



24

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24

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African Communication Research

Table of Contents

Volume 11, No. 1

December 2023

**Efficient Journalism Training for Effective Journalism Research and Practice in Tanzania:
A Quest for a Binding National Training Framework**

Francis Xavier Ng'atigwa, Ph.D **1**
St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT).

Journalism Practice in Tanzania- Reflections from the Training and Media Regulation

Ndossi Bitte Samson, Ph.D **14**
Nyakato Lutheran Bible College – Mwanza

**Integrating Africa's Triple Religious Heritage in Reclaiming Ethical Journalism in
Tanzania: A Quest for Media Stakeholders' Dialogue**

Pascal Adelard Shao **35**
St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT).

**Influence of Voter Education through the Media on the Awareness and Participation in
Nigeria's 2023 General Elections among Residents of South-East Nigeria**

Okechukwu Chukwuma, Ph.D **52**
St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT).

**Nollywood Films as Vector of Nigeria's Image Crisis in Cameroon: A Study of
Cameroonian Students' Perceptions**

Dr. Floribert Patrick C. Endong **68**
University of Dschang, Cameroon

Influence of Digital News Media on the Circulation of Printed Newspapers in Nigeria

Aderogba ADEYEMI
Osun State University, Nigeria
Ismail Olaitan AFOLABI **81**
Osun State University, Nigeria
Victor Oluwole ADEFEMI
Osun State University, Nigeria

**Examination of Nigerian Journalists' Views on the Feasibility and Infeasibility of Utilizing
Interpretive Journalism for Satirical Films in Nollywood.**

Osemhantie A. OKHUELEIGBE **95**
PhD Candidate, Catholic Institute of West Africa, Nigeria

**Efficient Journalism Training for Effective Journalism Research and Practice in Tanzania:
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Francis Xavier Ng'atigwa, Ph.D

ABSTRACT

The article contributes to current debates on journalism training in Tanzania and its impacts on journalism-related research and practice. Two notable journalism training institutions, the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC) of the University of Dar es Salaam and the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), have been taken as cases. Document Review and Interviews were used to collect data for this study. The UNESCO Model Curricula for Journalism Education (2007) was used as a frame to analyse journalism training and unveil its impact on journalism research and practice in the two institutions. The study found that the two institutions adopted the UNESCO Curricula Model (2007) and adopted it in their programmes. However, their journalism curricula lack a good balance between theoretical and practical modules whereby programmes of the two institutions are tailored to include many theoretical units than practical ones. Furthermore, the two institutions lack programmes which answer to journalism training that could equip journalists with knowledge for better journalism practice. Equally, the two institutions lack research units that could concentrate on journalism research and come up with journalism-related research agendas. The paper recommends a binding national training framework to guide all journalism training institutions aiming at bringing impact on journalism-related research agendas and better journalism practice, which will be mirrored by the needs of Tanzania.

Keywords: UNESCO, curricula, journalism training, programmes, Media Service Act, Media Services Regulations.

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Introduction

The last three decades have witnessed increased demand for journalism education which could respond to the challenges and needs of journalism as a practice, field of research and an

academic discipline. To respond to this demand, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2007 designed a Model Curriculum for Journalism Education for Developing Countries and Emerging Democracies (UNESCO 2007, p.8). This Model identified four major areas of concern for journalism education aimed at equipping journalists in the developing countries and emerging democracies : (1) ability to think critically, incorporating skill in comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and valuation of familiar material, and basic understanding of evidence and research methods (2) ability to write clearly and coherently using narrative, descriptive, and analytical methods (3) knowledge of national and international political, economic, cultural, religious, and social institutions, and (4) knowledge of current affairs and issues, and general knowledge of history and geography.

The Model Curricula further aimed to shed light on UNESCO member countries by designing skills-oriented journalism curricula to train journalists to serve the development agenda in their respective countries. The model is designed to inclusively transform journalism training, research, and practice in developing countries, including Tanzania. African countries adapted to Model Curricula, and scholars responded with different perspectives to the recommended journalism training, research, and practice. It has been over 16 years since UNESCO issued the curricula, yet there is a claim that journalism training institutions in Tanzania have neglected or partially accommodated the curricula, resulting in little journalism impact on the development of developing countries.

This study uses the 2007 UNESCO Model Curricula for Journalism Education for Developing Countries and Emerging Democracies as a tool to evaluate the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) documents on journalism training and practice, Prospectus and Programmes manual of two journalism training institutions; namely, School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC) of the University of Dar es Salaam and Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) to be acquainted with the way the two institutions have adapted it. The two journalism training institutions have been sampled as multiple case studies.

Journalism Training, Research and Practice in Africa: An Overview

Countries in Africa adopted the UNESCO Model Curricula (2007) compendium, and scholars responded to the recommended UNESCO Model Curricula, which had an impact on research and journalism practice. Motivated by the UNESCO Model Curricula, African scholars engaged in debates and discussions on the state of Journalism training through research, conferences, and seminars. The available literatures pay more attention to the challenges facing journalism training and research in African countries. Scholars such as Wefwafwa (2013), Ojomo (2007&2015), Murphy and Scotton (1987), and Mfumbusa (2008) explored trends of journalism training in Africa and identified deficiencies spreading in most African countries, which included lack of adequate qualified and experienced trainers as well as lack of journalism curricula to balance theory and practical gears of journalism training.

Other gaps included lack of programmes that answer the needs of journalism training and practice, inadequate infrastructure and lack of qualified students. On the same deficiencies, M'Bayo and Nwanko (1989) and Ileri (2015) document the lack of research and communication agenda in Africa, the lack of committed researchers and research publication journals, and the absence of coordinating research units in journalism training institutes. These are the contributions made by scholars to transform journalism education and training in developing countries, including Tanzania.

According to Murphy and Scotton (1987), Africa suffers from inappropriateness of Western models and professional standards of journalism. Of the training approaches available, the American practical orientation seems to appeal most to those who teach, sponsor, or practice journalism in the Third World. The situation creates a dependency on Western countries. As such, they call for an alternative model.

The Government of Tanzania issued the Media Services Act 2016 and the Media Services Regulations 2017 to direct and regulate the media industry in Tanzania. The two documents are viewed as a response to the current needs of journalism training, journalism related research and journalism practice in Tanzania. Part 3 (d) Articles 22 and 23 of the Media Services Act 2016 stipulates the establishment of a Media Training Fund that will (a) facilitate training for media services professionals, (b) promote local content development programmes, and (c) promote and contribute towards research and development in the field of journalism and mass communication. On the other hand, Part IV Articles 17 and 18 of the Media Services Regulations 2017 set the criteria for accreditation for journalists and the provision of press cards.

To a great extent, the two documents respond to the UNESCO Model Curricula on Journalism Training, Research, and Practice and seem to set the new direction for journalism training, research, and practice in Tanzania. Part 3 (d) Articles 22 and 23 of the Media Services Act 2016 sets the ground for journalism training and research, while the Media Services Regulations 2017 offers standards for journalism practice. Part 3 (d) Articles 22 and 23 of the Media Services Act 2016 stipulates the establishment of a Media Training Fund.

On the other hand, Part IV Articles 17 and 18 of the Media Services Regulations 2017 sets the criteria for accreditation for journalists and the provision of press cards. Regarding journalism legal framework, the two documents could be viewed as foundations and mirrors for journalism training, research and practice. Part 3 (d) Articles 22 and 23 of the Media Services Act 2016 specify the establishment of a Media Training Fund, which will cater to journalism training and research; the Media Services Regulations 2017 offers standards for journalism

practice whereby it sets a diploma in journalism as the minimum qualification for someone to merit to practice journalism. The two documents are still under debate; the Parliament, through the Ministry for Information, Communication and Information Technology, is collecting

opinions and views from stakeholders and journalists' bodies on the Media Service Act (2016). As such, it is a bit tricky to establish how training institutions will adapt the document to their curricula when it is ready.

Trends in Journalism Training, Research and Journalism Practice in Tanzania

The Media Council of Tanzania (MCT), the Tanzania Media Foundation (TMF), Inter Media, and the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), support and coordinate media and training aiming at improving the quality of journalism education in Tanzania. The MCT, in collaboration with the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACTVET), develops a curriculum and ensures quality in the provision of education in Journalism and Media studies at Certificate and Diploma levels.

At the University level, the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) evaluates and approves Journalism and Mass Communication curricula at the Bachelor, Master, and PhD levels and monitors the provision of Journalism and Mass Communication education in the Country. These are efforts employed by the respective bodies to oversee the provision of journalism training, journalism related researches and journalism practice in Tanzania.

In the efforts to improve journalism training in Tanzania, the contribution of the National Conference of Trainers from colleges and universities offering Journalism and Mass Communication held in Dodoma in 2007 is worth noting. The Conference was on 'Improving the Quality of Journalism Education in Tanzania,' and it brought together Journalism and Mass Communication trainers to share experiences on improving the quality of journalism training in Tanzania. Participants presented papers that touched on the trend of journalism training in Tanzania and set strategies to improve, especially in areas of curricula, research, admission of students, infrastructure, and time for internship. The Conference laid a foundation for journalism training responding to the local needs, especially in the area of internship, whereby it was agreed to be conducted during every semester break and should be monitored and followed up by trainers in the field of journalism.

Teaching, research and community service are the core functions of any university. Glance's views confirm that journalism training institutions in Tanzania are concerned with teaching and consultancy with minimal effort in research. This can be evidenced by the number of publications produced annually in these institutions, the number of calls for papers for conferences made, and research conferences organized yearly. It has now been more than ten years since the UNESCO Model Curricula for Journalism Education for Developing Countries and Emerging Democracies was issued.

The question is how journalism training and research in the two training institutions have adapted the UNESCO Model Curricula (2007)? To answer this question, the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC) of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and

the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) have been taken as cases to study journalism training and research. The number of programmes offered, credits given, the ratio set between theory and practice; as well as duration and conditions set for someone to graduate are units of analysis to answer the above key question. This will mirror how students from the two institutions will practice journalism upon completing their studies.

Methodology

Document review and interviews with six key informants from the two institutions (three from each institution) were used to collect data from January to May 2020. Purposive sampling was employed to select an equal number of key informants from the two journalism training institutions. Preference was given to two heads of department, two lecturers teaching undergraduate courses and postgraduate courses, and two research coordinators. The research used the UNESCO Model Curricula (2007) as a frame to inform the study.

This UNESCO Model Curricula (2007) was chosen because it is the one that laid the foundation of journalism training, especially in developing countries. There are UNESCO Model Curricula followed thereafter, which provide a glimpse of what has been achieved and add to what has been gained from the implementation evaluation. The UNESCO Model Curricula (2007) was used as a tool to evaluate the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) documents on journalism training and practice.

Moreover, Prospectus and programme manuals from the two journalism training institutions were reviewed to determine how they adapted the UNESCO Model Curricula. The review of documents was based on courses offered, mode of delivery, duration, credits given per course, and lecturers available in their academic ranks. Data from key informants' interviews have been used to back up materials from the reviewed documents. Data analyses were done thematically based on Journalism and Mass Communication programs from the two institutions, mode of delivery, program status, and duration.

Presentation of Findings

Case Study 1: School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC)

According to the Prospectus of the University of Dar es Salaam (2022/2023) the School of Journalism and Mass Communication was born out of the former Tanzania School of Journalism (TSJ), which was established under the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) Act No 12 of 1970, which accordingly, revoked the TSJ ACT.

Table 1: Journalism and Mass Communication Programmes at School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC)

SN	Programme Title	Mode of Delivery	Programme Status	Duration

1	Postgraduate Diploma in Mass Communication	Coursework and Report	Full-time	12 months
2	Postgraduate Diploma in Mass Communication	Coursework and Report	Evening	18 months
3	M.A. in Mass Communication	Coursework and Dissertation	Full-time	18 months
4	M.A. in Mass Communication	Thesis	Full-time	24 months
5	Doctor of Philosophy in Journalism and Mass Communication	Thesis	Full-time	36 months
6	Doctor of Philosophy in Journalism and Mass Communication	Thesis	Part-time	60 months
7	Bachelor of Arts in Journalism	Course work and Dissertation	Full-time	36 months
8	Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication	Course work and Dissertation	Full-time	36 months
9	Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations and Advertising	Course work and Dissertation	Full-time	36 months
10	Diploma in Journalism	Coursework and Field attachment	Full-time	24 months
11	Certificate in Journalism.	Coursework and Field attachment	Full-time	12 months

Source: UDSM Undergraduate and Postgraduate Prospectuses 2022/2023.

From Table 1 above, the School of Journalism and Mass Communication offers the following postgraduate programmes: Postgraduate Diploma in Mass Communication, Masters in Mass Communication and PhD in Journalism and Mass Communication. The school also offers the following undergraduate programmes: Bachelor of Arts in Journalism; Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication, Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations and Advertising, Diploma in Journalism and Certificate in Journalism.

Likewise, the Prospectus of the University of Dar es Salaam shows that in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, there are one senior lecturer, seven lecturers (one among them is on secondment), 14 assistant lecturers (four among them are on study leave) and three tutorial assistants. Furthermore, the Prospectus shows that there are three studio instructors (one among them is senior), one technician, two senior artisans, and two Mlimani Media producers

(one among them is on secondment). The above academic staff team deals with both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The School of Journalism and Mass Communication has Radio and Television studios whereby students are assigned hours for practicum.

On journalism training, the Prospectus of the University of Dar es Salaam (2022/2023) presents 32 core and 33 optional courses in the Bachelor of Journalism (B.A Journalism) programme. The core courses have 212 credits, while the optional courses have 396 credits. Among the 212 credits of the core courses, 16 credits are for Practicum. On the other hand, the Bachelor of Mass Communication has 33 core courses with 352 credits and 384 credits for optional courses. Among the 352 credits of the core courses, 16 credits are for Practicum. Each program lasts 36 months, consisting of coursework and dissertation. Consequently, for a candidate to graduate in Bachelor of Journalism or Bachelor of Mass Communication, he/she needs 360 credits as minimum or 432 credits as maximum requirement.

According to the UNESCO Model Curricula (2007, p.10), these curricula have three categories of courses, corresponding to the three axes: professional practice, journalism studies, and arts and sciences. Assigning each course in the three-year bachelor's program to one of these categories and assigning each course the credit value we think it deserves, we estimate that in the first year, 20% of coursework is in professional practice, 10% in journalism studies, and 70% in arts and science. In the second year, the percentages are 40%, 20% and 40%. In the third year, 80% of courses are in the professional category and 20% in arts and science.

Those percentages add up to the following balance for the three-year bachelor's program: professional practice, 47%; journalism studies, 10%; arts and science, 43%. We stress that this is an estimate. The credit value for individual courses should be calculated according to the system in place at each educational institution and the number of courses students are expected to take each year. Looked at a little differently, the balance for the three-year program may be calculated as follows: Based on the above UNESCO Model Curricula categories mentioned above, the Prospectus of the University of Dar es Salaam (2022/2023) in the Bachelor of Arts in Journalism shows that in the first year there are six (30%) journalism studies, one (5%) professional practice, 13 (65%) arts and science courses.

Likewise, in the second year, there are four (20%) journalism studies, one (4%) professional practice, and 21(76%) arts and science courses. In the third year, there are nine (39%) journalism studies, Dissertation I and II (9%), and 12(52%) arts and science courses. The balance for the three-year program may be calculated as professional practice, 6%; journalism studies, 29%; arts and science, 46%. This is eight percent (8%) less than the balance suggested by the UNESCO Model Curricula (2007), which is calculated as follows professional practice, 40%; journalism studies 10%; and arts and science, 50% professional practice, 40%; journalism studies, 10%; arts and science, 50%.

Case Study 2: Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT)

The Prospectus of SAUT (2022/2023) documents that the University was founded by the Catholic Bishops of Tanzania in 1998 (accredited in 2002) as a secular, non-profit, private

institution. Before 1998, SAUT was called Nyegezi Social Training Centre, which had two important units on Journalism and Financial Management. The Journalism unit became the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication when the Nyegezi Social Training Centre was transformed into St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) in 1998.

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication offers a Ph.D. in Mass Communication, a Master of Arts in Mass Communication, a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication, and a Certificate in Media Studies. The Prospectus of SAUT (2022/2023) exposes that there are two senior lecturers, four lecturers, and 12 assistant lecturers dealing with teaching activities. The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication has newspaper, Radio, and Television production studios for practicum.

Moreover, the Prospectus of SAUT (2022/2023) shows that the Bachelor of Mass Communication (BAMC) programme has 43 core courses and 11 specializations. The 43 core courses have 129 units. A total of 36 to 38 units and a desirable thesis and comprehensive examination are required for the award of the BAMC. These courses are unequally distributed in all three years of BAMC programme. In the first semester of the first year, students take nine courses; in the second semester, they only study eight. Students should study eight courses in the first and second semesters of their second year. In their third year, students split into specializations.

In the first semester, they all study courses with specialization courses (Broadcasting (TV and Radio), Print Media, and Public Relations). In the second semester, they all study five courses with their respective specializations, Research papers, and Comprehensive examinations. A candidate to graduate with BAMC needs to have a minimum of 36 and 38 units, and a desirable thesis and comprehensive examination are required for the BAMC award.

Table 2. Journalism and Mass Communication Programmes in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT)

SN	Programme	Mode of Delivery	Programme Status	Duration
1	PhD in Mass Communication	Coursework and Thesis	Full-time	36 months
2	M.A. in Mass Communication	Coursework, Dissertation and Comprehensive Oral Examination	Full-time	24 months
3	Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication	Course work, Research Paper and Comprehensive Oral Examination	Full-time	36months
4	Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication	Coursework	Full-time	24 months

5	Certificate in Media studies	Course work	Full-time	12 months
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Source: SAUT Prospectus 2022/2023

The Diploma in Journalism and Media Studies has 16 core courses amounting to 39 units and three electives making nine units. For a candidate to graduate with a Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication, he needs to have 48 units. For a Certificate in Media Studies, a candidate must study 18 core courses and have 70 units to graduate. For the Master of Arts in Mass Communication (MAMC), a student needs to cover 17 core courses amounting to 51 units. More weight is given to the Dissertation and Comprehensive (Oral) examinations, each having six units comparable to three units given to other courses. The duration for PhD in Mass Communication and a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication is 36 months, consisting of coursework and a dissertation. For the Master of Arts in Mass Communication, the duration is 24 months of coursework and a dissertation. The offered Diploma in Journalism and Media Studies at SAUT takes 24 months, and 12 months for Certificate in Media Studies.

The Prospectus of SAUT (2022/2023) has no Bachelor of Journalism; instead, there is a Bachelor of Mass Communication. Based on the UNESCO Model Curricula categories mentioned above, the Prospectus of SAUT (2022/2023) shows that in the Bachelor of Mass Communication shows that in the first year, there are six (30%) journalism studies, one (5%) professional practice, 13 (65%) arts and science courses. Likewise, in the second year, there are four (20%) journalism studies, one (4%) professional practice, and 21(76%) arts and science courses. In the third year, there are nine (39%) journalism studies, Dissertation I and II (9%), and 12(52%) arts and science courses. The balance for the three-year program may be calculated as professional practice, 6%; journalism studies, 29%; arts and science, 46%. This is eight percent (8%) less than the balance suggested by the UNESCO Model Curricula (2007), which is calculated as follows: professional practice, 40%; journalism studies, 10%; and arts and science, 50%.

Discussion

Efficient journalism training is a prerequisite for effective journalism-related research and practice in developing countries and emerging democracies, including Tanzania. To realize this, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2007 designed a Model Curricula for Journalism Education aimed at transforming journalism training and practice in developing countries.

The UNESCO Curricula model planned to tailor journalism training to produce multiple skilled journalists with critical, analytical and synthesis abilities. This could be enhanced with inclusive and multidisciplinary curricula so as to produce ‘jacks of all trades and masters of all’ media practitioners in terms of news writing and research. Based on the UNESCO Curricula Model of Journalism training as well as observations made by scholars such as Sialo (2014),

Wefwafwa (2013), Ojomo (2015), Murphy and Scotton (1987), Mfumbusa (2008;2010), as well as by M'Bayo and Nwanko (1989) and Ileri (2015), the current study found that still there is a gap in journalism training as well as in journalism programmes which could impart students with journalistic skills to serve the development agenda in their respective countries.

As we have already divulged, the UNESCO Model Curricula (2007, p.8) sets a kind of journalist needed after training. They must have: first an ability to think critically, incorporating skill in comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and valuation of familiar material, and a basic understanding of evidence and research methods second an ability to write clearly and coherently using narrative, descriptive, and analytical methods, third a knowledge of national and international political, economic, cultural, religious, and social institutions, and lastly, an understanding of current affairs and issues, and a general knowledge of history and geography.

A critical look at the Journalism training trend shows the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC) offers a wide range of arts and science courses which, according to the analysis made above, respond to the UNESCO Model Curricula (2007), which sets 43% for arts and science courses in the three years of training in bachelor of journalism. In the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC), arts and science courses in three years amount to 62% in three years of the bachelor of journalism programme.

On the other hand, the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) offers mass communication which includes few journalism courses as such priority as we have analysed above is placed on mass communication courses. In this way, little can be commented on regarding the UNESCO Model Curricula (2007) in the few journalism courses the Department offers.

Most of the programmes in the institutions include traditional journalism training courses covering media laws, regulations, policies, media theories, news writing and ethics courses. The above analysis shows that training institutions devote much time to theoretical teachings in class with many credit hours, tests, and examinations while giving few hours to practice. For instance, the SJMC locates only 16 credits for practicum, and in the Prospectus of SAUT, nothing is set as practicum hours. Similarly, the time for placement/internship/work experience is not indicated in the Prospectus. According to the UNESCO Model Curricula (2007, p.17), students should be placed in their specialized subject area in national or international media between the first and second year of the bachelor of journalism training programme. Learning from the journalism courses offered in the two institutions will likely produce academic journalists rather than skill-oriented media professionals. The discipline is a practical-oriented one; it is not enough that students participate in the production of radio or television programs and newspapers established purposely for practice, but there is also a need to set enough time for internships in the media houses for students to gain experience and create chances for employment. To arrive at practical journalism training with impacts on research and transformative journalism practice in Tanzania,

there is a need to design skills-oriented journalism curricula for training journalists.

Similarly, there is a need to conduct a tracer study on the employability status of the graduates. The study should involve media stakeholders and employers who are beneficiaries of the services of graduates from the two institutions. Similarly, the tracer study will identify the current societal needs for journalism training, research, and practice. A lecturer at SAUT revealed that every three years, there is a review of curricula that cannot be done without involving views and suggestions from stakeholders; moreover, SAUT frequently conducts tracer studies to locate her alumni and show the trend of employability.

The lecturers interviewed in the two journalism training institutions believe there is a need for a nationally binding legal framework to guide journalism training, journalism research agendas, and needed-oriented journalism practice in Tanzania. According to them, the Media Services Act 2016 is a timely and relevant opportunity to transform journalism education, training, research, and practice in Tanzania. From the opinion of a lecturer at SAUT, it is clear that the adaptation of UNESCO Model Curricula needs to have a policy and regulations to guide its implementation for positive results. For her, the recommendations made by UNESCO Model Curricula on journalism training were left to be interpreted at the journalism training institutions level for approval by the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) and National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACTVET). In most cases, the interpretation of the document was guided by the needs of a specific institution based on the available institutional human and capital resources.

There is a need for a national journalism training mechanism which will interpret the UNESCO Model Curricula on journalism training and guide institutions on how to accommodate the recommendations in their curricula. This could be rooted in the needs of the journalism industry in Tanzania, resulting in one implementable curriculum for the whole country.

On his part, a lecturer at SJMC pointed out the Media Services Act 2016 and its Media Services Regulations 2017 as the stepping stone to efficient journalism training research and practice. The lecturer observed that the dots in the Media Services Act 2016 and Media Services Regulations 2017 are crucial objectives to bring about journalism that will carry and contribute to the development agenda in Tanzania. He further suggested the need to use the Media Services Act 2016 and the Media Services Regulations 2017 to establish a legal framework that will develop a favourable environment for transformative media training, research, and practice to answer to the needs of Tanzania embraced in the national development goals.

Another lecturer at SJMC went further to suggest how to utilize and appreciate the opportunities for research and training implicated in the Media Services Act 2016. “To better utilize the opportunities laid down in the Act, we must prepare ourselves to have Journalism and Mass Communication research policy and agenda.” According to him, the research policy will guide the journalism training institutions on how to carry on the noble tasks itemized in the

research agenda. It will also enable them to set specific agendas and avoid embarking on conducting research with no societal needs and values.

On the same line of thinking, a lecturer at SAUT recommended establishing research units or departments in Journalism and Mass Communication training institutes to coordinate training, research, and journalism activities. For him, “it is not enough to have post-graduate research and publication units in our institutes but units which will also solicit funds. Such units and departments will be responsible for monitoring research sponsored and conducted as well as the process of publications.” The lecturer expects the units and departments to benefit journalism training institutions by putting weight on human and financial resources' preparedness to tap the opportunities in the Media Services Act 2016.

On the part of the journalism practice, training institutions, the Media Services Acts 2016 and the Media Services Regulations 2017 should be catalysts for journalism training institutes and media houses to have research agenda, facilities, and qualified researchers for conducting research and mentoring junior researchers. The training institutions and media houses need to collaborate and team up with the Ministry of Information, Culture, Arts, and Sports and, the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) to ensure quality training, research, and journalism practices. Moreover, the journalism and mass communication training institutions and media houses must work with stakeholders such as the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority (TCRA) and the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) for better journalism practice and research agendas.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Five central conclusions can be drawn from the study: First, the journalism training institutions in Tanzania have tried much to adopt the UNESCO Curricula model and contextualize it in their programmes at an institutional level. Second, journalism curricula in the two institutions lack a balance between theoretical and practical modules in journalism training because their programs are tailored to many units of theoretical subjects rather than practical ones. Third, the institutions lack programs that provide journalism training and equip journalists for better journalism practice in the country. For instance, no particular weight is given to rural reporting; in the course of Development communication, the course outline itemizes issues generally without considering the development agenda specifically for Tanzania, like democracy and freedom of expression. Fourth, the two institutions lack research units that could concentrate on journalism research. Lastly, the Media Service Act 2016 and the Media Services Regulations 2017 are potential tools for formulating a legal framework that will bring positive results in journalism training, research, and effectiveness in journalism practice.

The paper recommends that, for efficient journalism training with an impact on journalism-related research and effective journalism practice in Tanzania, a legal and regulatory framework is needed to establish that will guide journalism training, research, and practice in the context of Tanzania.

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Ndossi Bitte Samson, Ph.D

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the veracity of complaints and scepticism surrounding the practice of graduate journalists when they are employed in conventional journalism organizations in Tanzania. While there is a substantial set of appropriate literature involving theory and practice for vocational skills and competencies imparted to the candidates by the training institutions in the country, the study notes the existence of an argument that journalists who are exclusively trained on the job fare better than university or tertiary education graduates in the professional journalistic practice. It is this kind of argument that probably informed Banda's (2013) proposal for a compendium of new syllabi editions that reviewed and suggested how practical components can be included in journalism curricula. Moreover, the Media Council of Tanzania-MCT occasionally conducts several interventions and revisions of journalism programs for the training institutions so as to suit the media dynamics. The media sector, also, over the recent years, has tried to bridge the lacuna in journalism professionalism in various ways. This relentless stride, notwithstanding the massive transformations of media technologies, still causes the profession to suffer credibility woes from the public. The study agrees with the rest of African scholars that a major overhaul in the curricula training of journalists, an amplified ethical adherence of media practitioners, and a harmonized policy that favours press freedom for a democratic society be adopted.

Keywords: *journalism training, media practice, media policy, media regulation.*

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Introduction

Journalism studies have evolved as a field of inquiry over the better part of a century and a half, passing through a variety of stages. Hanitzch et al. (2019) assert that journalism around the world is battling against increased efforts by political and state authorities to restrict editorial autonomy. Attempts to undermine the autonomy of journalism have contributed to further erosion of public confidence in the news media and its authority around the world. At the same time, journalistic cultures around the globe vary vastly in theory and practice owing to what Hanitzch et al. (2019) contend: Journalism as a profession is undergoing a particularly challenging but fascinating time in many countries around the world. This paper discusses the challenges in the overall performance of the profession, including training, media practices, media policy implications, and the role of regulatory frameworks in enhancing the profession.

The plurality of media that is enjoyed in Tanzania, as far as the Media Ownership Monitor Report -RSF (2018), Sturmer (1998) is concerned, offers an opportunity for scholars at tertiary and university institutions to enrol students in media programs to acquire journalism specializations and media jobs. However, the problem, as stated by Bazira and Uki (2019) in the State of Media report in Tanzania, is that the performance of graduates joining the media industry is below the expected aptitude. Furthermore, constant changes in education and media policy resulting from changes in political regimes have affected how respective regulatory bodies can enhance segments of the profession.

The evidence of the journalism professional challenge as far as a long-serving Tanzanian senior editor Jesse Kwayu cited in Mwaffisi (2021), is that "there is a diminishing quality of journalists entering the newsrooms" as they lack skills and enthusiasm to work in the media (p.114). Seconding the situation is Wahl-Jorgensen et al. (2019), who opined that political authorities have always had a hand in any media situation of a particular country. According to Mmari et al. (2022), the situation is critical, and it requires a turnaround in both the training and industry practice policy regulation.

Background

The training of journalists and media professionals in Tanzania is done at higher learning institutions regulated by the two educational bodies which are under the Ministry of Education and Training – The Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) and the National Council for Technical Education (NACTE). The media practice, on the other hand, is regulated by the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) – a civil society organization, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), under the Ministry of Information, Communication and Information Technology. The Ministry oversees and governs the media services and practices in its totality. The interesting part of this study was to assess the role of these regulatory bodies in enhancing the overall media professional aptitude, which comprises both the training and practice of media.

Journalism training institutions, as used in this paper, refer to accredited educational facilities designed to impart higher learner knowledge, skills, and attitudes to achieve competency-based outcomes that may be applied in the journalism occupation. The National Council for Technical Education (NACTE) is a higher learning regulatory body in Tanzania that establishes, develops, and designs awards to ensure quality education provision in tertiary training institutions and colleges (NACTE website). The Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) is the statutory and regulatory organization established by the Tanzanian Government to oversee university education in Tanzania. The body needs recognition, approval, and accreditation before any university can start (TCU website). So far, this means that journalism training in Tanzania is controlled by these authorities that oversee and control it before the product is ready for the media market.

The resident issue on the cry for professional ethics has been in almost all professions, but according to how Deuze (2005) expounds about the role of the media; - that the media is a powerful social tool with basic functions of information, education, entertainment, and guidance for steering public opinion for democracy and economic development. The author contends that the imperative of the profession is "much more than its modernist bias of telling people what they need to know" (Deuze 2005, p.442). Journalists have an exclusive role and status in society. Studies that reflect the critical state of the journalism profession in the face of the changing communication technologies and the internet society are constantly done to uphold the profession (Heinonen, 1999). The author critically views journalistic practices that had to adapt quickly to the revolution of communication technologies.

The Journalism profession is all about the role journalists play in society. According to Awaisi and Jamal (2012) and Donsbach (2009), journalists are products of their own society. These people also uphold societal values vis a vis their professional duty of informing, guiding, educating, and entertaining. This means journalists who are also socially bound to some personal choices and feelings towards a story may easily fall into the social personality trap, which requires regulation. The role of regulatory frameworks is to ensure that every profession is upholding its rites in its spheres of practice without harming or affecting another entity. Rioba (2012), highlights the doubt of a media self-regulatory body in Tanzania MCT in upholding the professional rites of journalism in the wake of media market forces and political influences in Tanzania. The study investigates the role of regulatory frameworks - TCRA, MCT, NACTE, and TCU in enhancing journalism training and media practice in Tanzania. Guided by the question- How do the education and training of journalists affect media performance, and what policy implication does regulation have in determining professional aptitude.

Problem Statement

Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch (2019) posit that while journalism around the world battled against increased efforts of political and state authorities that restrict editorial autonomy, efforts that undermined the autonomy of journalists have contributed to further

erosion of public confidence in the news media and its authority around the world. Studies exploring journalism training and practice have focused intensively on the educator's role in brewing students and how the curriculum should produce a media practitioner.

Scholars like Mfumbusa (2010), Josephi (2010), and Wefwafwa (2014) expose inferences in the training curriculum that, in most cases, did not reflect the current journalists' social reality. According to Bazira and Uki (2019), fresh journalism graduates' performance and subsequent progression into the media houses have met complaints of unethical practices, poor performance, and inadequate skills in handling newsroom practice. This paper tries to identify the pertinent gaps in journalism practice, focusing on the training and regulations that impeach the profession.

Literature Review

The implementation of self-reliant journalism has not yet materialized in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa, according to the UNESCO (2013) series for journalism curriculum. Many reasons may be attributed to this slow realization of the state, and many factors also may be to blame. However, succumbing to the globalization ethos, it deemed necessary for journalism schools to update the curriculum much more often so that it suits any paradigm attained globally. The 'fourth' industrial revolution, whereby massive forms of digital media and interconnectivity are applied, according to Egbujor (2018), has made it possible for the information to reach the masses spontaneously such that there is a need to constantly review the journalism curriculum in Tanzania, while on the other hand, such a shift has found itself at crossroads with the country's education and media regulatory frameworks.

Neuvonen (2022) explains the role of media councils as models for social media councils formation in an era where self regulation is important for global media statistics. The author outlines that each European media outlet and its specific regulator. Enjoying genuine independence in law and in practice is a prerequisite for these authorities to carry out their remit effectively, transparently, and accountable. In Eberwin et al. (2019) there is a fierce public discussion about the quality and responsibility of the media. The authors believe that self-regulation of the media calls for a new paradigm in outlining the truth of the political messages in European media. While Neuvonen (2022) recognizes the critical role of independent regulatory authorities entrusted with responsibility for regulating the audio-visual sector at the national level as contributors towards fostering a favourable environment for freedom of expression, the author still oversees a wide range of independent and autonomous media in the audio-visual and social media sector. It is essential to provide for its adequate regulation, according to Erberwinet al. (2019). This may sound like an advanced priority of media regulation practiced efficiently in the European Union.

However, according to Rudin and Ibboston (2022), in the UK, all aspects of newspaper and magazine journalism and production, and radio and television journalism and production, are

regulated and advised by government-appointed and independent advisory bodies, which seek to ensure a balance between ethical and legal considerations. There is a similar but slightly different case in African media regulation. In Africa, media regulation has always been in conflict between press freedoms and controlling access to information, according to Brosse and Frere (2012). In many cases, this tendency left the regulator with no grip control over the profession, so it may seem as if the media regulator was against the media itself. The authors contend that media regulators were government appointees who preserved political power interests against media performance.

As far as the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) of 1977 is concerned, higher education is one of the matters falling under the Union sphere. Tanzania is a democratic unitary republic with a central government and a devolved government of Zanzibar, which has autonomy for non-union matters. Special institutions - the National Council for (NACTE, now NACTVET) and Tanzania Commission for Universities - (TCU) were established. The main objective is to regulate, among other things, the quality assurance of education programs offered at all tertiary institutions and Universities. Audit of the education programs is done periodically. The audit includes the availability of teachers and their qualifications and curriculum-supportive facilities available in the institutions, Bazira and Uki (2019). Media regulation in Tanzania has so far been done by the MCT, TCRA, and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. The study tries to identify the roles that regulatory frameworks play in facilitating the credibility of the media profession.

Regulatory Bodies of Media Training and Practice

The Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) is the statutory and regulatory organization established by the Tanzanian Government to oversee university education in Tanzania. It is the body whose recognition, approval, and accreditation are needed before any university can start. According to the (TCU website) under the background and core functions button, the council has three basic functions: Regulatory, advisory, and Supportive.

The National Council for Technical Education (NACTE) is a statutory body established by Act of Parliament, Cap. 129. To oversee and coordinate the provision of technical education and training provided by non-university tertiary institutions.

Section 11 of the Act of Parliament empowers the Council to approve curricula, examinations, and awards for autonomous non-university technical institutions. Technical education in this context is defined as "*education and training undertaken by students to equip them to play roles requiring higher levels of skills, knowledge, and understanding and in which they take responsibility for their areas of specialization.*" NACTE is, thus, a multidisciplinary and multi-sectored body empowered to oversee and coordinate the provision of technical and vocational education and training in Tanzania (NACTE website).

The Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) performs the designated regulatory role of media structuring and output control in Tanzania. The regulator records its performance on licensing physical media structures; and just little or nothing to do with content production and regulation. The TCRA prides itself on ensuring licenses for media outlets. The authority reports that the current number of radio stations operating legally in Tanzania is 158. In contrast, the number of TV stations in the country increased from 46 in 2016 to 48 in the 2017 TCRA report (2020). With such a body as a media regulator, the issue of upholding professional rites in journalism practice is still orphaned.

The Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) is an independent, voluntary, non-statutory, self-regulatory body established by the media fraternity on June 30th, 1995, at the Journalists and Stakeholders' Convention held in Dar es Salaam. The council envisions creating an environment that enables solid and ethical media that contributes to a more democratic and just society (MCT website). Among the many objectives of this body, an essential element that upholds professionalism in journalism is paramount.

The MCT records the objectives of the council, which are to promote, assist, safeguard, and defend media freedom and allied forms of public communication in the country. Moreover, the other primary objective is to oversee those journalists, editors, broadcasters, producers, directors, proprietors, and all those involved in the media industry to adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards. The council also receives and conciliates, mediates, and/or arbitrates upon complaints from the public and the media regarding the infringements of the code of ethics. Furthermore, the council also encourages the development of the media profession in Tanzania by undertaking activities including but not limited to training journalists, overseeing press clubs' development, conduct various media freedom campaigns, seminars, workshops, and symposia.

The MCT's many other objectives go on to maintain a register of developments that are likely to restrict the supply of information of public interest and importance. It also investigates the conduct and attitude of persons, corporations, and governmental bodies at all levels towards media. It makes public reports on such investigations and many other similar works of the council, which makes it more of a friendly regulator or free media practitioner. However, having a body like this is important in the profession, but again, it does not guarantee the performance of journalists in the media. The council serves as an interbody alia between the media and the public, and since it is a voluntary body composed and made up of the media stakeholders, not much can be anticipated from a body with no biting teeth.

The Ministry is meant to formulate and monitor the implementation of policies on information and communication technologies and Postal services. It is envisaged to drive the digital transformation agenda in Tanzania amid the global fourth phase of the industrial revolution. It is mandated to formulate and monitor the implementation of Policies on

Information, Information Technology, Telecommunications, and Postal. The Ministry is also responsible for ICT broadband Back-Borne, Performance Improvement, Human Resources Development, extra-ministerial Departments, Parastatal Organizations, Agencies, and Projects under this Ministry.

The Ministry's focus in the communication sector is basically on technology. According to the Ministry's strategic plan 2021/22- 2025/26, the Ministry's motto derives from the ruling party manifesto, which "acknowledges the importance of the communication sector as an "enabler" of other sectors in the contribution to robust economic growth" (MCIT 2021/22 – 2025/26 p. 7). Under this Ministry, the United Republic of Tanzania government enacted four acts concerning the control of freedom and media regulation in the country. These are; The Cybercrimes Act, 2015; the Statistics Act, 2015; The Media Services Act, 2016; and The Access to Information Act, 2015 (Mulinda, 2021). All these aim to limit the media space, especially the control of alternative political thoughts.

Although not stipulated in the Ministry's five-year strategic plan (2022/26), the importance of the media in the democratic process and national development has always been appreciated globally. The Global Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Article 19 states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers. The aspect of media regulation is neither highlighted in the Ministry's programs nor stated anywhere in the ministerial departments. The United Republic of Tanzania constitution (URT -1999) higher education and learning policy in Tanzania refers to higher learning institutions as research centres for enhancing professional excellence - This study comes as an eye opener to both media and education regulatory bodies to suggest better ways of supporting the profession amidst the poor professionalism claims.

The Research Approach

The objective of this case study was to assess journalism practice in Tanzania from the perspective of training and media regulation. Yin (2014) presents three major applications in doing a case study: as being a part of a larger evaluation, as a primary evaluation method, or as a dual-level evaluation. This study serves as a purpose of being a part of the larger evaluation. As a policy issue, the study tries to explain the regulation segments in the policy framework that affect both the training and practice of media. According to Creswell (2009), when a study addresses a policy issue, it has to be grounded in its approach, i.e., gather information from natural perspectives.

Data gained from this type of approach is rich and may correctly inform decisions for change. This type of approach also enables a policy researcher to understand complex phenomena qualitatively as well as to explain the phenomena by numbers, charts, and basic statistical analyses. This is in line with what Rossman and Wilson (1985) say of a multi-method

approach as important to policy research because it holds the potential for understanding the complex phenomena of the social world, seeing this world through multiple lenses, and using eclectic methodologies that better respond to the multiple stakeholders of policy issues than a single method or approach to research.

The study deployed questionnaires to journalism students at SAUT to make inferences about the course curriculum. Content analysis was done to understand the journalism curriculum. In-depth interviews were done with SAUT journalism lecturers, TBC and Mwananchi communications news editors, and SAUT graduates working in the media, and a documentary review of specific regulatory authorities - TCU, NACTE, MCT, and TCRA was done to obtain policy contents of both the training and media. Defining what a document is in this study, Tight (2019) posits that a document is written, printed, photographed, or recorded material that can be used to provide information or evidence. He further says that documents may be virtual, published, or unpublished texts that reside in public, private, or virtual domains. The study used both published and unpublished documents obtained from the official websites of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, the Media Council of Tanzania, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority, the Tanzania Commission of Universities, and the National Council of Technical and Vocational Education Training.

The study targeted the editors of media houses, journalism graduates, and Journalism lecturers in Tanzania. In-depth interviews were carried out with the respective media trainers, news editors, and journalism graduates on the state of the media in Tanzania. The units that this study unveiled were concerned mainly with how the TCU and NACTE guidelines for education supervision aided the adaptation of journalism learners in the media market. The role of the researcher here was to connect the patterns in the learning and patterns in the media practices to assess how they realign with each other. The study participants from each group (the journalism students, editors, lecturers, and working journalists) demonstrated a high level of understanding of the problem of poor professionalism in media practice. This meant that the study was essential.

The study further determined the sample using non-probability purposive sampling techniques. Robinson (2014) defines purposive sampling as an intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon. A purposive sample was used to obtain particular respondents for the interview- these were four journalism lecturers from St. Augustine University of Tanzania, which is an institution that, owing to the types of curricula provided, i.e., certificate, Diploma, and degree level journalism courses- it subscribes to both educational supervisory bodies TCU and NACTE. The study also sampled purposively for interviews with four editors of two prominent media houses in Tanzania- Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation (TBC) –a public broadcaster, and Mwananchi Communications –a private print media house. Three distinct data collection methods that supplemented each other were used to obtain lucrative information: questionnaires, interviews,

and documentary reviews. Denzin and Lincoln (2002, p. 7.) note that "multiple methods or triangulation reflects the attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question."

Data Analysis

The study had three basic themes that were aligned against each other to emulate the meaning and concept surrounding the problem under study – training, performance, and regulation. The training theme factors assessed included curriculum content, training facilities, and media exposure. The performance theme assessed the ability and attitude of journalism graduates as they performed in the media houses. The regulation theme assessed the 2016 national media policy and its subsequent directives towards media performance and the level descriptor awards required for higher learning in the country. The formation of themes derived from a specific objective that is intended to assess the role of supervision by specific regulatory bodies in the education and performance of journalists.

The data obtained by the study was specific, so the content analysis of the journalism curriculum and the interviews held with three specific groups —lecturers, journalism graduates, and news editors—offered qualitative inferences, which are explained in the narrative. Diagrams and figures were also used to give quantitative data from the questionnaires given to SAUT journalism students. Then, triangulation was made to show the connection and relationship between the theories used by the study and the variables used in the study.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the credibility of this study and to respect the dignity and interests of those participating, it was vital to consider the four common key ethical principles discussed in Halai (2006). **Consent:** Participants were informed that their contributions to the study were important and would remain anonymous. In addition, participants were informed that they were free to opt out of the study at whichever point and that they were not to be victimized or penalized for doing so. Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the National Research Bureau through St. Augustine University of Tanzania, School of Graduate Studies.

Member checking technique was done before the actual interviews with crucial informants. The interview questions were shared in advance for the members to familiarize themselves with the essence of the topic. Thus, this proves the study tools to be trustworthy for all stakeholders wishing to bank on the findings to improve the profession.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study were derived from the themes based on the specific objectives of this study. Journalism education and training as a theme, intended to get insights into the problem of poor journalists entering the media industry. The policy theme is designed to understand the dynamics of management issues of media houses and their products. The Regulation theme was

intentionally made to identify relationships between education and industry regulatory bodies and how they enhance the journalism profession in Tanzania. The study specific objectives were as follows:

- i. Assess the challenges in the field of journalism from the training institutions perspective
- ii. To investigate the media dynamics and how they informed professional journalism
- iii. To investigate the role of Regulation in enhancing journalism training and media performance.

An investigation is a thorough search for facts, especially those that are hidden or need to be sorted out in a complex situation. The goal of an investigation is usually to determine how or why something happened. Descriptive data was obtained from 130 journalism students of SAUT. In contrast, thematic data was derived from the interviews held with the six (6) journalism graduates working in the media houses of TBC and Mwananchi Communications and their respective news Editors and Four (4) SAUT journalism lecturers, a content analysis of the journalism training manual and review of the regulatory frameworks documents and work books. The study took place between November 2021 and April 2022. The following inferences were made trying to answer the questions raised:

What are the Challenges facing Journalism Training in the institutions and ways to improve them?

Journalism lecturers who responded to this question highlighted a number of challenges that, if acted upon, the training would be at its best. Asked whether there was something that needed to be improved in the training curriculum, one of the lecturers had this to say:

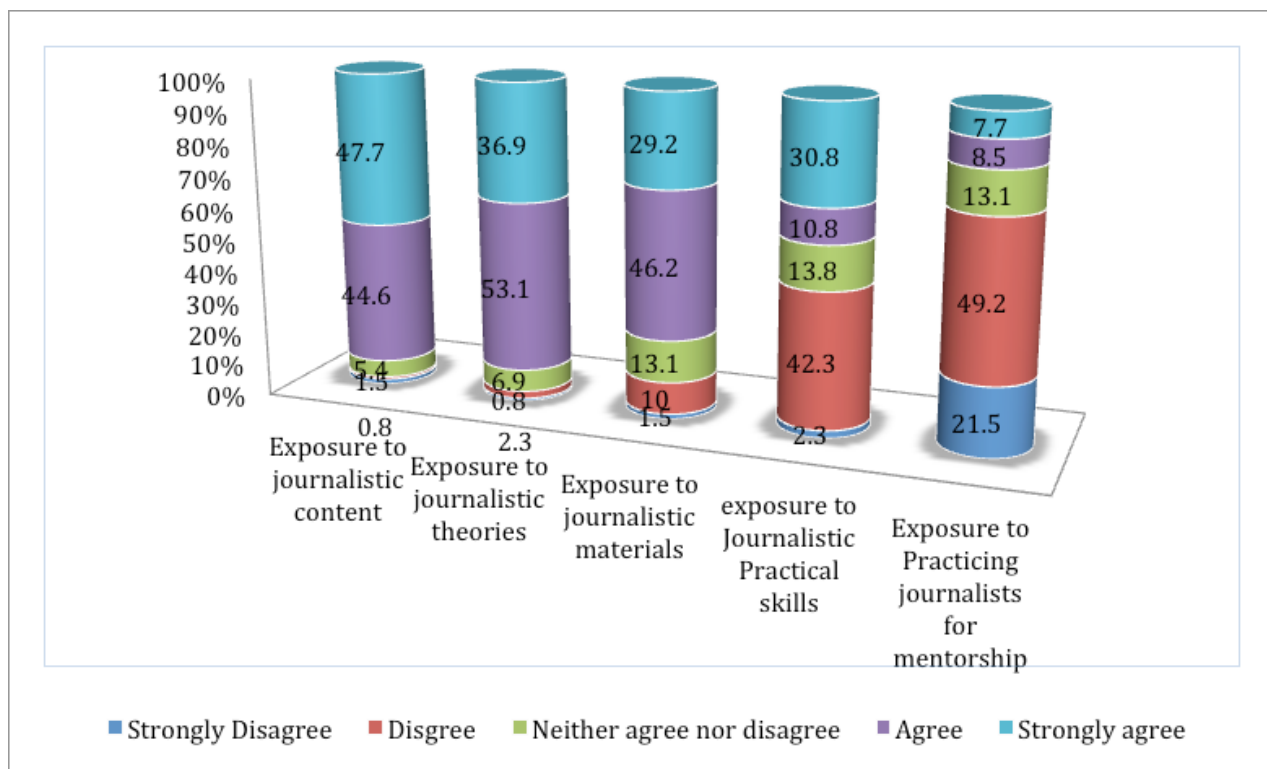
The lack of inter-disciplinarily of lecturers of journalism studies; is a huge problem since training a journalist requires us to be extra knowledgeable beyond just having the craft of writing texts and airing broadcasts... The mentors of journalism are faced with restrictions due to some policies of the Tanzania Commission for Universities. For example, there is a policy that requires all journalism lecturers to bear journalism credentials as from a bachelors' degree onwards to the post graduate degree in order to train journalists... this has negative effects on a crosscutting profession like journalism and by far this policy diminishes the professional vibrancy because we miss out some very important skills that are required in a multi-faceted profession. (Source: Field interview Data 9th December 2021).

Journalism students also had issues with the training when they highlighted inferences about the training process, which indicated a low emphasis on field practical attachment. The respondents were asked to indicate whether they were exposed to enough practical journalism skills. The responses were as follows: a total of 41.6% agreed to have that exposure, while 13.8% neither agreed nor disagreed, and a sum of 44.6% disagreed to have exposure to practical skills.

Another label on the journalism training exposure category was to find out whether the respondents had been exposed to journalists who are currently practicing in the media to mentor them about media dynamics; the responses are 70.7% of respondents disagreed. In comparison, 13.1% neither agreed nor disagreed and a sum of 16.2% agreed to have been exposed to practicing journalists. The table below explains:

Figure 2.

Journalism Training Exposure



Source: Field data (November, 2021)

The lecturers feel that the training curriculum should expose students to a variety of people from different disciplines since the media functions across all professions in reporting society issues. For a journalist to report on health or law issues they ought to be exposed to practitioners who can mentor them in their specific language and the use of suitable terminologies. This is building specialists in the media profession. TCU policy requires only journalism scholars to teach journalists something that hinders competency and vibrancy in the journalism training and practice.

Journalism is an artistic profession, according to Maniou et al. (2020) and Deuze (2005), adds that it requires beyond classroom teaching, and a journalist with a variety/mixture of knowledge is what gives the communicator a competitive advantage while informing the public. The basics of the profession are inbounding in the practice of communication itself. Having broad knowledge in a variety of disciplines is what decorates the art of the communication of a journalist.

On a second note, the constant changes in the policy of different disciplines that are not directly updated in the journalism training curriculum make the trained scholar unaware of the changes and, therefore, their exposure to new ideas in the field. Journalism lecturers

interviewed upon this claimed to labour a huge task of dealing with an amplified enrolment of students in the universities, something which deprives them also the extra time to obtain current media expositions to share with their students. This is also a regulatory matter as it was confirmed when they said that it is challenging to teach close to four hundred students and ensure you have adequate time to read their stories and listen to their broadcast clips, and correct them” (Interview data 09th December 2021)

The study found out that many of these lecturers did their journalism training during their time of studies as part of the field apprenticeship. Furthermore, one of the lecturers suggested the contextualization of the course to reflect African/ Tanzanian reality of things- a touch of culture, tradition, language, ethics and values of Tanzanians when they said:

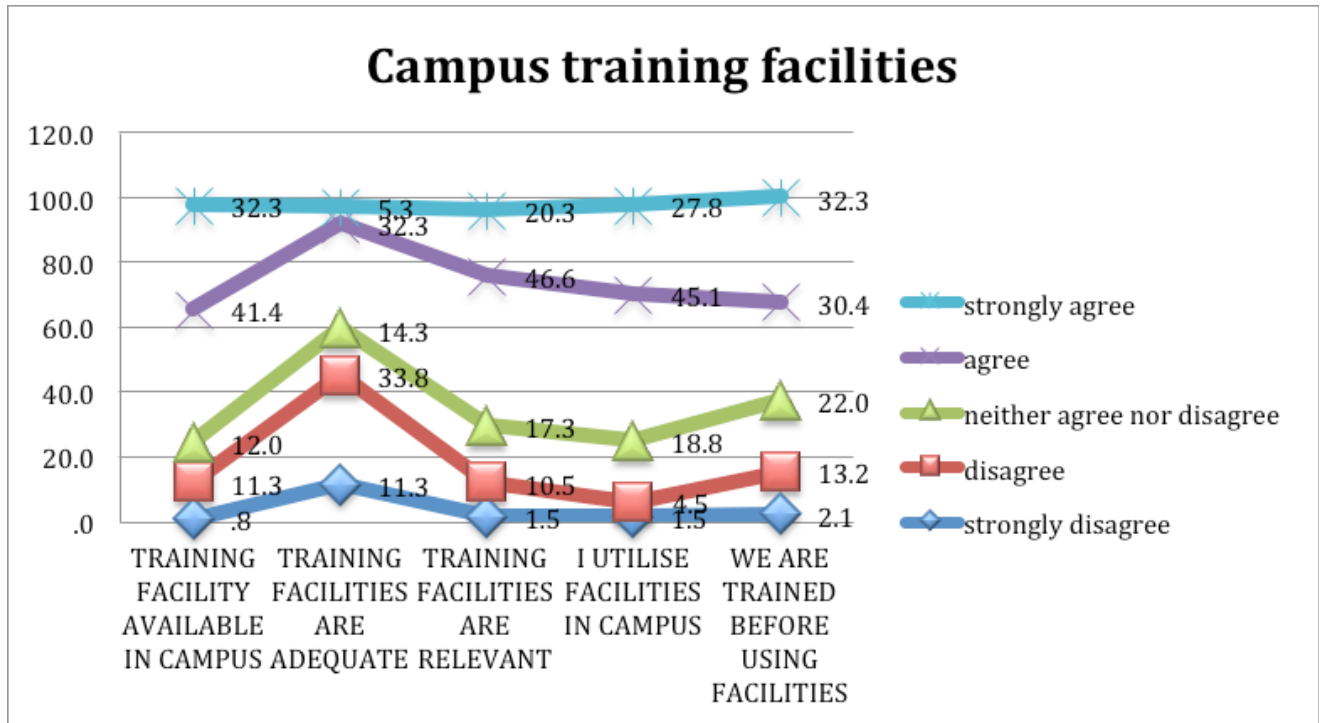
Sometimes our journalism training seems irrelevant simply because we expect scholars to address fellow scholars and we grade them by doing so instead of ensuring they touch their standing ground” For example expecting them to write news in English when in actual fact they are going to write and broadcast in Kiswahili or even another vernaculars of community radio (Field Interview, Data 9th December, 2021).

The graduate journalists also interviewed about their training versus the practice all affirmed that their training did not expose them to multimedia journalism practice. They affirm to have faced first hand intimidation from fellow workmates who do not have relevant degrees but can simply perform better than them. They insisted that apprenticeship should be enhanced in the training curriculum to help journalism students adapt well to the media. The editors commenting upon this inference said:

Honestly yes recently we have had graduates who need training in order to perform in the newsroom. We wonder what they have been doing in colleges for the years they have been taking their subjects. The situation is worse when they are required to go to the field say the court room and get a story – first they don’t gasp what is newsworthy in that story and second, they can hardly put up all the facts required. This leaves a lot to be desired! (Interview data 18/11/2021)

On another note, Bazira and Uki (2019) firmly talk of the incapacitated training facilities in many journalism training institutions countrywide. The diagram below is a snapshot of the situation at SAUT as found by this study:

Fig.3.Training Facilities



On a general observation, the figure depicts the average availability, adequacy, relevance, and utility of journalism training facilities at SAUT. The use of campus training facilities (like TV studio, Radio, writing articles in the SAUTIMES in-house newspaper, the use of photography lab and cameras and Teleprompters) was observed in the study. This category required the respondents to describe how well they used these facilities during their training. The first label prompted the availability of the said facilities; the second label inquired how adequate, followed by the relevance, utility, and provision of training on the use of the facilities before using them. The responses are shown in the figure.

Investigating the roles of the TCU and NACTE the study found that all bodies have quality assurance as one of their major responsibility. The issue with the availability of adequate training facilities in the educational setting is one of the quality assurance categories of the education regulator which goes hand in hand with the use of facilities and the modernity of facilities. The following response from the editors shows the students' typical lack of practical experience.

The problem with most teaching is that it is more theoretical and has no practical orientation. A teacher maybe teaching about a concept such as fade out or fade in without practically showing what that means. Such concepts cannot be taught only through paper. (Field interview Data, 9th December, 2021).

A reflection on the NACTE guidelines on journalism training curriculum NTA level 5, the study learns that what is claimed by the media editors as journalism students failing to

practice is revealed in the outlined course modules. The aspect of field practical assessment requires that the supervisor/ employer of the media house keep a daily track record of the trainee as they perform in the field. This does not happen, and it is not possible as far as the media editors are concerned. They confessed there are fewer editors in the newsroom who are quite busy and have timely deadlines to deliver news and allied services.

We want journalists who can work independently with minimal supervision because the media is so busy and vibrant and it wants timely quality products because of the stiff competition in the media market—breaking news items are all over the places from international media as well as from social media, a journalist has to be able to grasp from every corner of what has happened and have an informed story – it requires an independent action (Source: Interview data, 18th November, 2021).

The news editors' concern tallies with what the SAUT lecturers said: "*Media houses do not accept students for field practices*" – a concern about whose responsibility is ensuring students are guided and what measure is taken when such responsibility is unchecked. In Mfumbusa (2010), Josephi (2010), and Adaja (2012), a contention is made, that journalists being exposed to journalistic values in schools contradict industry realities.

The UNESCO model for journalism training provides that the media should foster democracy and nation building. The model gives nations provisions to customize programs according to the countries' needs. Since journalists are products of their society, the curriculum should be tailored to cater to the communication needs of the Tanzanian community parse. The lecturers highlight some elements in the curriculum that, although they are of global concern and relevant, do not directly benefit the common Tanzanian audience. A particular example is when the curriculum insists on online journalism, which is currently a global issue. However, in reality, the common villager in the country's remote areas does not even own a device for accessing online content, let alone have the finances to purchase bundles, but still needs the media for information. The media regulator TCRA focuses on digitalization while there are considerable gaps in the digital community. TCRA's Msimamizi Quarterly Newsletter (2022) talks of the government's emphasis on stirring the digital economy by establishing special digital schools across the country in a bid to explore opportunities in the digital world. An excerpt from the story notes:

Among the issues that were deliberated and agreed upon was the importance of establishing special ICT schools to stir and encourage students on matters of the digital economy alongside the construction of necessary infrastructure in support of the same so that Tanzania changes digitally (Msimamizi, 2022, p.28)

The move to national digitalization projects, as deliberated by TCRA, is a commendable effort. However, the national statistics of digital and mobile network subscribers (according to the TCRA's quarterly newsletter, Jan –March 2022) do not match its urgent need. It seems like

every department functions independently in a single organization such that one department is unaware of the plans and prospects of the other to advise each other accordingly. The study thus realizes that regulating media performance in the country, which probably falls under this regulator, may not be possible.

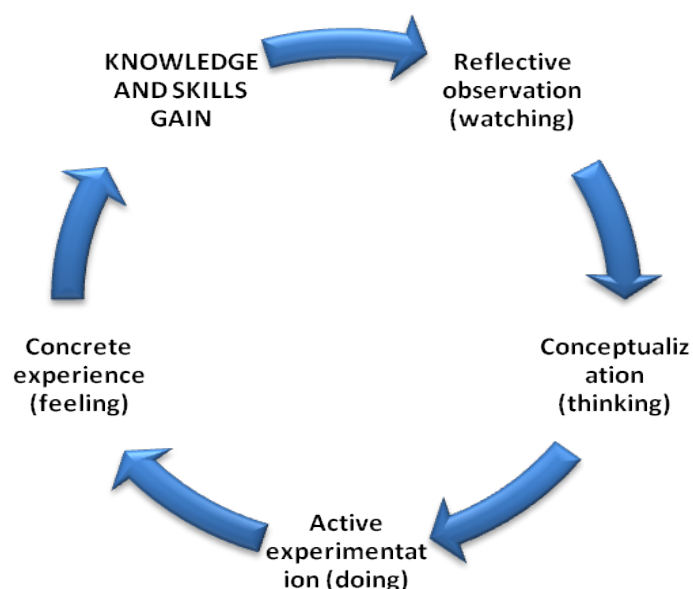
The news editors who responded to the question on how these regulatory bodies enhance the profession showed a crosscutting phenomenon in terms of the roles of regulatory authorities. The editors affirm that TCRA is a regulator concerned more with issues pertaining to physical structures and permits of media houses rather than issues of the "*quality of the media content.*" The authority deals more with laws and regulations and licensing of media houses rather than regarding the content and media professional practices. This was affirmed through the following statement made by one of the editors:

It is the civil society organizations that deal more with issues related to matters of content and professionalism in journalism. In such scenario media houses are left to design in-house protocols to be adhered according to ownership, editorial policies and their desired publics (Interview Data , 9th November, 2021).

This inference means there is no strict monitoring of journalism products in place, such that every media house is responsible for its own checks and balances. Having a profession with no strict regulator makes the profession lose credibility and sense, as far as Ibbi (2016) and Egbujor (2018) are concerned. The education regulators (TCU and NACTE) provide for the field practical attachment segment in the course of training that has to go alongside the theoretical knowledge gained in the journalism study program. However, this has so far been neglected, as proven by these findings. Each side of the collaboration teams (the journalism training institutions and the media houses) gives reasons for their inability to collaborate as suggested.

This study believes that the knowledge gained through experience, as Kolb's theory advises, is not strictly adhered to. In the journalism module for Diploma students, experiments are mentioned, but the learning emphasizes mainly the tutor/mentor classroom disposition (doing tests and assignments, contact hours of lectures, among others). The field practical requirement is not emphasized enough as it is only awarded 10 credit values (*equivalent to 4 hours only*) out of the total 129 credit values (*equivalent to 82 hours*) throughout the two-year program. This is according to the curriculum for (NTA level 5 in Journalism, p.7). The study suggests that Kolb's model should be adopted to adhere to the learning cycle.

Fig4. Adoption of the KOLB'S Experiential Learning Theory in Journalism training



(Source: Researcher Data analysis and Triangulation).

This model now means that in order for the learner to acquire knowledge and skills, they must be exposed to a continuous process of watching (reflective observation), thinking (conceptualizing), doing (active experiment), and feeling (concrete experience) what they are supposed to do. The knowledge and skills gained result from the whole process, which ought to be continuous.

In a similar light, the training of journalists, as suggested by Veglis and Maniou (2019) and Stark (2019), calls for more international collaborations among journalism schools since digitization has increased public awareness and interaction such that journalism education has moved from teaching to learning the ways of the real world. The regulatory frameworks, specifically TCRA, which has made efforts to digitize the nation, ought to embrace this shift to make the media sector more efficient. The agenda set during the COVID-19 pandemic, both internationally and locally, by the media in early 2020 revealed the power that the media still possesses in steering public opinion. This was also a time when journalists worldwide showcased a poor attire of professionalism when they kept reporting unconfirmed, biased, and uncertain news about the pandemic. "Some of the truths, albeit bitter, that emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic are "related to political authorities and community spirit" (Caron, 2021, p. 2).

The incidents of improper reporting, libel, and slander charges facing Tanzania media outlets in recent years have lowered the credibility of media houses, and others lost completely. The MCIT's Annual Media Report (2020) and the editors of the media houses interviewed in this study said that these are the effects of the Media Services Act of 2016, passed by the parliament of Tanzania. Cementing this truth, on the 2022 World Press Freedom Day held in Arusha, on the 3rd of May, the President, Honourable Samia Suluhu Hassan, insisted that journalists should observe caution when reporting Government affairs.

The President firmly said that despite journalists complaining about the punitive media laws, they should adhere to natural Tanzanian values of dealing with authority. The President urged the media to focus on development journalism for their society while maintaining all nations' important cultural aspects for peace and tranquillity (UNESCO Arusha Declaration of the World Press Freedom Day—WPF 2022). Media regulation also transcends the boundaries of the profession as far as the current wave of agenda-setting theory is concerned. In Kenya's Editors Guild Summit (KEG) in 2019, it was learned that most traditional media journalists sourced their information over social media and directly shared it via their public stations.

The major concern about this was the authenticity and credibility of the information. The one-time media audience has now changed into users and producers of information journalists, who are left hanging as their profession is swayed. This means lack of media regulation anyway. As a result, journalists form their own individualized agenda. The findings of this study contend that the McCombs et al. (1972) Agenda Setting Theory is challenged owing to the complaints from media editors and media owner's version that Journalists seem not to possess the power to steer public agenda because they lack the confidence to do so much that major public opinion is controlled by the social media.

News editors of Mwananchi Communication and TBC agreed that training must also concentrate on equipping the students with new media technologies for the timely identification of news items from global technologies alongside identifying fake stories against real stories; "*the media world is so fast*," they contend. More than ever, the media needs a vibrant, assertive, and activist personality to perform in the newsroom. This quality is not vividly reflected in the journalism graduating fellows. The news editors explain how even authentic news sources like the government and reliable business communications have preferred to share information through various reliable social media blogs like *Millard Ayo* or *Michuzi Blog*, to name but a few, for a spontaneous effect. The study by Zain (2014) notes the current media situation calls for a critical and analytical approach to journalism scholars and training institutions as it carries along a change in the paradigm of the theory. The key finding that this study unveils is that although there are challenges in the training of journalism, there is also a lack of coherence among the regulatory bodies in supervising the media profession from training to industry practice.

Conclusion

Many studies on the factors affecting the journalism profession have highlighted issues about the training, some about calibre of candidature, the ethical factor and somehow about the technological developments in the media. The link that merges these factors, such that the media profession can outstandingly project professionalism without blaming or having a dragging aliment, has yet to be exemplified. The study tried to obtain reflections on the journalism training and regulations that affect journalism practice. The study builds on the shoulders of pioneers in

the profession who tried to explain similar or part of the problems highlighted by this study but made singular recommendations for each factor studied. This linked study was a mission to restore the media's credibility in society as an important factor in national development.

Information is a powerful segment for any developing nation; in this case, the media has the imperative obligation to manifest the power to inform, educate, entertain, and stir national development. Guided by the objectives of the study, i.e., to assess the challenges in the field of journalism from the training institutions' perspective, the study has the opinion that although the training institutions have passed the benchmark of having adequate and reliable facilities and follow the education provision regulatory guidelines still does not guarantee successful entry in the field. The situation is two-way. The investigation on how the media dynamics inform professional journalism found that minimal support was available to student journalists entering the media houses for industry training.

Most of the time, the editors preferred a well-groomed personality with self-management skills to perform in the newsroom. The role of regulation and policy also affects the profession, as key guidelines are withheld within the regulatory body's parameters. There is no coordination or relation between two bodies that govern the same profession. Education and media regulators have no means of monitoring the journalism profession. The Civil Society Media Council of Tanzania is the one responsible for the media profession.

The study proved that the trainers performed their designated role of mentoring and directing students to attain their professional journalism skills very well according to curriculum directives. At the same time, also the media side performed their jobs well. However, as far as the problem of poor professionalism surrounding the practice soured, it was imperative to search for the missing link between the two variables. The study found out that the media side has issues like the advancement in digital technology, the editors' preference for a multimedia ability requirement of a journalist, dynamic changes in government policies that interfere with editorial preferences - guidelines, financial constraints of media houses, such that employment opportunities are limited, media research remains so limited and the huge number of journalism graduates who cannot be assimilated in the media. All these ailments reside in the professional aptitude of the media practice before the claims reach the journalism training.

Recommendations

In the light of these, the study recommends the following:

Journalism training institutions should invest in multimedia teaching and learning styles to respond to the requirements of the media sector. This may be by investing more in training facilities to suit the changing trends in the media environment. The enrolment of students should also consider market needs. This goes along by encouraging practical attachment learning with specific media specializations.

Media houses should create a department for mentoring field journalists with an in-house style and capacity to expose students, who, in the long run, may become their staff or be employed elsewhere. This should go alongside conducting media services research and development plans.

The training and media industry regulators should always harmonize their programs and current media needs and inform themselves to suit both: The proliferation of graduates from institutions and job opportunities should match the needs of the media industry or relevant communication and information. The Ministry of Information, Communication, and Information Technology should put in place an independent journalism professional regulatory authority to regulate all matters concerned with the profession, from funding training, research, media performance, and quality assurance.

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Integrating Africa's Triple Religious Heritage in Reclaiming Ethical Journalism in Tanzania: A Quest for Media Stakeholders' Dialogue

Pascal Adelard Shao

ABSTRACT

This paper argues for integrating religion into journalism to reclaim ethical and responsible practice. Specifically, the study sought to understand the perspectives of media stakeholders on the use of moral values embedded in African Traditional Religion (ATR), Christianity and Islam (Africa's triple religious heritage) in influencing ethical journalism practice in Tanzania. The current study has come in the wake of the persistence of violation of journalism ethics due to the failure to uphold self-regulation mechanisms through the observance of codes of ethics. Journalism flaws have led to the loss of public confidence in media. It is understood that journalists in Tanzania are believers of either African Traditional Religion, Christianity or Islam (Mbiti, 1969). All three religions, famously known as Africa's triple religious heritage, stress truth, fairness and honesty. Despite a plethora of literature on the deployment of religion on socio-political and cultural issues, little is known and studied on its application in journalism. In order to understand the missing link between upholding ethical journalism and religious beliefs, the study sought information from 83 media stakeholders using mixed research methods of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Media stakeholders acknowledged knowing the journalism codes of ethics and admitted to being believers of Christianity and Islam while not associating themselves with African Traditional Religion. Some of the respondents proposed the integration of Africa's triple religious heritage in journalism practice, while others opposed it by suggesting that commitment and constant reminders of journalism ethics would restore ethical journalism. The current study calls for a dialogue among media stakeholders to integrate values and principles embedded in the three religious beliefs to formulate an ethical journalism framework that fits the local realities of journalists in Tanzania.

Keywords: *African's Triple Religious Heritage; Ethical Journalism; Media Stakeholder Dialogue*

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Introduction

Journalism practice in Tanzania is flooded with chronicles of unethical reporting practices, sensationalism, conflict of interest and bribery. Journalists are alleged to indulge in

single source reporting (Tagalile, 2019, Spurk & Katunzi, 2018); partisanship, bias reporting and misleading headlines (Tagalile, 2015, Meena, 2012); character and business assassination (Rioba, 2012); corrupt practices and conflict of interest (Bilau, 2022, Kothari, 2018); invasion of privacy (Nuhu, 2010); abuse of the principle of presumption of innocence ((Mallya, 2012); 'defamation and inaccurate reporting' (Kilimwiko, 2009); misrepresentation and intentional distortion (Mbogora, 2012, p. 26); plagiarism, and failure to verify facts (Uki, 2014, Thomas, 2012) and many other unethical practices. Media practitioners have also been accused of non-compliance with editorial standards, lack of qualified journalists, lack of internal quality assurance checks within newsrooms and the presence of inexperienced editors and unqualified staff (Katunzi & Spurk, 2020 as cited in Katunzi and Ssenabulya, 2022, p. 3). Tales of these ethical transgressions have 'largely discarded integrity, one of the canons of journalism ethics' (Mbogora, 2012, p. 26). Media scholars have argued that unethical practices have not only 'undermined the credibility of media' (Kerunga Rowe & Gondwe, 2020, p.1) but also limited editorial autonomy (Mfumbusa, 2008). Moreover, the newspapers' credibility has dwindled for most of all the traditional media in the country (Katunzi & Spurk, 2020).

Media scholars argue that of all the ethical vices, bribery and corruption in journalism familiarly called 'brown envelope journalism' are persistent, widespread and are regarded as a norm, business-as-usual affair and modus operandi. It is reported that events cannot be covered without incentives, prompting organisers to set a budget for journalists to facilitate favourable coverage. Media scholars have observed that 'news sources recognise the lack of resources in the newsrooms, including lack of reliable access to transportation to bring the reporter back to the newsroom in a timely manner;' and thus are obliged to provide money for transport (Kothari, 2018, p. 232; Bilau, 2022). Incidences of journalists going to the field without being facilitated by their newsrooms and thus depending on the 'mercy' of the sources or events' organisers for transport and other facilities are plentiful in Tanzania. Journalists can be spotted at the end of every media event, waiting for politicians and other rich newsmakers to give them brown envelopes (Ibbi, 2016). Therefore, as Mpagaze and White (2010, p.547) pointed out, 'it is not clear what constitutes bribery in the African journalistic practice and what is the difference between providing customary hospitality at public events and heavy pressure from sources'. Such practice is taken for granted as some scholars defend that the 'concerned journalists belong to a society where a system of informal gratification is engrained in the local cultures and such does not pose an ethical problem to journalists' (Skjerdal, 2018, p. 164). Studies also show that some journalists admit to accepting bribes and remain objective and independent (Lodamo & Skjerdal, 2010; Nwabueze, 2010; Ongongo-Ongong'a & White, 2008). Notwithstanding, it was also observed that a number of brown envelope culprits are educated and trained journalists at MA and PhD levels (Mbwambo, 2013, 2009). This situation raises doubts about the kind of professional

training offered to journalism students in Tanzania. However, this circumstance seems to have spread across Sub-Saharan Africa, except South Africa. Events organisers in most parts of the region regard brown envelopes as a 'good neighbourhood act', which continues to paint journalism negatively.

In addition, ethical flaws by journalists in the Tanzanian political arena are also chronicled. In 2015, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Tanzania's Editors' Forum organised a seminar ahead of the General Elections. A total of 170 journalists from the Tanzania mainland and Isles were called for objective coverage of all registered parties and avoidance of partisanship (Lyimo, 2015). Paradoxically, the results of the 2015 seminar were gloomy as six dailies, namely *The Daily News*, *Habari Leo*, *Uhuru*, *Mzalendo*, *Mtanzania* and *Jambo Leo* tilted their coverage in favour of ruling party, *Chama cha Mapinduzi* and *Ukawa* while three dailies, *The Citizen*, *Mwananchi* and *Nipashe* exhibited a high degree of objectivity during the same period' (Election Monitor, 2015, p. 9). Since the first four newspapers above are run by taxpayers' money, they were expected to give all political parties equal priority and weight based on the news values. In the 2010 General Elections, media stakeholders were puzzled by the coverage of *The Daily News* and *Uhuru* which gave 'prominent coverage to Wilbroad Slaa's matrimonial scandal to demonise him as CHADEMA's presidential candidate, as a way to influence potential voters to reject him' (Kaigarula, 2010, p. 5).

The negative portrayal by *The Daily News* of Dr. Slaa's matrimonial affair was used as 'ammunition for soiling the credibility of candidates perceived as posing a threat to the establishment' (Kaigarula, 2010, p.5). The 2022 general elections went down to history as a number of senior journalists from both private and public media paraded for nomination in

political parties while they were active practitioners in journalism. Consequently, this scenario triggered a debate over the breaches of ethics and professionalism. The English daily, *The Citizen* (2022, p. 2) reported that 'the question that has been relayed to analysts is whether journalists should engage in active politics and whether their involvement does compromise their profession, media's integrity and its credibility.

Ethical malpractice in Tanzania could be contained if media self-regulation through the adherence to codes of ethics and the Ethics Committee could work as expected. The Media fraternity established codes of conduct in the 1990s to pre-empt government intervention in regulating the media. Following the persistence of ethical transgressions, the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) publishes memoranda regularly warning editors and reporters to avoid unethical reporting practices (Mfumbusa, 2010). The media watchdog, the Media Council of Tanzania, through its Ethics Committee, has no legal power to inflict penalties on erring journalists. Thus, self-regulation has been difficult to achieve. It is unfortunate, argues Rioba (2012, p. 20), that 'the media houses and editors violate most ethical guidelines, despite the fact that they took part in

formulating their code of conduct in July 2000 and vowed to adhere to it". In the same line of thinking, the media scholar and trainer, Samwilu Mwaffisi argues that 'even some governments support self-regulation because it removes from their shoulders the burden of being seen as dictators that muzzle the press (Media Watch, 2014, p. 8). Tales of failure to execute self-regulation mechanisms in Tanzania are enormous as 'editors do not appreciate being quizzed by non-journalists who make up the MCT Ethics Committee and others who are not or have never been involved in deadline pressures under which newsrooms decisions are made' (Media Watch, 2005, p. 4).

A notable example is the editor of the Kiswahili daily, *Dira ya Mtanzania*, who declined to appear before the MCT's Ethics Committee for two consecutive sessions (February 7, 2012, and March 13, 2012, respectively) to respond to defamation charges registered by the former Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Industry, Trade and Marketing, Joyce Mapunjo. The case was arbitrated in his absence, and the paper was ordered to compensate for the costs incurred during the case and to print apologies in its four consecutive editions starting from March 19, 2012 (Thomas, 2012). A study done by Riobain (2012) revealed several reasons that hinder MCT from executing its powers to uphold media ethics. Among others, they include media owners paying subscription fees to MCT, making them think the council had no right to admonish them in public, as well as 'the dilemma of newsroom value-which subject journalists to western notion of journalism on one hand and African values on the other, something which tend to affect the way media people respond to the idea and practice of self-regulation' (Rioba, 2012, p. 217).

Perhaps the central concern in this self-regulation debate is the perception that the codes of ethics that journalists in Tanzania vowed to abide by are Eurocentric and do not fit into local realities (Mohammed, 2021, Mabweazara, 2018; Shaw, 2018; Omotoso, 2017, Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2017, Skjerdal, 2015, Wasserman, 2014, Kur & Nwosu, 2013, Obonyo, 2011, Banda, 2009, Mfumbusa, 2008, Tomaselli, 2003). Such a critical stance is elucidated by scholars such as Umejei (2018), who calls for the 'hybridisation of journalism' and (Banda, 2009), seeking dialogue on the ground that 'journalistic norms are contextual, shaped by a hierarchy of influences that include global and local values such as culture, political climate and religion' (Pintak, 2013, p. 1, Bilau, 2022). The same line of thinking is echoed by Wasserman (2014, p. 785-786), who points out that the 'dominant northern perspectives in media theory and ethics are themselves rooted in specific cultural conditions, despite occasional claims to universal validity'. It is important to note that 'certain similarities exist between journalism cultures across the globe, but also that significant differences persist, owing to a variety of political, economic, cultural, technological and historical factors' (Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2017, p. 525; Mabweazara, 2018). Therefore, journalism ethics and communication at large cannot be universal, and a call for localisation and contextualisation of the same is of paramount importance.

Putting this contention in clearer terms, a need for scientific inquiries which will permit the deployment of Africa's triple religious heritage to achieve ethical journalism in Tanzania is

seen to be long overdue, as it was proposed two decades ago by Mfumbusa (2004). Such a proposal from Mfumbusa was an outcome of an attempt to replicate Boeyink's 1994 study on the use of codes of ethics in the US media but only to find out that conditions necessary for their use as found in the US did not exist in Tanzania. Thus, in order to achieve a meaningful journalism practice in Africa, scholars such as Wards 2008, p. 142 cited in Kothari (2018) proposed an engagement of 'cross-cultural dialogue, which will not only de-Westernise media ethics but also open up space for the inclusion of other ethical systems. In this sense, these new ethical systems will likely consider that journalists in places like Tanzania need job security, a censorship-free working environment, and support from employers and news sources (Omojola, 2008, cited in Kothari 2018). It is such journalistic realities which beg for alternative journalism norms and necessitated the present study.

As previously stated, the integration of African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam in the practice of journalism in Tanzania is probably the pertinent solution. Africa's triple religious heritage influences have helped to shape the social welfare of the Tanzanians and Africans at large and, if integrated into journalism, may presumably influence ethical practice. This is precisely why this article regards the integration of Africa's triple religious heritage as a booster of ethics and an alternative tool to remedy the current status of journalism practice in Tanzania. Since ethics and religion are about character building and religion is part and parcel of the lives of Tanzanians, the paper attempts to illustrate how religious values in which journalists make part of their adherents can catalyse ethical journalistic practice.

Africa's triple religious heritage: A conceptual framework

Studies on religion in Africa and Tanzania show that most Tanzanians are religious, and religion plays an important role daily (Tanner, 2012, Gomez, 2013). The renowned African scholar in African religions and culture, John Samuel Mbiti asserts that African people are 'notoriously religious' (Aderibigbe, 2015) and that "religion permeates all departments of life to such an extent that it is not easy or possible to isolate it (Mbiti, 1999, p. 1 as cited in Wari, 2009). As a result of Africans' religiosity, Aderibidge (2015, p. 7), points out that, "Africans have evolved and sustained religiously conscious communities, either as devotees of the traditional religion, or as followers of the two "converting religions"- Christianity and Islam.

The current study deals with the three religious beliefs, which are the major religions in terms of a number of adherents and mostly practised by the indigenous Tanzanians. Tanzania's post-colonial national population census of 1967 on religion registered the number of Christians at 32 per cent and Muslims at 30 per cent, while the rest are ATR believers. Following disputes on statistics of adherences of Christians and Muslims, each claiming the majority in population, religious demography in the subsequent censuses was removed. Since then, there have been no recent and concrete statistics on religious demography, an attempt to promote national cohesion and harmony (Mfumbusa, 2014, Westerlund, 1980). The country's population consists of more than 120 tribes who believe in three mentioned religions, while in the real sense ATR is absorbed

in the two religions and thus “influences the beliefs of Christians and Muslims which has led to syncretism” (Tanner, 2012, p. 3). This means that many imaginations, traditions and rituals found among Christians and Muslims in Tanzania have no basis in the *Bible* or the *Quran* (Ogunsade, 2004, p. 433 cited in Tanner 2012, Muzorewa, 1985, p. 31 cited in Agbiji and Swart, 2015). Syncretism has a huge impact with enormous influences and holds on the totality of the African life, making the Triple religious heritage a civic religion as they have “sustained the unique identity of Africans as a people vast in religious values” (Aderibigbe (2015, p. 28). Moreover, religion has been pervasive to the extent that one finds it difficult to differentiate between ‘pure’ Islam or Christianity as different shades of one religion are present in each other.

Manifestations of religious beliefs are evidenced not only in the artefacts such as churches, mosques, shrines, and dress codes but also in bicycles, motor vehicles and clothes such as T-shirts, Islamic robes, veils (bubui) and skull caps (though not common in public offices) and khanga. In addition, the Tanzanian government made it official that matters pertaining to adherence to religion are private. Article 19 in the Constitution stipulates that "every person has the right to the freedom to have conscience, or faith, and choice in matters of religion, including the freedom to change his religion or faith". The secular stance of the government is that "*serikalihainadini*" is literary, meaning that the 'government has no religion' is intended to safeguard national cohesion and tranquillity, and religious leaders have been called to use their following, stature and positions in maintaining the national values. However, the government's intervention in religious issues in Tanzania is experienced when the national values of peace and harmony are put in jeopardy.

Since journalists are among the believers of these religions, they have acquired principles and values enshrined in them first before becoming journalists. In Christian faith, as Oosthuizen (2014, p. 23) argues, ‘journalists applying the principle of agape or believe in loving and caring of people, implies that they also provide timely, reliable, undistorted, accurate, understandable and captivating news. In the Islamic religion, journalists "are implored to follow a 'decent style' in carrying out their duties and to preserve the integrity of the profession and Islamic traditions by avoiding the use of offensive words, publishing obscene material, indulging in cynicism, slander, provocation of '*fitna*' (understood to be things that cause problems between people), rumour mongering and other forms of defamatory action (Oosthuizen, 2014, p. 29). African traditional religions, through oral culture, also emphasize accuracy, honesty, credibility, social responsibility, and accountability and discourage false impressions, misleading people, deception and manipulation, and many other moral concerns (Chioma & Johnson, 2014, p. 32).

It suffices to say that religious teachings are important to build a foundation for journalism ethics as they define their adherents' certain principles and actions. In this sense, religious teaching becomes part of their guidance in their day-to-day performance, and thus, if deployed into professional practice, they are likely to strengthen media ethics and guide journalists.

Methodology

The need to know stakeholders' perspectives on integrating Africa's triple religious heritage into journalism practice following the persistence of ethical malpractices was critical in the current study. The study imagined that several issues have been said to be a remedy to the current state of journalism practice in Tanzania from outsiders' perspectives. It was found important to seek information from practitioners and those related to media operations. Given this intention, the study used a mixed methods research approach to collect data. It conducted in-depth interviews and supplied questionnaires to media stakeholders. The use of 'mixed methods for collection of both qualitative and quantitative data was applied to strengthen the study by neutralising the bias and weaknesses of each form of data that would rise when a single method is used' as suggested by (Creswell 2014, cited in Kayungi, 2021, p.77).

Both data collection methods were used to complement each other (Rioba, 2012). Some of the questions that could not be answered, for example, in the qualitative method, were asked using quantitative ones, thus enriching the study. As pointed out by Denzin and Lincoln (2011, as cited in Toivanen, (2014, p. 50), the use of a variety of methods, materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study "adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth of data." A combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches brings together the strength of both approaches, resulting in a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Maiga, 2017, as cited in Kayungi, 2021, p. 80).

In this sense, the study used questionnaires to collect data to establish the trend and generalize the journalists' (reporters') views and opinions on the influence of journalists in reclaiming ethical journalism in Tanzania. Qualitative unstructured interviews were also used to collect data (critical discourse analysis) from key informants, including editors, religious leaders, communication experts, and Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) personnel. These participants were sampled to establish a deeper understanding of the state of media ethics in Tanzania.

The study sampled 86 media stakeholders from Dar es Salaam and Mwanza who were contacted to fit the mixed research methods. The media stakeholders were selected purposively and conveniently. First, the researcher contacted 75 journalists using convenient or accidental sampling. The respondents were found in their respective newsrooms. When the COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak, most reporters worked from home, and entry to newsrooms was restricted to a few. The respondents in this stage were given questionnaires to fill in and were given time of their convenience. Second, the researcher sought permission and readiness to conduct a face to face conversation with nine respondents from Sahara Media Group, British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC Swahili Tanzania), TAMWA's chairperson, MCT's Programme Officer, religious leader, Editors from *The Guardian Limited* and *Tanzania Standard (Newspapers) Limited*.

In the quantitative approach, the sample size was conveniently drawn from 75 reporters

or journalists. A list of questionnaires was administered to them to solicit information about the problem under study. This second stage was used to compare information obtained from in-depth interviews with senior reporters and editors, religious leaders, and other media stakeholders. The media houses that were contacted are the Sahara Media Group (SMG), Tanzania Standard (Newspapers) Limited (TSN) hosting *The Daily News* and *Habari Leo* newspapers, Mwananchi Communications Limited, the owners of *Mwananchi* and *The Citizen* newspapers and The Guardian Limited, mothers of *Nipashe* and *The Guardian* newspapers.

In this study, the researcher analysed data obtained from interviews using thematic analysis as qualitative approach dictates. The researcher identified the themes and categories that emerged from the theory, collected data, and then attempted pattern matching of the categories from data to see whether they matched or did not. The second stage was quantitative data analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics from the data obtained from reporters. The responses were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25 to find frequencies and percentages. The responses were presented in tables, pie charts, and figures.

Findings

In order to examine the way journalists and other media stakeholders perceive the integration of religion in ethical journalism practice, interviews and questionnaires were used for data collection, and the analytical strategies were aimed at offering a detailed description of what emerged from the collected information. Looking at respondents' communication through questionnaires, it emerges quite candidly that religion has a functional role in the practice of journalism. Much as there is a variety of responses, an overall examination of the findings shows that respondents accept the integration of religion in journalism ethical practices due to the following reasons: it will support unity and peace in the country (this was endorsed at 30%); it will influence compliance to professional ethics (37%); uphold objectivity (24%) and promote honest (36%). The respondents also reported other importance such as "to uphold discipline (29%); to stir hard work (21%); 'to cover development-related stories" (20%), and 'to influence solidarity among journalists' scored (17%).

Data from interviews supported the above questionnaire data by showing that religion functions as a reminder of the adherence to professional ethics, offers a foundation to ethics, shapes individuals' behaviours and accountability, and forbids evils in society and journalism practices. Data from interviews also revealed that the 'fear of God' that is anchored in the foundation of religion can have positive effects on journalism practices as well. A God-fearing journalist will strive not to commit sins in their day to day life.

“When someone has a fear of God, which is the foundation of all religions, it implies that it is easy to comply with the guiding principles of our career. One of the principles is that, religion wants us to exercise justice... Justice is

everywhere; it is even said in the Bible. Religious principles will make you know the impact of what you are doing. When you have fear of God, you will not report information that damages someone's personality. The fear of God also gives you an understanding of many worldly issues and thus enables us to live well by complying with the principles of the society around us".

Concurring with the above argument, another interviewee said that religions contribute greatly to journalists and shape individuals' behaviours in a manner accepted in society. The other interviewee, on the other hand, reported that: "*religion reminds journalists on the adherence of the existing codes of conduct in journalism profession, for example, the issue of balancing stories"*.

The media stakeholders also said that religion forbids its adherents to commit sins. All the respondents argued that lies and injustice in reporting done by a section of journalists as major sins that religions forbid. An editor during the interview narrates:

"The major function of religion is on ethics.... Before a journalist decides to report a story should weigh it by referring to his or her belief and his society if the matter has an effect. I say this because, if a journalist wants to write an issue that sounds defamatory or it accuses an individual, then he or she has to measure if it can uplift or undermine someone. For example, if someone has a sexual harassment scandal, basing on your own ethics, you must consider news the way the news story will be received in the society. You must evaluate it to see if it is worth reporting or not. Do not report for the sake of reporting ...otherwise you may think you are doing a just job".

Responding to the question on journalists' persistence in non-compliance to codes of ethics despite participating in enacting them and MCT urges its members to comply, the study found out that the vices are caused by new communication technologies; negligence of journalists and editors; economic hardship of journalists and influx of new entrants in the profession from schools of journalism. An official from the Media Council of Tanzania said that:

"Human beings should be reminded on adherence to ethics every day. Just like what religious teachings repeatedly do to their adherents to avoid sins. There is no way it will reach a time we can say that 'we have stabilised on ethics'. There are new entrants in the field as journalism schools are releasing students and graduates every day. Thus, compliance to ethics is something that should be insisted regularly. We at MCT, have a tradition of visiting rogue media in the country to learn issues that made them not to stick to ethics. This is because journalists violate journalism ethics on the pretext of economic hardships. In

my opinion, neither money nor low wages, can be cited as an excuse for violation of ethics. Compliance to ethics should go hand in hand as adherence to God's commandments”.

In general, the respondents said that religion has a contribution not only to journalists but also to the general public, as religion teaches its adherents to live according to the will of God.

Journalists responding to questionnaires said they employ religion as their guidance in journalism practice in Tanzania. They reported that religion guides them to observe 'Objectivity, fairness and balance' at 27%, 'Truthfulness in writing and presentation' at 20%, and 'Respect for constituted authority in news sourcing' at 15%. Moreover, 14% were directed on 'giving priority to human interest issues', eight percent (8%) on 'avoidance of character and business assassination'; and 5 percent named 'use of accepted language and contents.

Respondents in in-depth interviews said that their religious beliefs have made them make decisions that improved their performance in journalism in areas of objectivity and fairness, as well as observing reporting events and issues that inform and educate and have public interest. The study found that respondents weigh the stories to report and the stories to improve before using them. An editor in a TV station said that:

“I do not allow the use of a story that goes contrary to journalism ethics. If I can improve it, I will use it”. It happened in the past a school owner in Mwanza wanted to support students from poor families and he wanted coverage. For me I saw the story was not of public interest, but for his own glory, so I ignored it”.

The media stakeholders in a survey and interviews gave mixed responses on the state of journalism ethics in Tanzania. One group of stakeholders said it was good, while others said the situation was bad. In a survey, respondents evaluated the state of journalism ethics in Tanzania as 93 percent good and 7 percent bad. Respondents in interviews also graded the state of journalism ethics in the country differently. Some respondents expressed their sentiments as bad, while others argued that journalism is improving. A pastor who has worked with the media in Tanzania delivered a peculiar response that:

“That ethics among journalists has dwindled. Even ethical scribes are also grouped in the same basket with rogue ones because of what is happening in the field. Journalists are now reporting trivial issues which do not educate people instead they motivate them to commit evils. Such reportage condones instead of reprimanding evils thus ‘legalise’ them as it is the way of life. I am of the view that journalists should evaluate themselves and keep in mind that they are the citizens like others. They have to accept their conditions of low salaries while remaining honest to report true and reliable news. I am sure they will attract

more audience to their news”.

Additional findings drawn from questionnaires illustrate that about 74 percent of the respondents answered YES to the contention that the integration of religion into journalism ethical practices is useful. The remaining percentages show opposition to the subject matter by ten percent (10%) and not being aware by the same ten percent (10%). Six percent (6) of the people involved in the study did not show their position. Respondents who said that religion could influence ethical journalism by 'Reporting issues of development and safeguard peace' amounted to 20 %; 'Reporting issues of public interest objectively,' seventeen percent (17%); 'Use of acceptable language and contents in Tanzanian context' (16 %); 'Reporting the truth without fear of the authority and owners' twelve percent (12%) and ten percent (10%) percent of respondents agreed with the idea of 'Bridging the public with government and religious leaders'. Other issues raised include: 'Reporting balanced account of events' at 9 percent; 'Giving voice to the marginalised, e.g., elderly, people with disabilities' at 7%; 'Religion be part of the codes of journalism ethics' at 7 percent; and four percent argued for religion being integrated in journalism curriculum'. Support for the idea of integrating religion into journalism ethical practices also viewed religion as something which can rescue the situation if employed positively;

“In the contemporary time, there are issues of human rights which contradict religion, for example, same sex marriages. They are considered as legal and human rights, but our religions tell us a marriage is between a man and a woman. Thus, supporting them would lead to destruction of the morals in the world. Journalists should not report certain religious believers as terrorists, not all Muslim are terrorists. We need to use religion ethically and positively to rectify bad behaviours so as to have good journalism that focuses on values, instead of writing for the sake of writing,”

A media scholar and trainer who once worked as a reporter and served in senior positions in media management sees religion differently. For him, religion can play its part as a reminder to its adherents to commit themselves to its teachings and values:

“Religion can help to remind journalists on their principles, but it cannot change them. The change is on journalists themselves to honour their own principles. It is impossible for a journalist not to believe in ethics. Even in religion, if you do not believe in God’s words even if you go to church several times, you will not believe. Commitment to ethics is a personal issue, ethics is a moral obligation and there is nowhere it is written as a law”.

Apart from the description of the findings presented immediately above, there was also an issue with including religion in journalism curricula. Drawing from the responses offered by

individuals who participated in the study, there seem to be diversified views on the subject matter. On the one hand, there is the view that religion cannot be part of curricula because it is difficult to choose which one religion(s) to include in the training and which not - thus, a risk of causing discrimination in the country. On the other hand, some respondents thought that the time for integrating religion in journalism training is not yet ripe, thus calling for more discussions and thorough research on the matter.

However, respondents who subscribe to the idea of inculcating religion into journalism curricula suggest that religion should not only be taught in journalism schools but also from primary school education onwards in order to enable students to get the foundations of religion and grow up with them:

“When a child acquires religious foundations at a tender age is different from teaching religion to a person at 29, who is aspiring for the ‘sacrament of confirmation’. That person has missed religious foundations, so probably will read the bible and pass the exam to get the sacrament. But if we start from infant stage, we shall have professionals who have the fear of God,”

Given this observation, the study sees the need for religious leaders to have special gatherings with journalists to discuss better ways of solving unethical practices.

Conclusion

Following the persistent unethical journalism practice in Tanzania, a call was made by scholars such as Mfumbusa (2004) and Rioba (2012) to conduct empirical studies on the importance of Africa's Triple Religious Legacy and 'oramedia' and other traditional forms of sharing information as they are practices and still relevant in Africa, in shaping values of journalists in Tanzania. It was believed that personal values shaped by first principles in religions are more important in shaping newsroom behaviour than professional values enshrined in codes of ethics. This hypothesis is supported by the results of the surveys and interviews of the present study. The role of religion cannot be underestimated as it 'provides the moral compass for both personal and professional conduct, emphasizing fairness, justice, and honesty in social interaction and relations and enables objectivity as the media fulfil its social responsibility function" (Chioma & Johnson, 2014, p.30). Journalists who adhere to their religious values are expected to be ethical and serve the masses according to their journalistic call.

In this sense, the findings agree with the views that religion as an instrument of socialization and social control, as Okon (2012) affirms, shapes its followers to conform to norms of the society for the common good, such as solidarity and cohesion, and provides penalties for the deviants. Credits are attributed to the socialization and training process by parents or organizations, such as religious and training institutions and media houses, that a person is oriented to learn the ways of a given society or social group. One plausible explanation is that there is an obvious link

between religion and ethics (Tittle & Wlech, 1983; Weaver & Agle, 2002, as cited in Parboteeah, Hoegl and Cullen, 2008) and thus, religions, through the values they embody; often build the basis for what is considered right and wrong (Turner, 1997, as cited in Parboteeah, Hoegl and Cullen, 2008). Thus, these norms, values, and beliefs are often codified into a religious code such as the Bible, the Koran, or indigenous African traditions. It is obvious that religious teachings and instructions have common aspects which lay emphasis on justice and fairness, which are compared with the ethical codes of journalism thus building a foundation of mass communication and journalism practice.

Generally speaking, it can be said that the link between religion and journalism is obvious. If the right moral system is founded, the triple religious heritage of indigenous, Islamic, and Western forces can influence responsible and ethical journalism in Tanzania. This implies that journalism in Tanzania does not need religious journalists but journalists should practice their craft/profession with a religious flavour. It will be possible when journalists in Tanzania embrace religious (Africa's Triple Religious Heritage) values and integrate them in their professional practices. This is likely to enrich the practice and give it more relevance and value to the audience in particular and the society in general.

Given the mixed feelings observed by this study on integrating religion into journalism ethical practices, a new journalism framework in Tanzania is thus imperative. For a country like Tanzania, where religion is part and parcel of people's lives, integrating religion into journalism is perhaps the most important decision. Probably one of the pertinent ways to realize this is through dialogue. This could involve all media stakeholders and set up mechanisms that will pave the way for a new journalism framework, putting ethical practices in its realm.

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Influence of Voter Education through the Media on the Awareness and Participation in Nigeria's 2023 General Elections among Residents of South-East Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of voter education via the media on the awareness and participation of the residents of South-East Nigeria in Nigeria's 2023 general elections. The quantitative approach and the descriptive survey design were used for the study. The residents of South-Eastern Nigeria constituted the population of the study from where a sample size of 384 was drawn using the creative research system online sample size calculator. The multistage sampling technique was used to select those who participated in the study, while the questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection. The generated data were cleaned and manually edited for any irregularities. The data were entered in screens designed using Microsoft Excel. The data captured in Microsoft Excel were exported to SPSS version 20 for more detailed analysis. Logical checks and frequency runs were made on all variables to improve the accuracy and consistency of the data and identify any outliers before actual data analysis. Descriptive statistics of frequency count was used for data analysis and presented in tables which were used to address the research questions. Findings revealed that the extent to which the respondents were influenced by voter education messages through the media to participate in voter registration for the 2023 general election was high in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria; the extent of influence of voter education messages via the media on the respondents awareness of the political parties that fielded candidates in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria was high; voter education messages via the media highly enhanced respondents' awareness of how to cast their ballots in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria; the extent of influence of voter education via the media on respondents' identification of their polling units was low during the general elections in Nigeria; and finally, the respondents were highly influenced to go and cast their votes during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. In line with the findings, it was recommended, among others, that efforts should be made by those packaging voter education messages (the Independent Electoral Commission of Nigeria, the media, etc.) in Nigeria to stress how best the electorate could locate / identify their polling units to enable them to cast their votes.

Keywords: voter education, media, awareness, participation, general elections

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Introduction

Democracy thrives on inclusiveness. No democracy can be viable and endure without citizenship engagement with and in the political process. The central role people play in governance is the major factor that distinguishes democracy from authoritarianism, and the well-being of democracy is largely dependent on the trust of the citizens in democratic institutions. Only with such trust and confidence in the workability of democracy as a system of government do citizens invest and get involved in public affairs. It is thus incumbent in a democracy that conscious efforts are made to build popular trust in the electoral system and promote mass political engagement as a desideratum for quality governance and government legitimacy. Generally, education, and voter education in particular, is a way citizens' cognitive and affective orientation toward the political system is enhanced (Odukoya, 2014).

Given the context and history of the media and electoral democracy in Nigeria, an effective civic and voter education program disseminated, especially via various media platforms, is required to promote national unity, nurture democratic culture, and prevent violence. Regular elections allow citizens to express their will and determine the direction of the government. To access this opportunity and make sensible choices, however, citizens must be aware of the purpose of the elections, their voting rights and obligations, the dates and procedures of elections, and the range of electoral options. This gamut of activities falls within the sphere of voter education, and the media stands as a potent channel through which such messages can be disseminated to the people (Orji, 2014).

Voter Education is the process by which citizens are educated on registering and voting, developing a sense of civic duty to participate in the electoral process, and learning to respect the outcome of legitimate elections (NDI, 2013). It is a publicity and mobilization exercise that is aimed at creating the required awareness among the citizens and mobilizing them to participate in the electoral process in any way desired, such as contesting for elective positions, working as part of the electoral management body as well as going to vote for preferred candidates. These are some of the numerous gains of voter education that are significantly made possible via media distribution of relevant voter education messages.

The role of voter education in any electoral process cannot be underestimated. With

respect to past experience in many parts of the world, voters will likely be ready, willing, and able to participate in the electoral process when enough education has been given (Akintyo, 2010). Prior to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, the need for well-articulated voter education via the media was stressed. Accordingly, the media of mass communication, such as the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), African Independent Television (AIT), Channels Television, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), Punch Newspaper, Guardian Newspaper, etc., came up with programmes and embarked on aggressive education of the electorates on various electoral issues intending to create the necessary awareness and mobilize the public to participate in the elections. Some of the voter education messages aired periodically by the media included “Register and vote,” “Your vote can make Nigeria great,” “Decide your future with your vote,” “How to cast your ballot,” “Avoid invalid vote,” “Know your polling units and date/time,” “candidates and political parties,” “The Office of the Citizen is the highest office in Nigeria,” “Your Vote is your right,” “Decide your future,” “Register to move Nigeria forward” etc. All these voter education messages by the media were aimed at creating the necessary awareness and mobilizing the public to participate in the 2023 general elections.

Statement of the Problem

Evidence from studies has shown that strategic communication is central to the effective delivery of voter education. Scholars such as Blake (2016) and Cole (2018) believe that any voter education to increase voters’ awareness and participation during elections must reasonably increase knowledge, change attitudes, and enhance easy adaptation of proper voting directives.

The pride of any democratically elected government is enhanced when the voter turnout gets close to 100%. This is only possible if voter apathy, which is a growing concern in many democracies, is reduced through voter education. In transitional contexts, voter education programs should not simply focus on teaching voters to learn where, when, and how to vote. They should also work to convince voters that voting will make a difference. It encompasses the basic voter information that every voter must have to arrive prepared at the voting station and vote on the set voting day. Voters’ education sensitizes the electorates on the importance of participating in elections that stimulate and consolidate democracy (Electoral Commission of Kenya, 2007; Jennings, 1999; Godana, 2015). It is worth noting that voter education makes information available and accessible to all constituents using various communication platforms to improve the citizens’ level of electoral awareness and get them to participate in the election. Mass media is key in increasing voter awareness and subsequent election participation.

Nigeria’s most recent general elections were held in 2023. In the elections, the president, vice president, and members of the legislature were elected. At the same time, governors of the thirty-six (36) states of the country, including members of the legislature of the states, were also elected. Over one year after the elections, studies regarding mass media performance in raising awareness and heralding participation in the elections among residents of South-East Nigeria are still scant, hence the need for this proposed research. To this end, the study empirically

ascertained the level of influence of mass media voter education messages on the awareness and participation in Nigeria's 2023 general elections among residents of South-East Nigeria.

Brief Overview of South-Eastern Nigeria

The South-Eastern part of Nigeria is one of the six (6) geopolitical zones of Nigeria. According to the National Population Commission (NPC) of Nigeria, the zone has a population of over twenty-three (23) million. The zone is the home of one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The indigenes of the zone are referred to as the Igbos and the Igbo language is the indigenous language of the area. Five States constitute the South-Eastern Nigeria. They are Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. Those from the zone are predominantly engaged in private businesses and entrepreneurship with sufficient interest in politics. They also love getting exposed to the media to be updated on various issues and developments in Nigeria and different parts of the world. So many media establishments are in the zone, including broadcast, print, and online media platforms. The media in the zone disseminate timely information on different issues (including issues on politics) to the residents.

Objectives of the Study

The broad aim of this study is to ascertain the extent of influence of mass media voter education messages on the awareness and participation in the 2023 general elections among residents of South-East Nigeria. However, the following specific objectives were raised for the study.

1. Determine the extent to which mass media voter education messages influenced residents to participate in voter registration exercise for the 2023 general elections.
2. Determine the extent to which mass media voter education messages improved the residents' awareness of the political parties that participated in the 2023 general elections.
3. Ascertain the extent to which mass media voter education messages enhanced the residents' awareness of how to cast ballots in the 2023 general elections.
4. Establish the extent to which mass media voter education messages promoted voters' identification of polling units during 2023 general elections.
5. Ascertain the extent to which mass media voter education messages influenced residents to participate in casting of ballots during the 2023 general elections

Research Questions

In line with the specific objectives, the following research questions guided the study

1. What is the extent to which mass media voter education messages influenced residents to participate in voter registration exercise for the 2023 general elections?
2. To what extent did the mass media voter education messages improve the residents' awareness of the political parties that participated in the 2023 general elections?
3. What is the extent to which mass media voter education messages enhanced the residents' awareness of how to cast ballots in the 2023 general elections?

4. To what extent did the mass media voter education messages promote voters' identification of their polling units during 2023 general elections?
5. What is the extent to which mass media voter education messages influence residents to participate in casting of ballots during the 2023 general elections?

Literature Review

Brief discourse on media and voter education

The term voter education is generally used to describe the dissemination of information, materials and programmes designed to inform electorates about the specifics and mechanics of the voting process for a particular election. Voter education, in this regard, involves providing information on who is eligible to vote, where and how to register, how the electorate can check the voters list to ensure they have been duly included, what type of elections are being held, where and how to vote, who the candidates are and how to file complaints (Okon, 2013).

Voter education is to make information available and accessible to all constituents using various communication platforms with the ultimate aim of improving the citizens' level of electoral awareness. The communication channels should be aimed at achieving coverage of all the electorate. An effective voter education campaign starts early and continues throughout the electoral process. Very early in the process, eligible voters should be informed about the voter registration process so they have ample time to register. They should be told how and where to check their respective voter lists to ensure their entries are correct. Voters should be informed on the type of election to be held, the polling date and location, when the polling station will be opened, and How to cast their ballots. These messages should be communicated to the people through different media (Agyiri, 2012).

Mass media have been found to be a fundamental source of voter information. In this regard, there is a need for the media to inform and inform adequately. Objectivity is key; subjectivity is out. Media reports to educate and enlighten the electorate in the context of successful elections must encompass the 5Ws & H (what, where, when, who, why, and how). Media reports should not just stop at generalizations such as "the election was successful." If you say elections were successful, then show the how and why of the report (Okon, 2015).

A public outreach strategy in raising electoral awareness should include detailed information about how to vote and how the overall system works. The strategy should consider the target audiences and use different types of media (TV, radio, press, Internet) based on the country context and, in particular, the mediums through which different segments of voters most commonly consume information (National Democratic Institute, 2013).

The right to vote can only be understood in the context of awareness of democratic culture and processes, the rights of the individual and minorities, the rule of law, and the role of government in a democracy. A UNDP report in 2013 described the increased participation of a

well-informed citizenry in democratic processes, including elections, to influence decision-making on matters that affect their lives. To make sensible choices, however, citizens must be aware of an election's purpose, their voting rights and obligations, the dates and procedures, and the range of electoral options, and know how to vote. Voter education aims to make information available and accessible to all constituents (Rackner & Svasand, 2005).

Review of Related Studies

Agyiri (2012) did a study to assess voter education on electoral processes in New Juaben municipality. The study, among other things, analyzed the perception of the effectiveness of voter education and the strategies for promoting voter education. The descriptive research design was used to carry out the study. Data was collected from 370 voters using a questionnaire. The study's findings showed that most voters perceive the voter education programme as reasonably effective. Sufficient information on voting, voter registration centres, contestants, and political parties was not provided (Agyiri, 2012). The findings of this study imply that adequate electoral awareness messages were not provided to the people to enhance their electoral participation.

Odukoya (2014) reported that a study entitled *National Youth Survey by Canada Public Policy Forum* was carried out in 2012, to measure the effectiveness of civic and voter education among youths in Canada. The report of the survey showed that voting among the youth was on the decline in the most recent elections. Youth turnout for elections was put at between 34-38 percent. Many young non-voters surveyed felt they lacked the knowledge to participate—specifically about the candidates, political parties, and their platforms. The respondents, therefore, scored low on voter education messages (Odukoya, 2014). This finding reveals the ineffectiveness of voter education messages in making the desired impact among Canadian youths.

In Uganda, the voter education program under the Deepening Democracy component of the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) was implemented by 14 partners that were contracted by the DGF to conduct Civic/Voter Education in 80 districts since 2011. The partners transitioned from Civic Education in June 2015 until May 2016 to support the 2016 general elections voter education requirements. Consequently, a study was conducted to ascertain the cumulative results of the voter education programme over one year. The surveyed population was 600, inclusive of a 10% non-response rate, and the actual usable returned survey instruments were 588, representing a response rate of 98%.

Findings from the study showed that the knowledge among the targeted beneficiaries of the programme significantly increased and influenced their participation in the electoral process. The evaluation found that the methods for raising electoral awareness were appropriate. These included the use of the radio, talk shows on the radio, road shows, posters/ leaflets, community sensitization meetings, community drama/theatre, and road shows, among others. The evaluation found that radio talk shows were still the most effective channel of awareness (89%) among both

the youth in urban and rural areas.

Other channels like social media were rated at WhatsApp (28%), Facebook (29%), Twitter (17%), and other social media (25%). The respondents adjudged as effective the messages on presidential elections (94%), registration to vote (92%), voting instructions (84%), voting in elections (80%), and party primaries (80%). The use of social media to raise awareness among university students was found relevant since this group accesses the internet (mainly through mobile phones) almost daily. The study also indicates that at least 60% of the general public had received voter education from the radio, with almost $\frac{3}{4}$ agreeing that this communication channel was suitable (Democratic Governance Facility, 2016). Revelations from the above findings indicate that the electoral awareness effort had the desired impact of providing the people with relevant information to enhance their electoral awareness and participation.

Godana (2015) investigated the influence of voter education approaches on election outcomes in Isiolo North Constituency, Isiolo County, Kenya. It focused on study objectives, which sought to establish whether the voter education content, training of voter education providers, methods used, and time in the provision of voter education would influence election outcomes. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and collected data using questionnaires. The study used both stratified and simple random sampling techniques, and data were analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) software system. The study findings revealed that voter education content had the highest influence on the people, with a correlation of 52.5% (Godana, 2015). This implies that electoral awareness messages significantly promote people's awareness of the electoral processes, such as voting procedures, candidates contesting the elections, election dates, political parties, and registration points.

Okon (2013) did a study entitled *Voter Education by the Nigerian Broadcast Media: A Normative Appraisal of three Radio Stations in Port Harcourt Metropolis*. This study explored whether Nigerian broadcast media, especially Radio, has played a role in educating the masses on a wide range of issues. The study entails content analysis of cognate programs of three broadcast stations in Port Harcourt from January 2014 to March 2014. As inferred from the findings, the stations did not devote a significant portion of their informative and educative programs to democracy education geared towards enlightening the populace on the benefits of active participation in the democratic and electioneering processes characterized by voter registration, voter mobilization, and the exercise of franchise. Findings also show that the content of broadcast stations did not create a platform for discourse analysis as powered by issues driven politics (Okon, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The Agenda-Setting Theory and the Individual Differences Theory were used to explain this study.

Agenda Setting Theory

The notion of agenda setting by the media can be traced to Walter Lippmann in 1922. He suggested that the media were responsible for the “pictures in our heads.” Forty years later, Cohen 1963 articulated the ideas when he argued that the media may not always be successful in telling people what to think, but that they are usually stunningly successful in telling them what to think about. Lang and Lang reinforced this notion by saying that the mass media forces attention to certain issues (Ogbuoshi, 2011). Agenda setting is a process by which the relative attention given to items or issues in news coverage influences the rank and order of public awareness of issues and attribution of significance. An extension effect on public policy may occur McQuail (2000); cited in Olujimi and Adekunle (2010).

The Agenda Setting theory helps in the understanding of the effects of mass media content on individuals, mainly the target audience. This theory also explains the effect of the media on culture and society. It describes the powerful influence the media can have in determining the issues that members of society talk about and how they talk about them (Udeze & Chukwuma, 2013). According to Gladys and Kurt (1983), cited in Ikenna (2011, p.86), “...the media lack powers to suppress concern. However, they can do more than stimulate interest. By directing attention to these concerns, they provide a context that influences how people will talk about these matters... the media more than direct attention to a problem; they influence how people think about it.”

Through agenda setting, the media can influence voter awareness and participation in elections by providing them with relevant information which will help to stimulate public attention to the elections and offer cues to action. The implication is that the media, through agenda setting, can raise people's consciousness about elections and ultimately influence them to participate in the elections.

Individual Differences Theory

This theory was propounded by Melvin De Fleur in 1970. The theory emerged from expositions and laboratory experiments on behaviourism, classical conditioning, learning differences, and attitude formation in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Anaeto et al., 2012; Folarin, 2002). Anaeto et al., (2012, p.131) assert that the theory has two major assumptions:

1. Members of the mass media audience are made up of different people (in terms of psychographic characteristics)
2. Members of the mass media audience will react/respond to the same media messages in different ways. This is because of the differences in their psychographic characteristics.

The theory argues that because people vary significantly in their psychological makeup and because they have different perceptions of things, media influence differs from person to

person (Baran & Davis, 2012 citing DeFleur (1970, p.122; Baran & Davis (2012, p.181) averred that, more specifically, media messages contain particular stimulus attributes that have differential interaction with the personality characteristics of members of the audience.

In line with this study, disseminating voter education messages may have different effects on the residents based on their psychological dispositions when the messages were received. This means that the messages may significantly affect some people, while for others, the effect may be minimal or no effect at all. The implication is that some people may respond in accordance with the messages by participating in the elections, while others may react to the messages by abstaining from the elections.

Methodology

The quantitative approach was adopted for the study, the descriptive survey was used as the research design, and the questionnaire was utilized to collect data. The residents of South-Eastern Nigeria constituted the population of the study. According to Nigeria's National Population Commission (NPC), the South-East geopolitical zone has a total population of 23,697,324. A sample size of 384 was drawn from the total population using Wimmer and Dominick's online sample size calculator. The sample included males and females 18 years and above because that is the acceptable voting age. The multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the Local Government Areas (LGAs), communities, and individuals who were studied. The respondents were limited to only those who were exposed to voter education messages of the mass media during the 2023 general elections. The questionnaire contained only close ended questions.

The generated quantitative data were cleaned and manually edited for any irregularities. The data were entered in screens designed using Microsoft Excel. The data captured in Microsoft Excel were exported to SPSS version 20 for more detailed analysis. Logical checks and frequency runs were made on all variables to improve the accuracy and consistency of the data and identify any outliers before actual data analysis. Descriptive statistics of frequency count were used for data analysis and presented in tables, which were used to address the research questions.

After the administration and collection of the data collection of copies of the questionnaire from the respondents, it was discovered that 8 copies were not returned while 376 were properly filled and returned. The study was therefore done using the returned 376 copies of the instrument.

Table 1: Extent to which mass media voter education messages influenced residents to participate in voter registration exercise for the 2023 general elections

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High extent	273	72.6	72.6	72.6
Moderate extent	51	13.6	13.6	86.2
Low extent	26	6.9	6.9	93.1
Not influenced at all	11	2.9	2.9	96.0
Not sure	15	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	376	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 above shows the extent to which mass media voter education messages influenced the respondents to participate in voter registration for the 2023 general elections. Data in the table indicate that 273 respondents, representing 72.6%, were influenced to a high extent; 51 respondents, representing 13.6%, indicated low extent; 26 respondents, representing 6.9%, stated low extent; 11 respondents, representing 2.9%, were not influenced at all while 15 respondents representing 4.0% were not sure of the level of influence.

Table 2: Extent to which mass media voter education messages improved the residents' awareness of the political parties that participated in the 2023 general elections

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High extent	201	53.5	53.5	53.5
Moderate extent	93	24.7	24.7	78.2
Low extent	47	12.5	12.5	90.7
Not influenced at all	13	3.5	3.5	94.1
Not sure	22	5.9	5.9	100.0
Total	376	100.0	100.0	

The data presented in Table 2 above reveal the extent to which the voter education messages via the media improved the residents' awareness of the political parties that participated in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Based on the data, 201 respondents, representing 53.5%, were influenced to a high extent, 93 respondents, representing 24.7%, were influenced to a moderate extent, 47 respondents constituting, the extent of influence, 47 respondents representing 12.5%, was low, 13 respondents representing 3.5% were not influenced at all. In comparison, 22 respondents, representing 5.9%, were not sure of the extent of influence on them.

Table 3: Extent to which mass media voter education messages enhanced the residents' awareness of how to cast ballots in the 2023 general elections

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High extent	219	58.2	58.2	58.2
Moderate extent	76	20.2	20.2	78.5
Low extent	32	8.5	8.5	87.0
Not influenced at all	19	5.1	5.1	92.0
Not sure	30	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	376	100.0	100.0	

Data in Table 3 above show the extent to which voter education through the mass media enhanced residents' awareness of how to cast their ballots in the 2023 general elections. From the presented data, 219 respondents, representing 58.2%, indicated a high extent; 76 respondents, representing 20.2%, indicated a moderate extent; 32 respondents, constituting 8.5%, indicated a low extent; 19 respondents, representing 5.1%, were not influenced at all, while 30 respondents, representing 8.0%, were not sure of the extent of influence.

Table 4: Extent to which the mass media voter education messages promoted voters' identification of their polling units during 2023 general elections

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High extent	83	22.1	22.1	22.1
Moderate extent	37	9.8	9.8	31.9
Low extent	211	56.1	56.1	88.0
Not influenced at all	6	1.6	1.6	89.6
Not sure	39	10.4	10.4	100.0
Total	376	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 above shows the extent to which voter education via the media promoted the respondents' identification of their polling units during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The data indicate that 83 respondents, representing 22.1%, were influenced to a high extent; 37 respondents, representing 9.8%, were moderately influenced. The extent of influence of 211 respondents, representing 56.1%, was low; 6 respondents, representing 1.6%, were not influenced at all, while 39 respondents, representing 10.4%, were not sure of the level of influence.

Table 5: Extent to which mass media voter education messages influenced residents to participate in casting of ballots during the 2023 general elections

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High extent	226	60.1	60.1	60.1
Moderate extent	48	12.8	12.8	72.9
Low extent	64	17.0	17.0	89.9
Not influenced at all	15	4.0	4.0	93.9
Not sure	23	6.1	6.1	100.0
Total	376	100.0	100.0	

Data presented in Table 5 above show the extent to which voter education via the media influenced the respondents to participate in the casting of ballots during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The data revealed that 226 respondents, representing 60.1%, were highly influenced; 48 respondents, representing 12.8%, were moderately influenced; the extent of influence on 64 respondents, representing 17.0%, was low; 15 respondents, representing 4.0%, was not influenced at all, while 23 respondents, representing 6.1% were not sure of the extent of influence.

Discussion

Research question one: What is the extent to which mass media voter education messages influenced residents to participate in voter registration exercise for the 2023 general elections?

The essence of this research question was to determine the extent to which the voter education messages via the mass media influenced the residents to participate in the voter registration exercise for the 2023 general election. This was necessary because registration qualifies the electorate to vote. The means that elections cannot be successful if the members of the public do not register to vote in such elections. To address this research questions, the data collected and presented in table 1 above were used. Table 1 above shows the extent to which mass media voter education messages influenced the respondents to participate in voter registration for the 2023 general elections. Data in the table indicate that 273 respondents representing 72.6% were influenced to a high extent, 51 respondents representing 13.6% indicated m low extent, 26 respondents representing 6.9% stated low extent, 11 respondents representing 2.9% were not influenced at all while 15 respondents representing 4.0% were not sure of the level of influence. The implication is that the extent to which the respondents were influenced by voter education messages through the media to participate in voter registration for the 2023 general election was high. Godana, (2015) found in his study that there was significant influence of voter education approaches on voter registration in Isiolo North Constituency, Isiolo County, Kenya.

Research question two: To what extent did the mass media voter education messages improve the residents' awareness of the political parties that participated in the 2023 general elections?

This research question was raised to ascertain the extent to which voter education messages via the media increased the level of awareness of the respondents on the various political parties that fielded candidates in the 2023 general elections. The data collected and presented in Table 2 above were used to address this research question. The data presented in Table 2 above reveal the extent to which the voter education messages via the media improved the residents' awareness of the political parties that participated in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Based on the data, 201 respondents, representing 53.5%, were influenced to a high extent; 93 respondents, representing 24.7% were influenced to a moderate extent; 47 respondents constituting, the extent of influence of 47 respondents representing 12.5%, was low; 13 respondents representing 3.5% were not influenced at all while 22 respondents representing 5.9% were not sure of the extent of influence on them. This implies that the extent of influence of voter education messages via the media on the respondents was high. Okon (2013) found in his study that voter education messages through radio stations in Port Harcourt Metropolis greatly affected residents' awareness of the political parties that participated in the 2011 general elections in Nigeria.

Research question three: What is the extent to which voter education via the media enhanced the residents' awareness of how to cast ballots in the 2023 general elections?

Casting ballots is another critical aspect of electoral participation because it is casting votes for preferred candidates. This is the exercise of expressing your choice of candidates in the electoral contests. This research question was consequently raised to ascertain how well voter education through the mass media helped to create the required awareness among the members of the public on how they should cast their ballots during the 2023 general elections. To address this research question, the data collected and presented in Table 3 above were helpful. Data in Table 3 above show the extent to which voter education through the mass media enhanced residents' awareness of how to cast their ballots in the 2023 general elections.

From the presented data, 219 respondents, representing 58.2%, indicated a high extent; 76 respondents, representing 20.2%, indicated a moderate extent; 32 respondents, constituting 8.5%, indicated a low extent; 19 respondents, representing 5.1%, were not influenced at all, while 30 respondents, representing 8.0%, were not sure of the extent of influence. This implies that the voter education messages via the media had a high influence on the respondents regarding their awareness of how to cast their ballots during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Agyiri (2012), in assessing voter education influence on electoral processes in the New Juaben Municipality, found that the electorates were highly influenced to become aware of the voting procedure.

Research question four: To what extent did voter education through the media promote voters' identification of their polling units during 2023 general elections?

For the electorates to be able to vote, they must be at the correct polling units/centres because that is where their information can be found and thereafter accredited by the electoral officials to cast their ballots. This means that if anyone is unable to ascertain a suitable polling unit, such a person will not be able to vote. The fundamentality of identifying polling units by the electorate formed the basis for this research question to determine the extent to which the dissemination of voter education messages via the media enabled the members of the public to identify their polling units with ease. Data collected and presented in Table 4 above were used to address the research question. The table shows the extent to which voter education via the media promoted respondents' identification of their polling units during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The data indicate that 83 respondents, representing 22.1%, were influenced to a high extent; 37 respondents, representing 9.8%, were moderately influenced; the extent of influence of 211 respondents, representing 56.1%, was low; 6 respondents, representing 1.6%, was not influenced at all while 39 respondents representing 10.4% were not sure of the level of influence.

The implication is that the extent of influence of voter education via the media on respondents' identification of their polling units was low during the general elections in Nigeria. Findings carried out by the Democratic Governance Facility, Kampala, Uganda, in 2016 on an evaluation of the cumulative results of the voter education Programme in Uganda revealed that the issue of where exactly to vote was not effectively addressed by the programme.

Research question five: What is the extent to which mass media voter education messages influenced residents to participate in casting of ballots during the 2023 general elections?

While research question three dealt with the issue of awareness of how to cast ballots, this fifth research question dealt with the extent to which the messages influenced respondents to participate in voting. This means the extent to which the respondents went to their polling units to vote for their preferred candidates during the elections. To address this research question, data presented in Table 5 above were used. Data presented in Table 5 above show the extent to which voter education via the media influenced the respondents to participate in the casting of ballots during the 2023 general elections in Nigerian. The data revealed that 226 respondents, representing 60.1%, were highly influenced; 48 respondents, representing 12.8%, were moderately influenced; the extent of influence on 64 respondents, representing 17.0%, was low; 15 respondents, representing 4.0%, were not influenced at all while 23 respondents representing 6.1% were not sure of the extent of influence.

This implies that the respondents were highly influenced to go and cast their votes during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Supporting this finding, Ikenna (2023) revealed in his

study that voter education through the media significantly mobilized Abia State residents to vote in the 2023 general elections in the State.

Summary of findings

The key findings of the study are hereunder summarized;

1. The extent to which the respondents were influenced by voter education messages through the media to participate in voter registration for the 2023 general election was high in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.
2. The extent of influence of voter education messages via the media on the respondents' awareness of the political parties that fielded candidates in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria was high
3. Voter education messages via the media highly enhanced respondents' awareness of how to cast their ballots in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.
4. The extent of influence of voter education via the media on respondents' identification of their polling units was low during the general elections in Nigeria.
5. The respondents were highly influenced to go and cast their votes during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The findings of the study are that voter education messages disseminated via the media were very effective in raising the required awareness and mobilizing the citizens to participate in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. This points to the fact that when the media are effectively used for voter education, there is a high tendency for the required awareness and participation among the electorates will be achieved, as could be seen from the findings of this study. This also reveals the potency of the media to influence the society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Efforts should be made by those packaging voter education messages (the Independent Electoral Commission of Nigeria, the media, etc) in Nigeria to stress on how best the electorate could locate/identify their polling units to enable them to cast their votes.
2. There is a need to carry out the same study in other geopolitical zones of Nigeria to establish the situation in those locations.

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Nollywood Films as Vector of Nigeria's Image Crisis in Cameroon: A Study of Cameroonian Students' Perceptions

Dr. Floribert Patrick C. Endong

ABSTRACT

Theories on Nollywood films' contribution to the Nigerian image crisis tend to hastily generalise. Those that particularly suggest Nollywood's negative effects on the Nigerian image are hardly nuanced. They give the impression that Nigerian films' portrayals of their country of origin automatically make foreign audiences to perceive almost everything about the Nigerian nationality in an essentially negative light. This paper challenges this perceptibly dominant trend in the scholarship devoted to Nollywood and the Nigerian image crisis. Using an empirical study of Cameroonian students' perceptions of Nigeria as informed by their Nollywood film experience, the paper provides a counter argument. The article hinges explicitly on a field survey involving 450 students from three Cameroonian state universities and a textual analysis of 50 monitoring reports written by students from these same universities on their perceptions of Nigeria as informed by their respective Nollywood film experiences. The paper argues that although Nigerian films breed some level of "Nigerianophobia" among foreign audiences, not everything about Nigeria is negatively perceived by these audiences. Issues such as Nigerian textile, proverbs, and Nigerian urban city development, among others, are positively perceived by some audiences, thanks to Nollywood portrayals of life in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria's Image Problem, Nollywood Films, Perception, Cultural Representation, Nation Branding

Biographical Note

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Introduction

Like many other cultural products, films are windows into their respective societies of origin. Through their representation of reality, they provide a serious glimpse of various socio-cultural, political, and economic aspects of life in their respective societies of origin. In view of this, it is popularly believed that films play a great role in shaping foreign audiences' perceptions of the countries they depict. They are the kinds of image makers used in many countries. In line with the theory mentioned above, several studies have speculatively argued that Nollywood has seriously affected the image of Nigeria and, by implication, the image of Nigerian products locally (Esan, 2008; Ojukwu & Ezenandu, 2012; Nnabuko & Anatsui, 2012). Abundant literature has also sought to establish that, being the second most prominent film industry in the world, Nollywood has penetrated numerous African countries, including West and Central African nations (Oh, 2014; Endong, 2018; Opeyemi, 2018). The formidable globalisation of the Nollywood phenomenon is viewable in the fact that most African immigrants' homes in the US have a library of Nollywood movies (Adebayo, 2010). Numerous cable channels in Ethiopia, Zambia, Uganda, South Africa, Kenya, and Cameroon, among other countries of Africa, are fully dedicated to Nollywood movies. Nollywood films are, likewise, heavily streamed on several websites for as little as a (US) dollar a piece. The popularity of Nollywood movies is equally felt in Afro-Caribbean nations. As Adebayo succinctly puts it, "More than transnational trade agreements, health policies or political reforms, this brand of popular culture has managed to connect more Africans and people of African origin worldwide than anything else" (Adebayo, 2010, p.732). These avidly consumed Nollywood films have many industrial and cultural brand messages (Ojukwu & Ezenandu, 2012; Ndukwu, 2013). As publicity and propaganda tools, they "transmit Nigerian cultural symbols into the international marketplace" (Adebayo, 2010, p.732). Apart from the eventual product placements that facilitate the indirect advertising of certain Nigerian brands (libels), the films subtly carry and sell publicity and propaganda messages on "Nigerianess/Nigerianity" and on certain Nigerian services as education (the Nigerian university system, for instance), the Nigerian security mechanism (the Nigerian police, the military and the intelligence service among other bodies involved in internal security), touristic products/services (such as hotels, festivals, restaurants), and the like.

The films, therefore, indirectly and variously advertise Nigeria first as a country and secondly as a tourist destination. They represent valuable tools that could be used for nation and image-building. It, however, appears interesting to explore the contribution, so far, of the Nollywood film industry to reversing the sometimes negative image Nigeria and her products (the Nigerian brands) have had, specifically on the international scene/market. Such an inquiry may inform a better regulation and orientation of the industry. This study opts to engage in such an endeavour, showing how Nollywood movies may contribute to (re)branding or (mis)representing Nigeria and affect the image of Nigerian products in the global Francophone world, particularly in French-speaking African communities. The paper uses audiences/consumers originating from Cameroon (a French-English bilingual country) as a case study. In line with this, the present study aims to investigate Nollywood films' ability to reverse

or intensify the negative image of Nigeria and its products in the Cameroonian market. The specific objectives of the study bordered on the effects of Nollywood films. Thus, the study specifically sought to examine how Cameroonian students' perceptions of 1) Nigeria as a country, 2) Nigeria as a tourist destination, 3) the Nigerian people and cultures, 4) the Nigerian product, 5) the Nigerian police, and 6) Nigerian schools.

Methodology

The study is a descriptive quantitative and qualitative research work. It relied on two data collection methods: (i) a field survey and (ii) a textual analysis of students' reports on their perceptions of Nigeria.

The Field Survey

This field survey sought to collect data from 450 respondents categorized as students of three Cameroonian institutions of higher learning, namely the Universities of Buea, Dschang, and Douala. These University students were enrolled in government owned universities situated in both the Anglophone and Francophone regions of Cameroon. The study focused specifically on students who admitted to be consumers of Nollywood films. The study thus considered university students of at least 18 years old, from both genders and who were admitted to undergraduate and post-graduate studies in the school years 2021-2022. The population cuts across a multitude of departments, including sociology, political sciences, linguistics, journalist/mass communication, and law, among others. The 450 sampled respondents were evenly distributed in the three universities selected for the study. In effect, a total of 150 students were purposively sampled from each of the selected universities. The researcher directly and exclusively considered students who, besides being members of the three selected universities, admitted to being consumers of Nollywood films or who have had such a consumption culture in the past. Thus, 450 questionnaires were mainly self-administered, and up to 420 were retrieved and considered for the study.

Data was collected with the aid of questionnaires structured into three main sections, namely (a) demographics, (b) exposure to Nollywood films, and (c) Respondents' perception of Nigeria and the Nigerian brand. The questionnaire integrated both open-ended questions and close-ended questions. The questionnaire was also considered to have multiple scales of measurement. To ascertain the validity of the data collection instrument, the questionnaire was pretested using ten students from each university, and relevant rectifications were effected, where needed, to upgrade the instrument. The researcher resorted to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme to process and compute data collected through the survey method. Simple statistical manipulations such as frequency distribution and cumulative frequency were utilised to organise data. The data collected and analyzed was presented in simple frequency distribution tables (see Tables 1 to 6 in the subsequent sections of the paper). Proportions and the number of variables were expressed in percentages. This was reinforced by anecdotal evidence from the monitoring reports generated by the university students.

Textual Analysis of Students' Monitoring Reports

The study also hinged on a textual analysis of 50 reports generated by both Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonian students. The reports were written on the following topic: "Based on your Nollywood experience, produce an essay to show how you perceive Nigeria, Nigerian citizens and her product, the Nigerian police, and Nigerian schools." Students were thus asked to describe their perceptions of Nigeria and the Nigerian brand, as informed by their specific Nollywood film experience (that is specific Nollywood films that they can clearly identify and that they have watched). It should be noted that students who participated in the exercise were purposively selected. Only those who were present or past consumers of Nollywood were selected. Twenty-five (25) students were drawn from the two cultures constituting Cameroon (Anglophone and Francophone). Data collected through textual analysis of students' reports were processed through qualitative methods. The researcher picked relevant anecdotal evidence and field experiences to buttress his analysis's points, assumptions, and theses.

Results and Analysis

Data Presentation

Results reveal that except for the Nigerian product, most features of Nigeria are dominantly perceived by Cameroonian students in a negative light (see Table 1). This is as a result of the students' exposure to Nollywood films. According to results, 69.95% of Cameroonian students positively perceived the Nigerian product as against 19.95 and 10.1% who respectively have negative and neutral perceptions of the made in Nigerian libel (see Table 1). Meanwhile, the Nigerian police, followed by the Nigerian people and Nigeria as a country constitute the features which, the most, are negatively perceived by the students under study. In effect, 74.53% of the students view the Nigerian police negatively compared to 17.37% and 10.1%, respectively, who had positive and neutral perceptions of this law enforcement body. A similar scenario is viewed in the students' perception of Nigeria as a country, the Nigerian people and Nigerian schools where unfavourable profiling remarkably dominates. 72.06% of the students view Nigeria as a country in a negative light, compared to 14.31% and 13.63% who have neutral and positive perceptions of the country. 72.49% of the students similarly have negative perceptions of Nigerians compared to 15.49% and 12.02%, who respectively have neutral and positive perceptions of these people. Nigerian schools are negatively perceived by a majority (50%) of Cameroonian students, compared to 31.69% and 18.31%, who respectively have neutral and positive perceptions of Nigerian schools.

Table 1: Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Cameroonian Students' Perceptions of some Key Features in Nigeria

Key features in Nigeria	Positive		Negative		Neutral		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%
Nigeria as a country	58	13.63	307	72.06	61	14.31	426	100
Nigerian people	49	12.02	311	72.49	66	15.49	426	100
The Nigerian product	298	69.95	83	19.95	45	10.1	426	100

The Nigerian police	43	10.1	309	72.53	74	17.37	426	100
Nigerian schools	78	18.31	213	50	135	31.69	426	100

Source: Field Work, 2022

According to the results in Table 2 below, most Cameroonian students dominantly associate Nigeria (as a country) with a hotbed of terrorism and insecurity. This negative perception is followed by conceptions of Nigeria as a country governed by corrupt leaders (20.89%) and ridden by military coups (13.15%), as well as by widening gaps between the rich and the poor (3.28%) (see Table 2). As discussed in the subsequent parts of this paper, students' perception of Nigeria as a country ridden by military coups and dictatorial governments are bound to be informed by factors other than Nollywood films. This is because military rule in Nigeria is not a dominant theme in Nollywood productions. However, film directors such as BiyiBamidele and Jeta Amata have given attention to such issues with such highly grossing films as *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Black November*. Results in Table 2 also show that few students have positive perceptions of Nigeria as a country. Over 7.28% of such positive perceptions elevate Nigeria to a country of wise (traditional leaders), while 6.35% posit that Nigeria is a land of plenty and great opportunities. This could suggest that Nollywood video films do not have a completely negative impact on Cameroonian students' perceptions of Nigeria. In the subsequent portions of this paper, a detailed analysis will be done on some of the specific films that have been positively affecting the students' perceptions.

Table 2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Cameroonian Students' Perception of Nigeria as a Country

Students' Perceptions of Nigeria		Percentages	
		N	%
Negative	Hot bed of terrorism and insecurity	148	34.74
	Corrupt leaders	89	20.89
	Land of military coups	56	13.15
	Country with wide gap between the rich and the poor	14	3.28
Positive	Good (traditional) leaders	31	7.28
	Land of plenty and opportunities	27	6.35
Neutral		61	14.31
Total		426	100

Source: Field Work, 2022

Concerning Cameroonian students' perceptions of Nigerian peoples, findings (in Table 3) reveal that Nigerians are mainly equated with adepts of voodooism and cultism. Over 29.81% of students surveyed shared this perception (see Table 3). Other negative perceptions include views

that Nigerians are too religious (20.42%), are corrupt and drug traffickers, and finally, perceptions that associate Nigerians with xenophobia and tribalism (2.07%). Some (6.57%) of the positive perceptions among students surveyed point to the popular imaginary that Nigerians are traditionalist and conservative as they still firmly remain attached to their cultures – which is arguable. Finally, 6.57% of the positive perceptions refer to Nigerian nationals being hardworking.

Table 3: Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Cameroonian Students’ Perceptions of Nigerians (as a People)

Students’ Perceptions of Nigerians		Percentages	
		N	%
Negative	Voodooists and cultists	127	29.81
	Too religious/religious fanatic	87	20.42
	Corrupt and drug traffickers	65	15.26
	Speak English with bad accent	21	4.93
	Xenophobes and engrossed in tribalism	11	2.07
Positive	Traditionalist and Conservative	28	6.57
	Hard working	21	5.45
Neutral		66	15.49
Total		426	100

Source: Field Work, 2022

One relatively surprising finding (shown in Table 4) is that Cameroonian students have a dominantly positive perception of the Nigerian product. Results indicate that 48.12% of the students interviewed claimed that Nollywood films cause them to appreciate Nigerian textiles (see Table 4). Similarly, 21.83% of students interviewed indicated favourable perception of the Nigerian product. Despite this dominantly positive perception, a small proportion (13.15%) of the students perceive the Nigerian product as fake, while another 6.34% of the sample view the Nigerian product as dangerous. It is equally important to underline that, as in examining other features of Nigeria, there were neutral perceptions of the Nigeria product. These perceptions amounted to 10.56%.

Table 4: Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Cameroonian Students’ Perceptions of the Nigerian Product

Students’ Perceptions of Nigerian products		Percentages	
		N	%
Positive	Good textile	205	48.12
	Cheap and Good commodities and services	93	21.83

Negative	Cheap and fake	56	13.15
	Dangerous or bad	27	6.34
Neutral		45	10.56
Total		426	100

Source: Field Work, 2022

Results in Table 5 below indicate that Nollywood films influence Cameroonian students' perceptions of the Nigerian police mainly in a negative way. Over 61.97% of the students claim Nollywood films cause them to view the Nigerian police as being corrupt and non-respecter of human rights; 10.56% of them similarly equate the Nigerian Police with adepts and perpetrators of xenophobia and tribalism (see Table 5). However, a small portion (10.1%) of the students have a positive perception of the law enforcement body. They claim Nollywood films cause them to see the Nigerian police as being duty conscious and patriotic. The remaining 17.37% of the students have neutral impressions about the Nigerian police.

Table 5: Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Cameroonian Students' Perception of the Nigerian Police

Students' Perceptions of Nigerian Police		Percentages	
		N	%
Negative	Corrupt and violators of human rights	264	61.97
	Xenophobic and ethnic conscious (tribalism)	45	10.56
Patriotic, duty conscious and reliable		43	10.1
Neutral		74	17.37
Total		426	100

Source: Field Work, 2022

Furthermore, Table 6 indicates that Cameroonian students dominantly perceive Nigerian schools in a negative light. Over 24.88% view Nigerian schools as plagued by various forms of educational malpractices and fraud. Over 20.66% of the sample claimed Nollywood films influenced them to view Nigerian schools as being hotbeds of cultism and occultism. In comparison, 3.28% and 1.18% of the sample, respectively, perceived Nigerian schools as breeding grounds for prostitution and as institutions offering very expensive programs. A number of positive perceptions are, however, observable. Over 12.44% of the students view Nigerian schools as well-equipped and staffed, while 5.87% of them perceive Nigerian universities as institutions that offer good programs. A considerable portion (31.68%) of the sample equally has a neutral conception of Nigerian schools.

Table 6: Summary of Descriptive Statistics for *Cameroonian Students Perception of Nigerian Schools*

Students' Perceptions of Nigerian Schools		Percentages	
		N	%
Negative	Favour educational malpractices and frauds	106	24.88
	Hot bed of cultism and occultism	88	20.66
	Breeding ground for prostitution	14	3.28
	Expensive education	5	1.18
Positive	Well equipped and staffed	53	12.44
	Good university programmes	25	5.87
Neutral		135	31.69
Total		426	100

Source: Field Work, 2022

Discussion of Findings

Discussions will be guided by the main objective of the paper, namely: examine Cameroonian student's perceptions of 1) Nigeria as a country, 2) as a tourist destination, 3) the Nigerian people and cultures, 4) the Nigerian product, 5) the Nigerian police and 6) Nigerian schools.

Nigeria as a Country

Table 12 indicates that Cameroonian students dominantly view Nigeria (the country) in a negative light. The results of the qualitative content analysis of students' essays somehow confirmed this observation. The major negativisms students associated Nigeria with include corruption, terrorism, insecurity, widening gap between the poor and the rich, violation of human rights, voodooism, and recrudescence of ethno-religious conflicts, issues which are explored by many Nollywood films mostly from a negative angle. A student pointedly wrote in his report that "when you watch films like *Isakaba, I Hate My Village* and *Gods of War*, you are tempted to believe that all about Nigeria is voodoo, witchcraft, and backward traditions." Another student remarked that films such as *Politicians at War, Corrupt Politicians* and *Politicians and Corruption* naturally make one see Nigeria as a corrupt nation". This view confirms the apprehensions formulated by Ndukwu (2013) that Nollywood has so far been a significant contributor to the Nigerian image crisis in the international scene.

Even though these apprehensions are founded, it should be noted that not all Nollywood films spurred or influenced international audiences into seeing Nigeria in a negative light. Table 12 – which this researcher mentioned earlier – also indicates that 13.63% of students interviewed positively perceive Nigeria. Although inferior to the portion of students who negatively perceived Nigeria, these 13.63% indicate that Nollywood films do not negatively impact

Cameroonian students' perceptions of Nigeria. Some Nollywood films major in depicting Nigeria as a modern and well-developed nation, thereby influencing – or having the potential to influence – Cameroon students to view Nigeria along these positive frames. Indeed, many Nollywood films are shot in urban centres and ultra-modern buildings, notably flashy mansions and semi-castles, well-equipped hospitals, ultra-modern schools, and supermarkets, among others. Others are about people who speedily or ultimately achieve upward social mobility thanks to the favourable socio-economic environment in which they live. Such films often feature characters exhibiting luxurious lifestyles, trendy and attractive fashion, flashy cars, and unlimited potential. All these recurrent tropes in Nollywood have been influencing pockets of Cameroonian audiences to perceive Nigeria in a positive light. Undoubtedly, 6.35% of students who were considered for the survey identified Nigeria as a land of opportunity and a modern country (see Table 7). In the same line of thought, a student wrote in his essay that films such as "*Blackberry Girls* and *The Price* make [him] believe that one can easily make it in life in Nigeria."

It should be noted that Nollywood films' influence on Cameroonian students' perception of Nigeria as a country brings to mind Stuart Hill's Encoding-Decoding theory in that some students tended to decode Nollywood films according to what could be regarded as aberrant codes. For instance, several respondents viewed epic and historical movies such as BiyiBande's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and KunleAfolayan's *October 1* as trustworthy reflections of modern Nigeria or a window into the cultures of some Nigerian peoples. A student thus claimed in her report that *Half of a Yellow Sun* makes her see Nigeria as a "land of military coup d'états and [...] a country ridden by ethnic conflicts and insecurity". It appears clear that the code used by such an audience is concurrent to the one deployed by the film director. From many indications, it could be seen that the intention of BiyiBande in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is not to portray Nigeria in a negative light but to give an account of some historical events. Unfortunately, some Cameroonian audiences seem to interpret his message as an ugly depiction of present Nigeria. Another striking fact in students' reading of Nollywood films is the fact that the African inferiority complex seems to affect their perception of Nigeria. For instance, many students claimed in their monitoring reports they believe the negative portrayal of Nigeria in Nollywood films just on account that Nigeria is an African country and should, by implication, be as corrupt, "backward," exaggeratingly religious, violent, and primitive as shown in films. With close reference to *Face to Face*, a student noted, for instance, that "Africans are known to be engrossed in witchcraft and cultism. It is no surprise that this theme drips in Nollywood films".

The Nigerian People and Cultures

Results shown in Tables 5 and 8 suggest that Nollywood films cause the majority of Cameroonian students to dominantly view Nigerians as voodooists, cultists, too religious and corrupt. This could be the logical outcome of the fact that voodoo and witchcraft among other negative themes are dominant tropes in these films. Authors such as Nwokedi, (2018), Omojuwa (2016) and The Economist (cited in Opeyemi 2016) have suspected Nollywood's obsession with voodoo related themes as a negative image maker for Nigeria. These author's observations are

somehow true to the contents of the monitoring reports considered in this study. Indeed, a majority of the students tended to interpret some of the Nollywood films they had watched as evidence pointing to the fact that most Nigerians practice voodoo and witchcraft. Other negative perceptions have had to do with Nigerians seen as people who are unnecessarily or dangerously religious or religious fanatics. Table 8 (earlier mentioned) indicates that 20.42% of respondents surveyed had such a negative perception. In tandem with this, a student anchored her negative criticism of Nigeria in *Face to Face* and *Isakaba*. She posited that “Nollywood gives one the impression that supernatural tools constitute Nigerians’ major approaches to life problems [...] they make one believe in Nigerians being too much inclined towards sorcery and ritualism”. A similar position is formulated by another student who considered *Sacramento* and *Billionaire Club* to posit that “although films are just make belief, I think there should be some degree of truth in how Nollywood directors depict Nigerians in their films [...] Nigerians should certainly be money mongers and too inclined towards cultism and voodoo. The films may exaggerate but these cultures are bound to be rooted in Nigeria”.

Even though Nollywood films' presumed unrealistic portrayal of Nigerian people and cultures may be blamed for this dominantly negative perception, one needs to take note of the fact that some of the students tend to questionably or poorly interpret some Nollywood films. For instance, you find students who more or less mistakenly interpret historical and epic films as authentic peepholes into modern Nigeria. In other words, some students apply aberrant codes in their readings of the films. For instance, a student interpreted *Dangerous Twins* as an authoritative depiction of modern Nigeria; meanwhile, the film is just an epic historical movie meant to depict and censure repugnant traditions (the killing of newborn twins) which have since been abandoned in the South Eastern parts of Nigeria. Again, this brings to the fore Stuart Hill's encoding-decoding theory stipulates that the codes deployed by audiences to decode or read movies are not always compatible with those employed by the film director or filmmaker. In the case of *Dangerous Twins*, it appears evident that the director's intent is to present and criticize a typology of backward culture which used to ravage the lives of newborn twins among some South Eastern Nigerian ethnic groups. Unfortunately, this intent is inadvertently disregarded or ignored by some audiences who rather see the film as a true representation of modern Nigeria.

The Nigerian Product

Outside the context of this study, it has been argued that Nigerian products are most often perceived to be of low quality, counterfeit, and unreliable. Nollywood films do not really amplify this perception. This is so as Table 9 suggests that it is just to a minute extent that Nollywood films negatively affect Cameroonian students' perception of the Nigerian product. In both the survey conducted in the context of this study and the content analysis of students' monitoring reports, it appears that negative perceptions of the Nigerian product are not really accentuated. Although some respondents relayed the popular negative stereotypes associated with the Nigerian product as part of their perception of the Nigerian product, the majority of Cameroonian students have a "soft spot" for the Nigerian product.

Through Nollywood films, Cameroonian students tend to praise a number of Nigerian-made products, which, to an extent, have been central exports in recent decades. Emphasis is here placed on the Nigerian textile which of course is strongly – though subtly – advertised through Nollywood films through costumes deployed in the films as well as other key and captivating aspects of the films' aesthetics. In one of the essays that were content analysed in this study, a student wrote that "when you watch a Nigerian movie you will surely discover the richness and diversity of Nigeria's textile products [...] This is captivating in that, it makes you believe that Nigeria has authentic and proudly African products to offer their African counterparts and the rest of the world". With close reference to *Osofia in London*, another student contends that "Nigerian films are often 'colourful festival' and exhibition of African influenced fashion [...] which make you have a better appreciation of Nigerian textile and the creative talents of the country's fashion designers. The different Nigerian prints and fashions exhibited in the films speak well of Nigeria. [They present Nigeria] as an African country that is proudly African and has many authentic cultural products to export to other countries".

It must be acknowledged that many Nigerian films intrinsically or extrinsically exhibit the talents of Nigerian fashion designers. They equally project the colourfulness and working nature of some textile products. Some of these products and services from the fashion and textile industry are already in vogue in some Cameroonian urban cities such as Buea, Douala, Dschang and Yaoundé, just to name a few. By featuring these specific cultural products, Nollywood films indirectly do not only market these products but Nigerianess as a whole. In light of the findings of this study, it may be argued that Nollywood films' integration of captivating aspects of the Nigerian fashion and textile industry speaks well of Nigeria. Foreign audiences tend to positively appreciate Nigerian genius, at least in fashion design and textile productivity.

Other positive appraisals of Nigerian products, as informed by Nollywood films, are related to the cheapness and the modern nature of Nigerian products and services. Table 9 indicates that 21.83% of the respondents appraised Nigerian-made products to be cheap and good. This may be due to the way Nigerian-made products are often placed or portrayed in Nollywood films. In effect, Nollywood films often feature commercial establishments (fast foods, supermarkets, hospitals, and other enterprises), which somehow give Cameroonian audiences a series of clues on the modernity and affordability of life in Nigeria. In one of the essays that were content analysed in this study, a student observed that "[...] the fast foods in which characters buy and eat, [...] the supermarkets in which such characters do their shopping are sometimes not different from the ones shown in Hollywood films. If that is a true depiction of Nigeria, then Nigerian fast foods, supermarkets and other commercial establishments are as modern and equipped as the ones found in the US".

The Nigerian Police

Table 10 above indicates that the Nigerian police is dominantly viewed negatively. Over 72.53% of the students considered for the survey viewed the Nigerian police as being corrupt,

violator of human rights, xenophobic, unreliable, and ethnic conscious. This is contrastable to a relatively small portion (10.1%) of students who perceived this Nigerian institution as being patriotic and duty conscious. From these results, it could be argued that, among the six features of Nigeria considered in this study, the Nigerian police have the most negative image. The reasons are, of course, not farfetched: Nollywood films most often portray the police in a very despicable way, influencing audiences in and outside Nigeria to mainly see this body as a socially irresponsible force. Critics such as Obi (2014), Akande (2012) and Omojowa (2016) among others, have for instance lamented that Nigerian police officers have mainly been portrayed as torturers, unimaginative, murderers, armed robbers and kidnappers among other abysmal portrayals.

Nigerian Schools

Another Nigerian institution which is often under serious attack by Nollywood directors is the Nigerian educational system. Many Nigerian movies have explored the socio-educational pathologies such as the "Nigerian factor," "sorting," corruption, "sexually transmitted marks," and exam malpractices in the Nigerian educational system. These Nollywood films' portrayals have been read by some Cameroonian students (sampled for the present study) to depict the Nigerian reality in the sphere of education. Thus, like the other major features of the Nigerian brand, the Nigerian educational system is perceived in a dominantly adverse way. Results shown in Table 11 above actually indicate that the majority (50%) of Cameroonian students perceive Nigerian schools as hotbeds of occultism and cultism, institutions plagued by educational malpractices, prostitution, and "god-fatherism." Only a minority of the respondents view these educational institutions positively; that is, as institutions that are well equipped and staffed and which offer good educational programmes.

Conclusion

On Based on the results presented in Table 6, it could be argued that Cameroonian students perceived almost all the key features of the Nigerian brand (Nigerian cultures and people, Nigeria as a country, Nigerian schools, Nigerian police, and Nigerian products) mainly in a negative light. Only Nigeria, as a tourist destination, is the exception. Overall, only very few Cameroonian students either have a positive or a neutral perception of these features. Tables 2 to 11 actually indicate that positive perceptions of these features are as follows: 1) Nigeria as a country: 13.63% [see Table 2], 2) Nigerian people and cultures: 12.02% [see Table 3], 3) The Nigerian product: 19.49% [see Table 4], 4) Nigeria police: 10.1% [see Table 5], 5) Nigerian schools: 18.31% [see Table 6]. The findings also lead to the conclusion that the positive perception of each of the six key features of Nigeria is all below 20%. Compared to the negative perceptions, these statistics suggest that Nollywood is spreading Nigeria's soft power, albeit to a relatively small extent. The statistics show that the films do not have a 100% negative effect on Cameroonian students' perceptions of the Nigerian image.

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ABSTRACT

The fortune of the print media world over has been declining in the last decade for several reasons. Presumably, chief among these reasons is the emergence and popularity of digital media. The Nigerian press is not in any way insulated from the problem facing the print media worldwide. This paper examines the Nigerian press current state of affairs. Employing primarily qualitative research method, both primary and secondary data were interrogated to determine the influence of digital news media on the circulation of printed newspapers in Nigeria and proffer solutions to the problem. The two theories considered relevant to this study are the Creative Destruction and the Destructive Innovation. Based on the data available for the study, it is sufficiently clear that the Nigerian press has been consistently in decline even before the emergence of the new media technology. The new media has, therefore, complicated matters for the newspaper industry. Comprehensive efforts should thus be geared toward arresting the declining trend. The government and the media operators have roles to play in this matter. The government needs to formulate a deliberate policy that would resuscitate the moribund newsprint and other newspaper auxiliary industries. The print media industry's operators need to maximize the benefits of the new media technology.

Keywords: Digital media, print media, media technology, mainstream media

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Introduction

The development of the media of mass communication has been an age-long phenomenon, starting from the era of indigenous communication and into the present age of new media technology. The print media pioneered what we presently refer to as conventional/traditional media. The history of newspapers and magazines began in Europe five centuries ago (Patil, 2011). When broadcasting debuted in the 19th century, many observers believed that an end had come to newspapers and magazines because broadcast media instantly became the delight of the mass media audiences. However, several decades later, print media still survives. However, the changes in socio-political, economic, and technological environments worldwide have altered the development of the mass media. Commenting on this, Fidler (1997, p. 4) states that "technological, social and political changes of the last decade of the 20th century have been dramatic and surprising". According to the scholar, even the powerful American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) could not anticipate some of the changes that have affected the newspaper industry in the last three decades in no small way.

The emergence of new media technology has created turmoil in the media industry worldwide, making it undergo tremendous changes/transformations. Also, it is important to state that even before the new media became this popular, the last three decades have seen the revenue of the biggest world media organizations dwindling. For instance, in the 1990s, the daily circulation figures of three leading American newspapers and magazines, USA Today, Wall Street Journal, and New York Times, were 2.2 million copies, 2.06 million copies, and 1.1 million copies, respectively. The figures have dwindled over the years to 534.6 thousand copies for the USA Today, 3.5 million copies for the Wall Street Journal and 343 thousand copies for the New York Times (<https://www.statista.com>). Among these big three media outlets, only the Wall Street Journal has been able to weather the storm by increasing its daily circulation figures. The newspaper has increased by giving out free hard copies at big shopping malls, five-star hotels, and international airports in America, Europe, and Asia. Revenue now comes mostly from maximizing the benefits of new media technology and advertising.

Quite a number of scholars associate the current decline in print media circulation figures with digital technology development (Firmansyah et al., 2022). This decline in circulation figures is linked to the advent of digital media in India (Karambelkar, 2019) and Malaysia (Salman et al., 2011). The media industry in developed countries is undoubtedly adapting to these changes. However, the same cannot be said of the Nigerian press, whose circulation figures in relation to its over 200 million population have been on a downward trend since the 1980s. According to (Igwe, 2004) cited in (Aliagan, 2015), before (SAP), total circulation figures of daily newspapers in Nigeria peaked at about 2 million copies. However, Nigerian newspapers' circulation figures have continued to nose-dive ever since then. It was slightly above 550,000 between 1999 and early 2,000 (Aliagan, 2015, p. 12). By 2010, the daily sales figure had fallen below 300,000 (Okon et al., 2022, p. 50). According to Ekeng (2010, p. 51), as cited in Okon, Obukoadata and Ekwok (2022), the daily circulation figures of eight top-selling newspapers was as follows: The Punch – 34,264, The Sun 25,632, Vanguard 25,241, The Guardian 25,222, This Day 21,703, Daily Trust 11,672 and Tribune (the oldest surviving newspaper) 8,314. Even though the Nigerian Newspaper Proprietors consistently disputed this figure, they have not been able to come up with a different figure. The question is, "How long can the print media survive in developing Nigeria?" The competition for the public to read and view the main traditional/mainstream media outlets and new media is becoming intense nowadays to the latter's advantage.

Ethical Consideration

State Correspondents interviewed for this study demanded that they remain anonymous. The researchers therefore, agreed that the correspondents would remain anonymous and anything that would make them be identified would be avoided.

The Aim of the Study

The paper aims to examine the state of performance health and challenges of the Nigerian press during the present digital era and recommend possible solutions.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the development of print media in the age of digital media has been on the front burner of academic discourse for some time now (Aliagan, 2015). The issue is of particular importance in Nigeria as the circulation figures of the print media have continued to fall and the financial fortune of the print media industry is dwindling. The purpose of this study is to find out whether or not the advent of new media technology influences the decline being witnessed in the industry or whether there are other underlying factors affecting the print media industry in Nigeria.

The Objectives of the Study

- i. To determine the extent of the popularity of digital media among media audiences.
- ii. To find out whether digital media negatively impacts print media.

iii. To recommend remedy the negative impact of digital media on print media

The following research questions are considered in the study:

RQ1. How popular is digital media among media audiences?

RQ2. Does digital media negatively impact print media?

RQ3. What can be done to remedy the negative impact of digital media on print media?

Literature Review

The genesis of print media trouble in Nigeria

Aliagan (2015) examined the problem of Nigerian newspapers' loss of readers and revenue and the steps they took to address the issue. The scholar links the decline in readership and revenue to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the Former Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida. The policy that was supposed to move Nigeria forward, according to the architect of the programme - the International Monetary Fund (IMF), ended up destroying it. The so-called SAP brought about the consistent devaluation of the Nigerian national currency (Naira) – a trend that continues to date. SAP also brought about hyperinflation and the collapse of industries. The print media industry was not spared as the prices of newsprint and other inputs, which were mostly imported, spiralled out of the reach of the industry's managers. The middle class, a major newspaper subscriber, disappeared (Aliagan, 2015), effectively signalling the beginning of the trouble for the print media industry. The era of digital technologies presents both good and bad news to the print media industry as they are now living through a transitional period, which proves to be one of the most challenging periods of the existence of the newspaper industry.

Is the print media dying?

Generally, conventional media outlets are facing numerous challenges which are more profound for the print media in what Barthelemy et al. (2011, p. 4) called "an age of fragmented audiences, high-speed internet, and mobile devices." Many researchers have focused their research efforts on the challenges of print media and have identified some of the major threats to its existence, which include falling advertising revenues and fragmented audiences in favour of online media (Saragih & Harahap, 2020; Barthelemy, 2011; Fortunati, & O'Sullivan, 2019). Adolescents in the United States of America pay less attention to older legacy media (magazines, newspapers, radio, and TV) today than they did decades ago (Twenge et al., 2019).

Nigeria is facing the worst-case scenario, as mentioned above. The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) initiated a decline in economic productivity in nearly all spheres of the economy (Aliagan, 2015). The advent of new media complicates the matter more, and together, these challenges are adversely affecting the development of print media as we used to know it.

Is there a future for the print media?

Even though quite a number of media researchers have painted gloomy pictures of the demise of the print media, some scholars hold that the print media can still weather the storm.

They believe that the problem of the decline of newspaper industries is overstated and that, in fact, the opposite is the case in emerging countries where newspaper businesses are not doing badly presently. According to scholars, print media are currently undergoing the process of change and adaptation (Barthelemy et al., 2011). Nossek, Adoni, & Nimrod (2015) affirm that "print media are still an important component of the new communications environment among European audiences." Technical advancements notwithstanding, print media still have numerous advantages over other media of communication that will make it relevant for a long time to come (Inyang, 2020).

Since the major problem created by the print media decline has to do with the financial constraint that is occasioned by the decline in advertising revenue, independent newspapers in developed economies take advantage of crowd funding to better their financial status (Konhäusner et al., 2021). This is an important alternative funding method that independent print media outlets can utilize, and the method is not alien to Nigerian print media. It was not unusual during the colonial era for newspaper subscribers to make unsolicited contributions to keep newspapers that were constrained financially running. The Nigerian Times, published by James Bright Davies, was a typical example of such support. Four anonymous subscribers were said to have contributed £12 to the newspaper in 1910 (Omu, 1978). Only the conventional media that maintain high-level credibility and trust in the news and information they present can derive such benefits (Firmansyah et al., 2022). Many scholars also see the survival of print media in multiplatform media convergence (Firmansyah et al., 2022; Fadilla & Sukmono, 2021).

The Current State of the Print Media Affairs in Nigerian

The Nigerian media has had its fair share of the decline in print media, with part of the evidence being the decline in newspapers' circulation figures. Okon, Obukoadata, and Ekwok (2022) believe that traditional print media is endangered in Nigeria due to low circulation and dwindling advert revenue. Aliagan (2015, p. 9) asserts that challenges of the print media in Nigeria predate the emergence of new media technologies, but "the loss of news readers to online platforms is a contributory factor." According to the scholar, the problem started in 1986 with the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced by General Ibrahim Military Administration (Aliagan, 2015, p. 10, as cited in Vision 2020, p. 20).

...SAP brought in an era of hyperinflation, devaluation of the national currency, and closure of many industries, including newspaper businesses. Newsprint and other inputs in newspaper production became too expensive for many newspaper managers to afford. Also, with the coming of SAP, the middle class, a potential newspaper reading class, disappeared, thus leading to a decreasing demand for newspapers. All these factors, among others, caused a strain on newspaper businesses, leading to a decline in circulation, readership and revenues.

Survival of Nigerian Print Media

Aliagan (2015, pp. 12–15) suggested 16 survival strategies, many considered reasonable and sustainable. The sustainable strategies are cutting operation costs, maintaining an online presence, improving graphics, niche publications, social media interface, mobile (online) newspaper, retainership, content page subscription, columns/columnists, multimedia publishing (online television) and supplements. Based on the American experience, Ekeanyanwu et al. (2017, pp. 440–442) suggest the following four strategies:

- i. Make a concerted effort “to get Aggregators like Google to pay for the right to provide a news link service with links to news media websites.
- ii. The optimization of search engines to drive traffic to a firm’s website, which is called Search Engine Optimization (SEO).
- iii. Some of the media organizations have argued that to be able to stay afloat it is necessary to engage in hyper local coverage.
- iv. Reinvention of the Classified Advertisements that were the media’s main source of revenue until the economic recession set in.

Theoretical Framework

Creative Destruction and Disruptive Innovation theories were adopted for this study.

Creative Destruction theory was coined by Joseph Schumpeter in 1942, and it talks about "the incessant product and process innovation mechanism by which new production replaces outdated ones" (Caballero, 2010, p. 24). The concept seemed tailor-made to describe how information and communication technology destroyed previous technological solutions and laid waste old companies to make room for the new" (Reinert & Reinert, 2006, p. 56)."

Economic thinkers believe that creative destruction is a way, though it may be messy, by which a free economy delivers growth. According to Alm and Cox (2020), Schumpeter and the economists who adopt the theory acknowledge the fact that even though an inherent part of the economic growth system is the economic cataclysm that results in the loss of jobs and the complete shutdown of unviable companies, they believe that in the long run, a society that allows creative destruction operates grow more productive and richer.

Disruptive innovations theory was coined by Clayton Christensen in 1995, and it argues that disruptive innovation occurs when a product or service is introduced into the market by a well-established business concern that becomes more cost-effective and increases consumers' patronage better than the old product. Aliagan (2015, p. 10) asserts that "the disruptive innovation theory essentially suggests that long-standing, successful industries and businesses fail or decline when an unexpected innovation emerges to threaten an existing technology." In addition, Gobble (2016, p. 66) affirms that "disruptive innovations were technologically straightforward," offering "a different package of attributes" from those valued by the

mainstream market. Disruptive innovators gain a foothold in the market either by creating a low-end product that appeals to customers for whom existing products are too much—too complex, too expensive, too complicated—or by addressing a set of customers overlooked or ignored by mainstream competitors". The two theories support the capitalist economy, and the turmoil the application of these two theories could cause in society, in most cases, is a source of concern to members of society.

These theories are considered relevant to this study because the print media is experiencing a dramatic decline, which can be linked to several factors including not limited to the advent of new media technology with innovation, which some observers believed brought about a significant drop in circulation volumes of the print media as quite many young print media subscribers now prefer online news. This is probably a visible effect of digital technology and is in line with creative destruction and destructive innovation theories. Innovation is key in this case, and as (Jones, 2010 cited in Aliagan, 2015, p. 10) observes, it could be incremental innovation, which allows for slight changes over a while or substantial innovation, which brings about significant structural changes, or even transformational innovation which is a complete overhaul of company operation. In history, many companies have gone under just because they failed to innovate, meaning that print media have to (re)adjust their operation in the face of the current reality so as not to follow the historical fate of the many companies that have collapsed.

Methods

The research method adopted for this study is qualitative (in-depth interview) and review of pertinent literature. The data used for this study is derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data is sourced from in-depth interviews conducted by the researchers. Three national daily newspapers, Vanguard, The Punch, and the Nation, were purposively selected. The selection of the newspapers was based on their national reach and long years of publication. Secondary data was sourced from books, journal articles, and other internet materials.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 Data set derived from filtered in-depth interviews of the correspondents of the selected newspapers

S/N	Question	Vanguard	*The Punch	The Nation
1	Based on your experience in the Nigerian newspaper industry, is it right to say that the fortunes of the industry have been dwindling over the years in terms of revenue generation?	Revenue generation in the industry has been on a downward trend for decades.	No, most big papers are still making good money, but the revenue is going into production and power supply. Most big papers, though, experienced a dip in revenue coming from advertising. However, many of them have since diversified into strengthening their operations by leveraging social media platforms.	Yes! It has been dwindling, but not absolutely, because the newspaper industry has been generating revenue through another means, which is digital media...the situation is affecting customers who used to sponsor

				advertisements in the manifest copy of a newspaper.
2	What is the situation regarding the circulation figures of your newspaper outfits in the last decade?	The circulation figure is on the decline due to the birth of digital media. However, the company is also inventing means to increase circulation using various marketing techniques	In the last 10 years, the print run (number of papers printed daily) of The Punch newspapers has reduced significantly. At its peak, the paper was printed an average 50,000 to 60,000 copies from Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt daily. But now the print has been reduced by more than half. Although that does not mean that people no longer read? ...More people read the contents of newspapers now through the internet. Monthly, the Punch website receives more than 6 million visits.	The circulation figure of newspapers in my organisation has dropped drastically. For example, before, we sold about 5,000 to 7,000 copies in a State in the southern part of Nigeria daily but now it has dropped to 1,000 and 1,500 copies. Those patronising the manifest copies of newspapers are now institutions, government offices, and cooperate bodies. Individuals rarely buy copies of newspapers again. Our firm has introduced e-copies. Even though the sales of hard copies have drastically decreased, the number of customers has increased on the electronic version.
3	What do you think is responsible for the performance of your company?	First, competition from other organisations, but like earlier raised, innovative ideas keep the organisation floating and retaining its edge over others. Second, the downturn of the economy is also another factor, particularly with regard to the importation of newsprint newspapers. However, the organization maintained relevance by hanging onto professionalism and diversification of content.	The Punch has remained the flagship of responsible journalism in Nigeria. The brand has earned the trust of the populace through its unbiased presentation of reports. The paper has also been moving with new trends in the industry by focusing more on the delivery of unparalleled and compelling digital content for its growing and insatiable audience.	We are prioritising online dissemination of news items over manifest copies.
4 (a)	Does the development of the new media technology affect the circulation figures of your newspaper outfit?	Yes, it does	The drop in print run of The Punch is in relation to the demands of the market, which favour the delivery of digital content to its audience across the globe. More people are now	Yes! I said earlier that it does. Individuals now have smartphones, which enable them to access news content on them.

			reading via the internet, and once they have the e-copies of the paper, they may feel no need to buy papers again, except in the instance where they need to buy a particular edition to keep.	
4(b)	In what ways does the new media technology affect the circulation figures of your newspaper outfit?	Many readers now read stories online even before the hardcopies get to the stand. The advent of e-copy also reduces circulation, but without a necessary reduction in revenue, as access to e-copy is also based on subscription.	: New media has made hardcopy only a second option, except for those that want to buy and keep. Most people now read online.	The new media has made it possible for virtually everybody who has a smartphone to access news items... New media has made news items accessible with low cost, convenience, and good referencing...with the new media, you can catalogue newspapers for further referencing...
5	What is the way forward for the development of the Nigerian print media?	More friendly economic policy. Establishment of funds by stakeholders to ensure access to money for investigative journalism and diversification of the traditional into the new media to retain relevance and, more importantly, adhere to professionalism.	There is a need to strengthen the technology to reach more people... There is also a need to strengthen the convergence of several media of mass communication into one, thereby giving the audience the opportunity to enjoy different media content without having to switch from one medium to another.	The print media must work more on the fusion of media; they must be able to publish still images, video images, and text for their audience on digital media with the utmost sense of immediacy in a professional way.

Analysis of in-depth interview

The state correspondents of the three newspapers selected for this study agreed that the fortunes of their firms have been dwindling over the years. This downward trend in terms of revenue generation comes from drops in advertising revenues and sales of hard copies (i.e., circulation figures). Circulation figures of the three newspapers have dropped significantly. The Punch newspaper, which prides itself as the flagship of responsible journalism in Nigeria, has seen its circulation figures drop from its peak of an average of between 50,000 and 60,000 copies a day by more than half. The story is the same for Vanguard and the Nation newspapers. The Nation has seen its circulation figures in one of the states in the southern part of Nigeria drop from 5,000 and 7,000 to about 1,000 in March 2024.

The correspondent of Vanguard newspaper believes that the economic downturn plaguing Nigeria is one of the major reasons the print media is facing difficulties. Also, strong competition from rival media outfits is identified as another reason. Even though all the correspondents agreed that new media technology brought about a decline in the circulation of hard copies, they firmly believe that the new media technology is not really just a problem. However, it is also an avenue they are employing to proffer solutions to the problem. All the correspondents see new media technology as part of the solution rather than just a problem.

The correspondents see part of the solution to the problem as the development of industry-friendly government policy and strengthening of internet infrastructure so that rural areas could be covered by the technology. The print media industry is advised to go highly, if not fully digitalised. As the correspondent of the Nation put it, "The print media industry must work more on the fusion of media; they must be able to publish still images, video images, and text for their audience on digital media with the utmost sense of immediacy in a professional way."

Answers to the three research questions

The three tables provide answers to the research questions.

RQ1. What is the extent of the popularity of digital media among media audiences?

Answer

According to a survey conducted by Adeyemi and Ise-oluwa (2022), 47.5 percent of the sampled population preferred digital media, 21.9 percent preferred television, 14 percent preferred radio, and 8.7 percent preferred print media. This is corroborated by the respondents of the in-depth interview, as they all agreed that most people now prefer digital news media over conventional media.

RQ2. Do digital media negatively impact print media?

Answer

Professional print media practitioners believe that digital media on conventional print media is more positive than negative. One of the state correspondents of the Punch newspaper sees more benefits in the advent of digital news as the traffic on digital copies has increased tremendously. According to the correspondent, the Punch website receives more than 6 million visits monthly. Therefore, most correspondents see new media as part of the solution to Nigeria's print media woes.

RQ3. What could be done to remedy the negative impact of digital media on print media?

Answer

The correspondents see the solution to the problem in increasing coverage of the existing internet infrastructure in both urban and rural areas to be able to capture many more new subscribers. In addition, the survival of the print media partly lies in multiplatform media convergence. Print media practitioners must endeavour to explore the full benefit of the new

media technology. It is not a secret that the technology industries, through such outlets as Google, Facebook, Instagram etc., control global advertising to a large extent and print media in Nigeria can position themselves properly to be able to get their fair share of the cake by copying their counterpart in Western countries to make aggregators such as Google pay the right to use newspaper content by providing news link service to the newspapers websites. This ultimately will enable newspapers to derive advertising benefits through the traffic generated by Google to the newspapers' websites. Newspapers must also take advantage of crowd funding to enable them to improve their financial standing.

Discussion of findings

No doubt, newspaper patronage and revenue generation have been declining for many reasons, including harsh economic conditions, unfriendly government policy, and readers' changes in preference. These findings are supported by the data from the in-depth interview in Table 1, which also corroborates the findings of Ekeanyanwu et al. (2017). Readers' change in preference in favour of new media is undoubtedly a global phenomenon, and it has negatively impacted the fortune of newspaper businesses worldwide. Even though some scholars believe that the process is characterized by changes and adaptation (Barthelemy et al., 2011), which is said to favour the media industries in emerging economies, such changes and adaptation, unfortunately, are not having the same result in Nigeria. Since the advent of SAP in 1986, the Nigerian economy has been in bad shape, and the currency exchange rate plummeted (Anwu, 2012). This has adversely affected the import-oriented Nigerian economy. Naira, the country's currency, has been declining ever since the introduction of SAP. Many of the companies that rely on the importation of raw materials have folded up. Nigeria's newspaper industry relies on imported inputs such as newsprint, printing equipment, computers, inks, and other consumables (Igwe, 2004, cited in Aliagan, 2015).

The readership of the newspapers has been declining over the last few decades, and the majority of the respondents, 57.6 percent, blamed the new technology. Even though the developed economies are also experiencing a shift in their reading preferences and habits in favour of digital media, taking Japan as an example (Kurata et al., 2017), Nigeria suffers more because it is not a high-reading nation, and her citizens have poor reading habits (Aina et al., 2011). There is a decline in reading culture among young Nigerians occasioned by social media addiction (Anyira & Udem, 2020), adding to the challenges facing the country.

Nevertheless, the Nigerian print media industry can perform better than it is doing right now if it can leverage the full potential of multiplatform media convergence (Firmansyah et al., 2022; Fadilla & Sukmono, 2021). It was government policy that brought about the collapse of so many industries right from the 1980s, and, therefore, correct government policy can bring about the resuscitation of industries, including that of the print media.

Summary of findings

The literature reveals that the prevailing economic reality and unfavourable government policy in Nigeria have brought about a decrease in productivity and large-scale poverty. This reduces the number of potential buyers of newspapers' hard copies. The majority of respondents and print media industry watchers are of the opinion that new media technology is negatively impacting the industry. For example, Okon et al. (2022, p. 55) are of the opinion that new media have negatively affected traditional newspapers' readership and that new media usage and penetration have negatively impacted the audience of traditional newspapers. This finding is not supported by the professional print media practitioners interviewed in this study, who believe that the fortune of the industry can surge upward if the print media outlets can maximize the benefits of new media technology.

Conclusion

Among all the conventional (mainstream) media, print media requires urgent attention because, in terms of revenue generation, it is the worst affected media of communication in the country. No doubt, the conventional media are all struggling to integrate by engaging in multiplatform media convergence. Print media requires additional effort to stay afloat. For the industry to survive, print media firms are expected to strategize and fully embrace new media technology continually.

The industry is expected to leverage the potential of the new media technology to enable it to arrest the current decline in readership and revenue. All the newspaper senior correspondents interviewed for the purpose of this study agreed that their companies have been struggling for survival since the days of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), and they now consider the new media technology as an enabler that would proffer a solution to the problem of decline in revenue and readership.

Recommendations

- i. Since the new media technology cannot replace the print media industry or wipe it out, the print media industry operators are to be more creative in the new order by becoming more active in the Internet space.
- ii. Governments at all levels need to create an enabling environment for the industry to thrive.

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Examination of Nigerian Journalists' Views on the Feasibility and Infeasibility of Utilizing Interpretive Journalism for Satirical Films in Nollywood.

Osemhantie A. OKHUELEIGBE

ABSTRACT

This work aimed to explore Nigerian journalists' perspectives on the feasibility and challenges associated with employing interpretive journalism in Nollywood's satirical films. The study was grounded in selective perception theory and social judgment theory and utilized a quantitative cross-sectional survey research design. A web-based questionnaire was used for data collection, administered to 35 active interpretive journalists selected through the Exponential Discriminatory Snowball Method (EDSM) from an estimated pool of 2000 interpretive journalists in the field. Descriptive statistics were employed for data analysis. The study's findings offer insights into the familiarity of Nigerian journalists with interpretive journalism, their perceptions of benefits and challenges, and their interest and willingness to collaborate on integrating interpretive journalism and filmic satire in Nollywood. Drawing from these insights, the study recommends the establishment of comprehensive training programmes, the creation of collaborative platforms, resource allocation, media literacy promotion, and advocacy for the recognition of interpretive journalism's value. Ultimately, this research contributes to a comprehensive understanding of how interpretive journalism enriches Nollywood's satirical films while underscoring their societal significance and impact.

Keywords: Interpretive Journalism, Nollywood and Satire.

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Introduction

In the vast landscape of media studies, two disciplines stand tall as core pillars: journalism and theatre art. Each of these fields possesses its unique essence and purpose, yet there lies an intrinsic connection that binds them together (Khaustova, 2018). At the very heart of journalism, one finds the essence of interpretive journalism, where the pursuit of truth is entwined with the art of storytelling. Similarly, in the realm of theatre art, the magic of cinematic or filmic performance brings narratives to life on the grand theatrical stage. This harmonious interplay between journalism and theatrical performance gives rise to a profound symbiotic relationship within the realm of media studies.

Although this interdependence seems apparent in theory, the real-world manifestation of this connection might not always be as vivid as expected. Practical constraints and industry divisions often result in a disconnect between these two arms of media study. Theatre has always been a hybrid form (Romesh, Chaturvedi & Merhotra, 2013). However, the consequences of such separation are not to be underestimated. When journalism and theatre art exist in isolation, they face significant challenges that impede their holistic growth and impact. Both disciplines rely on the power of effective communication, engaging storytelling, and deep insights into human behaviour. When they are divorced, these crucial elements become fragmented, limiting their potential to create a meaningful impact on society.

Nevertheless, recognizing the interconnected nature of journalism and theatre art is vital in unlocking their true potential as dynamic forces within the media landscape (Adams, 2021). Bridging the gap between these disciplines can lead to the emergence of innovative forms of storytelling, such as immersive journalistic theatre or documentaries that incorporate theatrical elements. Embracing this synergy can enrich the media experience for audiences and open new avenues for creative expression. By acknowledging their interdependence, practitioners in both fields can draw upon each other's strengths and create a powerful union that nurtures both artistry and truth-seeking.

The media landscape in Nigeria, particularly in Nollywood, the country's thriving film industry, has been witnessing a growing interest in the fusion of journalism and entertainment (Okpanachi, 2020). In recent years, there has been a surge in the production of satirical films that aim to entertain and shed light on pressing social, religious, and political issues. These satirical films often employ elements that are of interest to interpretive journalism (Orumhense, 2018) by presenting stories with a deeper layer of meaning and critical analysis. However, despite this emerging trend, there is limited research on the feasibility and obstacles faced by Nigerian journalists in utilizing interpretive journalism for satirical films in Nollywood. Understanding the perspectives of journalists in Nigeria regarding this subject can provide valuable insights into the potential of such collaborations and the challenges involved.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian media landscape is transforming significantly, with an increasing demand for thought-provoking content that reflects societal realities. Satirical films, with their potential to entertain and provoke critical thinking, have gained popularity. However, there remains a dearth of research that specifically examines the perceptions and experiences of journalists in Nigeria concerning the feasibility and challenges of integrating interpretive journalism into satirical films in Nollywood. This study seeks to address this gap in knowledge by exploring the viewpoints of journalists, aiming to identify the potential benefits and hurdles faced in this unique convergence of media forms.

Aim and Objective

The primary aim of this study is to examine Nigerian journalists' views on the feasibility and obstacles of utilizing interpretive journalism for satirical films in Nollywood. To achieve this overarching aim, the research was guided by the following four objectives:

1. To assess journalists' awareness and understanding of interpretive journalism and its potential for satirical filmmaking in Nollywood.
2. To identify the Nigerian journalists' perceived benefits of integrating interpretive journalism and Nollywood satirical films.
3. To examine the Nigerian journalists' perceived challenges of integrating interpretive journalism and Nollywood satirical films.
4. To explore the level of interest and willingness Nigerian journalists to collaborate with filmmakers in Nollywood for projects involving interpretive journalism and filmic satire.

Research Questions:

To guide the investigation and address the research objectives, the following research questions were explored:

1. How familiar are Nigerian journalists with the concept of interpretive journalism, and what is their understanding of its potential application in satirical filmmaking within Nollywood?
2. What are Nigerian journalists' perceived benefits of integrating interpretive journalism and Nollywood satirical films?
3. What are Nigerian journalists' perceived challenges of integrating interpretive journalism and Nollywood satirical films?
4. What is the level of interest and willingness of Nigerian journalists to collaborate with filmmakers in Nollywood for projects involving interpretive journalism and filmic satire?

Literature Review

Interpretive Journalism

Salgado and Strömbäck (2012) aver that interpretive journalism encompasses various conceptualizations, all of which agree that it transcends traditional descriptive, fact-based, objective, or source driven journalism, resulting in a blurry distinction between facts and interpretation. Journalists, using their own interpretation, take on the roles of commentators or analysts of the political reality (Djerf-Pierre and Weibull, 2008; Reinemann and Wilke, 2007; Salgado and Strömbäck, 2012; Wilke and Reinemann, 2001). This phenomenon has been described using various terms, with synonyms such as advocacy journalism, analytical journalism, and contextual journalism used interchangeably (Salgado and Strömbäck, 2012). In the context of Nollywood satirical films, interpretive journalism plays a crucial role in unpacking the underlying messages and social commentary embedded within these films.

Satire

Satire is a powerful tool that uses humour and irony to criticize and expose societal flaws and vices (Gray & Jones, 2012, p. 102). It challenges the status quo, questions authority, and prompts audiences to reflect on social, political, and cultural issues (Feigenbaum & Packman, 2015, p. 67). Satire in Nollywood films takes advantage of the medium's visual and narrative elements to deliver its messages in an engaging and entertaining manner. It allows filmmakers to address sensitive topics and critique societal norms in a way that may be more acceptable to audiences (Ward, 2014, p. 281).

Films and Nollywood Satires

Films are a powerful medium for storytelling and communication. They can captivate audiences, evoke emotions, and convey messages through visual and auditory elements (Thompson, 2013, p. 63). In the context of Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, films reflect Nigerian society, addressing various social, cultural, and political issues (Haynes, 2009, p. 83). Nollywood satirical films utilize the medium of film to combine entertainment with social commentary, using satire as a tool to critique and challenge societal norms and behaviours (Onuzulike, 2016, p. 213).

Intersection of Nollywood satire and interpretive journalism

Interpretive journalism plays a vital role in safeguarding the message of Nollywood satirical films. Fico and Ju (2017) argue that journalism can be seen as a cultural performance that involves interpretive practices (p. 720). Satire, on the other hand, is a form of communication that uses humour, irony, and wit to criticize societal issues and provoke thought (Baym, 2005, p. 263). When combined with the medium of film, satire in Nollywood has the potential to address socio-political concerns in Nigeria and entertain audiences at the same time (Ward, 2014, p. 281).

The combination of interpretive journalism, satire, and films, particularly within the context of Nollywood, offers a unique platform for addressing socio-political concerns in Nigeria. Ukaoma (2022) argues that interpretive journalism can help unpack the underlying messages and social commentary embedded within Nollywood satirical films. He also argues that interpretive journalism can promote critical thinking about societal issues and contribute to the appreciation and analysis of Nollywood films. Oke (2021) holds that satirical Nollywood films can address socio-political concerns in Nigeria, which is fully corroborated by Iwuoha (2020), who posited that interpretive journalism can play a vital role in promoting critical thinking and social change. She also argues that interpretive journalism can help to unpack the underlying messages and social commentary embedded within Nollywood films.

Empirical Review

Dike (2020), carried out a study titled *Interpretive Journalism and Satirical Films in Nollywood: Exploring Journalists' Perspectives*. The aim of the study was to explore journalists'

perspectives on the role of interpretive journalism in satirical films in Nollywood. The researcher employed a qualitative research design using interviews. The population under study was journalists who cover Nollywood films, particularly satirical films. Purposive sampling was used, and the sample size included 12 journalists. The findings revealed that journalists perceive interpretive journalism as crucial in satirical films, providing deeper insights and analysis. The study recommended fostering training and collaboration opportunities for journalists to enhance their interpretive journalism skills. In conclusion, interpretive journalism was found to be vital in safeguarding the message of Nollywood satirical films through journalists' perspectives.

Akinwale (2020) conducted a qualitative study titled *The Role of Interpretive Journalism in Preserving the Socio-Political Satire in Nollywood Films*. The main objective was to explore how interpretive journalism contributes to preserving the socio-political satire depicted in Nollywood films. The researcher employed interviews and textual analysis as the research methods, focusing on a sample of 20 Nollywood films with socio-political satire selected through purposive sampling. The findings emphasized the crucial role of interpretive journalism in safeguarding the socio-political satire in Nollywood films by providing contextual understanding and critical analysis. The study suggested establishing platforms for journalists to engage with filmmakers and encourage meaningful discussions on socio-political issues to foster this preservation. In conclusion, interpretive journalism was highlighted as a pivotal factor in safeguarding the message and impact of Nollywood satirical films by preserving their socio-political satire.

In their study, Oladunjoye and Balogun (2021) assessed the impact of interpretive journalism on audience reception of Nollywood satirical films. Utilizing a quantitative research design with survey questionnaires, they gathered responses from 300 participants representing the audience of Nollywood films, particularly satirical ones. The findings revealed that interpretive journalism significantly influences audience reception of Nollywood satirical films, providing deeper insights and understanding. The study recommends promoting interpretive journalism in media coverage to enhance audience engagement and appreciation of satirical films. Overall, interpretive journalism plays a pivotal role in safeguarding the message of Nollywood satirical films by shaping audience reception and interpretation.

Theoretical Review

Selective Perception Theory, formulated by Fritz Heider (1958), posits that individuals tend to selectively choose information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs and attitudes while disregarding or distorting information that contradicts them. This cognitive bias elucidates why people might resist accepting information that challenges their convictions and why diverse interpretations of the same event can arise. Despite its explanatory power, the theory is criticized for portraying individuals as resistant to change and for potentially leading to inaccurate judgments about the world.

In the context of Nigerian journalists' perspectives on utilizing interpretive journalism for satirical films in Nollywood, the Selective Perception Theory offers insights into why certain journalists might be more or less open to the idea. For instance, journalists already harbouring scepticism towards the media may readily dismiss interpretive journalism as biased or lacking accuracy. Conversely, those who approach their work with greater open-mindedness might be more inclined to explore the potential benefits of such an approach.

Another relevant perception theory is Social Judgment Theory, developed by Muzafer Sherif and Carl Hovland (1961). This theory contends that individuals evaluate novel information based on their pre-existing attitudes, sorting it into three judgment categories: acceptance, rejection, or non-commitment. The theory introduces the concept of "latitude of acceptance," where ideas consistent with existing beliefs are accepted, "latitude of rejection," where divergent ideas are rejected, and "latitude of non-commitment," where ideas evoke neither acceptance nor rejection.

The strength of this theory lies in its capacity to explain how people process new information within the framework of their pre-existing attitudes. However, it falls short of fully explaining the impact of social and cultural factors on perception.

In examining Nigerian journalists' perspectives on interpretive journalism and satirical films in Nollywood, the Social Judgment Theory aids in comprehending how the journalists' preconceived notions influence their opinions on the feasibility and obstacles of this creative endeavour. By mapping the latitude of acceptance and rejection among journalists, this theory enhances the understanding of the spectrum of viewpoints and how these viewpoints correlate with the journalists' established beliefs.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey research design. A web-based questionnaire was the instrument for data collection, and it was administered to 35 interpretive journalists practicing and registered with the Nigerian Union of Journalists in their respective State chapters. The thirty-five journalists sample size was arrived at with the aid of the Australian sample size calculator. The exponential discriminatory snowball method (EDSM) was used to administer the research instrument to the thirty-five selected interpretive journalists to ensure that all those selected for the study satisfied the criteria of being both registered journalists and practicing interpretive journalists.

Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The 16-item self-developed close-ended structured questionnaire, whose reliability was determined through a test-retest procedure and validated by three experts, consisted of two main sections. Section A contained demographic details of the respondents, while section B, which was subdivided into four areas, contained elicited data from the respondents on the dependent and independent variables of the

study. The correlation coefficient of the two sets of measurements was $r = 0.89$. The data collected for this study were analysed using descriptive statistics and frequency count, including interpretation and presentation of data using tables, frequencies, and percentages.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Of the 35 prospective respondents who received the research instrument, only 30 responded within the stipulated time. Thus, the analysis below is based on the responses from the 30 instruments.

RQ1: Familiarity of Nigerian journalists with the concept of interpretive journalism

Familiarity of Nigerian journalists with the concept of interpretive journalism (RQ1)	Very Familiar		Slightly Familiar	Not Familiar
	(33%)	(46.7%)	(13.3%)	(6.7%)
1. How familiar are you with the concept of interpretive journalism?				
2. How well do you understand its potential application in satirical filmmaking within Nollywood?	13.3%	56.7%	13.3%	16.7%
3. I am familiar with how interpretive journalism can contribute to creative storytelling in Nollywood.	13.3%	56.7%	13.3%	16.7%
4. I am familiar with how integrating interpretive journalism enhances the impact and depth of Nollywood satirical films.	30%	43.3%	10.0%	16.7%

Source: Fieldwork, July-August, 2023

The table above indicates that a significant portion of Nigerian journalists are familiar with interpretive journalism's relevance to satirical filmmaking in Nollywood. About 79.7% of respondents exhibit some level of familiarity, with 46.7% claiming familiarity and 33% stating they are very familiar. Additionally, 56.7% understand its potential in Nollywood satire, creative storytelling, and enhancing the impact of satirical films, suggesting substantial awareness among journalists regarding interpretive journalism's role in Nollywood.

RQ2: Nigerian journalists perceived benefits of integrating interpretive and Nollywood satirical films

Nigerian journalists perceived benefits of integrating interpretive and Nollywood satirical films (RQ.2)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5. Integrating interpretive journalism in Nollywood satirical films improves audience	40%	43.3%	10%

engagement.				
6. Utilizing interpretive journalism helps convey socio-political issues in Nollywood satires effectively.	36.7%	50%	00%	6.7%
7. The incorporation of interpretive journalism in satirical films fosters critical thinking.	33.3%	53%	00%	6.7%
8. Integrating interpretive journalism in Nollywood satirical films enhances the films' societal impact.	30%	56.7%	00%	6.7%

Source: Fieldwork, July-August, 2023.

Nigerian journalists widely perceive the benefits of integrating interpretive journalism into Nollywood satirical films (RQ.2). A substantial proportion agrees that such integration enhances audience engagement (83.3% combined), effectively conveys socio-political issues (86.7% combined), fosters critical thinking (86.3% combined), and amplifies the societal impact of the films (86.7% combined). This consensus underscores the perceived positive effects of merging interpretive journalism with Nollywood satire according to these journalists.

RQ3: Nigerian journalists perceived benefits of integrating interpretive and Nollywood satirical films

Nigerian journalists perceived benefits of integrating interpretive and Nollywood satirical films (RQ. 3)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9. Integrating interpretive journalism in Nollywood satirical films poses creative challenges.	20%	53.3%	16.7%	10%
10. Limited resources are barriers to applying interpretive journalism to Nollywood satirical films.	36.7%	46.7	6.6%	10%
11. The potential risk of misinterpretation is a concern in utilizing interpretive journalism for Nollywood Satirical films	30%	60%	3.3%	6.7
12. Integrating interpretive journalism to Nollywood satirical films may lead to biased portrayals of socio-political issues.	20%	60%	13.3%	6.7%

Source: Fieldwork, July-August, 2023.

The table above shows that Nigerian journalists perceive potential benefits and challenges related to integrating interpretive journalism with Nollywood satirical films (RQ. 3). A notable percentage acknowledge that while integration enhances critical thinking and societal impact (60% combined), it also introduces creative challenges (73.3% combined). Limited resources are seen as partial barriers (83.3% combined), and concerns about misinterpretation and biased portrayals (90% combined) suggest a nuanced assessment of the strategy's implications. This mixed perspective highlights journalists' awareness of the multifaceted nature of combining interpretive journalism and Nollywood satire.

RQ4: Level of interest and willingness Nigerian journalists to collaborate with filmmakers in Nollywood for projects involving interpretive journalism and filmic satire

Level of interest and willingness Nigerian journalists to collaborate with filmmakers in Nollywood for projects involving interpretive journalism and filmic satire (RQ.4)	Strongly Interested	Interested	Not Sure	Not Interested
13. I am interested in collaborating with filmmakers in Nollywood for projects involving interpretive journalism and filmic satire.	13.3%	46.7%	30%	10%
14. I am willing to collaborate with filmmakers in Nollywood for projects involving interpretive journalism and filmic satire.	23.3%	26.7%	36.7%	13.3%
15. There is a need for training and collaboration opportunities between journalists and filmmakers for this integration.	40%	33.3%	20%	6.7%
16. I am interested in putting in time and effort to make this collaborative projects successful	20%	50%	26.7%	3.3%

Source: fieldwork, July-August, 2023.

Nigerian journalists' level of interest and willingness to collaborate with Nollywood filmmakers for projects merging interpretive journalism and filmic satire (RQ.4) is diverse. While a considerable proportion express interest in collaborating (46.7% combined), a smaller percentage demonstrate strong willingness (50% combined). Recognizing the need for training and collaboration opportunities (73.3% combined) indicates the perceived importance of enhancing the partnership's effectiveness. A moderate willingness to invest effort in these collaborative projects (70% combined) suggests journalists' promising yet varied readiness to engage in such interdisciplinary endeavours.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study reveal several key insights regarding Nigerian journalists' familiarity with, perception of benefits and challenges of, as well as their level of interest and willingness to collaborate on projects involving the integration of interpretive journalism and filmic satire within Nollywood. The basic findings are:

1. Majority of Nigerian journalists are familiar with interpretive journalism.
2. Journalists perceive benefits in integrating interpretive journalism with Nollywood satirical films, enhancing engagement, socio-political communication, critical thinking, and societal impact.
3. The challenges of integrating interpretive journalism with Nollywood satire include: potential biases, misinterpretations, and limited resources.
4. Nigerian journalists vary in their interest and willingness to collaborate with Nollywood filmmakers, recognizing the need for training and collaboration opportunities to enhance effectiveness.

When considered along with the studies done by Dike (2020), Akinwale (2020), and Oladunjoye and Balogun (2021), a comprehensive picture emerges. The first finding of this work on journalists' familiarity with interpretive journalism aligns with Dike's findings, reflecting a foundational understanding of the concept. The perceived benefits of integrating interpretive journalism with Nollywood satirical films parallel Akinwale's insights, highlighting the potential of this integration for enhanced storytelling and societal impact. The creative challenges and concerns acknowledged by journalists echo the nuanced considerations outlined by Akinwale, emphasizing the importance of balanced portrayals and resource constraints.

As observed in the empirical data, the level of interest and willingness to collaborate among Nigerian journalists complements the holistic narrative. While journalists express interest, their varying levels of willingness resonate with the complexity suggested by Akinwale's emphasis on fostering meaningful discussions between journalists and filmmakers and confirming the tenets and assumptions of selective perception theory and social judgment theory.

The recognition of the need for training and collaboration opportunities mirrors the broader recommendations presented in all three studies, advocating for an integrated approach to enhance interpretive journalism's effectiveness in Nollywood's satirical films.

Generally, the empirical studies and the findings from this study collectively emphasize the vital role of interpretive journalism in enriching the impact, understanding, and preservation of Nollywood's satirical films. The intersection of these studies with selective perception theory and social judgment theory underscores how interpretive journalism bridges disciplines and enhances audience reception, further underscoring its significance in shaping the narrative and reception of Nollywood's socio-political satires.

This alignment of empirical findings with selective perception theory and social judgment theory reveals the interplay between interpretive journalism and Nollywood's satirical films. By mapping the latitude of acceptance and rejection among journalists, this social judgment theory enhances the understanding of the spectrum of viewpoints and how these viewpoints correlate with the journalists' established beliefs. The studies' outcomes reinforce this idea, showing how interpretive journalism influences how audiences receive and interpret the socio-political satire embedded in Nollywood films.

Furthermore, the integration of interpretive journalism and Nollywood satirical films exemplifies media convergence theory. The collaborative efforts between journalists and filmmakers embody the convergence of traditional journalism practices with the dynamic and evolving landscape of filmmaking. This integration aligns with media convergence theory's assertion that various media forms collaborate to create more comprehensive and engaging narratives.

The amalgamation of empirical research findings and the insights provided by Nigerian journalists underscores the crucial role of interpretive journalism in Nollywood's satirical films. These studies collectively depict how interpretive journalism adds depth, critical analysis, and context to satirical narratives, ultimately influencing audience reception and preserving the socio-political message. As selective perception and social judgment theories intersect with these findings, they illuminate the symbiotic relationship between interpretive journalism, filmmaking, and audience engagement, highlighting the evolving landscape of media in shaping cultural discourse and narratives.

Conclusion

In sum, the studies by Dike (2020), Akinwale (2020), and Oladunjoye and Balogun (2021) collectively underscore the vital role of interpretive journalism in Nollywood's satirical films. The alignment of journalists' perspectives with empirical findings emphasizes interpretive journalism's significance in offering deeper insights, preserving socio-political satire, shaping audience reception, and enhancing the societal impact of these films. As the studies from Nigerian journalists illustrate, familiarity with interpretive journalism, perceived benefits, creative challenges, and varying interest in collaboration all contribute to a nuanced understanding of its integration within Nollywood.

Recommendations

Following the findings of this study, the following are the recommended actions:

1. Faculties/departments of communication studies should evolve comprehensive training programmes for journalists and journalism students to cultivate interpretive skills, emphasizing analytical thinking and critical analysis.

2. The Federal Ministry of Information and Culture should create collaboration platforms for journalists and filmmakers to ensure well-rounded portrayals of socio-political matters and address creative challenges.
3. The Nollywood industry and Nigeria Union of Journalists should tackle resource constraints by seeking increased funding and partnerships with media and film institutions.
4. Experts in communication studies should promote media literacy in partnership with educational institutions and media outlets to enable audiences to engage thoughtfully with satirical films.
5. Nigeria Union of Journalists should advocate for interpretive journalism's significance through industry recognition via seminars, conferences, and awards.

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