

ETHICAL DILEMMAS OF NEWSPAPER ORGANISATIONS AND THE USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR JOURNALISTS IN LAGOS STATE

Buhari Olaoluwa Rasheed^{1*} & Adeleye Demilade Bernice²

¹Osun State University, Nigeria

²McPherson University, Nigeria

*burrysims@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study examines the ethical dilemmas and the use of social media as a source of information owned by journalists. The research used mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative). The study involved 81 journalists and 3 editors from three selected newspaper organizations in Lagos State. Using questionnaires and interview guides, data were collected and analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Results show that specific dilemmas include verification of credibility, privacy concerns, unbalanced information, balancing transparency, and maintaining individual privacy rights. Verifying information from credible social media accounts helps to increase actual and accurate reporting. Using images and videos can corroborate information, as well as using fact verification tools and plugins.

Keywords: Newspaper, Ethical, Journalism, Social Media, Information.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji dilema etika dan penggunaan media sosial sebagai sumber informasi yang dimiliki jurnalis. Penelitian menggunakan *mix method* (kuantitatif dan kualitatif). Studi ini melibatkan 81 jurnalis dan 3 editor dari tiga organisasi surat kabar terpilih di Negara Bagian Lagos. Dengan kuesioner dan panduan wawancara, data dikumpulkan dan dianalisis dengan *Statistical Package for Social Science* (SPSS). Hasil menunjukkan bahwa dilema spesifik meliputi verifikasi kredibilitas, kekhawatiran privasi, informasi yang tidak seimbang, menyeimbangkan transparansi, dan menjaga hak privasi individu. Verifikasi informasi dari akun media sosial yang kredibel membantu meningkatkan pelaporan yang aktual dan akurat. Menggunakan gambar dan video dapat menguatkan informasi, serta menggunakan alat dan plugin verifikasi fakta.

Kata Kunci: Koran, Etika, Jurnalisme, Media Sosial, Informasi.



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A. INTRODUCTION

The rapid proliferation of social media has revolutionized the landscape of journalism, enabling major news organisations to shape public opinion, and disseminate information to the global audience instantaneously. With social media's emerging narratives, it serves as a source for story function; Journalists use it to monitor trends, events and conversations as it enables direct communication between a news medium and its audience. This rapidly evolving digital landscape introduces additional ethical challenges. Issues such as the spread of misinformation, privacy breaches, and the ethical use of user-generated content on social media platforms demand vigilant scrutiny.

Perceived unique features of social media are interactivity, convergence, flexibility, vast increase in the volume of communication and wider ability to transcend space and time.¹ Given Social media's ability to create networks and strengthen engagement, one can imagine that it is potentially of some help to journalists and media organizations as they seek for collaborations, pursue local and international grants, explore training opportunities and participate in competitions locally and globally.² Journalism is one profession that can only be practiced excellently only when it is anchored on clear moral and ethical moorings.

The rise of social media can be seen as a signal of the advent of an entirely new form of journalism that breaks with previous rules and conventions in terms of production values, style, topics, ways of engagement and consumption. social media facilitates real-time news dissemination, creating an environment where journalists can engage with audiences immediately.³ This aligns with the observed trend of news organizations utilizing platforms like Twitter and Facebook for live updates, breaking news alerts, and interactive storytelling. Social media have become a prominent platform for news dissemination, allowing major news

¹ Okunoye, A., & Akinlade, O. Digital Journalism in Nigeria: A Study of the Role of Social Media. *Journal of Communication and Media Research*, 12(1), (2020). 73-89.

² Aborisade, R. Investigative journalism and the fight against corruption in Nigeria: A case study of Sahara Reporters. *International Journal for Communication and Media Studies*, (2018). 36-53.

³ Wilson, M. The Changing Landscape of Journalism: Challenges and Strategies for Social Media Integration. (2014). 2-14.

organizations to reach a wider audience. Platforms like X (formerly called Twitter), YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, have not only become integral sources for the audience but has transformed the landscape of journalism, offering instant communication, real time reporting and global reach.

The purpose of journalism is not defined by technology, by journalists or the techniques they employ; rather, it is defined by something more basic – the functionality of news in the lives of people. Journalism has recently been undergoing major changes, as many journalists are no longer willing to take on the normal traditional way of getting or sourcing for stories but would rather go to social media platforms as it serves as real time reporting and global reach . These changes grapples journalist into making decisions to enable rapid dissemination of news contents looking past their principles of fairness, verification and other ethics. Digital Journalism” highlighted that journalists are often not transparent about their sources (e.g. when they copy-paste press releases), or they prefer not to mention sources that have functioned as background information or because the journalists do not want to interrupt the natural flow of reading the article (in this sense, sources are a kind of metadata). However, some journalists do this when their sources are not verifiable, and in a rush to deliver information to the public they often ignore the verification stage with an excuse of avoiding distortion in information.

Aside news sourcing, social media platforms provide journalists with unprecedented access to a diverse audience, enabling them to share information on a global scale, in the same vein, serving as an alternative source for news and have brought ethical challenges leaving its impact on the decline of trust in the profession, decline of news media audiences, circulation, and advertising revenues. Sourcing on social media often bears misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. Social media are free, albeit irresponsible, and unaccountable journalism platforms, hence it is powerful tool to damage and corrupt. Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely. Social media citizens, which

include producers and consumers, are free from the institutional hierarchies, constraints, and regulations of off and online journalism.

Social media technologies and data become entangled with news selection, production, and dissemination practices of major commercial news sites which supports the notion that social media has become a primary source for news consumption. indicates that a significant portion of the population relies on platforms like Facebook and Twitter for news updates, underlining the transformative role of social media in shaping the contemporary news landscape.⁵ Although, these social platforms create an environment where posts are widely shared and reshared and relying on them makes attributing sources and providing clear information about the origin of a content inherently complex. In another conception, social media are seen as tools supporting the old networks and contributing to the development of new digital networks. The transformative impact of social media, as highlighted by scholars such as ⁴underscores the need to examine how journalists utilize their credibility and ethical strategies through these platforms.⁶

The revolutionary influence of social media underscores the imperative to examine the ways in which journalists deploy their credibility and ethical frameworks within these digital platforms. Delved into the intersection of social media and political communication. Their work emphasizes the transformative impact on the dissemination of political information, shedding light on the challenges and ethical considerations faced by journalists in this evolving landscape.⁷

Journalists must navigate these digital landscapes with a commitment to representing diverse perspectives and avoiding the perpetuation of existing biases. Ultimately, a comprehensive examination of how journalists wield their credibility and ethical strategies within the realm of social media is essential for

⁵Okunoye, A., & Akinlade, O. Digital Journalism...

⁶ Dunn, T. J.-B. Investigative Journalism in the Digital Age: Opportunities and Challenges. Journalism Practice. *Journal of Communication*, (2018). 1163-1178.

⁷Dunn, T. J.-B. Investigative Journalism ...

understanding the evolving role of journalism in the digital age and its profound implications for the dissemination of information in society.

Ethical dilemmas in journalism arise when journalists encounter situations where they must make difficult decisions that may have conflicting moral implications. Dilemma is the conflict between the responsibility to report the truth and the need to protect sources. Journalists often face pressure from authorities or powerful individuals to reveal their sources which can jeopardize the trust and confidentiality necessary for investigative journalism. Ethical dilemmas are regarded as the moral bottlenecks that journalists often face in their pursuit of truth, accuracy, and fairness. There is the tension between the responsibility to report information to the public and the obligation to uphold ethical standards and principles when faced with dilemmas. With a space where information spreads rapidly and influences public opinion, navigating these ethical dilemmas is a fundamental challenge for journalists. Journalists often find themselves at odds with the desire to uncover and report on information that is in the public interest, which sometimes means intruding into the private lives of individuals. Scholars have extensively studied and analyzed ethical dilemmas in journalism.

Newspaper organisations have taken up the usage of social media as a way to extend and enhance their reporting, particularly to reflect fast-moving, multifaceted events taking place over a period of time and across a broad geographical space.

The purpose of this study was to examine the ethical dilemmas journalists face when using social media for news gathering and how they can be navigated by journalists. This study is of huge benefit to journalists integrating social media into their traditional newsgathering processes, and print media organizations can use the findings to refine their ethical guidelines and training programs as it provides guidance on ethical social media use in journalistic practices and enhances understanding of the impact of social media on news dissemination and consumption. The findings of this study contribute to the discussion on media ethics and digital literacy, providing insights for scholars researching social

media's impact on society. The findings of this study assist the government in making informed policy decisions on social media regulation and online safety. The outcome of this research is going to equip the researchers and students with an understanding of the challenges posed by social media, ultimately fostering a more discerning and critically engaged audience. Also, this study serves as a point of reference for those seeking additional information on this research topic and other related subject matter.

There are gaps in using social media as a source of information which include; Problems with privacy and informed consent, worries about bias and fairness, difficulties confirming the veracity of information from social media, issues with the digital divide and inclusivity, and the requirement for mitigation and cybersecurity measures.

In essence, the birth of online media has with it an ethical challenge that calls for attention. Just as Gutenberg made everyone a printer with the invention of printing press, the advent of Internet has practically made everyone a journalist. Citizen journalism has made it a reality for everybody to be media creator, owner and actor, instead of passive user. They further add that citizen journalism gradually debases the conventional journalism, hence, information role that professional journalism does dissolves into public domain.

The study stated the following ethical dilemmas that have risen as a result of online intervention: degree of accuracy of reports published online, lack of acknowledgement of sources and sometimes outright plagiarism, obscenity, reporting on children and minor, and so many more. In the world of ⁵who also conducted a study titled Ethical issues in internet-based journalism practice in Nigeria. The main objective of the study was to examine the ethical issues in internet-based journalism practice in Nigeria against a sprawling fake news syndrome among internet-based platforms with a view to examining factors that trigger ethical concerns among internet-based journalism practitioners.

The study was anchored on the Social Responsibility Theory with focused group discussion guide and key informant interview as instruments for data

collection. systematic sampling technique was used in selecting 5,944 registered journalists in Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that there is a shortage in comprehensive knowledge of media laws because most practitioners are not aware of the legal ramification of certain media practice which must be adhered to in performing key role conceptions of the media, source credibility occasioned by a clearly defined editorial policy would be very useful in addressing ethical issues of fake news and hate speech prevalent among practitioners of internet based journalism platforms in Nigeria and adherence to ethical concerns is being hampered by untrained practitioners parading themselves as media influencers on different internet based journalism platforms. The study concluded that many internet-based practitioners are only interested in making profits and rapid dissemination rather than ensuring ethical standard.

The emergence of numerous media has made it simpler to obtain information thanks to the growth of information and communication technologies.⁸ To further re-examine the present of technological globalisation of new information technology and how it has contributed to the development of journalism, conducted a study on titled: Journalists' use of Twitter: Impact on perceptions of journalistic professionalism, the study aimed to investigate the impact of journalists' use of Twitter on perceptions of their professionalism.⁹ The research work adopted a survey method of collecting data through an online questionnaire. The study found that journalists' use of Twitter had an impact on their perceived professionalism with factors such as engaging in personal conversations expressing personal opinions and retweeting information without verification influencing public perceptions. The study concluded that journalists need to be mindful of their behavior on Twitter to maintain public trust and uphold professional standards.

⁸ Sulastris, Leni, et al. "MILLENNIAL DA'WAH INNOVATION OF PEMUDA HIJRAH LOMBOK IN DIGITAL DISRUPTION ERA". *KOMUNIKE: Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam*, vol. 15, no. 1, July 2023, pp. 73-92, doi:10.20414/jurkom.v15i1.7604.

⁹ Ugo, A. &. Ethical issues in internet-based journalism practice in Nigeria. *Journalism practice. Journal of Communication and media studies*. 4(7), (2023). 15-27.

Ethically, there should be a balance of ethical journalism inclusion in the journalism practice, on this note a renowned journalism researcher ⁷did a study on Journalism ethics as a discipline of practice. The study was aimed at exploring journalism ethics as a discipline of practice and its relevance in contemporary media environments. An extensive literature review was conducted and analysis of the existing theories and frameworks of journalism ethics was done. The study found that journalism ethics is a dynamic discipline that requires constant adaptation to new technologies and social contexts. It also emphasized the importance of professional codes of ethics and self-regulation in maintaining journalistic integrity. The researcher concluded that journalism ethics should be considered a discipline of practice rather than a set of rigid rules and journalists should be equipped with the ethical tools necessary to navigate complex ethical dilemmas. To further establish the social media contribution to the development of journalism "Ethics and journalism in a digital age".¹⁰

The objective of this study was to analyze the ethical challenges faced by journalists in the digital age. The study identified challenges such as maintaining privacy handling user-generated content and ensuring accuracy in the era of instant news dissemination. The researcher concluded that ethical guidelines and training programs should be developed to assist journalists in navigating the ethical challenges posed by digital media. Equally,¹¹ did a study on "Ethics in the age of social media. Media Ethics Magazine". The objective of this study was to examine the ethical challenges faced by journalists in the age of social media. A qualitative research approach of conducting in-depth interviews with journalists and media professionals was employed for data collection. The study revealed that journalists face ethical dilemmas concerning verification of information privacy concerns conflicts of interest and maintaining professional boundaries on social media platforms.

¹⁰ Maurice, T. Journalists perceived online source credibility and verification behavior. *Journal of Journalism Practice*. 3(2), (2018). 13-31.

¹¹ Nielsen, R. K., & Selva, M. Five things to know about the future of journalism. *Journalism Practice*. 12(1), (2019). 13-27.

The study adopted survey and open-ended questionnaires were used to sample opinions. The study discussed the design of the tool, present the text analysis techniques used to enable the presentation, and provide details on the visual and interaction design. It provided an exploratory evaluation based on a user study in which journalists interacted with the system to explore and report on a dataset of over one hundred thousand twitter messages collected during the U.S. State of the Union presidential address in 2010. The findings from the study show that Vox Civitas utility is in the divergent modes to drive analyst to gather information from identified sources under the Reuters institute for study of journalism titled “Five things to know about the future of journalism”.

The study documented that social media has enabled people worldwide but has also permitted the wide spread of disinformation and undermined the funding of professional journalism as we know it. The study used survey as method of data collection and also made use of secondary data. The research documented a significant decline in in global freedom of expression in the last three years ,including increasing problems in countries with a solid history of liberal democracy and both democratically elected political leaders using the account of fake news to openly attack the media and close down scrutiny of their policies and actions. The study also notes that in the absence of autonomous professional reporting the public will rely on self-interested sources and rumors circulating online.

Journalism and its changing role in news gathering and writing in the 21st Century which explored the challenges and ethical considerations faced by journalists in integrating data-driven content into their reporting. This study is anchored on the uses and gratification theory.¹² The study adopted the secondary method of data collection. The secondary method of data collection was adopted for this study. This method refers to the process of gathering information or data that has been previously collected, recorded, or published by other researchers, organisations or sources. In this approach, the researchers do not directly collect

¹² Nielsen, R. K., & Selva, M. Five things ...

new data themselves; rather, they analyse and interpret existing data to draw insights, make comparisons, or support their own research objectives. The objective of the study was to explore the challenges and ethical considerations faced by journalists in integrating data-driven content into their reporting.

Findings reveal that data journalism plays crucial roles in news gathering and writing, revolutionising how stories are researched, reported, and presented. The study concluded that Journalists must be transparent about their ¹³data sources, methodologies, and any assumptions made during reporting and analysis, as adherence to these guidelines will build trust with the audience and ensure responsible and unbiased data reporting.¹⁴ As a support to the existing study that revalidate the improvement on global information technological development.

Verification of information and the determination of how credible the source of data is in journalism is very paramount to journalism practice. Information verification in the age of digital Journalism.¹⁵ The purpose of this study was to determine how journalists 'verify' the news they get through social media. The study employed a qualitative semi-structured interview method of data collection. The findings of this study suggest that journalists are using social media for news gathering, but continue to place an emphasis on trusted sources and pre-existing relationships. The study concluded by stating that verification processes can often be circular, and some verification rests in knowledge derived from reporter's earlier work. Use of authoritative sources, reliability, accuracy, and credibility. To further substantiate the above finding, did a study on "Information Verification in the Age of Digital Journalism".¹⁶

¹⁴ Ainakhuagbor, T. &. Data Journalism and Its Changing Role in News Gathering and Writing in the 21st Century. *Journal of communication*. 3(1), (2023). 12-26.

¹⁴Martin, D. Information verification in the age of digital journalism. *Journalism Practice*. 3(12), (2014).

¹⁶ Brandtzæg, P. B. Emerging Journalistic Verification Practices Concerning Social Media. *Journalism Practice*, (2017). 323-342.

The main objective of the study was to determine how journalists ‘verify’ the news they get through social media. Qualitative research method was used in the study with qualitative semi-structured interview as the instrument of data collection. The findings of this study suggest that journalists are using social media for news gathering, but continue to place an emphasis on trusted sources and pre-existing relationships. Verification processes can often be circular, and some verification rests in knowledge derived from reporter’s earlier work. The study concluded that further research into the changing nature of journalists’ information practices is worthy of consideration, including research into issues of credibility and issue perception relating to the use of Twitter as a news distribution tool.¹⁷

Did a study on emerging journalistic verification practices concerning social media. The study was aimed at revealing the emerging journalistic values, practices, challenges and needs concerning the verification of social media content and sources. The study adopted qualitative interviews with reference to semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the study revealed that the social media work and verification practices among journalists could be divided into the following five main categories: Trusted sources, Access to eyewitnesses and authenticating sources, Traditional journalistic methods, Multimodal verification and verification tools, Workaround methods. In conclusion, the findings point to the emergence of a new style of real-time networked journalism representing both opportunities and challenges with information overload in an increasingly multimedia oriented social media landscape. The results in the present study indicate that verification of social media content is of crucial importance to journalists, particularly those reporting breaking news under severe time constraints.¹⁸

¹⁷Bahareh, E. Twitter journalism in Ireland: Sourcing and trust in the age of social media. *Journalism studies*, 3(6), (2016). 3-19.

¹⁸ Brandtzæg, P. B. Emerging Journalistic Verification Practices Concerning Social Media. *Journalism Practice*, (2017). 323–342.

In study “Twitter journalism in Ireland: sourcing and trust in the age of social media” gave findings which suggests that the full adoption of social media as one amongst many available quality sources of news is in a transitional phase, and with journalists integrating Twitter into their workflows enthusiastically, while noting a series of deterrents to its use. They adopted a survey method of research for data collection. They identified the top factor in deeming a social media source as trustworthy is a link in the social media account to a company or institutional website, and indeed indicators from ‘outside’ the social media world are key to the verification process. They noted that when it comes to validating contents found on social media, the strongest tendency is to go outside of social media to official sources. This will help journalist uphold their journalistic principles and reduce their exposure to the ethical dilemmas posed by social media platforms when using them for newsgathering processes.

In essence, conducted a study on how journalists and social media users perceive online fact-checking and verification services.¹⁹ This study investigated the use and impact of social media for fact-checking and verification. Based on interviews with 32 journalists and content analysis of social media users’ online conversations, knowledge about the ways that journalists and social media users perceive online fact-checking and verification services was contributed. The findings suggest that, a comparison of journalists’ perceptions with those of social media users reveals social media users are similarly ambivalent. Some accentuated the usefulness of such services, while others expressed strong distrust. However, the journalists displayed a more nuanced perspective, both seeing these services as potentially useful and being reluctant to blindly trust a single service. The study concluded on designing strategies to make online fact-checking and verification services more useful and trustworthy.

In addition to the above findings, examined the incorrect, fake, and false. Journalists’ perceived online source credibility and verification behavior. This

¹⁹ Maurice, T. Journalists perceived online source credibility and verification behavior. *Journal of Journalism Practice*. 3(2), (2018). 13-31

study focuses on the extent journalists verify information provided by online sources, and tests to what extent this verification behavior can be explained by journalists' perceived credibility of online information and other factors, such as journalism education of journalists, work and Internet experience, and work environment (broadcasting, newspapers, Internet). A survey method was adopted with questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The findings show that journalists verify online information extensively although journalists vary in the extent they check online information on its credibility, but it cannot be traced back to perceiving online information as less credible and to the level of education (journalism or secondary). These findings suggest that the perception of online information as being less credible is not the motive to verify the information.²⁰ The study concluded that the use of online information has enormous benefits as compared to gathering information in the pre-Internet era, such as ease of access, the abundance of information and quick access.

Still, caution on using online information is necessary. In essence, fake news in the age of social media. The main objectives of the study are to identify how fake news affected peoples' lives and what initiatives were taken to minimize the negative impacts to fake news. It was aimed at informing the readers of the penalties set by the UAE government to prevent the spread of fake news on social media.²¹ It also provided recommendations to prevent the negative effects of fake news in the age of social media. The study adopted a mixed methods approach using survey as a point of reference and data collection. The findings of the study showed that 22.22% of the respondents think that fake news mostly affected fake educational resources, 31.11% think it mostly affected entertainment news, while 46.67% think that fake news mostly affected political news. While a large percentage agree that fake news makes it difficult for ordinary people to separate fake news from reliable news. The study also found out that authorizing the credible/reliable pages/resources is a way to limit the effect of fake news as lack

²⁰ Maurice, T. Journalists perceived online source credibility and verification behavior. *Journal of Journalism Practice*. 3(2), (2018). 13-31.

²¹ Viola, G. *Fake news in the age of social media*. 123-135, Peter Lang Publishing (2018).

of regulation of social media sources often fuels the generation/spread of fake news. The study concluded that fake news is increasing in the evolvement of social media.

The more social media platforms occur, the more fake news have a chance to get spread between people. People including journalists should be aware how to differentiate between the real news and fake news. Moreover, reliable sources should be well-known so that people will know the fake accounts or unreliable accounts. It also recommended the following in order to lessen the effects of fake news on social media: 1) Reading more on the news. 2) Checking for proof and evidence in the news. 3) Making sure the source is trustworthy. 4) Spreading awareness about how fake news can badly affect social media.²² Changing Journalistic Information-Gathering Practices? Reliability in Everyday Information Gathering in High-Speed Newsrooms". This study explored how journalists in highspeed newsrooms gather information, how gathering activities are temporally structured and how reliability manifests itself in information-gathering activities. Data was obtained through the method of micro-observations. The method of micro-observations consists of a combination of qualitative, ethnographic observational techniques and precise, direct observations of individual behavior.²³

It offers rich, profound, and very detailed qualitative data. A non-random theoretical sampling technique was used. The findings from the study revealed a rich variety of gathering activities and insight into the temporal structuring of the activities. They also show various manifestations of the journalists strive to deliver reliable information.²⁴ Although the findings of this study are predominately descriptive, more can be said about the impact and implications, especially with regard to the assumed increased tension between reliability and immediacy.

The use of social media has facilitated real-time news dissemination thus creating an environment where journalists can engage with audiences

²² Okunoye, A., & Akinlade, O. Digital Journalism ...

²³ Oso, L. *Media, Journalism, and Society in Nigeria: Issues and Perspectives*. Handbook of Research on Media Literacy in Higher Education Environment, (2017). 1-17.

²⁴ Powers, M. *Journalism Ethics amidst structural change: The Digital Challenge*. The Routledge Handbook of Media and Communication Studies, (2014). 352-366.

immediately. The benefits of the integration of social media are outnumbered but at the same time, its setbacks are glaring. The issues include the unchecked spread and unreliable information on social media platforms, the choosing reliable sources, credible sourcing that journalists have when trying to sort through the massive and fast-moving volume of news to determine which information is legitimate and reliable. The challenges of social media integration are now identified as public and journalistic concern.

The general objective of this study was to identify the ethical dilemmas confronted by journalists in using social media as a source of information. The specific objectives were to: identify specific ethical dilemmas faced by journalists while using social media for news sourcing, investigate journalists' usage of social media for information verification, and explain the selected newspapers perception of social media for news gathering.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed mixed method (quantitative and qualitative). Survey enables a researcher to gather quantitative data for the study. While interview enables the researcher to gather qualitative data for the study. Survey is the most used method in social and behavioural sciences for investigating the nature, cause, influence and effect of a phenomenon under study from all or a selected number of respondents concerned.

The study employed cross-sectional descriptive research design in data collection, measurement and analysis. The population for this research was made of the reporters and editorial staff in the selected newspapers totalling 150 members of staff and 3 editorial department. The departments included editorial and production department of the selected newspaper organisations; Business Day, The Guardian, and Vanguard, they provided appropriate feedbacks to the set of questions and also helped in achieving the set objectives for the study. The total population of the study is 150 respondents and 3 members of editorial for interview. This information was gotten from the Human resource unit and

reference from the editors at the selected newspaper organisations in Lagos, Nigeria.

Random Sampling procedure was employed where each member of the population (that is the editorial/reportorial members of Business Day, The Guardian, and Vanguard) had an equal chance of being selected. Structured questionnaire and key informant interview were used as data collection method for this study. Face-to-face method was employed in this study. One hundred and fifty (150) copies of the questionnaire were administered on the sample respondents and collected after they are filled by the respondents also. Also, informed consent was obtained. The purpose of the study, procedures, and potential risks were communicated clearly. This study employed two methods of analysis. This involved usage of both types of data (survey and Key informant interview) during the analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of research questions. T-Test was the basic tool for the quantitative analysis. Responses from each participant were analyzed in order to know the prevalence of ethical dilemmas and credibility challenges across different news organizations.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained from the field were analysed based on the objectives and research questions. Through the administration of questionnaires and interview to examine the ethical dilemmas and usage of social media as a source of information: an analysis of selected newspaper organisations in Lagos state. The data for the questionnaire was analyzed using software package for social and management sciences. They were built in tables for easy understanding and presented according to each questionnaire item. The interviews were transcribed in full and the transcripts were then reviewed by the researcher to determine broad themes. The benefits of transcribing your own interviews include bringing the researcher closer to the data, facilitating the identification of key themes and an awareness of the similarities and differences between participants' accounts. A total number of 150 questionnaires were administered and total of 81 questionnaire were duly filled and retrieved while a total of three editors were interviewed.

Frequency distribution of respondent's exposure to the ethical dilemmas faced with when using social media for news sourcing

Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	TOTAL
Verifying credibility on social media poses accuracy risks for journalists.	29.6% (24)	51.9% (42)	0	2.5% (2)	16.0% (13)	100% (81)
Privacy concerns emerge when sourcing news from social media	9.9% (11)	56.8% (46)	9.9 (8)	0	19.8% (16)	100% (81)
Bias and misinformation risk arise from relying solely on social media	27.2% (22)	70.4% (57)	1.2% (1)	0	1.2% (1)	100% (81)
Ethical dilemmas involve balancing transparency and privacy with social media contents.	19.8% (16)	63.0% (51)	17.3% (14)	0	0	100% (81)

Table 1: Ethical dilemmas and social media²⁵

Table above shows the frequency distribution table on the respondent's exposure to the ethical dilemmas faced with when using social media for news sourcing. 42(51.9%) of the respondents agree that verifying credibility on social media poses accuracy risks for journalists and 24(29.6%) agree, while 13(16.0%) strongly disagree, 2(2.5%) are undecided. 46(56.8%) also agree that privacy concerns emerge when sourcing news from social media and 11(13.6%) also strongly agree while 8(9.9%) are undecided and 16(19.8%) strongly disagree. Also, 57(70.4%) agree that bias and misinformation risk arise from relying solely on social media, 22(27.2%) strongly agree to it, while 1(1.2%) strongly disagree, and 1(1.2%) is undecided.

Lastly 16(19.8%) of the respondents strongly agree that ethical dilemmas involve balancing transparency with social media contents and 51(63.0%) agree, while 14(17.3%) are undecided. Majority of the respondents agree with the

²⁵ Field Work, (2024).

statements in the table above, indicating that they recognize the challenge of verifying credibility on social media, highlighting their concern for privacy issues when using social media for news sourcing, acknowledging the risk of bias and misinformation on social media, and recognizing the need for balance between transparency and social media content, while the rest of the respondents don't consider them as significant issues. This indicates that there is need for robust verification processes, careful navigation of privacy issues, diverse sourcing, and adherence to ethical standards in journalism.

Frequency distribution on how journalists use social media for information verification

Variables	SA	A	UN	D	SD	TOTAL
Checking of information from multiple and independent /credible sources can ensure consistency and accuracy.	67.9% (55)	32.1% (26)	0	0	0	100% (81)
Evaluating the credibility of the social media account or source sharing the information can help enhance reliable and accurate reporting.	56.8% (46)	42.0% (34)	1.2% (1)	0	0	100% (81)
Elements, such as images and videos, through eyewitness accounts can help verify information for authenticity	45.7% (37)	53.1% (43)	1.2% (1)	0	0	100% (81)
Employing fact-checking tools and plugins during sourcing can provide real-time analysis of information	342.0% (34)	43.1% (43)	4.9% (4)			100% (81)

Table 2: Journalists use social media²⁶

²⁶ Field Work, (2024).

To measure how journalists use the social media platforms for information verification, they were asked to respond to a series of statements. As shown above in table 4.1.2, 55(67.9%) of the respondents strongly agree that checking of information from multiple, independent or credible sources can ensure consistency and accuracy and 26(32.1%) agree. 46(56.8%) strongly agree that evaluating the credibility of the social media account or source sharing the information can help enhance reliable and accurate reporting, and 34(42.0%) agree, while 1(1.2%) are undecided. 37(45.7%) also affirm that elements, such as images and videos, through eyewitness accounts can help verify information for authenticity and 43(53.1%) agree, while 1(1.2%) are undecided. 34(42.0%) confirmed that employing fact-checking tool and plugins during sourcing can provide real-time analysis of information and another (53.1 %) agree while 4(4.9%) are undecided. This means that a majority of respondents believe verifying information from multiple credible sources ensures accuracy and consistency. Evaluating the credibility of social media accounts and sources is also seen as crucial for reliable reporting. Moreover, using images, videos, and eyewitness accounts helps authenticate information, and fact-checking tools provide real-time analysis to enhance information accuracy. This indicates the importance of thorough verification practices and the positive perception of technological tools in ensuring accurate information dissemination across the media.

For RQ3, an interview was conducted with three editors at the selected organisations. The interview also sought to compare their perception of social media for news gathering. A respondent from Guardian said:

“Using social media for news gathering is that journalists must exercise caution. If news breaks on social media for instance, a professional Journalist will not share the content immediately he needs to verify. Verification is key when handling information on social media”.

Another respondent from Vanguard said:

“Social media usage for news gathering is okay. Although one has to be careful and cautious on which information one is extracting from the platform”.

This shows that social media generally is still an additional tool that has helped news gathering process but due to its lack of regulation and type of platform, one needs to take on verification process seriously and work with fact checkers when utilizing social media into the information sourcing process.

Another respondent from Business Day had this to say:

“Social media is a virtual town, news is everywhere. It is not just another tool for news gathering but can be used as the main tool for news gathering”.

It can be deduced that social media is one of the tools in a journalist’s toolbox. From the interview the study was also able to find that social media is a vital tool for newsgathering but a journalist is saddled with the responsibility of fact checking, verification, content analysis to avoid misinformation and other themes of fake news to avoid fueling the public with an ungenuine information in order to continuously uphold their rights to the public.

Therefore, Social media has a huge impact on newsgathering in journalism. Social media has revolutionized the way journalism is carried out and with adherence to ethical guidelines, specific dilemmas and challenges that journalists encounter during newsgathering can be subdued. From the results of the data analysis, the first research objective was aimed at finding out the specific dilemmas journalists face while sourcing for news on social media. In response to the question, as shown above the study found out that the specific dilemmas include credibility verification, privacy concerns, unbalanced information, balancing transparency and upholding individual’s right to privacy. From this finding, it can be deduced that the first objective has been achieved as the afore-mentioned dilemmas was acknowledged by the respondents as the specific dilemmas they face when using social media as a source of information.

Also, the second research objective was aimed at finding out how journalists use social media for information verification. As shown above in table 4.3, it is revealed that a large number of the respondents strongly agree that checking of information from multiple, independent or credible sources, evaluating the credibility of the social media account or source sharing the information can help

enhance reliable and accurate reporting, also using elements, such as images and videos, through eyewitness accounts can help verify information for authenticity and employing fact-checking tool and plugins during sourcing are the various ways journalists use social media for information verification. The results achieved the objective of identifying the ways through which journalist verify the information they come across when sourcing on social media.

The third research objective on other hand was aimed at finding out the selected newspapers' perception of social media for news gathering which employed a qualitative means of acquiring data. From the interview the study was also able to find that social media is a vital tool for newsgathering but a journalist is saddled with the responsibility of fact checking, verification, content analysis to avoid misinformation and other themes of fake news to avoid fuelling the public with an fake information in order to continuously uphold their rights to the public. Two of the interviewed respondents believe that social media is an additional tool that has helped news gathering process but due to its lack of regulation and type of platform, and one needs to take on verification process seriously and work with fact checkers when utilizing social media into the information sourcing process. While one of the interviewed respondents perceives social media as a tool a journalist can work with little or no assistance from other tools in the journalism toolkit.

The researcher concluded that journalists need to navigate these ethical challenges by adhering to traditional journalistic values such as accuracy fairness and transparency while adapting to the changing media landscape in essence, however, Social media and investigative journalism practice in Nigeria. The explored the impact of social media on investigative journalism practices in Nigeria, focusing on the role of social media platforms in facilitating whistleblowing and information dissemination. The study utilized a qualitative research design, employing in-depth interviews with investigative journalists in Nigeria. The interviews explored journalists' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of utilizing social media platforms for investigative reporting. After

research the study found that social media platforms have transformed investigative journalism practices in Nigeria by providing journalists with new avenues for information gathering, source verification, and audience engagement. Social media was identified as a valuable tool for journalism practice, enabling journalists to receive tips, evidence, and information from anonymous sources. However, challenges such as the verification of information, the spread of misinformation, and the need for ethical guidelines in the use of social media were highlighted.

The study recommends that journalists receive training on digital literacy and ethical reporting in the context of social media. Insightfully, Journalists perceived online source credibility and verification behavior, to be a keen factor that a journalist must adhere to and on this note, his study focuses on the extent journalists verify information provided by online sources, and tests to what extent this verification behavior can be explained by journalists' perceived credibility of online information and other factors, such as journalism education of journalists, work and Internet experience, and work environment. The research work adopted a survey method of collecting data through questionnaire 70 percent of journalists were respondents. The study found out that managers in the newsroom appear to verify online information more often than others. It also stated that reporters also verify online information more often than others do, while those that write and edit texts do not verify information more often. Study examined that Journalists increasingly turn to social media sources such as Facebook or Twitter to support their coverage of various news events. For large-scale events such as televised debates and speeches, the amount of content on social media can easily become overwhelming, yet still contain information that may aid and augment reporting via individual content items as well as via aggregate information from the crowd's response.

D. CONCLUSION

Social media has immensely influenced and journalism information sourcing process. Because Journalists are exposed to social media platforms such

as Instagram, X (formerly called Twitter) Facebook, YouTube and Telegram therefore, this study found that journalists use these platforms for information sharing and gathering. The study also found that the specific dilemmas include credibility verification, privacy concerns, unbalanced information, balancing transparency and upholding individual's right to privacy. Likewise, a finding stated that checking of information from multiple, independent or credible sources, evaluating the credibility of the social media account or source sharing the information can help enhance reliable and accurate reporting, also using elements, such as images and videos, through eyewitness accounts can help verify information for authenticity and employing fact-checking tool and plugins during sourcing are the various ways journalists use social media for information verification.

Similarly, one of the findings stated that the challenges that confront journalists include the spread of misinformation, lack of transparency in the usage of social media not balancing public's interest with individual's right to privacy and information overload on social media stands as a wall in newsgathering on social media. Furthermore, from the interview the study was also able to find that social media isn't just an additional tool that has helped news gathering process, but a tool a journalist can work with little or no assistance from other tools in the journalism toolkit. However, due to its lack of regulation and type of platform, and one needs to take on verification process seriously and work with fact checkers when utilizing social media into the information sourcing process.

Therefore, the study recommend that; 1) newspaper organisations should establish and enforce clear social media usage guidelines for journalists, to ensure transparency and accountability. 2) Newspaper organisations should provide technology for fact-checking. 3) Policymakers should develop and enact legislation that promotes transparency and accountability in social media usage. 4) Journalists should be equipped with knowledge and skills to evaluate the credibility and influence of sources. 5) Journalists should continue to prioritize

transparency and disclosure when using social media sources, towards maintaining public trust and credibility.

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