**THE NIGERIAN PRESS AND ETHICS OF JOURNALISM PROFESSION**

**Abstract**

Journalism, like other professions, has direct impact on the citizenry and the society at large. Practitioners are expected to be guided by a code of conduct which members are expected to comply with strictly, and to be enforced by a body acceptable to all the stakeholders. However, journalism practice in Nigeria has raised a lot of questions as to the proprietary of referring to it as a profession. The loose definition of the criteria for membership has made the profession an all-comers-affair. Also, the absence of a prescribed qualifying test has made it difficult to moderate the standard of journalism practice in Nigeria. To restore credibility to the profession, the gap between school curricula and journalism practice must be bridged. A revisit to the existing code of conduct to explicitly state those who can practice journalism in Nigeria is necessary. Also, an acceptable remuneration package comparable with other professions must be worked out.

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

* 1. **Background of the study**

Truth is either nailed to a bleeding cross, or it dons a variegated cloak. That is the nexus between the ‘brown envelope’ syndrome and the cancer of corruption. Siyan Oyeweso (2009). Journalism practice wields such enormous powers and calls for the highest standards of ethics and commitment to truth. Ethics and truth in journalism have assumed global concern as scholars recognize that their basic constituents of objectivity, accuracy, fairness and balance have merely assumed mythical qualities as journalists battle to assign credibility to their news stories.
Tuchman (1978: 2) describes objectivity as `facility’ (a mechanism which allows the journalists to hide even from themselves the `constructed’ and `partial’ nature of their stories). This view seems to have garnered force as increasingly, scholars suggest that news even when professionally `selected’ is guided more by organizational needs than by professionalism. The journalist thus becomes `a walking paradox’ (Nordenstreng 1995) as one cannot fail to see that journalism is so full of contradictions that “we have to question even the most fundamental dogma of the profession – truth seeking – because the way it has been conceived and practiced in journalism serves as a deceptive filtering device preventing as much as helping the truth being discovered” (Nordenstreng 1995:117). News commercialization practise in Nigeria media industries adds to this contradiction and deception, creating a continuous dilemma for ethics and objectivity in journalism practice in Nigeria. In the same manner, in our noble profession of journalism, when a journalist gets hooked on the ‘brown envelope’ malaise, or a media house engages in ‘cheque book journalism,’ professionalism and ethics get crucified. While the definitions are wide, within the media, they have precise applications as defined by the Nigerian Union of Journalists’ Code of Ethics Clause 4 of the Code says: “A journalist shall not accept bribes nor shall he/she allow other inducements to influence the performance of his/her professional duties.”
The Nigerian Guild of Editors concurs in Clause 7 of its Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists where it says emphatically that, “A journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribe, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish information.” It further states that “To determine payment for publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event.
TerjeS. Skjerdal of the Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication, Norway. In a research article titled, Research On Brown Envelope Journalism In The African Media, (African Communication Research Vol. 3, 2010) states: “The term ‘brown envelope journalism’ is applied to denote journalistic activity which involves transfer of various types of rewards from sources to the reporter” (p. 369).
He further identifies the “three characteristics” that are commonly involved in the disturbing phenomenon. One, it usually occurs at a very personal level; two, it involves a reasonable degree of confidentiality to succeed. Media are social institutions that expect to make a moral contribution to the society; therefore, there is need for the rules that will guide the journalism practice. Oso and Pate, (2011: 145) quoted Johnson saying media are potentially “great secular church” and a system of Evangelism for dispensing the darkness of ignorance, expelling error and establishing truth.” On the process of their duty journalists were criticized of been subjective and their role has been a topic of discussion. According to Briggs and Burke 2005 they said “journalists are not to be trusted” and they are “slanderous”. (Briggs and Burke, 2005). The reason behind this is that; the nature of ownership, the news media weather it is government owned media or private media, the employers are working under editorial control. Politicians who can afford to run a media house can dictate what goes into the pages of the newspaper (Dare, 2010: 2). Government owned media tries to protect the government interest where as private media protect the interest of owners, these leads to the violation of stipulated code of ethics. Like the saying goes „He who pays the piper dictates the tone‟. This research will examine the practice of the profession of journalism in Nigerian news media. Journalism is the trade technique or profession of reporting news for the public by various means. James Glen Stovall says “journalists meet many challenges in gathering, processing and distributing the news...” (Stovall, 2005: 18). Journalists are facing serious challenges in the process of their duty.Journalists are watchdog or gatekeepers of the society because they decide what news is and they make much important decision about what society says to itself. Been the gatekeepers of the society the profession is guided by journalism code of ethics to ensure journalists are doing their job within the context. Ethics in journalism, is the code of morals that journalist are supposed to uphold. These include a commitment to revealing the truth objectivity without being influenced by self-interest; maintaining the secrecy of sources and attributing what is said to the appropriate source (Ike, 2005: 74).Media has become as necessary as food and clothing. It has played significant role in strengthening the society. Media is considered as "mirror" of the modern society, in fact, it is the media which shapes our lives. Agenda setting describes a very powerful influence of the media, the ability to tell us what issues are important. McCombs and Shaw pointed out that; Agenda setting is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. Two basis assumptions underlie most research on agenda-setting: first, the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it. Second, media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. (McCombs & Shaw, 1972: 176).Walter Lippmann in his 1922 classic, Public Opinion, he noted that:“The news media are a primary source of those pictures in our heads about the larger world of public affairs, a world that for most citizens is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind.” The purpose of the media is to inform people about current, new affairs and to tell about the latest gossip and fashion. It tells about the people who are geographically divided. In other words, Media can contribute a lot to a society. It can change opinions because they have access to people and this gives it a lot of strength. This strength can either be used constructively by educating the people or it can be used destructively by misleading the innocent people, the most important use of media is to educate the people about the basic human rights. Media is a bridge between the governing bodies and general public. Considering this vital role of the media in the society, there is need for ethical issues. This research focus on ethical issues on Nigerian news media, before discussing the ethical issues and theories the research will give brief background about Nigeria as a nation and Nigerian media structure, the research also discusses about Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalist. That is, it is not usually done in the open. And three, it is an informal contract. This presupposes that there is a willing source who is ready to give ‘something’ to influence the processing of the information gathered by the reporter; and a reporter, willing or reluctant to take but who collects all the same for his/her personal use and the ‘deal’ is wrapped up in utmost confidentiality

* 1. **STATEMENT OF THE STUDY**

It is clearly stated in the ethics of journalism that journalists are not to receive any form of bribe whether white, blue, green or brown envelope which has become common phenomenon among Nigeria journalists.
Many journalists derive pleasure in collecting brown envelope which is sending a bad signal and making public loosing confidence in journalism activities.
This research will x-ray the position of the Punch newspaper as against the collection of brown envelope by its staff.

* 1. **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To know how the ethics of journalism are against the brown envelop.
2. To study why journalists receive brown envelope.
3. To highlight the implications of brown envelope on the image and objectivity of media house.

4. To know how welfare of journalists influence brown envelope.
5. To know that the media houses are doing to curtail brown envelop.
6. To unravel why Punch newspapers opt to publicly declared acceptance of gratification by its staff.

**1.4 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

The following research hypotheses were formulated by the researcher;

**H0:** brown envelope does not have any negative image on the objectivity of media house.

**H1:** brown envelope does have a negative image on the objectivity of media house.

**H0:** the welfare of journalists does not influence brown envelope

**H2:** the welfare of journalists does influence brown envelope

**1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. To what extent can gift be amount to brown envelope?
2. To what extent can brown envelope affect news objectivity?
3. Can poor welfare force journalists to accept brown envelope?
4. To what extent can media owner prevent their journalists from collecting bribe?
5. Is taking brown envelope a punishable offence?

6. To what extent can collection of brown envelope be eradicated among journalists?

**1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

With the selection of the Punch Newspaper as a case study, this project work has been limited because it will be difficult to contact all mass media houses in Nigeria. However, the demography of the journalists and management of the Punch Newspaper such as : age, sex, working experience, academic qualification will be considered before the distribution of questionnaires.

**1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Work like this will benefit a lot of people; few among the beneficiaries include but not limited to undergraduates and graduates of mass communication, advertisers and public relations.
It will as well benefit the media practitioners on what is expected of them in a company. It will serve as eyes opener to the management and journalists the need to uphold the ethics of the profession in order to sanitize the profession. In addition, this research work tries to provide satisfactory answers to some questions that are disturbing the mind of policy formulators, students and researcher. Moreover, policy formulators will benefit from this research work because they will be able to identify the usefulness of the ethics of journalism in their day to day assignment.

**1.8 LIMITATION OF STUDY**

Although this study has accomplished the purpose, which is set out to achieve, one of the very limitations is that the validity of the results or findings is depending on the honest of the respondents in providing the needed information. Due to constraints of time and money, it is difficult to carry out the research extensively. This led to the limiting of the scope.
Cognizance was also taken to the fact that the academic calendar was too short and academic workload was enormous, as a result of this, no time to run around for the work.

**1.9 Definition of the Terms**

**Press:** This is a collective name for media practitioners
**Ethics:** It is the principle or code of conduct that governs a particular association or group.

**Brown envelope:** It is aterms in the media sphere which means bribe given to journalists?

**Journalism:** This is a profession of or act of writing, editing and dissemination of information to the wider audience.
**Professionalism:** It is an act or way of standardizing a particular organization profession or organizing

**ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

This research work is organized in five chapters, for easy understanding, as follows. Chapter one is concern with the introduction, which consist of the (background of the study), statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, research hypotheses, significance of the study, scope of the study etc. Chapter two being the review of the related literature presents the theoretical framework, conceptual framework and other areas concerning the subject matter. Chapter three is a research methodology covers deals on the research design and methods adopted in the study. Chapter four concentrate on the data collection and analysis and presentation of finding. Chapter five gives summary, conclusion, and recommendations made of the study.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

**2.1 Introduction**

Journalism is increasingly becoming a difficult concept to define and delineate because of some contemporary developments having direct effects on its practice. The twenty - first century invention of the new media, especially the internet, has revolutionized and redefined the scope and practice of journalism all over the world. The emergence of the concept of ‘Citizen Journalism’ has compounded the problems of; first who is a journalist, second, what is journalism, third, what are the ethical requirements for the practice of journalism, fourth, what are the roles expectation of journalists and journalism profession in the society, as well as many other questions begging for attention and answers. However, regardless of the seemingly nebulous outlook of journalism in the contemporary time, journalism is concerned with the gathering, processing and dissemination of information regarded as important and critical to the operations of the different components of the society. According to Microsoft Encarta (2009), journalism refers to the process of “gathering, evaluating and distributing facts of current interest”. The professional norms of good journalism include, in particular, the following; truthfulness, objectivity, neutrality and detachment (kempf, 2007). The crisis of confidence that rocked journalism in the 19th Century gave birth to the development in the twentieth century, the concept of social responsibility theory which ascribed to the press some responsibilities in addition to the professional requirements and responsibilities of the profession.

**2.2 THEORETICAL REVIEW**

The work is anchored on two communication theories: the Social Responsibility Theory and the Development Media Theory. i. Social Responsibility Theory As a result of the shortcomings of the libertarian theory of the press, the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press set up in the United States of America in 1947 recommended that, apart from ensuring and preserving press freedom, the press is also expected to observe certain social standards and responsibilities in performing their professional functions. Thus, the emergence of social responsibility theory, according to Siebert et al (1956) as cited by Folarin (1998:28) was premised on six functions.

i. To serve the political system by making information, discussion and consideration of public affairs generally accessible.

ii. To inform the public to enable it to take self determined action.

iii. To protect the rights of the individual by acting as watchdog over the government.

iv. To serve the economic system, for instance the bringing together buyers and sellers through the medium of advertising.

v. To provide good entertainment, whatever “good” may mean in the culture at any point in time.

vi. To preserve financial autonomy in order not to become dependent on special interests and influences.

**Development Media Theory**

The theory seeks to prescribe the function of the press in developing nations of the world. The theory posits that the media/press must provide such platforms that can accelerate the development of their respective nations. The major thrusts of the theory according to McQuail (1987) as cited by Folarin (1998) are that:

i. Media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy.

ii. Freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society.

iii. Media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language(s).

iv. Media should give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries which are close geographically, culturally or politically. v. Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedoms in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.

vi. In the interest of development ends the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict, media operation, devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified. Thus, the above two theories present the media institution as central and germane to the existence of the society. And, for the media institution to perform its social responsibility and developmental functions, it must be peopled by professionals who understand and can uphold the central media tenets such as impartiality, truthfulness, balanced reporting, fairness to all parties, etc. It is only through this that the media institution/journalism can live up to the expectations of a profession.

**2.3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGERIAN PRESS**

The Nigerian Press predates the Nigerian nation with more than a hundred years. Whereas, the Nigerian nation came into existence in 1960, the year Nigeria obtained independence; what metamorphosed into the Nigerian Press started in 1859. History has it that, the first newspaper to be established in Nigeria, Iwe Irohin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba; hit the newsstands on December 3, 1859. Although, presses for the production of religious pamphlets, tracks, posters, etc, had been established in Calabar in 1846 and in Abeokuta in 1854 by the Presbyterian Church and the Christian Mission Society (CMS) respectively, newspapering did not begin until 1859 when what could be regarded as the first newspaper to be published in Nigeria was published. Although, the establishment of Iwe Iroyin by the Missionaries, according to Coker (1968), while citing one of the letters of Rev. Henry Townsend to London; was “to get the people to read to beget the habit of seeking information by reading”; it is imperative to state that, the immense role of journalism as well as the realization of the potentials of journalism as a potent instrument in accomplishing their mission works, especially the successes journalism recorded in other British Colonies in mobilizing the people to support their programmes and accomplishing their goals, precipitated the establishment of the first and subsequent newspapers in Nigeria in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Thus, the desire of the British Missionaries as well as the British humanitarian movements, at the time to succeed in their operations in Nigeria and other parts of Africa led to the establishment of newspapers in their Colonies across Africa. According to Omu (2008:6): The prevailing situation evidently made a strong impression on British Missionaries going to Africa and the emphasis which the humanitarians placed upon pamphlets and newspaper publicity and propaganda elevated the printing press into an important engine of missionary enterprise. It is not surprising therefore, that printing press proliferated in West Africa during the first half of the nineteenth century. However, it must be stated that the mission of the newspaper, according to Ekpu (1996): was to evangelize the natives through Western education and to champion the issues that affected them such as the abolition of slave trade and the improvement of the welfare of the Egbas.

**2.4 JOURNALISM AS A PROFESSION**

A profession, according to the Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary, refers to “a type of job that needs special training or skill, especially one that needs a high level of education”. A profession is conceptually referred to as that occupation that requires an extensive education or specialized training. According to Odunewu (2000:3), a profession is “an occupation requiring advanced education and training, involving intellectual skills as in medicine, law, pharmacy, engineering, etcetera”. However, practitioners of these professions are referred to as professionals. Odunewu (2000) highlighted some of the criteria by which professionals are judged. Some of which include: Specialized educational preparation Dedication to public’s welfare A distinct body of knowledge An enforceable code of conduct, that is, a shared body of values and standards, and Individual accountability From the above, it could be deduced that, for Journalists to live up to their expectations in the society and to acquire appropriate knowledge and skills to perform those functions as prescribed by the constitution of the land, they must be properly “schooled” in the art and science of journalism. The process of detecting news, gathering news, sorting news, processing news and eventual dissemination of news require both education and technical skills. Also, it is instructive to point out that, Journalists (Press) do not operate or function in a vacuum; the society ascribes to them certain social responsibilities. Neophytes or novices cannot adequately fill the gap. Only those who are sufficiently trained and grounded in journalism or mass communication can perform these functions satisfactorily. Thus, journalism, like other disciplines such as law, medicine, engineering, etc could be described as a profession, especially when considering its impacts and role in the society. Odunewu (2000:5) submits that journalism is a profession because journalists perform critical functions in the society such that any “journalist that wants to excel must adhere to certain standards of behaviour also there are core values such as respect for truth, accuracy, independence, fairness, balance, which a journalist must uphold”.

**2.5 JOURNALISM ETHICS**

Ethics means morality or study of morality, ethics is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct, often addressing disputes of moral mixture. In other word, Ethics is the branch of philosophy that studies human actions in terms of being right or wrong, licit or illicit (Pate, 2013). According to Washington Ethical Society, ethics defines the elements essential to human wellbeing and proposes principles to be used as guidelines for generating an ethical culture. Ethics also refers to the specific values, standards, rules, and agreements people adopt for conducting their lives (WES, 2012). Linda Thornton (2012) defined ethics as fundamentally about acting beyond our own self-interests. Another definition says that ethics are rules of conduct or principles of morality that point us towards the right or best way to act in a situation (Dominick, 1998). Ethics may be seen as being concerned with that which holds society together or provide the stability and security essential to the living of human life (Brown, 2011: 9). Ethics is the analysis, evaluation and promotionof what constitutes correct conduct and virtuous character in light of the best available principles (Ward, 2013).The term „ethics comes from the Greek word „ethos‟ which means „character‟ or what a right-thinking person is or does in order to have a good character. It deals with choosing among the good or bad options that individual faces. It may see as being concerned with that which holds society or a profession together or provides stability and security essential to social or professional cohesion. It involves thinking about morality, moral problems and moral judgements. It deals with what obligation we owe or to responsibilities we have toward our brothers, and what we should do make the world better place than we find it (Black and Roberts, 2011: 2-5). In line with the above mentioned definition of ethics, some key ideas were deducted to shade more light about the concept of ethics. These ideas are: values, rights, duties, rules, and morality. Starting with values, values is an important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable. Values have major influence on a person‟s behaviour and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations. Values has four influential sources; parents, peer groups, role models and societal institutions. Rights are conforming with or conformable to justice, law, or morality. Duties; are obligation to take specific actions. Rules; are guidelines upon which an individual acts and provide resolutions in the face of ethical dilemmas. Relationship; are connections of one individuals to another in a web of mutuality. While morality; is a beliefs or ideas about what is right and wrong and about how people should behave. All these aspect – values, rights, duties, rules, relationship and morality has interconnection and when talking about ethics, these aspects are in front line.

**2.6 ETHICAL DILEMMA OF JOURNALISM**

Ethical theory serves as the foundation for ethical solutions to the difficult situations people encounter in life. In fact, for centuries, philosophers have come up with theoretical ways of telling right from wrong and for giving guidelines about how to live and act ethically. There are different theories of ethics provided by different scholars. The most popular ones are provided by Merrill, almost all the ethical theories can be placed under two main categories i.e. pragmatic and humanistic. Pragmatic ethics, Emphasis is on achieving success, on reaching a goal potentially, with relatively little concern for how that success is achieved. (Merrill, 2004: 19-20) consider this a Machiavellian but pragmatic morality in which end justified the means. The idea is that the job of journalist is to provide as truthful account as possible and that the end may justify the means. Humanistic ethics, Emphasis is on doing what's best for society. Humanistic ethics, which overwhelmingly dominate ethical theory, are more obviously unselfish. The goals of ethics here are virtue and social improvement rather than personal success. Merrill 1997 explains this category of ethics is focused on either self-improvement of the journalist or on a concern for others, particularly sources and audience. This can be categorizing into three phases – deontological, teleological and personalist ethics.

**2.7 CODE OF ETHICS FOR NIGERIAN JOURNALISTS**

 A journalistic code of ethics refers to a set of principles of professional conduct that are adopted and guarded by journalists themselves (McQuail, 2005: 173). Nigerian journalists with approval of Nigerian Press Organization and Nigerian Press Councilcame up with new ethical code of journalism in 1996. The council claimed that the old code of ethics was deficient in many vital areas. The new code was adopted and ratified. The new codes are fifteen ranging from editorial independence to press freedom and responsibility. (NPO: 1996).The most important part of this code is an editorial independence; the code says decision concerning the content of news should be responsibility of professional journalist. Accuracy and fairness is also another important angle of the code. Public has a right to know. Factual accurate, balanced and fair reporting is the ultimate objective of good journalism and the basis of earning public trust and confidence. A journalist should refrain from publishing inaccurate and misleading information. Where such information has been inadvertently published, prompt correction should be made. A journalist must hold the right of reply as a cardinal rule of practice. In the course of his duties, a journalist should strive to separate facts from conjecture and comment. Decency is in the front of Nigerian code of ethics, the code of ethics emphasizes that; journalist should dress and comport himself in a manner that conforms to public taste. A journalist should refrain from using offensive, abusive, or vulgar language. A journalist should not present lurid details, either in words or picture, of violence, sexual acts, abhorrent or horrid scenes. In cases involved in personal grief or shock, enquiries should be carried out and approaches made with sympathy and discretion. Unless itis in the furtherance of the public‟s right to know, a journalist should generally avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime.Last but not the list, the code made clarification about discrimination; journalist should refrain from making pejorative reference to a person‟s ethnic group, religion, sex, or to any physical or mental illness or handicap. The other sectors that the code looks into include: reward and gratification, violence, children and minors, public interest, plagiarism among others. Nigerian code of ethics was derived from international code even though there are some differences, but share most common element including the principles of truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness and public accountability as these apply to the acquisition of newsworthy information and its subsequent dissemination to the public. Some journalistic Codes of Ethics, notably the European ones, also include a concern with discriminatory references in news based on race, religion, sexual orientation and physical or mental disabilities. In nutshell, code of ethics for Nigerian journalists is more or less similar with the code in UK and the USA.

**MEDIA ETHICS AND JOURNALISM PRACTICE**

Ethics is seen as a branch of knowledge which is concerned with the standards of good or bad conduct in society, using societal norms as a basis for the evaluation of human conduct or behavior. This indicates that ethics applies to all spheres of life and profession in the society. Every profession has its ethics. The class of ethics that governs mass media practice is called media ethics. According to Prasad (2008, p.33), “media ethics is the subdivision of applied ethics dealing with the specific ethical principles and standards of media, including broadcast media, film, theatre, the arts, print media and the Internet. The field covers many varied and highly controversial topics, ranging from war journalism to advertising.” It must however be pointed out that there are many classes of media ethics, viz: media ethics relating to: journalism, entertainment, democracy, media economics, public officials and culture (Wikipedia, 2011). Of all the areas of media ethics, journalistic ethics is one of the most well-defined. Two reasons can be advanced for this. First, it is frequently taught in higher institutions offering communication and journalism studies. Secondly, journalism is the nucleus of mass media practice. Journalistic ethics are the codes of behaviour or moral principles that guide the activities of journalists in any given situation. They are therefore the bases for the judgement of the rightness or otherwise of the action or behaviour of the journalist. They are often encapsulated in journalism codes of practice. Media ethics mainly revolves around truthfulness, accuracy, fairness, objectivity and editorial independence (BBC, 2010). Other topics covered by journalism ethics include news manipulation, truth and values, truth and fantasy, truth and public interest, privacy, taste and conflict with the law. In this case, the equitable maxim, where equities are equal, the law prevails, is instructive – meaning where there is a conflict between media ethics and the law, the law takes pre-eminence. The depiction of violence and sex, the presence of foul/strong language, product placement, stereotypes, taste and taboos constitute the concern of ethics of the entertainment media. Because of the questions of values in artists and entertainment, ethics becomes imperative since these two aspects (values and arts) usually come in conflict with each other. From the above discourse, it is obvious that both media laws and media ethics constitute a kind of watch-dog to journalism practice. While media laws are rules made outside the media circle, ethics is the objective moral principle, which forms the basis of guidelines for, and regulating, the conduct of journalists in their profession. Unfortunately in Nigeria, contemporary socio-economic and political trends seem to contradict the above function of media laws and ethics. It therefore becomes necessary to critically examine the extent to which mass media laws and ethics have influenced journalism practice in Nigeria.

**2.7 NIGERIAN PRESS AND THE QUEST FOR PROFESSIONALISM**

The institutional position of the press as the watchdog of the society, has found expression in section 22 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which states explicitly “The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people”. The chapter referred to is chapter 11, which is entitled “Fundamental objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy”, covering sections 13-14 of the constitution, and outlining the fundamental obligations of the government and the people of Nigeria, as well as the political, economic, social, educational, environmental and cultural foreign policy thrust of the country. To give impetus to the above, section 39 of the same 1999 Constitution, entitled “Right to freedom of expression and the press”, declares as follow: 1. Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference

2. Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) of this section; every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions, provided that no person, other than the government of the federation or of a state or any other person or body authorized by the president on the fulfillment of conditions laid down by an Act of the National Assembly, shall own, establish or operate a television or wireless broadcasting station for any purpose whatsoever. Following the above constitutional provision, it is quite glaring that the 1999 Constitution, is in support of Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states expressly that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The right includes freedom to hold opinion without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regard less of frontiers”. But the extent of the abuse of these constitutional provisions by a section of the Nigerian press has not only necessitated this research, but it has also made the society and others to call for the adherence to professionalism of journalism. In spite of the many laudable roles played by the media, and are still playing, there are still some dark sides to it. Agbese (2000:3), in carpeting the Nigerian press, notes as follow: They do not correctly mirror the society. They exaggerate. They sensationalize. They are unpatriotic. They pander to ethnic, sectional and market forces. They ignore the wider national interest in pursuit of narrow and selfish interests that do not promote national unity and cohesion. They over emphasize the negative and ignore or at best down play the positive achievements in our national life. Agbese goes further to assert that certain section of the press has shown a tendency towards the negative approach capable of wrecking this country; he laments the negative approach adopted by some Nigerian Journalists, who indulge in vicious, and sensational journalism, unmindful of that fact that by their actions, the prestige and stability of the country, is to that extent affected, possibly with unpredictable grave consequences for the country and the wellbeing of the citizens. He argues further that Nigerian journalists are not to lose much credibility, and become a laughing stock in the eyes of others; they must change their unprofessional conduct and put an end to ruinous journalism in favour of something more constructive. This is exactly the state of the government owned press in Nigeria where meaningful development issues are abandoned for frivolous issues simply because it concerns the chief executive of the state. This scenario became associated with the Ondo State Broadcasting Corporation (OSBC) Akure during the government of the ousted governor, Olusegun Agagu. During the illegal stay of Olusegun Agagu in government house Akure, the government owned radio and television stations were engaged in open air insult and the use of derogatory words against the opposition parties in the state. Sambe (2005:185) corroborates the above by arguing that in most cases, absolute falsehood and half-truths are reported as facts, a practice that has already degenerated to such a level that some readers take news stories from the Nigerian press, with a pinch of salt. This view is equally supported by Oso (1997:14), Yussuf (2000:46), Ekpu (1993:19) and Jibo (2000:8). But how did the Nigerian press come to this sorry pass that the laws and ethics of the profession seem to have been thrown overboard? The Nigerian press, especially the pre-independent press, was known to be virile, vibrant and alive to its responsibilities. Even with the average level of education which journalists had then, they were able to conduct themselves properly.

 **CHAPTER THREE**

 **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

* 1. **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The researcher used survey design in building up this project work the choice of this research design was considered appropriate because of its advantages of identifying attributes of a large population from a group of individuals. The design was suitable for the study as the study the Nigerian press and ethics of journalism profession.

* 1. **SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION**

Data were collected from two main sources namely:

(i)Primary source and

(ii)Secondary source

**Primary source:**

These are materials of statistical investigation which were collected by the research for a particular purpose. They can be obtained through a survey, observation questionnaire or as experiment, the researcher has adopted the questionnaire method for this study.

**Secondary source:**

These are data from textbook Journal handset etc. they arise as byproducts of the same other purposes. Example administration, various other unpublished works and write ups were also used.

* 1. **POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

Population of a study is a group of persons or aggregate items, things the researcher is interested in getting information on the study the Nigerian press and ethics of journalism profession. 200 staffs of the Nigerian press council and the Nigerian union of journalist Abuja was randomly selected as the population of the study.

* 1. **Sample and sampling procedure**

Sample is the set people or items which constitute part of a given population sampling. Due to large size of the target population, the researcher used the Taro Yamani formula to arrive at the sample population of the study.

n= N

 1+N(e)2

n= 200

1+200(0.05)2

= 200

1+200(0.0025)

= 200 200

1+0.5 = 1.5 = 133.

**3.5 Instrument for data collection**

The major research instrument used is the questionnaires. This was appropriately moderated. The receptionists were administered with the questionnaires to complete, with or without disclosing their identities. The questionnaire was designed to obtain sufficient and relevant information from the respondents. The primary data contained information extracted from the questionnaires in which the respondents were required to give specific answer to a question by ticking in front of an appropriate answer and administered the same on staff of the organizations

**Validation of the research instrument**

The questionnaire used as the research instrument was subjected to face its validation. This research instrument (questionnaire) adopted was adequately checked and validated by the supervisor his contributions and corrections were included into the final draft of the research instrument used.

* 1. **Method of data analysis**

The data collected was not an end in itself but it served as a means to an end. The end being the use of the required data to understand the various situations, it is with a view to making valuable recommendations and contributions. To this end, the data collected has to be analysis for any meaningful interpretation to come out with some results. It is for this reason that the following methods were adopted in the research project for the analysis of the data collected. For a comprehensive analysis of data collected, emphasis were laid on the use of absolute numbers frequencies of responses and percentages. Answers to the research questions were provided through the comparison of the percentage of workers response to each statement in the questionnaire related to any specified question being considered.

Frequency in this study refers to the arrangement of responses in order of magnitude or occurrence while percentage refers to the arrangements of the responses in order of their proportion.

The simple percentage method is believed to be straight forward easy to interpret and understand method.

The researcher therefore choose the simple percentage as the method to use.

The formula for percentage is shown as.

% = f/N x 100/1

where f = frequency of respondents response

N = Total Number of response of the sample

100 = Consistency in the percentage of respondents for each item contained in questions.

 **CHAPTER FOUR**

 **PRESENTATION ANALYSIS INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

**4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Efforts will be made at this stage to present, analyze and interpret the data collected during the field survey. This presentation will be based on the responses from the completed questionnaires. The result of this exercise will be summarized in tabular forms for easy references and analysis. It will also show answers to questions relating to the research questions for this research study. The researcher employed simple percentage in the analysis.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected from the respondents were analyzed in tabular form with simple percentage for easy understanding.

A total of 133 (one hundred and thirty three) questionnaires were distributed and 133 questionnaires were returned.

Question 1

Gender distribution of the respondents.

 TABLE I

|  |
| --- |
| **Gender distribution of the respondents** |
|  |
| Response | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Male | 77 | 57.9 | 57.9 | 57.9 |
| Female | 56 | 42.1 | 42.1 | 100.0 |
| Total | 133 | 100.0 | 100.0 |  |

From the above table it shows that 57.9% of the respondents were male while 42.1% of the respondents were female.

**TEST OF HYPOTHESES ONE**

Brown envelope does not have any negative image on the objectivity of media house.

|  |
| --- |
| **brown envelope does not have any negative image on the objectivity of media house**  |
| Response  | Observed N | Expected N | Residual |
| Agreed | 40 | 33.3 | 6.8 |
| strongly agreed | 50 | 33.3 | 16.8 |
| Disagreed | 26 | 33.3 | -7.3 |
| strongly disagreed | 17 | 33.3 | -16.3 |
| Total | 133 |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Test Statistics** |
|  | brown envelope does not have any negative image on the objectivity of media house |
| Chi-Square | 19.331a |
| Df | 3 |
| Asymp. Sig. | .000 |
| a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 33.3. |

Decision rule:

There researcher therefore reject the null hypothesis that state that brown envelope does not have any negative image on the objectivity of media house as the calculated value of 19.331 is greater than the critical value of 7.82

Therefore the alternate hypothesis is accepted that state that brown envelope does have a negative image on the objectivity of media house.

**TEST OF HYPOTHESIS TWO**

The welfare of journalists does not influence brown envelope

**Table IV**

|  |
| --- |
| **the welfare of journalists does not influence brown envelope** |
| Response  | Observed N | Expected N | Residual |
| Agreed | 40 | 33.3 | 6.8 |
| strongly agreed | 50 | 33.3 | 16.8 |
| Disagreed | 26 | 33.3 | -7.3 |
| strongly disagreed | 17 | 33.3 | -16.3 |
| Total | 133 |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Test Statistics** |
|  | the welfare of journalists does not influence brown envelope  |
| Chi-Square | 19.331a |
| Df | 3 |
| Asymp. Sig. | .000 |
| a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 33.3. |

Decision rule:

There researcher therefore reject the null hypothesis that states that the welfare of journalists does not influence brown envelope as the calculated value of 28.211 is greater than the critical value of 5.99

Therefore the alternate hypothesis is accepted that states that the welfare of journalists does influence brown envelope.

 **CHAPTER FIVE**

 **SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

**5.1 INTRODUCTION**

It is pertinent to note that this research was aimed at examining the Nigerian press and ethics of journalism profession.

In the preceding chapter, the relevant data collected for this study were presented, critically analyzed and appropriate interpretation given. In this chapter, certain recommendations made which in the opinion of the researcher will be of benefits in addressing the challenges of Nigerian press and journalism profession.

**5.2 SUMMARY**

This study was meant to explore the Journalism ethics in Nigerian news media. discourse analysis was used as yardstick. Major finding of this research revealed that; Nigerian journalists are not obeyed the codes; journalists are expecting to be moral-crusaders but some time they are doing otherwise. As the research exposed the reason behind this, is the complex nature of the Nigerian state. Nigeria has over two hundred and fifty ethnic group and religions. Journalist from opposite part of the country opposed each other in their publications. According to Oso, the factors that can lead to unethical practices in Nigeria are: poor technical knowledge, conflict of interests, ownership pattern and control, pressure of the market, poor pay, weak professional regulation, and loose organizational policies and control (Oso, 2007: 150). These factors that lead to unethical in journalism field is not only experienced in Nigeria, the problem is similar in many third world countries. Ethics in the media is, at its essence, about duty. It comes with concepts of freedom and responsibility. It comprises a set of principles and rules determined by members of the profession, preferably in cooperation with public opinion, to allow most if not all of the media to perform a better service.Unethical conduct, immorality or negative values are devoid of ethical benchmarks. They are dangerous social evils. They can be damaging to the society, to the extent of leading to a failed state. And, like all forms of things that are wrong, the dangers are multifaceted and some of them concrete enough (Pate, 2013). In light with this, for any society that want to develop code of ethics need to be apply; media has a vital role to play on this. There is need for the other researchers to explore Nigerian code in broadcast media houses because it‟s the major source of information for Nigerians, not only exploring the problem but to provide possible solutions to salvage the situation.

**5.3 Conclusion**

Considering the composition and practice of journalism in Nigeria today vis-à-vis other climes, one would agree that the profession needs regurgitation, for it to compete favourably with their colleagues in other lands and other professions. A standard code of conduct that will encompass the major thrust of the profession, membership requirements, recruitment procedures, mode of practice, and how to discipline erring members should be put in place. According to Adaja, “… a redefinition of the Nigerian media interest, mission and vision, unconditionally shared and subscribed to by all its members, must as a matter of urgency, be carried out”. Also, “conscious and conscientious efforts must be made to professionalize journalism in Nigeria by adhering to the basic tenets and characteristics required of a profession”

**5.4 Recommendation**

Arising from the research findings, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations.

1. The Nigerian Government should stop unnecessary and undue interference in the media.
2. Unnecessary Censorship should be discouraged by the government and when it is inevitable, it is should be left for the media professionals to determine.
3. Objectivity and fairness should be the watch word of the Nigerian press in order to retain readership and even improve on their market share.
4. Under-funding is inimical to the operation of any newspaper organization and should therefore be avoided.
5. Journalism training institutions should increase the number of ethics-based courses in their curricula in order to inculcate the culture of media ethics in future media professionals. This would plausibly reduce instances of journalists’ non-adherence to media law and ethics.
6. Finally, the researcher wishes to state that this research may not be free from unavoidable human errors and therefore suggests that further research be carried out on this topic but with a different sample size and a wider coverage as the case study area.

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**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**INSTRUCTION**

Please tick or fill in where necessary as the case may be.

Section A

1. Gender of respondent

A male { }

B female { }

1. Age distribution of respondents
2. 15-20 { }
3. 21-30 { }
4. 31-40 { }
5. 41-50 { }
6. 51 and above { }
7. Marital status of respondents?
8. married [ ]
9. single [ ]
10. divorce [ ]
11. Educational qualification off respondents
12. SSCE/OND { }
13. HND/BSC { }
14. PGD/MSC { }
15. PHD { }

Others……………………………….

**SECTION B**

1. The welfare of journalists does influence brown envelope?
2. Agreed { }
3. Strongly agreed { }
4. Disagreed { }
5. Strongly disagreed { }
6. Brown envelope does have a negative image on the objectivity of media house?

(a) Agrees { }

(b) Strongly agreed { }

(c) Disagreed { }

(d) Strongly disagreed { }

1. Brown envelope does not have any negative image on the objectivity of media house?
2. Agreed { }
3. Strongly agreed { }
4. Disagreed { }
5. Strongly disagreed { }
6. The welfare of journalists does not influence brown envelope?
7. Agreed { }
8. Strongly agreed { }
9. Disagreed { }
10. Strongly disagreed { }
11. To what extent can gift be amount to brown envelope?
12. Agreed { }
13. Strongly agreed { }
14. Disagreed { }
15. Strongly disagreed { }
16. To what extent can brown envelope affect news objectivity?
17. Agreed { }
18. Strongly agreed { }
19. Disagreed { }
20. Strongly disagreed { }
21. Can poor welfare force journalists to accept brown envelope?
22. Agreed { }
23. Strongly agreed { }
24. Disagreed { }
25. Strongly disagreed { }
26. To what extent can media owner prevent their journalists from collecting bribe?
27. Agreed { }
28. Strongly agreed { }
29. Disagreed { }
30. Strongly disagreed { }
31. Is taking brown envelope a punishable offence?
32. Agreed { }
33. Strongly agreed { }
34. Disagreed { }
35. Strongly disagreed { }
36. To what extent can collection of brown envelope be eradicated among journalists?
37. Agreed { }
38. Strongly agreed { }
39. Disagreed { }
40. Strongly disagreed { }