

Public Perception on Journalists Ethical Behaviour: Lagos Nigeria in Perspective

Aderogba Adeyemi* Department of Mass Communication, Osun State University (Nigeria) draderogbaadeyemi@gmail.com	Victor Oluwole Adefemi Department of Mass Communication, Ekiti State University (Nigeria)	Nike Akinwumi Department of Mass Communication, Osun State University (Nigeria)
--	---	---

Submitted: 03/10/2025

Accepted: 18/10/2025

Abstract:

Mass media audiences as the primary consumers of media products place a high premium on journalists' adherence to the traditional journalism ethical values of accuracy, truth and objectivity which are generally regarded the bedrock of good journalism. News stories, the primary products of the media industry, attract the audience's favourable attention only when the public (i.e., the audience) trusts the process of gathering, processing, and disseminating the products (i.e., news and information). Therefore, the media industry must thrive to earn the trust of the consumer by maintaining a high standard of ethical values. This study examines the audience's perception of the media practitioners' compliance with the ethical code of the journalistic profession in accomplishing their professional duties. The survey method is adopted for the study; Lagos State is chosen using a random sampling technique. The findings show that the majority of the respondents believed that news and information emanating from mass media organisations were considered credible and trustworthy. They were of the opinion that the activities of the media practitioners are in tandem with their professional ethical code. However, the majority of the audience expressed the view that journalists are corrupt as a result of their acceptance of "brown envelopes" and other forms of gratification. The audience also believed that most media organisations lacked editorial independence. We can therefore conclude that there is a serious ethical problem in the Nigerian media industry that needs to be addressed.

Key Words: Unethical practices, ethical standards, media audience, media ethics, ethical behaviour

1- Introduction

The main staple of news media outlets is news and information and so, the survival of the industry, among other things, is hinged on the quality of news and information it disseminates. Several scholars also believe that the survival of the media industry has a lot to do with trust and credibility (Firmansyah, Novita, Rachmiatie, Sobur, and Putri, 2022; Shalman, 2020). Audiences would only stick to the mass media outlets if they trust that the information emanating from them is trustworthy and credible. Unfortunately, Schiffirin, (2019) observes that trust and credibility have been in a state of decline in the last three decades. Media trust and credibility, as an important subject, are well connected to the integrity of news gathering, processing, and dissemination.

* Corresponding author

Huberts, (2018, p. 19) describes integrity as uprightness, wholesomeness, harmony, and consistency of principles and values. McFall, (1987) believes that a person with integrity upholds a set of moral principles and stands by them come what may.

Integrity as an ethical concept has to do with honesty in one's actions. Integrity also refers to the consistency of actions, values, and principles. To attain the virtue of integrity in the journalism profession, journalists are to inculcate the ethical code of the journalism profession.

2- Literature Review

Ethics

Foreman (2010:17) explains that ethics relates to moral principles that affect people's conduct. Integrity as a concept is linked to morality or ethics (Akinseinde, 2020). The scholar believes that integrity has so much to do with morality and ethics. According to the scholar, an ethical person is driven by a "moral foundation or ethical convictions coupled with an inner drive to do the right thing and take responsibility for one's own actions" (Akinseinde, 2020, p. 232). Ethics in journalism is a serious matter.

The ethical challenges in the journalism profession are not that simple because they influence several aspects of the profession including a number of age long-virtues of news accuracy and factuality (Adeyemi, 2013), application of technology in altering photographs, which can significantly affect news accuracy, objectivity, truthfulness, etc. (Iggers, 1999). A whole lot of ethical concerns in journalism, such as racism, conflict of interest, sexism, privacy, etc, are related journalism ethics. This also includes and is not limited to media organisations' response to economic constraints. For instance, many media organisations hide the truth about their correct circulation figures, so as to win advertisers and patronage (Foreman, 2010; Iggers, 1999).

Ethics developed with society. Ethics is an important value in society without which decency would disappear, and corruption and other societal vices would take over and reign supreme. No society is freed of corrupt practices and no profession is spared; mass media profession inclusive. The sure panacea for corrupt practices in mass media space is the introduction of a strong code of professional conduct in mass media practice just like in most of the elite professions such as engineering, law, medicine, etc. This practice originated in the Western world before spreading to other parts of the globe (Adeyemi and Okorie, 2010; Igboanusi, 2006).

Without an iota of doubt, unethical practice is capable of damaging the hard-earned reputation of practitioners and the integrity of media industry.

Even though the journalism profession, like other elite professions, has a well-formalised code of ethical conduct. However, compliance with an established code of ethical conduct by journalists is entirely a different ball game.

What Constitutes an Ethical Dilemma in Mass Media?

Numerous unethical behaviours in mass media constitute ethical dilemmas. A few of such unwholesome practices are the following:

Deception

Deception is one of the most contentious subjects in mass media. This is so because quite a number of media practitioners do not see anything wrong in employing the method in a bid to elicit information in a very difficult socio-economic and political terrain. The method is multi-dimensional as it includes various forms of unethical practices such as fabrication, hidden cameras, impersonation, and a host of other unethical reporting techniques. According to Foreman, (2010, p. 293), such methods were widely used in the 1970s as a “tradition in newspaper investigative reporting”. Some media scholars are of the opinion that deception could be regarded as a necessary evil employed to uncover hidden facts as well as to uphold the media audience’s right to know (Wikins and Coleman, 2005).

Journalists have been using these techniques for centuries. Wikins and Coleman (2005) affirm that the techniques were commonly used in the 18th century. Deceptive practices by journalists are not uncommon. Bok, (1978/1989), cited in Wikins and Coleman, (2005, p. 94), affirms that quite a number of media practitioners referred to deception techniques as “telling lies in public good” citing the case of the American “Watergate” scandal as a good example insisting that trust is fundamental to good human relation; the absence of trust can cause the collapse of institutions. Wikins and Coleman (2005) opine that even though deception may “stem from an altruistic desire” to serve the common interest of the public, it may end up damaging the public image of the journalistic profession. Wikins and Coleman (2005, p. 94).

All these scholars and indeed, numerous others that aligned with deontological theory (deontologists), think more of the action and less of the consequences that may result from such action. To deontologists, there is no justification for any form of unethical behaviour putting the integrity of the media professional and media industry in jeopardy. Deception can destroy mass media audiences’ trust and confidence. Apart from deontologists, there is another school of thought called teleology. Teleologists, in most cases, consider the outcome of an action rather than the action. Teleologists believe that what resulted from a “noble end” is right. They also support the notion that “the end can justify the means” (Michael Josephson cited in Foreman, 2010, p. 77). There is a dire need to strike a balance between the schools of thought in line with Aristotle’s Golden Mean, which advocates for “the virtue of moderation...” (Foreman, 2010, p. 79).

Ethics of Sleaze Coverage

Sleaze coverage is all about coverage of scandalous news stories and all forms of sensationalism. This kind of news coverage was particularly common in the West in 90’s. At that time, media practitioners were involved in the reckless pursuit of new stories on scandals through all forms of unethical practices that included bugging and infringement on people’s right to privacy. Keeble (2009). asserts that the British paper “Independence on Sunday” asserted that within five years, about 34 conservative party members, four Labour Party members, and one Liberal Democrat were locked in sexual and other forms of scandals.

Iggers, (1999) claims that the media industry in the USA had its fair share of pressure. The former President of the United States of America, Bill Clinton’s improper love affair with Monica Lewinsky - a White House intern in the 90’s. The scandal dominated media headlines not only in the USA but also around the world.

Keeble (2009) believes that the problem of sleaze coverage was a result of three things:

- 1- the prevailing economic constraint facing the media industry in the 90s,
- 2- the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the abrupt end of the Cold War and
- 3- an inevitability of sensationalism resulting from severe competition between various mass media outlets in the UK and falling circulation figures.

Distortion of Truth

It is no longer news that men of the pen profession can tell outright lies; what is news is that journalists can fabricate stories and distort truth. There are several cases of journalists been accused of presenting fiction as reality; journalists plagiarised, and they have been accused of putting “words in people’s mouths”. Journalists sometimes preferred to ignore facts or refused to give an event coverage. Goldstein (2007, pp 30-31) confirms that some of the leading American tort scholars indict the American press for misrepresentation of the world by targeting mostly unusual occurrences.

Journalists are obliged to tell the public the truth about events. Unfortunately, the public may not get to know the truth beyond what is published by journalists.

Right to privacy

The right to privacy is not a simple concept. It is a complex matter with a scope that cannot be easily determined. Privacy rights are a matter of fundamental human rights, legal rights, human dignity, freedom, and independence of individuals (Lukács, 2016; Marmor, 2015). Privacy right is as old as human society, but it changes from era to era. It is almost impossible to give an exhaustive definition of privacy rights as it is not easy to determine the subject of privacy protection. However, Louis Brandeis and Samuel Warren, in their privacy notion published in 1890 describe privacy rights as “the right to be let alone” (Marmor, 2015, p. 256). Loius W. Hodges cited in Foreman, (2010, p. 231), describes privacy as “the power to determine who may gain access to information about oneself.”

The right of an individual to be ‘let alone’ is a fundamental right of freedom of man. No individual should be deprived of privacy rights. According to Loius W. Hodges cited in Foreman, (2010), without some measure of privacy, it is impossible to live a civilised life.

Invasion of privacy by journalists is clearly an unethical professional practice that both media practitioners and media organisation should avoid.

Anthony Lewis cited in LaMay, (2003) describes the act of journalists prying into people’s private lives as grossly unethical and an action that violates all known journalists’ ethical standards.

Besides all the listed ethical dilemmas, there are several other misconducts associated with the journalistic profession. Some of these misconducts are identified by Aina (2004) and Okunna (2003).

Source of the Problem

Ethical challenges are as old as a society but journalism ethics came to the limelight in the 20th century as a result of the journalistic activities of the protagonists of the libertarian (or free press theory (Siebert et al., (1963) cited in McQuail, (1987, p. 37). Free press theory, supports the notion that mass media ought to be free of any form of censorship. Journalists, in

no time, began to abuse this freedom offered on the platform of libertarian theory by indulging in all forms of unethical practices. The abuses continued for several decades till the time media scholars started to examine the matter critically. Scholars pressed for a responsible free press. The movement gave birth to the social responsibility theory. Those who uphold the idea of a responsible free press agree that the media plays a significant role in society. Therefore, they cannot be allowed to operate irresponsibly. Allowing the mass media to operate with absolute freedom can only lead to anarchy. Journalism associations across the globe responded to these challenges by formulating a journalism ethical code in a bid to check gross misconduct in the profession.

Journalism Ethical Code

Journalism's code of ethics is regarded as one of the most powerful instruments of self-regulation by journalists (Fidalgo, Thomass, Ruggiero, Bomba, Sallusti, & von Krogh, 2022). It is an expression by journalists that they would at all times adopt best practices in carrying out their professional duties so as to enable them to fulfill their social responsibility obligation of being accountable to the public. According to Iggers (1999), the most fundamental principles contained in the code of journalism ethics are expected to help journalists in making decisions that are based on sound ethical standpoints (parameter). It is therefore not surprising that journalism organisations across the globe subscribe to one form of code of ethics or the other. This is done with the belief that it would help to improve their performance and curb excesses. Fidalgo, (2022, p. 211), believes that a journalist's commitment to follow the best professional practice based on the tenet of self-regulation assists the mass media in protecting themselves from political interference as well as preserving their independence, pluralism, and freedom. Herrscher, (2002) advocates for a comprehensive and expanded code of ethics, which he calls a universal code. Just like their counterparts across the globe, Nigerian journalism organisations formulated a code of ethics in the 70s. The Nigerian Press Organisation (which is the combination of the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) and the Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria (NPAN) introduced a new set of codes of ethics in 1998.

The Statement of the Problem

The experience shows that corruption is not peculiar to any profession or country; it is a global thing. It is not limited to a particular profession. The Nigerian media industry is not immune to corruption and corrupt practices. These challenges necessitate a thorough study of the assessment of the level of credibility and trust accorded to the industry by mass media audiences.

This is particularly interesting because of the importance of audiences to the media industry. Audiences are regarded as the primary product sold to advertisers by the media industry (Napoli, 2001; Napoli, 2016).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out the level of audience perception of credibility and trust accorded to the Nigerian media outfits.
2. To find out the audience perception of Nigerian media practitioners' level of compliance with the journalism ethical code.

3. To investigate the perceived government influence on journalists' news judgment.
4. To examine whether or not Nigerian media practitioners are in the habit of employing abusive or vulgar language.

Research Questions

1. How do the media audiences perceive the level of credibility and trust accorded to the Nigerian media outfits?
2. Do the Nigerian media audiences perceive journalists as being compliant with the profession's code of ethics?
3. Do the Nigerian governments have any influence on journalists' news decisions?
4. Is the use of abusive or vulgar words a common phenomenon in Nigerian mass media?

3- Theoretical Framework

The study is based on two relevant theories, that is, the Deontological Theory of Ethics and the Social Responsibility Theory.

Deontological Theory of Ethics

Deontological theory of ethics considers the actions rather than the consequences of such actions.

Deontological theory is a moral theory that controls our decision on how we ought to behave (Alexander, & Moore, 2007). The actions are considered from the perspective of what is morally wrong or right. The word deontology has its root in two Greek words – duty (deon) and study of (logos) (Alexander, & Moore, 2007).

To deontologists, the action that is considered right is one that is based on good intention; the consequences of such actions are of less importance. Charlie Dunbar Broad, who lived from 1887 to 1971, propounded deontological theory, which is often referred to as duty and obligation-based theory. The theory is also referred to as x theory. Protagonists of deontological theory are of several schools of thought. Moral absolutists, as one of such schools of thought, believe that whatever is wrong remains wrong, regardless of the consequences of such an action, and no matter from which angle we look at it.

Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher and a deontologist, argues that it is certainly wrong to lie, regardless of what necessitates the action. Deontologists believe that people are morally duty-bound to act in the right manner. According to Tyler, & Darley, (1999), in a law-abiding society, people are motivated to obey law and order out of respect for the law, not because of the fear of punitive measures for wrongdoing, but rather because of the desire to act in a socially appropriate and ethical manner.

Social Responsibility Theory

Social responsibility theory is chosen for this study because of its basic principles. These principles are identified by McQuail (1993, p. 117). The principles are all about the obligations of the media practitioners to society. The only way to fulfil these obligations is to set high standards of accuracy, informativeness, objectivity, balance, and truth. Journalists' obligations

also call for media self-regulation based on the law and the journalism code of conduct. Media practitioners are also expected to be responsible to the public, employers, and the market.

Social responsibility as a concept came to the limelight in the mid-twentieth century. It was based on the findings of the Commission on the Freedom of the Press, often referred to as the Hutchins Commission (Middleton, 2009). According to Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956), cited in Tsukamoto, (2006), the concept is initially linked to freedom of the press. Developing countries find it convenient to adopt the concept in order “to explain their press systems” (Gunaratne, & Hasim, 1996, p. 97). The press cannot afford to act irresponsibly; it has the responsibility to be accountable to the public. The accountable press would definitely be accurate, truthful, objective, and balanced (Adeyemi 2013).

4- Research Design

The research method selected for the study is the survey design. The population of the study is the mass media audience in Lagos State. The State is popularly called the commercial capital of Nigeria, and is also the news media capital of the country. Lagos state was purposefully selected, being both the financial capital and the base of most of the leading media outfits in Nigeria. 250 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the sampled population. The randomly selected sample includes the residents of two out of twenty local government areas, that is, Ojo and Ikeja Local Government Areas. Stratified random sampling method was adopted to choose the respondents in densely populated areas of the state. Popular market areas are Alaba International Market, Ojo Local Government Secretariat, Ikeja Local Government Secretariat, and Computer Village. Out of the administered 250 copies of the questionnaire, 228 copies were retrieved, giving a 91.2 percent retrieval rate.

5- Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Respondents' educational background

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Primary	9	4
Secondary	91	39.9
Tertiary	115	50.4
Illiterate	13	5.7
Total	228	100

Table 1 reveals that 4 percent of the respondents had primary education, 39.9 percent had secondary education, 50.4 percent had tertiary education, and 5.7 percent were illiterate.

Table 2: Respondents' occupation

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Schooling	60	26.3
Civil Service	83	36.4
Banking	25	11
Farming	12	5.3
Trading	38	16.7
Others (Please Specify)	10	4.3
Total	228	100

Table 2 shows that 26.3% of the respondents were students, 36.4% were civil servants, 11% were bankers, 16.7% were traders, and 4.3% were farmers.

Table 3: Respondents who have access to at least one mass media channel

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	194	85.1
No	12	5.3
Sometimes	22	9.6
Total	228	100.0

Table 3 above shows that 85.1% of sampled population accessed at least one medium. Also, 5.3% of the sampled population had no access to any media channel, and 9.6% sometimes accessed media channels.

Table 4: Mass media accessed by respondents

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Radio	80	35.1
TV	51	22.4
Print media	14	6.1
Radio and Print Media	9	3.9
Radio and non-conventional channel	8	3.5
Radio, Television and Print Media	23	10.1
Non-Conventional, Radio and Television	14	6.1
Non-Conventional Channels, Radio and Print Media	9	4
Internet/News App	20	8.8
Total	228	100

Table 4 reveals that 35.1% of the respondents accessed Radio, 22.4% had accessed to TV, 6.1% accessed Print Media, 4% accessed radio and print media, 3.5% radio and non-conventional channel, 10.1% accessed radio, television and print media, 6.1% non-conventional channels of communication, radio, and 4% preferred television, non-conventional channels, radio and print media, and 8.8% accessed the internet/news apps.

Table 5: Respondents' opinion on the credibility and trust of Nigerian mass media outlets

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Very credible and trustworthy	33	14.5
Credible and trustworthy	128	56.1
Not credible and trustworthy	34	14.9
I cannot say	33	14.5
Total	228	100

Table 5 above reveals that 70.6% of the respondents believed that news items disseminated by Nigerian media outlets were considered reliable and trustworthy. 14.9% of the respondents

considered news items from the Nigerian mass media unreliable and untrustworthy, and 14.5% of the respondents were undecided.

Table 6: Respondents who believed that Nigerian journalists are governed by the professional ethical code

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	29	12.7
Agree	108	47.4
Undecided	49	21.5
Disagree	19	8.3
Strongly disagree	23	10.1
Total	228	100

According to Table 6, 60.1% of respondents believed that the activities of the media practitioners were governed by the journalism professional ethical code. 21.5% of the respondents were undecided, while 18.4% either disagreed.

Table 7: Respondents who believed that journalists are not being influenced by the government

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	10	4.4
Agree	64	28.1
Undecided	52	22.8
Disagree	93	40.7
Strongly disagree	9	4
Total	228	100

Table 7 reveals that the majority of the respondents, that is, 44.7%, were of the opinion that Nigerian journalists were not independent of government influence, 32.5% of the respondents believed that Nigerian media practitioners were independent of government influence, while 22.8% were undecided.

Table 8: Respondents who were of the opinion that Nigerian journalists do not accept bribes and gratification

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	6	2.6
Agree	21	9.2
Undecided	87	38.2
Disagree	72	31.6
Strongly disagree	42	18.4
Total	228	100.0

Data in Table 8 shows that 50% of the respondents believed that Nigerian journalists do accept bribes and other forms of gratifications, while 11.8% thought otherwise, and 38.2% were undecided.

Table 9: Respondents who believed that Nigerian journalists do not make use of abusive and vulgar words

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	42	18.6
Agree	99	43.2
Undecided	41	18.2
Disagree	40	17.5
Strongly disagree	6	2.5
Total	228	100.0

Table 9 shows that 61.8% of the respondents believed that Nigerian media practitioners do not use vulgar and abusive words, while 20% didn't agree and 18.2% were undecided.

Table 10: Respondents who were of the opinion that Nigerian journalists are not biased against any ethnic nationalities and minority groups

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	42	18.4
Agree	91	39.9
Undecided	59	25.9
Disagree	25	11
Strongly Disagree	11	4.8
Total	228	100.0

According to Table 10, 58.3% of the respondents believed that Nigerian media practitioners are not biased against any ethnic nationalities and minority groups, 15.8% disagreed, and 25.9% were undecided.

6- Discussion of findings

The statistics displayed in the tables above revealed that news and information content published or aired by Nigerian media organisations are considered credible and trustworthy. According to Table 5, 70.6 percent of the respondents believed that mass media content emanating from the country's media outlets is considered credible and trustworthy. However, what is worrisome is the perception of the Nigerian media audiences in the Lagos metropolis regarding the integrity of journalists concerning the acceptance of bribes and other forms of gratification. Data provided in Table 8 reveals that the overwhelming majority of the respondents, that is, 50 percent were of the opinion that Nigerian journalists do accept bribes and other forms of gratification.

The findings corroborate an earlier study on corrupt practices in Nigerian mass media, Adeyemi and Okorie (2010, p. 192), with an astonishing percentage of practicing journalists (75.5 percent), who agreed that Nigerian journalists accept handouts tagged "brown envelope". Acceptance of "brown envelopes" by journalists in Nigeria is a routine practice that the management of the majority of media organisations usually ignores (Adeyemi 2013).

The research questions for this study are hereby examined below:

1. How do the media audience perceive the level of credibility and trust accorded to the Nigerian media outfits?
2. Do the Nigerian media audience perceive journalists as being compliant with the profession's code of ethics?
3. Do the Nigerian governments have any influence on journalists' news decisions?
4. Is the use of abusive or vulgar words a common phenomenon in Nigerian mass media?

RQ 1. How do the media audience perceive the level of credibility and trust of news and information emanating from Nigerian media outfits?

The majority of the respondents, 70.6 percent, according to Table 5, believed that mass media content (most especially news items) is credible and trustworthy. According to Table 6, the majority of the respondents, that is, 60.1, percent were of the opinion that Nigerian journalists are governed by the ethical code of the profession. This finding revealed that even though Nigerian journalists are believed to be corrupt, media audiences are not in doubt about the fact that Nigerian mass media activities are largely governed by the profession's ethical code.

RQ 2. Do the Nigerian media audiences perceive journalists as being compliant with the profession's code of ethics?

According to the data provided in Table 8, 50 percent believed that Nigerian media practitioners do collect handouts tagged "brown envelopes". Simply put, this is a form of bribery and corruption. However, 60.1 percent of the media audience believed that the activities of journalists in the metropolis were compliant with the ethical code of the profession (see Table 6).

According to statistics provided in Table 10, 58.3 percent of the sampled population, were of the opinion that Nigerian journalists do not discriminate against ethnic minorities. This level of compliance is relatively high.

RQ3. Do the Nigerian governments have any influence on journalists' news decisions?

The majority of the sampled population believed that the government in a way can either directly or indirectly influence the journalists' news judgment as they determine the events that are selected to be published or aired. According to data provided in Table 7, 44.7 percent did not believe that Nigerian media practitioners have editorial independence.

RQ4. Is the use of abusive or vulgar words a common phenomenon in Nigerian mass media?

The majority of the respondents, according to Table 9, that is, 61.8 percent were of the opinion that Nigerian media practitioners are civil as they do not make use of vulgar or abusive words. 20 percent of the sampled population agreed that the Nigerian media practitioners do make use of vulgar or abusive words. 18.2 percent of the respondents were undecided.

7- Conclusion

The Nigerian media industry has a lot of work to do in order to safeguard the integrity of the media profession. The survival of the media industry has a lot to do with audience trust. The industry can measure its performance through the assessment of the media audience. According to the findings of this study, news subscribers still have a measure of trust in the industry, as the majority of the respondents believed that Nigerian media practitioners were considered ethical in the way they carry out their professional responsibilities. The majority of the sampled audiences were also of the opinion that journalists were largely guided by the profession's ethical code. They also believed that the news content emanating from the media organisations was credible and trustworthy. According to the findings, media practitioners do not discriminate against ethnic minorities. This is no doubt a positive assessment, but such a positive assessment notwithstanding, the findings revealed that men of the pen profession were largely corrupt. Media audience perceived that the government influences journalists' news judgment.

Judging by the assessment of the Nigerian media audience, we can categorically state that the Nigerian media industry's integrity is in serious doubt. The level of Nigerian media audiences' distrust is very high. However, this is not peculiar to Nigeria. According to Winkins and Coleman (2005), American news subscribers also have serious misgivings about American journalists. Iggers (1999), also asserts that news subscribers' assessment of American journalists and their media organisations is currently at an all-time low. According to the scholar, the low performance is a result of rapid structural changes, which are threatening the integrity of the media profession.

Even though the Nigerian media industry is not as dynamic and vibrant as the American news media, and American media audiences are more sophisticated than Nigerian media audiences, there is a bit of similarity between the two countries in terms of media audience perception of media practitioners' ethical values and audience's deteriorating level of trust. As stated above, the findings reveal that the respondents expressed a relative level of favourable perception of the Nigerian mass media audience of media organisations regarding credibility and trust of news and information. However, the sustainability of audience trust largely depends on the ability of journalists and their organisations to address various ethical challenges facing the profession.

Recommendations

- There is a need for concerted efforts of all the stakeholders in a bid to address ethical challenges in the media industry.
- The media industry needs to improve its welfare packages.
- Proper monitoring mechanisms must be put in place to check the unethical behaviour of the journalists by both journalism organisations.
- Media owners should put in place a strong policy that would strengthen the editorial independence of the media.

References

1. Adeyemi Aderogba (2013). Nigerian Media and Corrupt Practices: The Need for Paradigm Shift. *European Scientific Journal*, 9(1), pp. 119-136.
2. Adeyemi, A. (2013). Nigerian media practitioners and ethical values: Media audience assessment. *Journal of emerging trends in educational research and policy studies*, 4(2), pp. 215-222.
3. Adeyemi A. and Okorie N. (2010). Perception of the 'Brown Envelope' Syndrome by Journalists in South West Nigeria. *The Journal of the African Council For Communication Education (ACCE), Nigerian Chapter*, 8(1), pp. 173-200.
4. Adiarsi, G. R., Stellarosa, Y., & Setiawati, D. (2013). Integrity Values of Public Media In Indonesia. *INTEGRITY*, 237.
5. Aina, S.C (2004). *Intermediate News Writing and Reporting*. Abeokuta: Julian.
6. Akinseinde, S. I. (2020) *Integrating a Culture of Personal Integrity in Media and Information Literacy. Resisting Disinfodemic Media and Information Literacy for everyone by everyone, Selected Papers, UNESCO Abuja Regional Office.*
7. Alexander, L., & Moore, M. (2007). Deontological ethics. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved December 25, 2024 from <https://plato.sydney.edu.au/entries/ethics-deontological/>
8. Dike, E. (1999). *Leadership, Democracy and the Nigerian Economy: Lessons from the Past and Directions for the Future*. Sacramento: The Lightning Press.
9. Fidalgo, J., Thomass, B., Ruggiero, C., Bomba, M., Sallusti, S., & von Krogh, T. (2022). Ethical codes of conduct in journalism: Demands for a digitalising mediascape. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *Success and failure in news media performance: Comparative analysis in the Media for Democracy Monitor 2021* (pp. 211–230). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855589-10>
10. Firmansyah, F., Novita, S., Rachmiate, A., Sobur, A., & Putri, D. W. (2022). How the Print Media Industry Survived in the Digital Era. *Jurnal ASPIKOM*, 7(1), pp. 1-15.
11. Foreman Gene (2010). *The Ethical Journalist: Making Responsible Decisions in the Pursuit of News*. UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
12. Goldstein Tom (2007). *Journalism and Truth: Strange Bedfellow*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
13. Gunaratne, S., & Hasim, Mohd. S. (1996). Social Responsibility Theory Revisited a Comparative Study of Public Journalism and Developmental Journalism. *Javnost - The Public*, 3(3), 97–107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.1996.11008635>
14. Herrscher, R. (2002). A universal code of journalism ethics: Problems, limitations, and proposals. *Journal of mass media ethics*, 17(4), pp. 277-289.
15. Huberts, L. W. (2018). Integrity: What it is and Why it is Important. *Public Integrity*, 20(sup1), S18-S32.
16. Igboanusi. E. C. (2006). *Normative Media Ethics: A Personalist Approach to Overcomeing Autonomous Individualism in Media Practice*. Owerri: Edu-Edy Publications.
17. Iggers Jeremy (1999). *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest*. Boulder, Colorado: Biestview Press.
18. James E. Post, Anne T. Lawrence and James Weber (1999). *Business and Society: Corporate Strategy, Public Policy, Ethics* (Ninth Edition). Boston: McGraw Hill. International Edition,
19. Keeble Richard (2009). *Ethics of Journalism*. New York: Routledge.
20. LaMay Craig (ed)(2003). *Journalism and the Debate Over Privacy*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
21. Lukács, A. (2016). What is privacy? The history and definition of privacy.
22. Marmor, A. (2015). What is the right to privacy?. *Phil. & Pub. Aff.*, 43, 3.
23. McFall, L. (1987). Integrity. *Ethics*, 98(1), pp. 5-20.

24. McQuail (2002). *Mass Communication Theory*. London. Sage Publishing.
25. Middleton, M. (2009). Social responsibility in the media. Center for International Media Ethics CIME, Oxford University PCMLP, 2-3. https://www.mediafutureweek.nl/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/SR_media1.pdf
26. Wilkins, L., & Coleman, R. (2005). *The moral media: How journalists reason about ethics*. Routledge.
27. Okunna, S.C. (1995). *Ethics of Mass Communication*. Enugu: New Generation Books.
28. Napoli, P. M. (2001). The audience product and the new media environment: Implications for the economics of media industries. *International Journal on Media Management*, 3(2), 66-73.
29. Napoli, P. M. (2016). The audience as product, consumer, and producer in the contemporary media marketplace. In *Managing Media Firms and Industries: What's So Special About Media Management?* (pp. 261-275). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
30. Schiffrin, A. (2019, August 28). Credibility and Trust in Journalism. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Retrieved 13 Dec. 2024, from <https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-794>
31. Shalman Tetiana (2020). Competition in mass media market: from TV to social networks. *Міжнародний Науковий Журнал «Інтернаука» International Scientific Journal «Internauka» Международный Научный Журнал, № 17 (97), vol. 1, pp. 41-45.*
32. Tsukamoto, S. (2006). Social Responsibility Theory and the Study of Journalism Ethics in Japan. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 21(1), 55–69. <https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327728jmme21014>
33. Tyler, T. R., & Darley, J. M. (1999). Building a law-abiding society: Taking public views about morality and the legitimacy of legal authorities into account when formulating substantive law. *Hofstra L. Rev.*, 28, 707.