

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENTAL DYNAMICS ON UNETHICAL PRACTICES AMONG JOURNALISTS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates journalists' perceptions of how new media environmental dynamics influence unethical practices among journalists in Kwara State, Nigeria. The digital transformation of journalism, marked by speed, interactivity, convergence and intensified competition for audience attention, has significantly altered news production processes and professional routines. While these changes have expanded access to information and enhanced audience engagement, they have also generated ethical challenges that threaten core journalistic values such as accuracy, credibility and accountability. Anchored in **Media Ecology Theory**, which conceptualises media technologies as environments that shape human behaviour and professional norms, the study examines how structural features of the new media environment affect ethical decision-making among journalists. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from 140 registered journalists drawn from a population of 223 members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) across broadcast, print and online media organisations in Kwara State. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. The findings reveal that respondents perceive **privacy violations** and **cyberbullying** as the most prevalent ethical challenges in online journalism. Commercial pressures associated with the digital media economy, particularly intense competition for advertising and audience visibility, were also seen as contributing to unethical practices such as faking stories and sensational reporting. Furthermore, journalists strongly agreed that the new media environment has aggravated practices including **Afghanistanism** (avoidance of sensitive local issues), **inaccurate reporting**, **sycophancy**, and **sensationalism**, largely due to the pressures of immediacy, constant content production and reduced editorial gatekeeping. In contrast, traditional unethical practices such as plagiarism, brown-envelope journalism and self-censorship were perceived as less influenced by new media dynamics. Overall, the study concludes that while digital technologies have enhanced the reach and speed of journalism, they have also intensified specific unethical practices by reshaping professional priorities and routines. The findings underscore the need for stronger regulatory frameworks, continuous ethics training, and greater institutional oversight to promote responsible journalism in Nigeria's evolving digital media landscape.

Key words: New media dynamics, Journalism ethics, Unethical journalistic practices, Media Ecology Theory, Digital journalism in Nigeria.

Introduction

Journalism is undergoing a profound transformation, arguably the most fundamental since the emergence of the tabloid press in the mid-nineteenth century. The rise of digital technologies from the late 1900s into the early 2000s gave birth to a transformed model of journalism, one defined by rapid news delivery, worldwide reach, interactive engagement, the use of multimedia formats, and content tailored to individual users (Ambadas, 2024). While these developments

represent a more dynamic and inclusive model of journalism, they also pose significant threats to traditional journalistic values such as truth, accuracy, credibility, and professional accountability. In the new media environment, where anyone with an internet connection can act as a global publisher, the authenticity of content and reliability of sources are frequently questioned.

The term new media environment encompasses a wide range of digital platforms and tools including blogs, wikis, podcasts, social networks, and YouTube used in contemporary journalistic practices (Hamada, 2018). Although these technologies have simplified access to global information and enhanced collaboration among media professionals, they have also introduced complex ethical challenges (Hamada, 2019). The rapid development of online media has disrupted the conventional journalistic order and demands a reevaluation of professional ethics and standards, particularly in African contexts where journalism faces structural and institutional limitations.

Izuogu, Omeonu, Ubani, and Ugwu (2018) stress that ethics should guide journalists in distinguishing right from wrong, ensuring responsible reporting and accountability in news dissemination. Afzal (2017) further observes that ethical journalism is the cornerstone of democracy, yet in Nigeria, economic constraints and political pressures continue to endanger this foundation. As observed by Zainawa and Maitama (2022), the core principles of journalism truth, justice, accuracy, balance, and impartiality are increasingly being compromised in Nigeria's media landscape. Economic hardship, political influence, and corruption have eroded journalistic integrity. Abdulrasheed (2021) emphasizes the need for a zero-tolerance stance against corruption in both media practice and wider society, given that economic inequality and systemic corruption undermine ethical journalism.

Problem Statement

The Nigerian digital media environment is afflicted with ethical dilemma similar to the global challenges. The new digital media have fostered an environment where old, conventional media and the new media vie for audience attention. In the ensuing scenario, the core journalistic ethos of accuracy suffers and often sacrificed, especially when stories are published without sufficient editorial oversight. Though the new media environment tends to enhance the audience's experience compare to the old media clime, the flip side is that, it places additional pressure on journalists to produce content that is not only accurate and timely but also visually and narratively compelling (Apuke & Omar, 2021). This leads to journalists' prioritizing immediacy of content delivery which comes at the expense of

depth and reliability. This challenge of the new media dynamics compelled a continuous examination of their impact on the practice of journalism. While studies have examined and calibrated a number of features of the new media environment including click bait culture, algorithm driven decisions, user generated misinformation, economic pressure of digital platforms, deep fake, automated journalism (Díaz-Campo&Segado-Boj,2015, Edeani, 2021, Alade, Oyegoke, Ojewumi,& Okunade, 2025)), few studies have sought to understand the phenomenon from the perception of the practitioners, the journalists. In addition to empirical account, contextual factors from the sub national of the Nigerian federation that has the potential to add to the understanding of nuances about the phenomenon is yet to be highlighted. The question of interest for this is to examine the perception of practitioners to the types and most prevalent unethical practices in the new media environment. This concern is brought under these research questions: What are the most prevalent types of unethical practices in online journalism **in Kwara State as perceived by practitioners?** How do the Journalists in Kwara State perceive the influence of new media environmental dynamics on trends of unethical practices among Journalists?

New Media Environmental Dynamics

New media environmental dynamics refer to the shifting conditions under which communication and information circulate in digitally networked spaces, shaped by platform affordances, user practices and evolving media forms. A key contribution to this view is the “dynamics” approach to new media, which treats change itself, across systems, institutions and everyday practices, as central to understanding contemporary media environments (Hartley, Burgess, & Bruns, 2013). In such environments, communication is increasingly organised around networked distribution, rapid feedback, and the continual reconfiguration of relationships between producers, audiences and intermediaries.

One prominent dynamic is fragmentation: networked media multiply communication arenas and publics, weakening the integrative role historically played by mass media. In examining European public communication, Trenz argues that new (and old) media interact with political institutions within a fragmented attention

economy, complicating the formation of shared public spheres and democratic legitimacy (Trenz, n.d.). Closely related is the dynamic of competition for attention, which can influence both what information gains visibility and how it is framed.

Computational communication research highlights how information environments are shaped by interactions among multiple actors (e.g., mainstream media, blogs and social platforms). Quattrociochi, Caldarelli and Scala model “interacting networks” in which media outlets compete for followers and adjust positions strategically, showing how these dynamics can reshape opinion distributions and collective debate (Quattrociochi, Caldarelli, & Scala, 2014). At the societal level, digital media may also restructure patterns of interaction in ways that intensify political division: Törnberg proposes that non-local interactions facilitated by digital media can drive “partisan sorting”, aligning diverse conflicts into polarised camps and undermining social cohesion (Törnberg, 2022).

New media environments additionally normalise forms of harmful communication. Walther notes that social media afford interpersonal dynamics in which users gain social approval from like-minded networks, helping to sustain and spread online hate beyond individual-level explanations (Walther, 2022). Taken together, these perspectives suggest that new media dynamics are not neutral; rather, they constitute an evolving communicative environment that shapes attention, opinion formation, civic culture and the ethical quality of public discourse (Hartley et al., 2013).

Ethical Issues in the New Media Environment

The emergence of new media has significantly transformed the practice of journalism, rendering it increasingly complex and multifaceted. Contemporary media landscapes now encompass blogs, podcasts, vlogs, emails, social networking platforms and video-based applications. As a result, virtually anyone with internet access can function as both a creator and distributor of news content (Harris, 2022). This democratisation of media production has altered traditional journalistic norms and raised profound ethical concerns.

The immediacy and interactivity enabled by the internet and social media platforms have reshaped news consumption and production. Audiences now expect real-time updates and direct engagement

with journalists and media professionals on issues of interest. Consequently, news is continuously generated and disseminated around the clock. While this constant flow of information enhances accessibility, it has also contributed to the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, alongside a noticeable decline in traditional editorial gatekeeping and verification processes.

Harris (2022), drawing on Srisaracam (2014), observes that individuals frequently share inadequately verified information, misleading headlines, and fabricated stories presented as legitimate news. Such content spreads rapidly online, often driven by political motives or intended as satire or humour, yet is frequently misunderstood as factual reporting. This trend undermines public trust in media institutions and poses a significant challenge to journalistic credibility. Given that accuracy remains a foundational principle of journalism, ethical practice demands that journalists rigorously verify information obtained from digital and online sources before publication.

Within the context of citizen journalism, ethical responsibility becomes even more complex. Moyo (2015) argues that citizen journalism represents a future-oriented phenomenon in which ethical norms are likely to emerge around “de-professionalised and de-institutionalised personal responsibilities” (p. 125). This perspective suggests that the ethical framework governing new media may differ from that of traditional journalism, as content creators often operate outside established professional standards and regulatory structures. Consequently, ethical accountability in new media spaces is increasingly individualised, requiring users to exercise personal judgement and responsibility.

Another prominent ethical issue in the new media age is cyberbullying, also referred to as social media bullying. Cyberbullying involves the use of digital technologies and online platforms to harass, abuse, or harm individuals socially, psychologically, and, in some cases, physically (Akeusola, 2023). The anonymity and reach afforded by new media amplify the potential for such harmful behaviour, raising concerns about moral responsibility, platform governance, and user protection.

Privacy also constitutes a critical ethical concern within the new media environment. The extensive collection and sharing of personal data on social media platforms expose users to risks such as identity theft, surveillance, and exploitation. Park and Bae (2025) emphasise the need for users to understand the importance of safeguarding their personal information and exercising caution when sharing data online. Ethical new media practice therefore necessitates greater digital literacy, transparency in data use, and stronger protections for individual privacy.

Therefore, while new media technologies have expanded opportunities for participation and engagement in journalism, they have also introduced complex ethical challenges. Addressing issues of accuracy, accountability, cyberbullying, and privacy is essential to sustaining public trust and promoting responsible communication in the evolving digital media landscape.

Theoretical Framework: Media Ecology Theory

This study is anchored in Media Ecology Theory, a perspective originally associated with the works of Marshall McLuhan and later advanced by scholars such as Neil Postman and Lance Strate (Strate, 2000). Media ecology examines media technologies as environments that fundamentally shape human perception, behaviour, cognition, and social relations. Rather than viewing media as neutral channels for transmitting information, the theory emphasises the ways in which the structural characteristics of media technologies influence how communication is produced, interpreted, and evaluated.

Central to Media Ecology Theory is McLuhan's assertion that "*the medium is the message*", which underscores the idea that the form and technological properties of a medium exert a greater influence on communication outcomes than the content conveyed. Expanding this argument, Postman contends that each new medium reconfigures the scale, pace, and pattern of human activity, thereby reshaping social institutions, professional practices, and ethical norms. From this perspective, media technologies actively structure communicative behaviour and value systems, rather than merely reflecting them.

Contemporary scholarship confirms the continued relevance of Media Ecology Theory in

understanding digital communication environments. Ahmed and Zia (2023), for instance, demonstrate how social media interactivity reshapes human behaviour and social engagement, highlighting the transformative effects of sustained interaction within digital platforms. Similarly, Khalid et al. (2025) trace the evolution of media ecology from its foundational principles to its application in complex digital ecosystems, illustrating the theory's adaptability in explaining contemporary media dynamics. Collectively, these studies reinforce the core assumption that technological environments are inherently value-laden and exert powerful influences on users' behavioural and ethical orientations, including those of journalists.

Within the context of this study, Media Ecology Theory provides a robust lens for examining how new media environmental dynamics, such as speed, immediacy, interactivity, convergence, algorithmic visibility, and decentralisation, shape journalistic practices and ethical decision-making. The rapid circulation of information, competitive pressure for visibility, and diminished editorial gatekeeping characteristic of new media environments may encourage practices that compromise professional standards, including inadequate verification, sensationalism, plagiarism, and the dissemination of misleading content.

Applied to the Nigerian new media context, the theory helps to explain how journalists' perceptions of these environmental pressures influence their professional conduct. As journalists operate within a digital ecosystem that prioritises immediacy, audience engagement, and constant content production, ethical judgement may become subordinated to technological and organisational demands. Media Ecology Theory therefore enables this study to conceptualise unethical journalistic practices not solely as individual moral failings, but as outcomes shaped by the structural and environmental conditions of the new media landscape.

Media Ecology Theory offers a comprehensive framework for analysing the relationship between new media environmental dynamics and unethical practices among journalists, highlighting the powerful role of media technologies in shaping professional norms, routines, and ethical behaviour.

Methods

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design, employing a survey method to examine journalists' perceptions of the influence of new media environmental dynamics on unethical professional practices. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which enabled the systematic gathering of quantitative information from respondents at a single point in time.

The study population comprised registered journalists working across various media organisations in Kwara State, Nigeria. According to records obtained from the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Kwara State Chapter, there are 12 chapels in the state, with a total registered membership of 223 journalists spanning broadcast, print, and online media organisations (NUJ, 2023).

Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, a sample of 140 journalists was drawn from the total population. This sample size was considered adequate to ensure representativeness and statistical reliability. Respondents were selected across the different media sectors to capture diverse professional experiences within the new media environment.

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS version 25.0). The analysis involved descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, which were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and assess patterns in perceptions regarding new media dynamics and unethical journalistic practices.

Findings

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
21–25	4	2.8
26–30	43	30.7
31–35	30	21.5
36 and above	63	45.0
Total	140	100
Gender		
Male	84	60.0
Female	56	40.0
Total	130	100
Qualification		
OND	10	7.2
HND	30	21.5
B.Sc.	75	53.5
M.Sc.	20	14.3
PhD	5	3.5
Total	140	100

The demographic data show that male journalists (60%) outnumber their female counterparts (40%), indicating a male-dominated sample. Most respondents (45%) are aged 36 years and above, suggesting that the profession is largely composed of experienced and mature individuals. In terms of educational qualification, the majority hold a Bachelor's degree (53.5%), followed by HND holders (21.5%), while only a few possess postgraduate qualifications such as M.Sc. (14.3%) and PhD (3.5%). This suggests that the respondents are generally well-educated, with most having at least a tertiary-level qualification suitable for professional journalism practice.

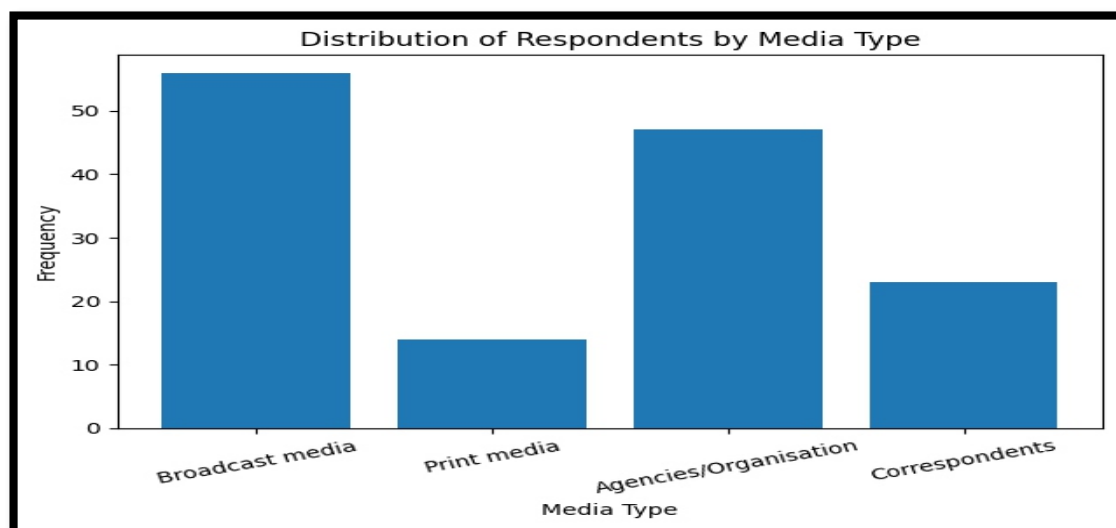


Figure 1: Respondents according to Media Type/House

The data show that the **broadcast media** category has the highest number of respondents (56), representing **40%** of the total sample. This indicates that a significant proportion of the journalists surveyed work in radio or television stations. The **print media** has the least representation with **14 respondents (10%)**, reflecting the declining influence or reduced workforce in traditional print journalism. Furthermore, **47 respondents (34%)** are from **media agencies or organizations**, suggesting that a sizable portion of journalists are engaged in

corporate communication, news agencies, or digital media outfits. The **correspondent's** category accounts for **23 respondents (16%)**, showing that a smaller but notable group operates as field or freelance reporters. Overall, the data imply that the journalism landscape represented in this study is dominated by practitioners in the broadcast sector, followed by those in agencies and organizations, while print media participation appears comparatively low. This trend may reflect the shifting focus of the media industry toward electronic and digital platforms.

Table 2: Most Prevalent Types of Unethical Practices in Online Journalism as Perceived by Practitioners

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. D
1	Faking story	50 (35.7)	22(15.7)	38 (27.2)	30(21.)	3.28	.86
2	Misleading headlines	24 (17.1)	38(27.2)	68 (48.5)	10 (7.1)	2.86	.79
3	Cyber-bullying	82 (58.5)	5 (3.5)	30 (21.4)	23(16.)	3.63	.56
4	Media accountability	20 (14.2)	24(17.1)	18 (12.8)	78(55.)	2.21	.79
5	Privacy	68 (48.5)	38(27.1)	24 (17.1)	10 (7.1)	3.74	.55
6	Cut throat desperation for advertisement	24 (17.1)	68(48.5)	38 (27.1)	10 (7.1)	3.47	.76

The data in table 3 presents journalists' views on selected ethical issues influenced by the new media environment. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree – SA; Agree – A; Disagree – D; Strongly Disagree – SD), with mean scores used to gauge the level of agreement. A **mean ≥ 2.50** indicates agreement that the issue has become more pronounced due to new media, while a **mean < 2.50** suggests disagreement.

High-Level Agreement (Mean ≥ 3.50)

- **Privacy violation (Mean = 3.74, SD = 0.55) and cyber-bullying (Mean = 3.63, SD = 0.56)** ranked highest among the listed issues. This implies that journalists strongly perceive breaches of privacy and online harassment as major ethical concerns aggravated by the new media space. The participatory and open nature of digital platforms appears to have heightened these problems.

Moderate Agreement (Mean between 3.00 and 3.49)

- **Cut-throat desperation for advertisement (Mean = 3.47, SD = 0.76) and faking stories (Mean = 3.28, SD = 0.86)** indicate a moderate but notable perception that commercial pressure and competition for online attention drive journalists toward unethical content creation and sensational reporting.

Low-Level Agreement (Mean between 2.50 and 2.99)

- **Misleading headlines (Mean = 2.86, SD = 0.79)** shows that while respondents acknowledge its occurrence, it is viewed as less intensified by new media compared to other unethical behaviors. This may suggest growing editorial caution or audience backlash against misinformation online. Disagreement (Mean < 2.50)

- **Media accountability (Mean = 2.21, SD = 0.79)** received the lowest mean, implying that respondents generally disagree that new media has improved or worsened accountability among journalists. Rather, accountability appears weakly influenced, possibly due to limited enforcement of ethical standards in online journalism.

The findings reveal that **privacy invasion, cyber-bullying, and commercial pressure** are the most pressing ethical challenges confronting journalists in the digital era. The data underscore the impact of digital platforms in eroding boundaries between personal and public information while fostering an environment where competition for visibility and revenue can compromise professional integrity. Conversely, issues like **media accountability** remain under-addressed, indicating a need for **stronger institutional and regulatory frameworks** to uphold ethical standards in online journalism

Table 3: Perceptions of how the new media environment has influenced unethical practices within the profession

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. D.
1.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of plagiarism among journalists	50(35.8)	10(7.2)	60(42.)	20(14.)	2.21	.79
2.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of demand and collection of bribery among journalists	64(45.2)	28 (20)	24(17.)	24 (42)	3.25	.86
3.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of inaccurate reporting among journalists	84 (60)	26(18.)	15(10.)	15(10.)	3.47	.76
4.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of sensationalism among journalists	70 (52)	34(25.)	17(12.)	15(10.)	3.28	.86

5.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Sycophancy among journalists	84 (60)	20(14.)	20(14.)	16(11.)	3.47	.76
6.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Character Assassination among journalists	48(34.2)	46(32.)	23(16.)	23(16.)	2.90	.86
7.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Pressure on journalists	60(42.9)	44(31.)	18(12.)	18(12.)	2.47	1.07
8.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Afghanistanism (avoidance of hot local issues) among journalists	82(58.5)	16(11.)	20(14.)	22(15.)	3.56	.78
9.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Moonlighting among journalists	58(41.4)	36 (25.7)	20 (14.2)	26 (18.5)	2.90	.86
10.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Self -censorship among journalists	28 (20)	22 (15.8)	36 (25.7)	54 (38.5)	1.65	0.54
11.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Freebies and Junket journalism among journalists	54 (38.5)	30 (21.4)	30 (21.4)	26 (18.5)	2.98	.87
12.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Self -censorship among journalists	52 (37.1)	52 (37.1)	8 (5.7)	28 (20)	2.90	.86
13.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Brown envelopes among journalists	24 (17.2)	38 (27.2)	48 (34.2)	30 (21.4)	1.65	0.54

14.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Faking stories among journalists	46 (32.8)	40 (28.6)	30 (21.4)	24 (17.2)	2.98	.87
15.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Hacking among journalists	20 (14.2)	24 (17.1)	50 (35.7)	46 (32.8)	1.65	0.54
16.	The new media environment has aggravated the incidence of Hate Speech among journalists	24 (17.2)	38 (27.2)	48 (34.2)	30 (21.4)	2.98	.87

The data in Table 3 present journalists' perceptions of how the new media environment has influenced unethical practices within the profession. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree – SA; Agree – A; Disagree – D; Strongly Disagree – SD). The analysis is based on mean scores, where a mean ≥ 2.50 indicates agreement that the unethical practice has increased, while a mean < 2.50 suggests disagreement.

High-Level Agreement (Mean ≥ 3.00)

The items with the highest mean values indicate areas where respondents strongly agree that the new media environment has intensified unethical practices:

- **Afghanistanism (Mean = 3.56, SD = 0.78):** Most respondents agreed that journalists increasingly avoid sensitive local issues, preferring distant or global topics. This suggests a growing detachment from accountability journalism. It may also indicate an atmosphere of ownership or regulatory overbearing that self-censorship among the practitioners.
- **Inaccurate reporting (Mean = 3.47, SD = 0.76)** These high means show that misinformation and biased reporting have become more prevalent, likely due to the speed and competition of digital news dissemination.
- **Sycophancy (Mean = 3.47, SD = 0.76):** The high means indicates journalist or media houses allows excessive flattery behaviour towards powerful individuals, organisations or government often in exchange for access or favour. This can compromise the integrity of reporting leading to biased or uncritical reporting.

- **Sensationalism (Mean = 3.28, SD = 0.86) and Bribery (Mean = 3.25, SD = 0.86):** These indicate that exaggeration, shocking or provocative content to attract attention and increase audience patronages. These unethical practices prioritize entertainment values over factual accuracy and journalistic integrity

Moderate Agreement (Mean between 2.50 and 2.99)

This category includes unethical behaviors perceived as moderately aggravated by the new media environment:

Character assassination (Mean = 2.90, SD = 0.86), **Moonlighting** (Mean = 2.90, SD = 0.86), **Freebies and junket journalism** (Mean = 2.98, SD = 0.87), **Faking stories** (Mean = 2.98, SD = 0.87), and **Hate speech** (Mean = 2.98, SD = 0.87).

The results indicate that the unethical practices assessed fall within a similar range of perception among respondents. Character assassination and moonlighting both recorded identical mean scores of 2.90 (SD = 0.86), suggesting a moderately low to moderate level of occurrence or agreement, with a comparable degree of variability in respondents' views.

Freebies and junket journalism, faking stories, and hate speech all showed slightly higher but identical mean values of 2.98 (SD = 0.87). This places them marginally above the previous two practices, though still within the same general moderate range. The close similarity in both the means and standard deviations suggests that participants perceive these three behaviours as occurring at nearly the same level and with similar consistency across the sample.

These results suggest that digital platforms' immediacy and lack of strict editorial oversight may have encouraged practices like defamation, multiple job holdings, and the circulation of fabricated or inflammatory content.

Low-Level Agreement (Mean < 2.50)

Items in this range reflect unethical behaviors not widely seen as aggravated by the new media environment:

- **Plagiarism** (Mean = 2.21, SD = 0.79), Pressure on journalists (Mean = 2.47, SD = 1.07), Brown envelope (Mean = 1.65, SD = 0.54), Self-censorship (Mean = 1.65, SD = 0.54), and Hacking (Mean = 1.65, SD = 0.54).

Conclusion

The analysis of respondents' views on unethical practices in the new media environment reveals that digital transformation has considerably influenced journalistic ethics. Findings show that practices such as Afghanistanism (Mean = 3.56), inaccurate reporting (Mean = 3.47), sycophancy (Mean = 3.47), sensationalism (Mean = 3.28), and bribery (Mean = 3.25) were perceived to have been most aggravated by the rise of new media platforms. Moderate levels of agreement were also recorded for issues like character assassination, moonlighting, and faking of stories, suggesting that the immediacy and competitive nature of online journalism encourage such tendencies. Conversely, unethical practices like plagiarism (Mean = 2.21), self-censorship (Mean = 1.65), and brown-envelope journalism (Mean = 1.65) recorded low means, implying limited influence from new media. Overall, the results indicate that while digital technology enhances information dissemination, it simultaneously amplifies ethical challenges, underscoring the need for stronger professional regulation and ethical reorientation among journalists in the digital age.

The analysis demonstrates that while digital technology has enhanced journalistic reach and

These relatively low means suggest that while such practices exist, respondents do not perceive them as significantly worsened by digital media technologies.

Generally, the findings indicate that the new media environment has heightened the prevalence of certain unethical practices, notably inaccurate reporting, sensationalism, sycophancy, and avoidance of sensitive local issues, due to the pressures of immediacy, audience engagement, and competition for online visibility. However, traditional unethical behaviors such as plagiarism, bribery solicitation, and brown-envelope journalism appear to have less perceived influence from new media dynamics, possibly due to improved transparency and audience scrutiny online.

speed, it has also amplified tendencies toward sensationalism, misinformation, and superficial coverage. Addressing these ethical challenges requires stronger editorial control, digital literacy, and enforcement of professional codes in the evolving media landscape

Recommendations

The findings from this study compel some recommendation. The findings indicate high perception of the incidence of the violation of privacy and cyberbullying. To deal with such incidence, there is need for the media houses to organize Mandatory Continuous Training for all registered journalists and other categories on online and/or citizens journalists

The increasing incidence of sensationalism and sycophancy reporting among journalist as perceived by the respondents requires adequate funding of the practice of journalism that can wean the journalists from desperation for money which fuels sensationalism and sycophancy.

There is need for increase regulatory regime over the new media environment that clearly outline guidance on ethical and unethical practices within the profession.

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