

Antinomianism and Professionalism in Media Practice: Do Ethics Still Matter?

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Abstract

Ethics is very important aspect of any profession because it helps the practitioner to judge his/her actions. In other words, it makes it possible for us to subject our conscience to test. It is socially determined, but individually enforced. In other words, antinomian is the opposite of the legalistic principle subscriber. They are those that believe that man should not be pinned down or pigeon holed into any particular way of life in the name of a written code. Therefore, the study seeks to antinomianism and professionalism in media practice: Do ethical codes still matter? The study examined all concepts and critical reviews were given to support to the study. The study employed library based research method and social responsibility theory was used to provide the theoretical background of the study. The study recommended that Since journalism practice is based on accuracy, fairness, trust, honestly among others, journalists should follow and abide by the ethical codes in other to lead them on the right part; antinomianism is not the best because it leads journalist to corruption, so journalist should stick to the ethical codes.

Keywords: Antinomianism, Professionalism, Media Practice, Media, Ethical Codes



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INTRODUCTION

Journalistic codes of ethics are traditionally regarded as declarations that journalists will try to follow the best professional practices and ethical standards, meet their social responsibility obligations, and accept public accountability. Their commitment to do so on a self-regulatory basis helps to protect news media from political interference and, thus, to preserve freedom, independence, and pluralism. The country reports of the 2021 Media for Democracy Monitor (MDM) research project shows a vast multiplicity of such codes, although with different origin or authorship, scope, range of action, and enforcement capacity, depending on the media context (Trappel & Tomaz, 2021).

The mass media can influence actions, change the course of events and even destroy. Since “one good journalist on the ground was worth a battalion of troops” (Dallaire, 2007), the leader of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda during the genocide regretted his inability to exploit this arsenal. Roméo Dallaire and his men could not match the efficiency of the radio which mobilised one ethnic group against another. The Rwandan experience clearly demonstrates the overriding imperative for journalists to be guided by a code of ethics that can discourage the abuse of freedom and guarantee the application of sound judgment in information gathering, analysis and dissemination.

In Nigeria, if the mass media are to support development and stability in society, they need to exercise press freedom responsibly. The inability of the press to indulge in self examination as a social institution with a relative long history has put it in the public focus. While the press inundates the public with ethical misconducts of public officials (Pratt, 1988) in (Nnamani, 2003), journalists and media owners resist any attempt to subject them and their practice to any form of control. thus, the least restricted press in the sub-Saharan region (Pratt, 1988) exhibits features of a profession without control. Agbese, (2010) observes that

the Nigeria Press Organisation Code of Honour, which outlines a journalist's duties and conduct, is to be adhered to at the journalist's discretion, and has no language of enforcement. his agrees with Merrill's (2011) conceptualisation of media ethics as "a normative science of conduct, with conduct considered primarily self-determined, rational, and voluntary." That is, ethical principles are actualised based on personal responsibility and autonomy (Plaisance & Deppa, 2009) accompanied with press freedom (Merrill). As a social institution, the press (print and electronic) is expected to derive its ethical principles from its role in society, ensuring that it is above board in the manner of information acquisition, use and dissemination. Ideally, a newspaper is supposed to pluck out the truth from the daily maelstrom of events, make independent and objective judgments as to its importance to readers, and print it without fear or favor. Resistance to outside pressures, including those applied by advertisers, is considered a must. (Wall Street Journal [WSJ], 1975, p. 150)

Media ethics discourse is integral in journalism practice and development. Christians (2008) and Ferré (2009) trace its scholarly development from journalism values geared at ensuring social responsibility to a normative theory of ethics that explores diverse philosophical leanings in deining truth telling, humanness, justice, freedom and stewardship to society. Nonetheless, Plaisance and Deppa (2009) found that in practice, journalists apply sets of values, rather than particular philosophical approaches in ethical decision-making. his, however, does not undermine the importance of ethics education, as some journalists tend to think, because ethical journalists develop "a strong internal sense of the appropriate professional choices" (Wilkins & Coleman, 2005) due to having undergone ethics education.

Moreover, maturity in ethics develops through recognizing moral issues, and assessing different arguments and tolerating other perspectives on them (Alia, 2004) — "a person does not one day just become 'ethical'. Individuals grow ethically just as they grow physically and intellectually" (Merrill, 2011). To Rodman (undated, p.508) "ethics is the study of guideline that help people determine right from wrong. Unlike law, ethics deals primarily with self-determined voluntary conduct." Dominick (2002) defines ethics as "rules of conduct or principal of morality that point toward the right or best way to in a situation." Generally, therefore, ethics can be a branch of philosophy that deals with value relating to human conduct with respect to rightness or wrongness of certain action and to the goodness or badness of the motive and ends of such actions. In a nutshell, has to do with what is good and what is bad.

Ethics is very important aspect of any profession because it helps the practitioner to judge his/her actions. In other words, it makes it possible for us to subject our conscience to test. It is socially determined, but individually enforced. In other words, ethical decisions are collectively made but individually implemented. To be judged for violation of ethics, an individual must have control over his/her action. In a situation where one is compelled to do something, the issue of ethics dos not arise. For instance, it is ethically wrong for a photojournalist to make advantage of helpless accident victim like taking a shot of a naked accident victim. If he is ordered to do so by his editor, he may be absolved of ethical responsibilities arising from such an action.

The antinomian is the opposite of the legalistic principle subscriber. They are those that believe that man should not be pinned down or pigeon holed into any particular way of life in the name of a written code. They argue that man is a rational being; he should be guided by his feeling, instinct, or intuition as he battles with moral or ethical problems. The antinomians are freewheeling duds that owe no loyalty to any person or group. The live their lives the way they deem fit and are simply unpredictable when it comes to taking ethical decisions. Unlike the absolutists or legalists, no one can say with precision that an antinomian will suppress a

story, tell a lie, collect brown envelope without running the risk of being wrong. This is because the circumstances or situation at the moment determines what the antinomian does, not existing code or adherence to already existing principles of morality.

In another dimension, journalists have received acceptance and accolades in the country and outside by virtue of the professional excellence exhibited in the course of their duty. One of the recent achievements is the Pulitzer prize (for best journalist in the world) awarded to a Nigerian journalist, Dele Olojede. In view of this, former Director General of the National Orientation Agency, Alhaji Idi Muhammad Faruk submitted that: Most Nigerians perceive the Nigerian press positively and this is evident in increase readership, viewership, and listenership of Newspaper, Television and Radio...unfortunately, quacks and charlatans have infiltrated the ranks, thereby dragging the reputation of the profession to the mud. They are in every Press conference, offices, and airport etc demanding 'brown envelopes'. They have also introduced blackmail, using mobile phone and at this level of operation the demand is not brown envelop but Ghana must go!

Day (2006) shares similar view when he said that 'public opinion polls continue to disfavor the unethical behavior of journalists. This then poses a question on their credibility which tilts the public perception to hold that media ship is sailing without a moral compass'. He further quotes Rabinowitz (2006) as saying 'many journalists continue to believe that they are involved in a calling so high as to entitle them to rights not given to ordinary citizen'. That is why there has been increasing public debates about the unethical behaviors of journalists as observed among some media practitioners. These include among others bias, press cynicism, media manipulation, condemnation of journalist intrusions into privacy, worries about the damaging or distortive effects of the television medium as levied against the gentlemen of the press, (Kieran 2003). Other and similar unethical practices among some journalists include sensationalism, fakery, plagiarism, moonlighting, corruption, junkets and check book journalism. Describing the imminent implication of these unethical practices among journalists the profession and media organizations, Potter, (2006) espouses:

Ethical lapses do occur in journalism. Reporters have accepted payments from sources. News organizations have published advertisements in the guise of news. When this happens, the public has a right question everything that appears in the news media. All journalists and all news organizations, suffer when journalists behave unethically because that behavior calls the professions credibility into question. When credibility suffers, so does a news organization ability to survive economically.

In his comparative analysis on the consequence of unethical behaviors among journalists Wilmot (2006) holds that: You have a choice; you can work in a supermarket, a bank, or a surgery. As long as you choose to do a job where truth is the measure of professionalism, you must resist-whatever the sacrifice. You cannot offer the excuse that you tell lies to feed and house your family because by lying to defend a disastrous government you sacrifice the futures of your children and grandchildren. Doctors, architects, builders and other professionals have codes of conduct as well as professional competence, violation of which leads to deaths and collapse of buildings. Doctors, lawyers and engineers can be sued or jailed for professional malpractices. But when broadcasters and their journalists and intellectuals lie they threaten the whole societies with collapse

Over the years, the question of unethical practices among journalists in Africa and Nigeria in particular is such that has continued to attract attention and generate issues of various sorts. Despite the legal framework and regulatory bodies such as Nigerian Press Council (NPC), Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) and other professional associations to checkmate the excesses of journalists, the efforts seem unyielding as these practices continue

to generate multiple images about journalism and journalists alike before the Nigerian publics. Rather than enjoying public trust and confidence, skepticism and uncertainty have dominated the Nigerian public sphere regarding journalists. Hence, this paper takes a theoretical approach to examine the question of Antinomianism and professionalism in media practice: Do ethical codes Matter?

RESEARCH METHOD

The study was set to examine Antinomianism and professionalism in media practice: Do ethical codes Matter? Therefore, the methodology adopted for this study is the library research method. Here, the researcher made use of secondary research material relevant to this paper such as articles, books, chapters, journals, newspapers, magazines to gather facts in discussing the subject matter.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media: An Overview

This raises two other questions, first, the calibre and nature of those who call themselves journalists, second the induction and training offered them at recruitment by various media houses. To be sure, journalism is an all-comer profession in Nigeria. People of diverse backgrounds and disciplines with mere “interest” in journalism or who are merely seeking job opportunities, automatically become journalists when such offers are made. Many essayists or writers can easily claim to be journalists, there are no rules of entry, or to restate the same thing, there are no rules for regulating conduct and practice of journalists or better still, enforcement mechanisms are weak. Most prominent people, who are editors and news editors in many media houses today, never studied journalism or mass communication that is true.

But I do not think that accounts for why they are morally wanting. Not studying Mass Communication is not and cannot be an excuse, because all subjects, all disciplines teach ethics and good conduct; so it is with and in all professions –there are best practices. But why are these not respected by journalists or enforced by media owners or professional unions? (Oladele, 2009) The cheapening of professional and ethical standards in journalism has affected the quality of news and reports; and has introduced excessive biases, fabrications and partisanship in the conduct of many journalists. What happens is that many journalists are on the payroll of key established businesses, governmental and political interests. From time to time, these patrons get news syndicated and planted in the media. They also pay heavily to get news killed, the public interest, notwithstanding.

Many people occupying the office of “Press Secretary” whether at federal state or Local government level, or legislative arm or even to former political office holders, are meant to achieve that purpose. Hence those positions in many ways have become means of compromising the press and quality of news. The implication is that Nigerians no longer trust in what they read, they no longer believe what they hear, and rumor seems more authentic than what the media tells them. The result of the inaccuracies and falsehood of Nigeria media have resulted in a lot of litigations in law courts over libel and so on. For how longer will the NUJ condone this practice?

The unethical practices of journalists are also related in no small way to poor pay. Many journalists are grossly underpaid and this has compromised them in no small way in the discharge of their professional and social responsibility. It may be argued that this is not peculiar to the journalism or journalism as a profession, but it is most tempting for some journalists, the choice between collecting or rejecting gratification is quite complex. I hasten

to add that some of those journalists are also greedy and opportunistic. Such bad eggs should be severed with the profession. There is no where Nigerian journalist has shown misconduct, sharp and unethical practices and lack of respect for the readership than in reporting of political activities or political office holders.

Types of Media

1. Print Media

This type of news media used to be the only way of delivering information to the public. For the generations of the 80s and 90s, print media was the only media of entertain. People relied on newspapers and magazines to learn everything, from recipes and entertainment news to important information about the country or the world. Print media includes:

- a. Newspapers** – printed and distributed on a daily or weekly basis. They include news related to sports, politics, technology, science, local news, national news, international news, birth notices, as well as entertainment news related to fashion, celebrities, and movies. Today’s parents grew up with this type of printed media.
- b. Magazines** – printed on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. It contains information about finance, food, lifestyle, fashion, sports, etc.
- c. Books** – focused on a particular topic or subject, giving the reader a chance to spread their knowledge about their favorite topic.
- d. Banners** – used to advertise a company’s services and products, hung on easily-noticed sights to attract people’s attention.
- e. Billboards** – huge advertisements created with the help of computers. Their goal is to attract people passing by.
- f. Brochures** – a type of booklet that includes everything about one company – its products, services, terms and conditions, contact details, address, etc. They are either distributed with the newspapers or hand over to people. Check this article to learn more on how to ease the brochure design process here
- g. Flyers** – used mostly by small companies due to the low cost of advertising. They contain the basic information about a company, their name, logo, service or product, and contact information, and they are distributed in public areas.

2. Broadcasting Media

Broadcasting media includes videos, audios, or written content that provides important or entertaining information shared by different methods:

- a. Television** – in the past, there were a few channels sharing various types of content, whereas now we have hundreds of TV channels to choose from. Each channel delivers a different type of content, so you have a separate channel for news, drama, movies, sports, animation, nature, travel, politics, cartoon, and religion. It’s the number one broadcasting media due to its reach to the audience.
- b. Radio** – uses radio waves to transmit entertaining, informative, and educative content to the public. Due to its high reach to the audience, radio is widely used for advertising products and services. Radio is one of the oldest means of entertainment, and today people often hear it to find out the weather and traffic while commuting.
- c. Movies** – film, motion picture, screenplay, moving picture, or movie has world-wide reach ability. It’s the best type of mass media to promote cultures and spread social awareness. Movies have always played a huge part in the entertainment world.

3. Internet Media

Nowadays, we are relying on the Internet to get the news a lot more often than traditional news sources. Websites provide information in the form of video, text, and audio. We can even choose the way we want to receive the news. Types of Internet media include:

- a. Social networks or websites** – including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Quora, Reddit, Pinterest, etc. They are user-friendly and widely used by people around the world. Although we can find any news here, they may be misleading because of the lack of regulations on the content shared.
- b. Online forums** - an online place where we can comment, message, or discuss a particular topic. Forums allow us to share knowledge with other people with the same interest. That's why it's regarded as the best platform to seek support and assistance.
- c. Podcast** – a series of audios focused on a particular topic or theme. We can listen to them on a computer or a mobile phone. It's a platform that allows anyone to share their knowledge and communicate with the world. You can browse some podcast hosting sites to see what fits your needs best.

Professionalism in Media Practice

Who is a professional journalist?

One of the American reputable social scientists, William J. Goode states that professionals constitute a homogeneous community whose members share values, identity, definition of roles and interest. He added that members of a profession are bound by sense of identity and they share common values.

According to (Olatunji, 1991), sociologists hold that, in order for a job to qualify as a profession; it must possess the following attributes. First, it must emphasize a unique and essential service. Second, it must perform a unique and essential service. Third, it must have a long period of specialized training to acquire a systematic body of knowledge, based on research. Fourth, it must be given a broad personal responsibility for their judgments and actions. Sixth, it must place greater emphasis on service than on private economic gain. Seventh, it must develop a comprehensive, self-governing organization. Eight, it must have a code of ethics which has been clarified and interpreted by concrete cases. Needless to say, no single profession or occupation passes all these tests. A profession, then, is nothing but an ideal type in the sense which does not describe any actual profession, but which is fruitful in the analysis and investigation of actual professions. What we have in reality therefore is a continuum, with zero professionalism at one end, maximum professionalism at the other. Various professions may be plotted at various points along this continuum. It may well be that, on such a continuum, journalism is further from maximum professionalism like law or medicine or even closer to zero professionalism than in law or medicine. Astor (1991) expresses the thought of the United States of America's Bureau of Labour Statistics which summarizes the qualifications of professions thus, prescribes educational standards, licensing and enforcement of performance of standard by the profession itself. By and large, research conducted by Akinfele (1991) explains the features of a professional body as follows.

- 1. Solidarity:** A member of a profession believes closely in solidarity with other members and thinks that, it is a good thing to present a solid front to those outside the profession. How far can we say this about Nigerian journalists?
- 2. Trust:** A member of a profession assumes that he can be trusted since he professes to have certain expertise that is not common. To what extent can a Nigerian journalist claim this point and be believed? It is viewed that everybody is a journalist in this country (even if he

only features via letter to the editor). The impression created by print media that everybody should become journalist by creating his own news is not helping matters. Though it is acknowledged that there should be democratization of news via citizen journalism notwithstanding, expertise should still be upheld to make the profession one of the best.

- 3. Objectivity:** Members of a profession are expected to think objectively and inquiring about matters subject to orthodoxy and sentiment which limit intellectual exploration. This feature of professionalism is dead in Nigeria journalism where emphasis on materialism is placed above intellectual exploration. Majority of journalists are not interested in stories that will not enrich their pocket-so, pocket first, others follow, among others.
- 4. Code of Ethics:** Code of ethics governing the entrance and practice of members of a profession is a must. This governs their practice to a high degree of group control. There only exist on paper numerous codes of ethics for various Nigerian journalism associations, yet, the actual practice and submission to peer control has not been brought to fruition. The journalists' creed of 1908, media council law of 1988, Ilorin Declaration of 1998 and other code of ethics governing the conduct of journalism in Nigeria only exist on paper.

Media and Ethics

According to Cicero (106-4BC) cited in Udeze (2012) the first step towards understanding any subject is a clear definition of such a subject so that everybody involved will understand what the issue at stake is all about. Based on this, we have tried to give both dictionary and other definition of the work.

The Nigerian media have come under scrutiny and attacks from without and within for a spate of unethical practices in the last one to two decades. Some have argued that this spate of unethical practices of the media is not unconnected with the general state of the country which is said to be 'crawling with all manner of ethical maladies and unethical behaviour', as well as a culture that had ceased to value integrity, honesty and hard work. (Okunna, 2005) The result of this situation of increasing corruption of the journalist is a moral panic over the media by various sectors of the polity such that ethical consideration and criticism of journalistic efforts have become a major preoccupation of politicians, captains of industry, media pundits as well as the general public.

Such criticism been leveled against the Nigerian media by various national opinion leaders, notably, the Nobel laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, who berated the media concerning the unethical practices associated with junk journalism.

Ethical Codes in Media Practice

The question of ethics is not clear-cut as the question of law. The ethical implications of a reporter's action, in the process of gathering and disseminating information, are far-fetched in relation to the legal implications of such action. The issue of ethics is so wide that it can be interpreted variously, depending on who or what is involved. However, ethics dwell on the concept of methodology which ought to be universally recognized one. If, for instance, obtaining information through pretense or deceit is unacceptable as a standard practice, then it becomes condemnable for a journalist to do so, no matter what issue is involved. But the journalist is in a fix here. He now ruminates over whether to violate the law and serve national interest or play the game by the rules and put the peace and unity of the country in jeopardy. But purists will always argue that only the methods approved by law in gathering information are acceptable, notwithstanding what else will suffer. They believe that, that is the only way the media can be trusted by members of the public. It is now left for the reporter

to justify whatever decision he takes (Abadins, 2007). He went further that journalists are corrupt or that they take brown envelopes. Which euphemistically, still means bribe, has become the song of many? Corruption is reprehensible, whichever way it happens, whether openly or in a veiled form. There is no justification for it, for the self pride and integrity of the journalist involved are depleted, while the little confidence and trust of the public in the media are further eroded. If the media must act to type as the watchdog of society, its practitioners must shun all form or appearance of corruption. That is the only moral standing they have to expose corruption in other places

Professionalism and Media Ethics

McQuail, (2005) points out that lack of political independence has been identified as one of the effects of professionalism in journalism. This takes various forms, including organization into associations, the formation of press councils and the drawing up of principles of good practice in the form of codes of practice and ethics. The press councils are typically voluntary or at least non-governmental bodies that mediate between the public and the mass media. The function implies the need to have some codes of standard principles to which reference can be made; and in general press councils are instruments of self regulations for the press that acknowledge a responsibility to the public. There are codes of ethics in Nigeria but it is often flawed — selling conscience at the altar of money.

Why Codes of Ethics?

Codes of ethics exist virtually in all professions in order to ensure standard practice and since journalism is not an exception thus, it concerns the dictates of the standards of professional practice. The phenomenon reflects the general process of professionalism of journalism especially from the threat of external intervention and reduced autonomy. It reveals the values that the media publicly proclaim as guidelines for their work. Common features of the codes includes: the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion; respect for privacy; and prohibition of bribes or any other benefits. As a matter of fact, truth and objectivity are central to the values of journalism. It is the code of ethics that confers importance, respect and integrity on any profession. Code of ethics dictate or stipulate that standards of behaviour expected of any member of a group. Without ethics, people could do anything they want, and some of these things may be beyond horrible. Ethics help the regulate our behaviours, point us to the way way of life and help us to relate better with others.

Ethical Philosophies

Ethics is a sub branch of philosophy which concerns itself with what is moral and immoral, what is right and wrong, what is good and bad. What men ought to do and ought not to do. The study of ethics is therefore the study of morality. This underscores why ethics is also referred to as moral philosophy. According to Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English, ethics is a system of decent ideologies by which individual movements and suggestions may be mediated right or wrong." Jay- black and Chris Robert in their book "Doing Ethics in Media, state that Ethics comes from many words one of them is Greek "Ethos" means character or what man does to have a good character. The news is very important in media.

Simply put, ethics is the study of morality. If we ask anybody what ethics mean, we are likely to hear that it is something to do with moral judgments or right actions. Louis Day [1991] defines ethics as the branch of philosophy that deals with the moral component of human life. Stoner et al.[2002] defined ethics as the study of people's rights and duties, the

moral rules that people apply in making decisions, and the nature of the relationships among people. Another definition says that ethics are rules of conduct or principles of morality that point us towards the right or best way to act in a situation (Dominick,1996) cited in Edem, (2012)

Antinomianism vs Professionalism: When Ethics Matter

The Concept of Antinomianism

An antinomian is the opposite of the legalistic principle subscriber. They are those that believe that man should not be pinned down or pigeonholed into any particular way of life in the name of a written code. They argue that man is a rational being; he should be guided by his feelings, instincts, or intuition as he battles with moral or ethical problems. The antinomians are freewheeling duds that owe no loyalty to any person or group. They live their lives the way they deem fit and are simply unpredictable when it comes to taking ethical decision. Unlike the absolutists or legalists, no one can say with precision that an antinomian will suppress a story, tell a lie, collect brown envelope without running the risk of being wrong. This is because the circumstances or situation at the moment determines what the antinomian does, not existing codes or adherence to already existing principles of morality. Antinomian ethics is thus the anti- thesis of legalistic ethics. Also called “against laws ethic” (Merrill & Lowenstein, 1979), antinomianism is based on a rejection of all ethical standards and principles, and is therefore a kind of non-ethics. The antinomians in journalism do not subscribe to any ethics.

Professionalism in Journalism: A Close Look

There is no doubt that all journalists would like total freedom and autonomy to publish or broadcast what they like. But considering the great powers they wield in the shaping of society, the freedom and the autonomy they want must be tempered by commensurate sense of responsibility, considering the fact that modern media are pervasive and reach or touch virtually all aspects of life (Franklin, 2006). Egbon (2001), further adds that: "it is time someone undertook the task to fill the ethical vacuum which is at present occupying the hearts of most media establishments.' From the above views expressed by Egbon (2001), it is apt to state that ethical issues have become very sensitive issues in modern society. In Nigeria for instance, corruption is one of the nagging issues in the media. A journalist is not supposed to take or accept bribe to suppress a story. Journalists are also not supposed to disclose their confidential sources of information to anybody.

Owing to various factors, unethical practices are gradually pervading the journalism landscape not only in Nigeria, but globally. Lies, blackmails, half-truths, character assassination, sensationalism or yellow journalism, bribery, discrimination, etc are a common place in the media today. Lack of objectivity and outright propaganda characterized the media of different nations today and something has to be done about it before it gets out of hand. Antinomians are taking over most editorial and leadership positions in the media space and this is, to say the least, disturbing. It is time to sound the battle cry ; it is time to embrace the social responsibility paradigm to reclaim the glory of journalism.

Ethics of Journalism Practice in Nigeria

First, there is a need to highlight the code of ethics of journalism in Nigeria. The code of ethics is a collective effort of Nigerian journalists represented by the Nigeria Press Organization (NPO) and the Nigerian Press Council (NPC). It thus reads;

1. **Editorial Independence:** Decisions concerning the content of news should be the responsibility of a professional journalist
2. **Accuracy and Fairness:** The public has a right to know. Factual accurate, balanced and fair reporting is the ultimate objective of good journalism and the basis of earning public trust and confidence. A journalist should refrain from publishing inaccurate and misleading information. Where such information has been inadvertently published, prompt correction should be made. A journalist must hold the right of reply as a cardinal rule of practice. (iii) In the course of his duties, a journalist should strive to separate facts from conjecture and comment.
3. **Privacy:** As a general rule, a journalist should respect the privacy of individuals and their families unless it affects public interest.
 - a. Information on the private life of an individual or his family should only be published if it impinges on public interest.
 - b. Publishing of such information about an individual as mentioned above should be deemed justifiable only if it is directly at:
 - 1) Exposing crime or serious misdemeanor
 - 2) Exposing anti-social conduct;
 - 3) Protecting public health, morality and safety
 - 4) Preventing the public from being misled by some statement or action of the individual concerned.

Privilege/Non Disclosure

1. A journalist should observe the universally accepted principle of confidentiality and should not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence.
 2. A journalist should not bridge an agreement with a source of information obtained as “off the record” or as “back ground information”
- **Decency:** A journalist should dress and comport himself in a manner that conforms to public taste. A journalist should refrain from using offensive, abusive, or vulgar language. A journalist should not present lurid details, either in words or picture, of violence, sexual acts, abhorrent or horrid scenes. In cases involved in personal grief or shock, enquiries should be carried out and approaches made with sympathy and discretion. Unless it is in the furtherance of the public’s right to know, a journalist should generally avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime.
 - **Discrimination:** A journalist should refrain from making pejorative reference to a person’s ethnic group, religion, sex, or to any physical or mental illness or handicap.
 - **Reward and Gratification:** A journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribe, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish information. To determine payment for publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event.
 - **Violence** A journalist should not present or report acts of violence, armed robberies, terrorist activities or vulgar display of wealth in a manner that glorifies such act in the eyes of the public.
 - **Children and Minors:** A journalist should not identify, either by name or picture, or interview children under the age of 16 who are involved in cases concerning sexual offences, crimes and rituals or witchcraft either as victims, witnesses or defendants.

- **Access to Information:** A journalist should strive to employ open and honest means in the gathering of information. Exceptional methods may be employed only when the public interest is at stake.
- **Public Interest:** A journalist should strive to enhance national unity and public good.
- **Social Responsibility:** A journalist should promote universal principles of human rights, democracy, justice, equity, peace and international understanding.
- **Plagiarism** A journalist should not copy, wholesale, or in part, other people's work without attribution and/or consent.
- **Copyright:** Where a journalist reproduces a work, be it in print, broadcast, art work or design, proper acknowledgement should be accorded to the author. A journalist should abide by all rules of copyright, established by national and international laws and conventions.
- **Press Freedom And Responsibility** A journalist should strive at all times to enhance press freedom and responsibility.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Responsibility Media Theory

This study adopted social responsibility as its theoretical framework with the assumption that it will explain the concept of professionalism of the media in a given situation. The social responsibility theory for instance is one of the six (6) normative theories of the press which argues that the media must at all times operate unhindered by control from the government on one hand, and on the other serve the people without fear or favour. McQuail, (2010) gave this following as the major underlining principles of the theory:

1. The media have the obligation to society, and media ownership is a public trust.
2. News media should be truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant.
3. The media should be free but self-regulated.
4. The media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct. This theory emphasizes the need for media professionals to act responsibly in every situation, know that their freedom is not free but concomitant with responsibility to their organisation and society. It avers that the media should be self-regulated. Self-regulation would help the media to screen, verify content, seek for balance reportage, avoid discriminatory slants and reports, and be conscious that they are responsible for every modicum of their actions and or inactions.

Discussion

According to Rodman (undated, p.508) in Udeze (2012) "ethics is the study of guideline that help people determine right from wrong. Unlike law, ethics deals primarily with self-determined voluntary conduct." Dominick (2002) defines ethics as "rules of conduct or principal of morality that point toward the right or best way to in a situation." Generally, therefore, ethics can be a branch of philosophy that deals with value relating to human conduct with respect to rightness or wrongness of certain action and to the goodness or badness of the motive and ends of such actions. In a nutshell, has to do with what is good and what is bad.

Speaking of professionalism in media practices, one of the American reputable social scientists, William J.Goode states that professionals constitute a homogeneous community whose members share values, identity, definition of roles and interest. He added that members of a profession are bound by sense of identity and they share common values. According to (Olatunji, 1991), sociologists hold that, in order for a job to qualify as a

profession; it must possess the following attributes. First, it must emphasize a unique and essential service. Second, it must perform a unique and essential service. Third, it must have a long period of specialized training to acquire a systematic body of knowledge, based on research. Fourth, it must be given a broad personal responsibility for their judgments and actions. Sixth, it must place greater emphasis on service than on private economic gain. Seventh, it must develop a comprehensive, self-governing organization. Eighth, it must have a code of ethics which has been clarified and interpreted by concrete cases. Needless to say, no single profession or occupation passes all these tests. A profession, then, is nothing but an ideal type in the sense which does not describe any actual profession, but which is fruitful in the analysis and investigation of actual professions. What we have in reality therefore is a continuum, with zero professionalism at one end, maximum professionalism at the other.

In view of media and ethics Cicero (106-4BC), in Udeze (2012) states that the first step towards understanding any subject is a clear definition of such a subject so that everybody involved will understand what the issue at stake is all about. Based on this, we have tried to give both dictionary and other definition of the work. The Nigerian media have come under scrutiny and attacks from without and within for a spate of unethical practices in the last one to two decades. Some have argued that this spate of unethical practices of the media is not unconnected with the general state of the country which is said to be 'crawling with all manner of ethical maladies and unethical behaviour', as well as a culture that had ceased to value integrity, honesty and hard work.

In line with ethical codes in media practice, the question of ethics is not clear-cut as the question of law. The ethical implications of a reporter's action, in the process of gathering and disseminating information, are far-fetched in relation to the legal implications of such action. The issue of ethics is so wide that it can be interpreted variously, depending on who or what is involved. However, ethics dwell on the concept of methodology which ought to be universally recognized one (Maxwell, 2002). However, in taking a closer look of **professionalism and media ethics**, McQuail, (2005) points out that lack of political independence has been identified as one of the effects of professionalism in journalism. This takes various forms, including organization into associations, the formation of press councils and the drawing up of principles of good practice in the form of codes of practice and ethics.

Meanwhile, Udeze, (2012) noted that **antinomianism** is the opposite of legalism. They are those that believe that man should not be pinned down or pigeon- holed into any particular way of life in the name of a written code. They argue that man is a rational beings; he should be guided by his feeling, instinct, or intuition as he battles with moral or ethical problems. The antinomians are freewheeling duds that owe no loyalty to any person or group. They lived their lives the way they deem fit and are simply unpredictable when it comes to taking ethical decision. In other words, Egbujor sees journalistic profession as 'norms and standards that constitute the kind of outputs that are generally recognized as quality journalism', these definitions expand the scope of journalistic professionalism to include contextual issues assessing the performance of the media and the quality of the information they convey to the public (Egbujor, 2015). LanreIdowu [2011] has listed the factors that can lead to unethical practices: poor technical knowledge, conflict of interests, ownership pattern and control, pressure of the market, poor pay, weak professional regulation, and loose organizational policies and control.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for journalists to be above board and abiding by the best global best practices. This call is necessary considering the enormous

power inherent in the media as such cannot be allowed to be abused by people with selfish interests. Also, the study draws attention to the fact that journalism just like any other professions such as law, medicine, engineering etc. requires laws and self-imposed regulations to guide its affairs. There is no denying the fact that integrity is the hallmark of a professional journalist. Integrity naturally earns societal respect while the opposite of it would attract disrespect. Akinfeleye, (2016) argues that every worthwhile profession must have integrity to maintain its relevance to society it serves, adding that professions integrity is derived from the philosophical foundation of the professional Code of Ethics for and by the profession itself. As a result, Akinfeleye, (2013) concludes that journalistic integrity is a derivation of the journalistic code of ethics.

In addition, if journalists in Nigeria throw away professionalism in their practice, then they cannot effectively discharge their constitutional duties of monitoring government as posited by Harold Lasswell (1948); making it accountable to the people and upholding the fundamental objectives of a given society. However, being absolutely objective is easier said than done. But one salient attribute about journalism is that the media are always under watchful eyes of the public.

Independence in journalism means freedom from all obligations that might interfere with the fidelity to the public interest. An honest journalist therefore must not be seen to promote any private or corporate interest which is unacceptable to the general public. Also, partisanship in editorial comment which a journalist deliberately makes is a clear departure from the truth and not in the spirit of good journalism. It is instructive to note that all decisions on news coverage, news content, slant and depth should be taken by the editorial team rather than being imposed by outsiders. Ethics still matters and will continue to matter in the practice of every reasonable profession. There is need to know that freedom is not free, and the price of freedom is responsibility and being responsible entails knowing what to do and doing it effectively.

Recommendations

The paper made the following recommendations: Since journalism practice is based on accuracy, fairness, trust, honesty among others, journalists should follow and abide by the ethical codes in order to lead them on the right part. Antinomianism is not the best because it leads journalists to corruption, so journalist should stick to the ethical codes.

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