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ADHERENCE TO JOURNALISM CODE OF ETHICS BY REPORTERS IN IMO STATE

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Abstract

Thus, the purpose of this research was to investigate whether or not journalists in Imo State followed the Journalism Code of Conduct. Theories of relativism and social responsibility served as the basis for the research. This study employed a mixed research methodology consisting of a survey and an in-depth interview. The study's population included 193 registered journalists based in Imo State for the quantitative portion, and 6 media professionals classified as stakeholders for the qualitative portion. This study's data collection methods included a questionnaire and an interview guide. The study found that journalists in Imo State have an above-average understanding of professional ethics, with a mean score of 5.4 on a 10-point scale. The research also found that journalists' adherence to ethical standards is inadequate. According to the findings, if we want the public to continue to respect the journalism profession, we need to ensure that journalists are held to high standards of ethics.

Keywords: Adherence, Ethics, Reporters, Journalism, code of conduct

Introduction

There has been much observation on whether or not the current state of journalism in Owerri can be considered an ethical one. Reporters in Owerri have been observed doing their tasks in a manner inconsistent with what is proper and true in the profession of journalism. The observation has it that a sizable proportion of reporters in Owerri fail to meet standards of impartiality, accuracy, fairness, or truth. What is considered good or bad, right or wrong, moral or immoral, varies from one culture to the next. There are standardized words covering the reference points or yard sticks for measuring ethical conducts in different organizations and bodies. It is no different in journalism, where a professional organization has established norms of conduct to help maintain the credibility of the field.

Reportorial ethics, consisting of the guiding principles or ethics that assure proper behaviour, are applicable to all trained and qualified reporters in their pursuit of the career of journalism. In a time when reputations are at stake, it's important to have a reputation for accuracy and reliability.

According to Nworgu (2010), the public has a lot of faith in the news media. That's why it's so important for every reporter and news outlet to reach the highest levels of professionalism and uphold the highest standards of ethics. Reporters, according to Chimaraoke (2013), must always act with a healthy regard for the public interest. Journalism relies on the public's trust, so every reporter should work hard to verify facts before publishing them.

Ogundu (2008) in Jamiu and Bolanle (2013) brought attention to the charges leveled against reporters for their unethical practices of lying, innuendo, and blatant falsification in violation of the ethical code of conduct, and for posing a threat to public order and national security with their media contents.

When reporters cross the line into unethical behaviour, it hurts the entire profession and the news companies they work for. When readers lose faith in a news organization, advertising revenue drops and the business collapses.

When serving the public, reporters must adhere to standards of impartiality, openness, truth, access to information, privacy, decency, public interest, and absence of plagiarism, as outlined by Potter (2006). Instead of being fair and impartial in their reporting, some Owerri reporters seem to lack objectivity.

The fact that both educated and untrained civilians work as journalists means that there is a wide range in the degree to which professional cases are accepted. According to Wilson (2011), the work of reporting on society's goings-on now incorporates both educated and uneducated, which inevitably leads to a mingling of the two. For this one reason, Wilson observed that the public's perception of journalism as a profession has deteriorated to the point where its very credibility is called into question. This, according to Boyd-Barret (2010) as cited in Onyebuchi, Obayi, and Anorue (2019), "could weaken the possibility of public recognition of the occupation as a profession or indeed as an occupation of high status."

According to Onyebuchi, et al. (2019, p. 2), "the practice of journalism has been moulded and reshaped, interpreted and misinterpreted, described and explained by many. It is a well-known fact that the quality of a person's writing is directly proportional to the amount of effort they put into it, and this is especially true when it comes to the field of journalism. In 2011, the Nigerian union of Journalists made it their mission to protect the integrity of the journalism profession in Nigeria. individuals who are considered "professionals" in this context are individuals who "know the ins and outs of the trade, have mastered the relevant arts, and are well versed in the standards of conduct that underpin the industry as a whole."

Statement of the Problem

Every industry and field has its own set of ethical requirements meant to safeguard business practices and the distribution of responsibilities. This perspective is unique to journalism and helps ensure that journalists stay on the right side of ethical boundaries. Reporters are then encouraged to take the code of ethics to heart as they work. From what we can tell, journalists who are supposed to serve as role models for the rest of society have shifted ground on the mentioned variables and are losing credibility, integrity, and respect among the right thinking members of society and clans. Reporters in the South East have been the target of protests and accusations of unethical behaviour in the past. Despite the existence of multiple oversight groups, reporters have persisted in violating the industry's code of ethics. This provides the basis for the study's evaluation of reporters' compliance with ethical standards in the media.

According to Alemoh (2011, p.305), "in Nigeria today, as it is elsewhere in the world, a violation of ethics of journalism has almost become the rule, rather than the exception" because to the long-standing issues seen among Imo-based reporters. That "the most disturbing phenomenon in the practice of journalism in Nigeria today is a non-observance of ethical practice by journalists" is confirmed by Sambe (2009, p.60) is a similar statement. As a result, media organizations in Nigeria are facing declining performance and credibility difficulties. Utor (2009, p.129) expresses regret at this situation, writing, "Nigerians are sick and tired of its lack of credibility." It's sad that this is now standard procedure for both mainstream and alternative news outlets. This unsettling trend prompted research into whether or not journalists in South East Nigeria follow the journalism code of ethics.

Research Questions

This research work was guided by the following questions.

1. To what extent are reporters in Imo State have knowledge of the Nigerian codes for professional journalism practice?
2. What is the e level adherence by reporters on the Nigerian code for professional journalism practice?
3. What are the possible factors that may influence Reporters towards non-adherence to ethical code by Reporters in Owerri?

Literature Review

Journalistic Ethics and Practice in Nigeria

It has been claimed by Agbaje that "practitioners included the commercially frustrated local elites driven out of business by unfair competition from European monopolists, the unemployed, those sacked from jobs in ailing European firms, drop outs from other professions, etc." For example: (Agbaje, 1992, p.99) The foregoing demonstrates that the profession's pioneers not only lacked the necessary educational background, but also did not recognize the work they were doing as a profession. The majority of the earliest practitioners entered the field because they needed

to make ends meet or get into a good school. Even after gaining independence in 1960, this view persisted. At the opening ceremony of the International Press Institute (IPI) in Lagos, presided over by President Nnamidi Azikwe in 1964, a student is said to have told Institute Director Tom Hopkins, You are just trying to make us feel good about being reporters as though we had an important career ahead of us, during an interview section between students and the director. Don't you see that we are the ones that got tossed? And people who have been shunned in their previous professions. For example: (Barton, 1979), The first reporters to attend journalism school certainly shared this view that reporting was not a legitimate vocation. Their output, as well as their attitude and sense of worth, suffered as a result of this. According to Okunna (1995), Nigerian society is plagued by a wide variety of ethical ills for which no effective treatments exist. She believes that consumerism is to blame for this issue in its entirety. Okunna (2015) listed the following practices under the category of materialism: bribery and corruption, kickback, 10%, kola, settlement, and the Nigerian factor.

Empirical Review

On Adherence to journalism code of conduct, Angese, Okoro, and Etumnu (2012) in their study titled Assessment of the Adherence to Journalism Code of Ethics by Journalists in Bayelsa State discovered that Journalists follow a code of ethics much like those in any other profession. There is cause for alarm at the alarming rate at which journalists are ignoring basic ethical standards. As a result, the journalists in Bayelsa State were analyzed to see how well they followed the journalistic code of ethics. The research was founded on the absolute truth and the concept of civic duty. The research strategy based on a survey. The 320 journalists in Bayelsa State who have officially registered as journalists served as the population for this census. The questionnaire was the tool for collecting information. In Bayelsa State, the study found that 45 percent of respondents have a good understanding of the journalistic code of ethics. It was also discovered that few journalists in Bayelsa State uphold the profession's ethical standards. Given that only 45% of journalists have a solid understanding of at least one journalistic ethical code, the researchers draw the conclusion that the issue of non-adherence will persist unless journalists are constantly reminded of and encouraged to follow these guidelines. Bayelsa State's journalists have a poor rate of adhering to journalistic ethical rules, thus it's important to urge them to do so. This will help the profession preserve its reputation in the eyes of the public

Asemah and Tsegyu, (2014) in their study entitled Examining Media Workers in Minna, Nigeria, the study looked into whether or not media professionals adhered to a set of ethical guidelines for the profession. Based on the social responsibility principle, which argues that the media have a duty to serve the public interest by disseminating important information, this research sought to determine the extent to which the media actually fulfill this mandate. 200 journalists in Minna, Nigeria who are members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) were surveyed using a questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The study found that journalists engaged in a number of unethical practices and recommended that the government, media owners, and media professional associations raise journalists' welfare packages while working to ensure that journalists adhere to journalistic codes so that the field can regain its credibility.

Ismail, Folarin, and Folarin (2019). In their study entitled Assessing Journalists' Adherence to Ethical Standards in Nigeria their article examined the theoretical foundations of journalistic ethics in light of recent criticisms of Nigerian journalists' purported lack of commitment to ethical practice. Experts are concerned that Nigerian journalists may soon be unable to perform their customary functions as a result of the proliferation of fake news and the budgetary restraints and economic downturns currently impacting the media industry. Instead, they risk becoming propagandists for falsehoods, half-truths, and outright fabrications, all in defiance of ethical norms, and they endanger the stability of states through their print and broadcast output. The researchers contextualized arguments presented in the theoretical literature on ethics and journalism ethics. According to their analysis, Nigerian journalists appear to be falling short of the standards set by their international counterparts. On the basis of their analysis, the writers propose remedies to the ethnic issues currently confronting Nigerian journalists.

Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this research is absolute theory and the philosophy of social responsibility.

The Absolutist Theory

The absolutist theory proposes the existence of a set of universal moral principles that can be used as a basis for guiding individuals across time, space, gender, and social status. It also establishes that a good deed, wherever it may be relocated in time, will continue to be a good deed. This indicates that something that is good at point A will always have the potential to be good at point B. ukozor (2015): "it is also based on the fact that a good deed should be correct everywhere in the world, at all times, and under all conditions. Ukozor (2015) cites Merrill (1974) who says, "the ethics of absolutists believe that there is one universal and eternal code that basically applies to everyone, in all ages, that changing opinions, traditions, and conditions make no significant differences to this absolute moral code."

"In the field of journalism, the professional who believes in this theory accepts in principle that there are absolute and universal Reportersic ethics which should guide the practicing journalist," Ukozor (2015, p. 17) wrote. A universal and ethical norm in journalism should be articulated from the perspective of reporters from all over the world. Truthfulness, fairness, play, correctness, balance, and objectivity are the ethical moral universals.

A reliable journalistic representative ensures strict adherence to the established ethics guidelines. So, journalism ethics will be the focus of this research.

Social Responsibility Theory

The research is grounded in the second framework of the social responsibility theory in order to provide guidance and clarity in terms of the reality of connectivity to related concepts. Angese, et al (2019) cited Tsegysu and Asemah's (2014, p.11) work, which traces its roots back to the Hutchins Commission of 1947 and rests on the premise that with freedom comes responsibility.

The media has a responsibility to the public and must fulfill key functions of mass communication. Nevertheless, the idea maintains that a free press is essential because it helps to scrutinize other social institutions and because it provides unbiased, reliable news reporting (Pepple & Acholonu, 2018; Nkwam-Uwaoma, Etumnu & Okoro, 2020). The media's responsibility to help build thriving, inventive communities is seen as social responsibility theory's crowning achievement.(2019) (Baran & Davis, as cited by Tsegysu & Asemah, 2014.). This idea argues why the media should be permitted to stay independent of government oversight on the condition that it provide certain public services in exchange.

These theories are important to this research because, according to absolutist theory, the media has an obligation to the public and must thus submit to the standards of professional journalism. On the other hand, the social responsibility paradigm requires reporters to act civilly, cautiously, and responsibly while they carry out their obligations. For the benefit of the profession as a whole, both the absoluteist theory and the social responsibility theory emphasize the importance of reporters adhering to a universal ethical code of behaviour.

Research Design

Journalists' adherence to ethical standards was investigated by a survey and in-depth interview for this study. When designing a survey, the approach you choose to collecting responses from respondents is crucial. It makes it easier to compute, analyze, and interpret data (Okalla, Etumnu, Anyanwu, Odionyenma & Akahieobi, 2022). while in-depth interviews are helpful if you need to know specifics about someone's thoughts and actions or want to go further into a new topic. In order to provide a more full picture of what happened and why, interviews are frequently utilized in conjunction with other data.

Meanwhile journalists in Imo State make up one of two populations in this research of journalistic ethics. There are 193 registered journalists in Imo State according to Imo state chapter of Nigerian Union of Journalist. This is according to Nigeria Union Of Journalist Imo State Chapter database.

Meanwhile, the researcher purposively selected ten participants for the interview discussion but six out of the ten responded effectively and these six are stakeholders in the practice of the media. The six participants were as thus: two Editors which represented the practicing journalists of two segments which are Government owned media and private owned media editors. The second two were also chosen to represent the retired journalists while two media owners/ managers were also selected. This, made the population of the qualitative study to be six in place of ten.

Data Presentation, Analysis And Discussion

Here, we looked at how questionnaire were used to collect quantitative data in the field, and how those results were presented, analysed, and discussed. Figures, frequencies, and simple percentages on a four-point Likert Table represented the data obtained in the field. The qualitative data was gathered through in-depth interviews, and the interviewees were given codes to use in identifying themselves during the course of the conversation.

Data Presentation and Analysis.

The data is extracted from the two parts of the questionnaire. Where part A, is regarded as the demographic data presentation while part B presented the variables of the research question which regarded as the psychographic data.

Demographic Data.

Questionnaire Distribution

Retrieval	Frequency	Percentage
Returned	188	97.4%
Unreturned	5	2.6%
Total	193	100%

With the return rate at 97.4% the questionnaire became valid to be used for the study.

Gender Identification

variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	107	56%
Female	79	44%
Total	188	100%

Age Variable	Frequency	Percentage
18-28	17	9%
29-38	32	17%
39-49	49	26%
50- Above	90	48%
Total	188	100%

Data Presentation

Part B.

Question 1: to what extent do journalist adhere to the ethical code of conduct?

Table 1: Journalist adherence to these codes of conduct.

VARIABLES	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	X	Decision rule
Editorial Independence	58 31%	48 26%	55 29%	27 44%	2.8	accept
Accuracy and fairness	126 67%	62 33%	0 0%	0 0%	3.6	accept
Privacy	130 69.2%	48 25.5%	6 3.2	4 2.1	3.6	accept
Privilege/ non-disclosure	180 95.7%	8 4.3%	0 0%	0 0%	3.9	accept
Decency	0 0%	120 63.8%	22 11.7%	46 24.5	2.4	reject
Discrimination	78 41.5%	80 42.6%	17 9.0%	13 6.9%	3.2	accept
Reward and Gratification	26 13.8%	14 7.5%	28 68.1%	20 10.6%	2.4	reject

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Violence	98 52.2%	66 35.1%	15 8.0%	9 4.8%	3.6	accept
Children and Minor	12 6.4%	11 5.9%	80 42.5%	85 45.2%	1.7	reject
Access to Information	53 28.2%	55 29.3%	87 46.3%	29 15.4%	2.6	accept
Public Interest	20 10.6%	52 27.7%	87 46.3%	29 15.4	2.3	reject
Social Responsibility	68 36%	40 21%	37 20%	34 23%	2.7	accept

Grand Mean: 5.4

Finding revealed that there is an overwhelming knowledge level on code of ethics by reporters in Imo state. This finding is encouraging to the noble profession of journalism.

Table 4.2: Do you have knowledge of these ethical guidelines as a journalist?

VARIABLES	SA	A	SD	D	N	Mean(X) and Decision Rule
You have knowledge of the unethical practices among some journalists in Owerri Municipal?	152 81%	36 19%	0 0%	0 0%	188 100%	3.8 Accept
Code of ethics is a guideline that direct all who engage in journalism to act responsibly as they carry out their duty.	188 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	188 100%	4. Accept
Code of ethics disallows the acceptance of gift and gratification for the purpose of suppressing news content	61 32.4%	91 48.2%	0 0%	36 19.2%	188 100%	2.9 Accept
Code of ethics ensures media integrity	170 90%	9 5%	7 4%	2 2%	188 100%	3.8 Accept
Code of ethics disallows identification either by name, picture or interview of a minor that is emotionally or sexually abused	60 32%	73 39%	34 18%	21 11%	188 100%	2.9 Accept
Code of ethics disallows making pejorative reference to a person's ethnic group, religion, sex, physical or mental illness.	141 75%	47 25%	0 0%	0 0%	188 100%	3.7 Accept
Code of ethics ensures that journalists and reporters are socially responsible to the society.	188 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	188 100%	4 Accept

Grand Mean: 3.6

The result in table 4.2 reveals the admittance by journalist to have appreciable knowledge level of the ethical code of practice. Following the findings from this table, one will ask; why then do Journalists trend on unethical grounds knowing that the have the knowledge of ethical practice. This suffices that there should be influencing factors that spur the journalists to unethical practice.

Table 4.3

Factors That Influence Journalists Into Unethical Practice.

VARIABLES	SA	A	SD	D	N	Mean(X) and
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						Decision Rule
Poor Remuneration	173 92%	14 7%	0 0%	1 1%	188 100%	3.9 Accept
Pressure from Colleagues	40 21.3%	101 53.7%	47 25%	0 0%	188 100%	2.9 Accept
Personal Interest	109 58%	79 42%	0 0%	0 0%	188 100%	3.5 Accept
Delay in payment of salary	102 54.3%	64 34%	1 0.5%	21 11.2%	188 100%	3.3 Accept
Condition of employment/service	143 76%	36 19%	0 0%	9 5%	188 100%	3.6 Accept
Absence of technical know how	47 25%	85 45%	32 17%	24 13%	188 100%	2.7 Accept
hierarchical Influence	134 71.3%	34 18.1%	8 4.3%	12 6.3%	188 100%	3.5 Accept
Government Interest	176 94%	12 6%	0 0%	0 0%	188 100%	3.9 Accept

Grand Mean: 3.4 (table accepted)

Table 4.3

In table 3, shows how respondents in Imo state has admitted the impact of ethical factors and obstacles on the profession of journalism. The average scores for this question are higher than the median value of 2.5, as shown by these results. Because of this, journalism in Imo state is impacted by ethical concerns.

Summary of the in-depth interview conducted (Qualitative Data)

The researcher ascribed code to the participants selected from the relevant authorities of media ethics in Imo state. The interviews were drawn from the followings; media senior citizens (retirees) news editors and new managers/directors. This is so because in depth interviews was meant not for any employees of the media house to answer but for some purposive selected journalists who are in Imo state. Questions were asked in order to help balance the answers of the research question in the study. The researcher did not ask any lead or introductory question because the interviewees are already registered and practicing journalists in Imo state.

Interviewees were assigned codes to differentiate responses:

Interview 1	News editor	NE I
Interview 2	News editor	NE II
Interview 3	Retired Journalist	RC I
Interview 4	Retired Journalist	RCII
Interview 5	Media house manager	NHM I
Interview 6	Media house manager	NHM II

The Degree To Which Journalists Adhere To Ethical Codes Of Conducts

In responding to the level of adherence NE I responded that

The Nigeria Union of Journalists' Code of Ethics and the Nigeria Guild for Editors remained unenforced for a considerable amount of time. The process has been hampered by a lack of precision in the coding. The journalists who this code is intended to protect have voiced concerns about the importance of editorial independence and other ethical guidelines for editors maintaining the public's trust and confidence for quite some time. With a similar tone, NE II went on to say that the above has really crippled the contribution of the code towards the maintenance of high professional standard in the offerings and outputs of the journalism profession. Almost all media produced for general consumption violates basic standards of decency. He went on to quote Andrew Belsey, saying that "journalism is an

honourable practise, though many of those who should care for it, including its own professionals, have dishonoured it." When not actively represented, governments of all ideological stripes have used the media as a tool to exert control over journalists and the work they do. Journalists are regularly reminded that they should not take "brown envelopes" or other forms of bribery because doing so would be immoral.

NMD11 responded as thus;

The right of the public to know is being misused in Nigeria, and no effort is made to present a factual, accurate, balanced, and fair report of an event, in my experience as a journalist, as these are the provisions of the ethical code that seem to be most abused. NMD II continued by saying that certain journalists and editors have trouble avoiding editorialising their reporting, which can lead to the appearance of half-truths or even exaggerations. In order to win and keep the public's trust, journalists and news outlets must adhere to the strictest standards of professionalism, as outlined in their separate style guides. But this is not the case with Nigerian journalists; in fact, many of them disregard professional ethics. Reporters in Nigeria have been seen repeatedly breaking the rules. In the world of journalism, the "brown envelope syndrome" has endured. Despite legal requirements to the contrary, journalists employed by government-owned media outlets have persisted in excessively praising the current ruling administration. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) of Nigeria and the Nigerian Media Council have become a toothless tiger. No journalist who has made a public error has ever been publicly reprimanded.

SC I: I have found that journalists who have a high opinion of themselves are more likely to violate journalistic ethics. Permit me to remark that these ethical egoists consider their unethical behaviours to be appropriate if they bring about positive and advantageous outcomes for themselves. Regardless of the repercussions to others or to the integrity of one's vocation. These celebrated egoists in action believe that the end justifies the means if their actions will lead to private gain at the expense of society or their profession. SC II reiterated the position that ethical flaws have been observed in the practise of journalism in response to the non-compliance with journalism code of conducts. Journalists have asked for and received gifts and other forms of gratification from sources. Since news outlets have advertisements, readers should be sceptical of anything they read. When journalists violate ethical standards, it hurts the entire profession and the news outlets that employ them. If a news organisation loses its credibility, it won't last long. Reporters who are dishonest besmirch the profession from which they have received so much respect and honour because of the weight of the obligation that is placed on the shoulders of the person who carries the nation's banner. Since journalists serve the public, they should answer to it for their actions, and the public has a right to expect that information will be presented to them in a fair, honest, and competent manner, but unfortunately, this has not always been the case.

Knowledge Level Of Journalists On Ethical Conducts.

NE: it has been so devastating since observed and known that journalist who has adequate knowledge on journalist ethics are few among the numerous practicing journalists. One thing, is to have the knowledge and another thing is to put the knowledge into work or practice, often times, I think that these short falls in journalism ethics are perpetrated by journalists who are well armed with the do's and don'ts of journalism and yet choose to indulge in unethical practices with reasons best known to them.

NE II: it is not to be argued that most journalists in Imo state are ignorant of these ethical codes of conduct. Some persons got themselves into practice of journalism for the right aim of making good fortunes and means of livelihood and not ready to practice in line and in accordance to the ethical code of journalism practice. I am trying to say that some practicing and registered journalists inn Imo state missed their ways and goot into the practice without prior knowledge of the practice.

SC I: in responding to the knowledge level, he said, he would love to answer using an explanation as thus; many if not all profession has a process and stages to pass through before being inducted as a member of the professional body and these process are to be passed through and true by an intending member. Looking at the medical profession, when a medical practitioner lacks the knowledge of practice, and goes into the profession through the back door, it is blessedly certain that such a one will sponsor the death of so many souls. If one gets into building without the fundamental and advance knowledge in building, such a person will help to construct and build structure that will collapse. These applies to journalism, when the journalists lacks the ethical knowledge of the ethical codes, he will not only bring a bad image on the profession, but will contribute heavily to the death and collapse of the structure of journalism. This observe ignorance, would be said to be contributing factor to the unethical practice as observed among some journalists in Imo state.

SC II: responded in similarity with NE II, he said that journalists in practice mostly lack the knowledge of media ethics and such has made it look as though brown envelope and bribe and legitimate with the concept of media ethics, do not really know what ethics entails and good number of these journalists, did not study mass communication nor journalism and as such will see journalism as an all comers affairs and field of play. As a retired journalist from the state government owned media house, I have questioned the knowledge of a particular journalist in owerri on the ethical values of the profession. Knowledge in journalism could be acquired either while in practice or before coming into practice but it is necessary and recommended to media houses to organize discipleship classes for their new intake as to guide them properly with a required knowledge.

NMD I: shared the same contribution with SC II though with different lines and sentences but same meaning was derived.

NMD II: as regards ethical knowledge, I will make it simple and direct to a point. In the process and system of giving, no man had ever given what he does not have or possess. Every man gives what he has and not what he has not attained. These journalists have the knowledge on ethics they would have given it out in the practice. The pattern and system of employment in the station is opposite to what is expected when someone that studied language and linguistics is employed how will such a person know about fairness and accuracy, social responsibility, editorial independence, brown envelopes, decency etc. this is one of the major part of limiting factors on ethical knowledge.

Discussion on Findings.

In addition, Obeiri (2006) hypothesised that reporters' involvement in infamously unethical practices like brown envelope collecting, news tampering, Afganistanism, character assassination, plagiarism, and sensationalism stemmed from their failure to adhere to journalism ethics codes. According to the theoretical framework that this study is grounded in, a journalist's social responsibility duty necessitates that he or she uphold the profession's moral standards and avoid displaying any immoral behaviour while on the job.

The Knowledge Level Of Journalists In Imo State On Ethical Code Of Conduct.

Analysis of finding revealed that there is an overwhelming knowledge level on code of ethics by reporters in Imo state. This finding is encouraging to the noble profession of journalism. However, it is worthy to bring to knowledge that it is worrisome that the knowledge level for acceptance of gifts and gratification and discrimination turned out low. Could this be that the system has legitimized brown envelope that journalists in Imo State do not regard it as unethical or could it be the reality of the truth of their knowledge on it? In such a case, journalists who are unaware of these ethics are likely to violate the established norms of their trade. Angese et al.'s (2019) research backs up these conclusions. Journalists who don't know the rules of their profession will inevitably break them, and journalists who don't know the rules of their profession will definitely do things that go against the theoretical principles of relativism theory and social responsibility theory on which this work is based. According to Pepple and Acholonu (2018), journalists can act unethically if they aren't aware of the rules they're supposed to follow. In this vein, Tsegay and Asenah (2014) argued that most media professionals enjoy breaking professional ethics.

Factors that influences journalists in Imo State into unethical practices

From the findings in table three, it revealed that poor remuneration, personal interest, condition of employment, hierarchical influence and government interest are major factors that influence journalists to engage in unethical practice of journalism. This agrees with what Angese et al. (2019) found. Researchers in one study said that several of the problems they found were major factors in pressuring journalists to engage in unethical behaviour. Alete (2013) corroborates these findings by noting that disparities between internal and external factors affecting journalism practice in Nigeria are to blame for both unethical practices and difficulties in the field. He also pointed out that the reputation of journalists and the quality of their work are both harmed by the stupidity of their managers. Journalists, by virtue of their profession, are obligated to do what is always and morally right, regardless of the circumstances; this obligation includes putting public interest ahead of individual self-interest when performing the media's social responsibility.

Recommendation

The findings from this study, will guide the recommendation for this study and the recommendation is as thus;

1. To state the obvious, the mean score of 5.4 on the table indicating journalists' familiarity with the code of ethics in Imo State is indicative of this. According to the results, the problem of non-adherence should be

taken out of the game. The study concludes that there is a pressing need to educate media professionals on the need of adhering to ethical standards by holding seminars and workshops on the topic.

2. Given the low percentage of adherence to journalistic ethical precepts in Imo State, it is important to encourage journalists to uphold the journalistic codes in order to preserve the integrity and professionalism of the profession in the eyes of the public.
3. Journalists should be paid fairly and promptly for their work. Journalists should be encouraged to put the public interest ahead of their own interests, and the working and employment conditions of journalists should be studied to learn how to effectively involve journalists in practice and employment. At the same time, the government should stay out of the media, as the press is supposed to operate independently, not as a weapon.

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