a story. Brown envelope will only thrive when there are few journalists to bribe with gifts, but today everyone with an internet enabled gadget has become a journalist and can disseminate news and information faster than a professional journalist. Another reason is that journalists no longer go out on assignments like they used to. This is unlike the old days, when journalists move around under harsh weather conditions in search of news. Today, most journalists monitor their beats through citizen journalism sites to get the latest updates on particular issue. Although it can be argued that this is unethical but the point is that it reduces their exposure to chances of demanding or accepting gratifications to report a story. What this implies is that there are fewer chances for the journalists to be offered a ride home from the scourging sun or given brown envelopes for lunch and so on in order to influence a particular issue.

Similarly, 16(64%) out of the 25 who said citizen journalism impacts on brown envelope journalism were male while the remaining 9(36%) were female. The significance of this margin between both genders goes beyond the fact that there are more male journalists than female in Nigeria (as earlier mentioned). In a typical African setting, a man bears the responsibility of providing for the family. The implication of this is that it makes the male journalists more prone to brown envelope journalism more than the female journalists. The pressure to meet with the financial responsibilities of his family and the country’s economy will make a man journalist cross ethical boundaries in order to provide for his family. Governments in most Africa countries do not offer benefits such as free education up to some certain stage, loan for study, child support and so on unlike what is applicable in most western countries. Most parents struggle to pay for their children’s school fees and other demands of family life and journalists are just like any other individual in the society. In fact, Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe (2012, p.516) argues that “a journalist does not exist in isolation but in the society.hence, he is faced with the challenges in that particular society”. This leads us to the argument for and against brown envelope journalism as discussed earlier where some journalists argue that they need an indigenous code of ethics that captures the experiences they pass through. Omanga (2015) refers to this as “Afriethics”. However, the point of this analysis is not to justify the unethical practice of brown envelope journalism but explain the factors responsible for the margin between in the responses by the male and female journalists.

Furthermore, 9(36%) of the journalists who said that citizen journalism impacts on brown envelope journalism have working for 24 years and above. Their response is significant because they are those who built the strong reputation upon which journalism thrives in Nigeria today, starting in the days of the *Punch Newspaper, Tell Magazine, Newswatch* and other newspapers that courageously brought independence and subsequently democracy to Nigeria. This group strongly argues against brown envelope journalism because it impacts on the credibility and reputation of the profession which the founding fathers of the profession earned over the years.

 **If yes, what ways does it impact the practice?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Category | Frequency |
| Free flow of information | 8 |
| Story telling | 6 |
| Exposes the other side of stories | 17 |
| Others | 1 |

 Figure 4.6

From the table above, 17(68%) of the journalists surveyed said that citizen journalism impacts on brown envelope journalism by exposing the other side of stories. Citizen journalism gives balance to stories. The mainstream media most of the time picks an angle to a story that they will report from, which may not be a true representation of the event. But with several citizen journalism platforms, people can get a different perspective of the issue. Stories are now being told differently but this time, more objectively. 6(24%) of the journalists agreed that the emergence of citizen journalism has influenced how issues are reported in the mainstream media, while 8(32%) says the citizen journalism creates a free flow of information and as such impacts on brown envelope journalism in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the findings from the interviews present a more detailed interpretation of the results. In terms of the impact of citizen journalism on the daily work of journalists, Nwabueze (2015) in his interview with the author argues that;

“Citizen Journalism mounts what could be described as positive pressure on the work of journalists in Nigeria.in fact, mainstream journalists are competing with citizen journalists and this competition leads to an increase in the quality of news reported by the traditional journalists. Journalists also sources information from Blogs.most stories especially the breaking news in Nigeria break first in Blogs and online platform before featuring on the mainstream media”. Chinenye Nwabueze, PhD. Head, Department of Mass Communication. Anambra State University, South-East Nigeria.

What this means is that the emergence of citizen journalists creates a healthy competition between them and the professional journalists. This competition includes the struggle for audience, who breaks news first and who has credibility more than the other. The implication of this healthy competition is that they both strive to be at their best and thus, limiting the chances of brown envelope journalism in the mainstream media. What accounts for the decrease in the mainstream media audience is the fact that people depend on online citizen journalism platforms to get the latest information on what that is happening in the country. When news breaks on online platforms, it takes some time before featuring on mainstream media platforms. The reason for this is because of the time it takes the mainstream media to verify an information before publishing it. What this means in the context of my argument is that since news break first on online platforms before featuring on the mainstream press, the traditional journalists will no longer demand or accept gratifications to change the angle or to suppress a story.

Another important impact of citizen journalism on the daily routine of journalists as revealed by the findings is that it gives lead to journalists in the mainstream media. Nwabueze (2015) in his interview with the author goes further to say that “whenever citizen journalists break news, you will find journalists trying to follow up those stories and publish it after they have verified it. You will find such stories making headlines in both print and broadcast”. The findings also revealed that citizen journalism engenders civic engagement by adding checks and balances in the society in terms of giving people the voice to contribute to discussions in the public sphere. Citizen journalism sets the agenda for discussion in the public sphere based on the latest development in the society. In terms of the impact citizen journalism on brown envelope journalism in Nigeria, Ezeugwu (2015) in his interview with the author argues that “citizen Journalism impacts on brown envelope journalism today because people help themselves to publish whatever they want to publish, spread propaganda and maintain their own image online by themselves. Why pay a journalist to publish your propaganda when you can actually do it yourself?” Since this is the case, people no longer need to bribe journalists to publish information whether the information is true or false.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results from this study provide confirmatory evidence that citizen journalism impacts positively on mainstream journalism in Nigeria. This impact has curbed the unethical practice of brown envelope journalism which poses a threat to the image of the profession and ability of journalists to perform their duties objectively. The consensus view among the journalists surveyed reveals that the entry of citizen journalists into the information scene has blocked the avenues through which brown envelope journalists request or accepts gratifications to perform their duty. The major factor responsible for this rests on the fact that citizen journalism has provided alternative platforms for people to know what is happening in the society. What this means is that citizen journalism has created multitude of exits through which news worthy events are disseminated to the people unlike the single exit which existed before. The single gate exit enabled the mainstream media to gate-keep what comes out of the gate. Since this was the case, information coming out of that gate was no longer based on truth but on gratification. But with the multiple exits provided by citizen journalism, brown envelope journalists can no longer hide certain information from the people because it is already out there in Blogs and other citizen journalism sites.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the daily routine of journalists in Nigeria is no longer the same since the emergence of citizen journalism. A good number of journalists surveyed said that the impact of citizen journalism is most felt on the speed of their reporting. The traditional style of news gathering and dissemination has changed to accommodate the presence of citizen journalists in the field. Journalists no longer need to be physically present to report a story as soon as it happens. All they need to do is to engage the reports of accidental journalists who happen to be at the scene to make up their stories. In fact, the findings reveal that journalists have shifted their investigative duty to citizen journalists due to the extra cost such investigations incur on their already stressed resources. This accounts for the fact that most breaking news (as revealed from the finding) comes from citizen journalism sites before featuring in the pages of newspapers or heard over the radio and television.

Again, the findings reveal that online citizen journalism sites are impacting on the editorial content and business of news organisations in Nigeria. This impact is felt most on the drop in the audience of population of mainstream media. The implication of this is that people will no longer buy newspapers like they used to or advertise like they used to. In fact, evidences discussed in the work reveals that citizen journalism sites and blogs are not just taking over mainstream media audience but also their revenue base. The study also reveals that the quality of mainstream media has improved since the emergence of citizen journalists.

The public sphere in Nigeria has changed into a more inclusive and participatory space where citizens engage in discus that has influenced government policies and improved accountability among the political office holders in Nigeria. Evidences show that the new public has unified the voices of over one hundred and seventy million people in order to monitor the activities of Politicians who have not been monitored for a long time. The extended effect of this is that even citizens in the country no longer involve themselves in acts of irregularity because it could be picked up on a recording device by anyone around.

This study does not validate the findings by Okoro and Onuoha (2013) which found that a good number of journalists do not perceive brown envelope as a bribe and as such does not affect the credibility of journalists or their contents. The results provides confirmatory evidence that journalists are increasingly becoming aware of the fact that brown envelope journalism is unethical and should be expunged from the media system. It also reveals that mainstream journalists recognise the fact that the emergence of citizen journalism in the media sector has blocked the avenues through which this unethical practice can thrive.

On the basis of the results, the work would argue that if participatory journalism is developing rather sluggishly in Nigeria as literature suggests (see Dare, 2010), it is because of the unwillingness of some media professionals to acknowledge the fact that citizen journalism is not a threat to the profession. Editors, News managers and older generation of journalists have refused to open up the news production process for citizen journalists to help them improve the profession. The country provides tremendous opportunities for citizen journalism to grow expand. A remarkable increase from its 19th position in the global ranking in 2005 to 8th position in 2014 shows that people are increasing getting themselves equipped to watch-dog the society and its leaders (including the media) to ensure all forms of corruption are removed from the country.

In summary, it is clear from the findings that citizen journalism and user generated is increasingly improving the practice of journalism in Nigeria and has helped to curb the unethical practice of brown envelope journalism. Its impact in the journalism process is reflected on the speed of reporting stories. The findings further reveal that the presences of online citizen journalism sites are fast taking over the audience of mainstream media and also their revenue. This challenge is a positive one because it will make the traditional journalists to expunge all unethical practice that is fast decreasing their image and credibility in the society. The study recommends that professional journalists should see the emergence of citizen journalism as an opportunity to expand and improve journalism sector just like other sectors have done. The banking sector, medical sector and so have all utilised the opportunity technology has offered them. The Automated Teller Machine (ATM/cash machine) has not replaced the role of cashiers in the bank, neither has computer and medical apps replaced the role of doctors in the hospitals.

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