

An assessment of Journalists' Compliance to the Ethical Precepts of Objectivity and Balance in Reporting the 2023 General Election: A Study of Journalists in Imo State

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Kizito Nzube Alaekwe, student
Imo State University, Department of Mass
Communication
kizitonzubealaekwe@gmail.com

Alexander Chima Onyebuchi, PhD
Imo State University, Department of Mass
Communication
greatonyebuchi@gmail.com

Philomena Effiong Umoren, PhD
Akwa Ibom State University, Department
of Mass Communication
philoumoren@aksu.edu.ng

Fabian Okalla, PhD
Imo State University, Department of
Mass Communication
nkwafab2050@gmail.com

Nkendirim Marypeace Idih, PhD
Imo State University, Department of
Mass Communication
idihpeace.n@gmail.com

Etumnu Emeka Williams, PhD
Candidate
Imo State University, Department of
Mass Communication
etumnuemeka@gmail.com

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Abstract

Imo State journalists' adherence to the moral standards of impartiality and balance in their reporting on the general election of 2023 was evaluated by the study. The deontological theory of ethics and the social responsibility theory served as the foundation of the study. The survey was used as the design. Using a questionnaire as the data collecting tool, 200 journalists who are based in Imo State were sampled according to the census principle. Findings showed that Imo State journalists have a very high level of understanding of the ethical principles of objectivity and balance in news reporting, with an average score of 3.6 (N=196). The extent of compliance to the ethical precepts of objectivity and balance in the 2023 general election reportage by the journalists was low at an average mean of 2.7 (N=196). In line with the findings, recommendations were made.

Keywords: Election, ethical precepts, journalism, news reportage, objectivity, balance

1. Introduction

The media are charged with the primary job of observing, integrating, and correlating societal events. This is in addition to other roles like informing, teaching, passing down culture, and entertaining audiences, among others. Any election anywhere in the globe depends heavily on the media. According to Bassey (2020), the media is expected to sufficiently mobilise the electorate for the electoral process through effective reporting and observation of the process to achieve a fair result. According to McQuail (2010), as cited in Bassey (2020), political parties and their candidates must use the media as a platform to connect with voters and engage in electoral campaigning. He also makes the argument that readers expect the media to report events accurately and impartially. All citizens can get useful information from the media on public events, and it also helps to increase political and governmental transparency. According to Coronel (2014), the media strengthen democratic institutions by enabling public engagement, without which democracy is merely a charade, and they also have a catalytic role in enabling improvements through the democratic process.

The only way the media can accomplish this is by adhering to the journalistic precept of objectivity and balance, which stresses on providing both sides of an issue and all facts and figures involved in the electioneering throughout the struggle for political positions. In its sixth revision of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (2016), which was published in a diverse nation like Nigeria, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) emphasised the significance of including various points of view in electioneering. This is done to increase objectivity and balance.

Walter Lippman, one of the most important American media figures of the 20th century, advocated for journalists to be objective and evaluate facts using the scientific method in order to give readers the truth, not just the reporter's perception of the truth. Objectivity was unquestionably the higher professional norm, and Lippman's call marked a change from the sensational yellow journalism of a previous age (Matt, 2022). According to Ahmad (2023), the fundamental rule of journalistic practise is objectivity, which entails distancing oneself from the information while upholding a high standard of fairness and balance in providing a truthful account of events. According to Rogers (2019), journalists must be objective when reporting on sensitive news so as not to reveal their personal opinions, biases, or prejudices. They accomplish this by use neutral language in their stories and avoiding giving persons or institutions either favourable or bad traits.

The term "objectivity" has many different connotations, but according to Fahy (2017), it is commonly used to refer to the procedure of obtaining and properly presenting facts,

separating them from values, and giving both sides of an argument equal weight in order to produce fair news broadcasts. The conventional buzzwords of journalism ethics, in Alan's opinion (2023), are objectivity and balance. A fair and balanced presentation of all sides of a topic is the aim of objective journalism. Instead of twisting a tale to make the reader believe what the reporter wants them to believe, reporters covering electioneering issues should strive for authenticity and honesty in their reporting.

According to Wokemezie (2020), objective reporting depends on ethics and is characterised by elements like impartiality, truthfulness, accuracy, and balanced reporting of opposing perspectives. Journalism's objectivity and balance depend on covering both sides of news or event stories honestly, without bias or inducement, and reporting societal events in a fair, balanced, and neutral manner. It lives on information that is factual, objective, correct, and verified. According to Asogwa and Asemah (2012), a reporter's primary responsibility is to observe events rather than to advocate, hence objectivity should be their main goal and the foundation upon which they construct their journalism practises.

Credibility as a journalist is built on the basis of professional ethics. A goal of ethical journalism is the free exchange of accurate, unbiased, and comprehensive information. When reporting, balance and fairness are essential, and failing to be either can have serious ethical repercussions Obayi (2022). Balance and objectivity should be prioritised by journalists as a staff philosophy and content standard.

Journalists follow ethical guidelines when reporting. During elections, information about political parties and candidates is made available on a number of platforms, some of which are purported to be trustworthy news sources. However, during elections, voters rely on journalists and the mainstream media for reliable and high-quality news that assist them make informed decisions (Ekpali, 2023). This means that when reporting, journalists must keep the ethical standards and ideals of their trade in mind. Political parties, politicians, and occasionally supporters produce a variety of facts, images, and statements during election seasons only to forward a political agenda. To avoid deceiving the public, it is the reporter's responsibility to verify allegations or assertions made during the election season. Reporters should be familiar with websites and online fact-checking tools that may be used to verify the veracity of images, remarks, and statistics pertaining to elections in order to assist them in determining if these claims are real or false (Ekpali, 2023).

However, this is the range against which the study intends to evaluate the adherence to the ethical norms of impartiality and balance by journalists reporting on the Nigerian general election in 2023 in Imo State.

1.1. Statement of the Research Problem

Being a journalist has so many advantages to the public more than even the journalist themselves. Everyone is always looking to get a well-researched story that will perfectly reflect the society's expectations. That is why as a journalist, you need to have objectivity as a truth-seeking tool by your side. When your audience expects you to tell the truth and you end up lying about something, you will be jeopardizing your position and that of your company (Lee, 2020). The majority of professionally trained journalists are aware of the importance of objectivity and balance in reporting. However, not all Nigerian working journalists have had adequate training in communication, and as a result, they might not be comfortable with the fundamentals of objectivity and balance. Another difficulty is that political reporting has a tendency to undermine the concepts of impartiality and balance.

Previously, people trusted the information they read in newspapers, watched on television, or listened to on their radios because of their trust in journalists and their dedication to bringing first-hand, trustworthy, and accurate information to the public's attention. Today, though, it's a different situation because editors are paid to alter material for certain political purposes. Indeed, the narrative has shifted, and journalists no longer regard objectivity and balance as a fundamental concept that needs to be upheld but instead place a greater emphasis on news driven by advertisers or on revenue derived from politically motivated material.

However, Bashir (2023) observed that the media coverage of the 2023 general election has continued to be terribly one-sided without any semblance of balance and objectivity. This raises the concern to ask whether the ethical precepts objectivity and balance are no longer fashionable to be respected by journalists and media organisations? Or that journalists are not well trained?

1.2. Research Questions

The following questions guided the study

1. To what extent do journalists in Imo State understand the ethical precept of objectivity and balance in news reporting?
2. What is their extent of compliance of the ethical precept of objectivity and balance in the 2023 general election reportage?
3. What are the challenging factors that militated against the ethical precepts of objectivity and balance in 2023 general election reportage?

2. Framework of the Study

2.1. Ethical Precepts of Objectivity and Balance in Journalism: An Overview

The degree of professional honesty a journalist exhibits forms the basis of their credibility. According to the Society of Professional Journalists (2021), public awareness is the foundation of democracy and the forerunner of justice. Furthermore, ethical journalism encourages the open sharing of accurate, impartial, and thorough information. Everyone in the media is urged to incorporate the four guiding principles that SPJ created as the cornerstone of ethical journalism in their work. These values include acting independently, minimising harm, seeking the truth and reporting it, and being accountable and transparent.

According to Anim (2006), as cited in Akpan and Onyebuchi (2012), “The idea of objectivity in the business of news gathering has grown very problematic among communication researchers.” This is because certain media scholars, including Akpan and Onyebuchi (2012), hold the opinion that selecting a story from among the numerous events that occur throughout the day is fraught with subjectivity. They argued that it is indisputable that some media reports lack objectivity. According to Ahmad (2022), the fundamental tenet of journalism practise is objectivity, which entails distancing oneself from the information while upholding the highest standards of fairness and balance in providing an accurate account of events.

However, Nwankpa, Umoren and Utuk (2021) claimed that “the penchant for the Nigerian mass media, especially the news magazines, to eulogise and chant the praise songs of some non-performing governors to the chagrin of the masses” was problematic. He believes that the continuous extolling of governors’ virtues while disregarding the populace’s belief to the opposite is entirely subjective and not objective.

In the context of journalism, balance, according to Allienticott (2016), refers to the obligation of journalists to present a variety of viewpoints while remaining objective in order to allow readers to form their own opinions based on the information provided keep a story balanced so that the public isn’t led to draw a certain conclusion from just one biased source

Objective reporting has been defined as:

- Fairness and objectivity when presenting several viewpoints on a subject.
- Reporting that is accurate and realistic.
- Outlining all essential, pertinent points.
- Distinguishing between facts and opinions, yet seeing opinions as relevant.

- Reducing the impact of the author’s personal perspective, involvement, or attitude.
- Avoiding biased or sneaky intentions.

2.2. Empirical Review

The results of an investigation by Obayi (2022) using a survey research design and the title “Rethinking balance and fairness as journalistic ethical precepts: A survey of journalists in Southeast, Nigeria” showed that the respondents, with an average mean of 3.7 (N=271), comprehend the principles of balance and fairness in news reporting. It was also discovered that they only seldom apply balance and justice in their news reports. The results also showed that respondents, with an average mean of 3.7 (N=271), agreed that journalists should continue to be held to high standards of fairness and balance while reporting news. The study comes to the conclusion that fairness and balance should always be the cornerstones of news reporting, regardless of who gets their ox gored. Journalists should always adhere to these principles in order to practise professional journalism, or they should be rethought to fit the current fashion. Among other things, the study suggested that for better journalism practise in Nigeria, journalists should make an effort to follow and put into practise the code of professional journalistic ethics.

According to research by Edegoh and Ude-Akpeh (2016), the majority of Nigerian journalists uphold the journalistic ideals of fairness and objectivity in their work. This study was titled “Ethical standards of fairness and objectivity and journalism practise in Nigeria” and used a survey methodology. Additionally, it demonstrated that journalists did not always adhere to ethical standards. Further study showed that employees of privately owned media were more honest in respecting ethical ideals of fairness and impartiality than those of government-owned media, particularly in reports on political election campaigns.

In contrast, Geremew (2014) used a qualitative approach (in-depth interviews) in a study titled “Challenges in practising objectivity and other ethical issues in news reporting” to examine journalists’ perceptions of the factors influencing their implementation of objectivity and other ethical issues in the context of the Oromia Broadcasting Network. His investigation revealed three key explanations for why the OBN gave less consideration to impartiality and other moral considerations when gathering, assessing, and disseminating news. The following explanations were given for the outcomes: The first one is professional issues, which are brought on by a lack of independent and properly trained journalists; the second is pressure groups, which either directly or indirectly affect objectivity and other moral issues; and the third and final one is problems with news vetting and the selection of trustworthy sources.

Akpan, et al. (2012) found that the majority of online news stories are not accurately reported in their study “Rethinking Objectivity in News Reporting in the Digital Age,” which aims to ascertain whether online versions of news stories are objective and to also ascertain the effect of lack of news objectivity on online news reporting using the survey research design. This conclusion is in line with that of Geremew (2014).

Wahl-Jorgensen, Berry, Garcia-Blanco, Bennett and Cable (2017) conducted an analysis titled “Rethinking Balance and Impartiality in Journalism: How the BBC Attempted and Failed to Change the Paradigm” to support the aforementioned findings. Their investigation’s conclusions state that the BBC’s agenda is primarily carried out through comparing the positions of the two main political parties, Labour and the Conservatives. Based on this, the paper advances the idea of the “paradigm of impartiality-as-balance”. This paradigm is still prevalent despite the news organization’s commitment to covering a wider range of perspectives. Only a few perspectives and voices are heard on the most important and difficult issues, according to the idea of impartiality as balance.

In a similar vein, Weber (2015) asserted in his paper “Teaching Fairness in Journalism: A Challenging Task” that while average fairness increased, average prejudice also increased. Additionally, the median degree of prejudice grew while the median amount of fairness declined.

2.3. Theoretical Foundation

The study was underpinned on social responsibility theory and the deontological theory of ethics. The social responsibility theory was first put forward in 1963 by Wilbur Schramm, Fred Siebert, and Theodore Peterson. Due to problems with its predecessor, this theory was created. According to Okunna and Omenugha (2012), the key tenet of this philosophy is that the press should be given the freedom to carry out the functions that the libertarian ideology permitted it to carry out, but that this freedom should be exercised responsibly. The social responsibility theory contends that if the media fails to meet its social responsibilities, the government should take control over them in order to persuade them to do so. The social responsibility thesis, according to Moemeka (1991), emphasises the moral and social obligations of the people and organisations who run the mass media. It is sufficient to say that the notion of journalistic ethics and its adoption marked the beginning of professional journalistic groups with their own self-developed codes of ethics and formal journalistic standards intended to promote ethical conduct among its members.

By giving the name social responsibility, the report provided key journalistic standards that the press should seek to maintain. These standards according to McQuail (2010),

I. A responsible press should present an accurate, dependable, thorough, and insightful account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning..

II. It should act as a platform for discussion and critique and as a shared means of disseminating public opinion.

III. Thirdly, the media ought to present and make clear the society's values and aims as well as a fair representation of all continuous groups within it. The press should avoid cases of sensationalism and mixing news with editorial opinion.

However, Ojobor (2002) cited in Obayi and Onyebuchi (2021) summarized the principles of the social responsibility theory thus:

I. The media must acknowledge and uphold certain societal commitments.

II. By adhering to professional standards of truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance, these commitments can be fulfilled.

III. It is imperative that the media exercise self-regulation within the confines of legal parameters and established institutional frameworks in order to effectively fulfil its obligations.

IV. In order to maintain social harmony and prevent the exacerbation of crime, violence, civil disorder, or the marginalisation of minority groups, it is imperative for the media to refrain from engaging in such activities.

V. The media ought to accurately represent the diverse perspectives within a society, providing equitable access to a range of viewpoints and affording all individuals the opportunity to respond.

VI. Based on the ideas, it is expected that the society has the right to demand a high level of performance from the media. The justification for interventions lies solely in their ability to safeguard the public good.

VII. The accountability of media workers ought to be directed towards their employers, the market, and the society.

The significance of this theory in relation to the research being conducted lies in its emphasis on the importance of ethical conduct among media practitioners in carrying out their responsibilities. The primary duty of the press is to serve the interests of the public and the broader societal framework. The presence of bias in media reporting has the potential to erode public trust and confidence in the media.

On the other hand, the Deontological Theory of Ethics was first put forth by W.D. Ross in 1877 and first applied in Charlie Dunbar Broad's (1887–1971) book *Five Types of Ethical Idea*, which was published in 1930. Duty- or obligation-based theory are common names for the theory. According to deontologists, people are challenging and compelled to act in a way that respects law and order rather than just because of the consequences of their actions (Akakwandu, 2013).

The fact that wrongdoing ought to be despised unites all variations of this ideology, despite their differences. Media professionals should vehemently oppose corrupt practises since they are morally reprehensible in every way. Journalists would be aware, given the principles of the deontological theory, that it is very unethical to undermine impartiality and balance in news reporting, and the profession detests such actions.

The theory is especially pertinent to the study since it highlights the fact that journalists are typically more terrified of the law than of the repercussions of their activities. In order to avoid legal embarrassment, journalists are obliged to behave appropriately.

3. Methodology & Results

3.1. Methodology

The investigation employed a survey research design. Ohaja (2015) defines a survey as a research method that involves the systematic investigation of specific characteristics within a sample group, enabling the researcher to make inferences and generalisations about the larger population of interest. The rationale behind selecting this strategy was to facilitate the creation of a precise and identifiable depiction of the individuals who would be included in the sample. Therefore, the utilisation of surveys is deemed optimal for doing research since it enables the collection of respondents' perspectives and opinions pertaining to the subject matter being investigated. Population for this study consists of 200 registered and practising journalists. According to NUJ factsheet, the number of registered journalists in Imo state is 200. Therefore, the population of this study was 200 journalists in Imo State. The census principle was adopted where the researcher sampled all the elements in the population. Obayi, Anorue, Onyebuchi, Umeokeke and Etumnu (2020) in their study used this method to investigate journalists on the issue of Freedom of Information Act. According to Damico (2016), the feasibility of studying a whole community arises when it is characterised by a modest size and a clearly delineated composition. Therefore, due to the limited size of the population

under investigation, the entire population was selected as the sample size. A self-developed questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. It is a 15 items questionnaire structured in a likert scale format. The instrument was face validated by communication experts and their corrections enabled us to reword the instrument to eliminate grammatical errors and ambiguity. The researchers self-administered the instrument to journalists within a period of two weeks. The researchers employed descriptive statistics to analyse the data.

3.2. Survey Results

By employing a questionnaire as an instrument, data was collected from the field and presented in tables using numbers and mean analysis. 200 copies of the survey were given out by the researchers. About 196 (98%) copies were retrieved from the numbers distributed and confirmed to be authentic. Due to incorrect response entry by the respondents, 4 (2%) copies were deemed invalid.

TABLE 1. Responses of the respondents on the extent they understand the ethical precept of objectivity and balance in news reporting

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Objectivity and balance in news reporting is the code of conduct that specifies the reportage of both sides of an event or a story	111	85	-	-	3.6	Accepted
Objectivity and balance in news reporting entails being neutral and free from the story	106	90	-	-	3.5	Accepted
It means not injecting emotions, empathy and sympathy in presenting a news story	92	91	8	5	3.4	Accepted
It means reporting news stories without bias, prejudices ad favoritism	143	53	-	-	3.7	Accepted
Objectivity and balance ensure truth, accuracy, fairness and credibility in news reportage	129	67	-	-	3.7	Accepted
Average Mean					3.6	Accepted

SOURCE: Field survey, 2023

Decision rule: Given that the benchmark of a 4-point Likert scale for decision is 2.5, it means that if the calculated mean is 2.5-4.0, then the item in question is accepted. However, if the calculated mean is 1-2.4, then the item in question is rejected. Let 1.0-1.5 (Very Low), 1.6-2.2 (Low), 2.3-2.9 (Moderate), 3.0-3.5 (High) and 3.6-4.0 (Very High).

The results of the analysis of variance show that Imo State-based journalists have a very high level of awareness for the ethical principles of objectivity and balance in news reporting, with an average mean of 3.6 (N=196).

TABLE 2. Responses of the respondents on their extent of compliance to the ethical precept of objectivity and balance in the 2023 general election reportage

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Most journalists did not apply objectivity and balance in their reportage of the 2023 general election as a result of their personal interest	78	64	44	10	3.1	Accepted
Objectivity and balance were found lacking in the news reportage of the 2023 general election as a result of the acceptance of gratification and free gifts by the journalists	83	55	31	27	3.0	Accepted
Equal representation was given to all the political parties in the media reports of the 2023 general election	34	39	78	45	2.3	Rejected
The 2023 general election news reportage on the media was balanced and fair without bias and prejudice	38	32	73	53	2.3	Rejected
Average Mean					2.7	Accepted

SOURCE: Field survey, 2023

According to the findings of the means analysis 2.7 (N=196), there was little compliance with the ethical criteria of objectivity and balance in the reporting of the general election of 2023. The respondents' assertion that most journalists did not exhibit objectivity and balance in their reporting because of personal interests confirmed this. Additionally, it was discovered that journalists' acceptance of gratuities and freebies contributed to the lack of objectivity and balance in the press coverage of the general election in 2023. Furthermore, the media reports of the election did not provide equal representation to all political parties. In general, the media's coverage of the 2023 general election was marked by a dearth of fairness and balance as well as clear bias and prejudice.

TABLE 3. Responses of the respondents on the challenging factors that militated against the ethical precepts of objectivity and balance in 2023 general election reportage

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Harsh economy of the country	78	88	18	12	3.2	Accepted
Poor remuneration	81	94	13	8	3.3	Accepted
Lack of adequate and proper training of journalists on the core principle of professional journalism	109	87	-	-	3.6	Accepted
Influence of political interest of the media owners	71	105	11	9	3.2	Accepted
Media ownership control	103	82	10	1	-	Accepted
Acceptance of gratification and brown envelope syndrome from politicians	117	72	7	-	3.6	Accepted
Average Mean					3.4	Accepted

SOURCE: Field survey, 2023

The analysis of the mean, based on a mean of 3.4 (N=196), showed that the reporting on the 2023 general election was hampered by a number of difficult variables that jeopardised the ethical norms of impartiality and balance. These factors included the adverse economic conditions of the country, inadequate remuneration for journalists, insufficient training on the fundamental tenets of professional journalism, the influence of political interests held by media owners, control exerted by media ownership, and the acceptance of gratification and the prevalence of the brown envelope syndrome among journalists.

3.3. Discussion

Researchers looked at how well journalists in Imo State understood the ethical principles of objectivity and balance in news reporting. They found that with an average mean of 3.6 (N=196), Imo State-based journalists demonstrated a very high level of understanding for these principles. This finding is consistent with Obayi's (2022) research, which showed that Southeast journalists are aware of the principles of fairness and balance in news reporting.

The social responsibility theory, which supports this finding, gives adequate weight to the press's and journalists' moral and societal obligations. In addition to avoiding examples of sensationalism and fusing news with editorial opinion, a responsible press should deliver a complete, reliable, in-depth, and intellectual account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning (McQuail, 2010). By using professional standards of truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance, the press can fulfil its obligations to society and the general public. According to the deontological theory of ethics, journalists act as they ought to act by first recognizing the intrinsic value of a certain activity.

As a result of respondents' affirmations that most journalists did not apply objectivity and balance in their reporting of the 2023 general election due to their personal interests, the results of the survey on their level of compliance with the ethical precepts of objectivity and balance in the 2023 general election reportage showed a low level of compliance at an average mean of 2.7 (N=196). This suggests that there was little journalistic compliance with the ethical principles of objectivity and balance in the coverage of the general election in 2023. This outcome is consistent with Obayi's (2022) findings, which showed that very few Southeast journalists use balance and justice in their news reports. Edegoh and Ude-Akpeh (2016) discovered that journalists did not always uphold ethical standards, further supporting this finding. Additionally, Akpan et al. (2012) discovered that the majority of internet news reports lack objectivity. In a related finding, Geremew (2014)'s analysis showed that Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN)'s news collection, processing, and reporting paid less attention to objectivity and other ethical issues as a result of three key variables. Weber (2015) argued further that while the average level of prejudice increased, the average level of fairness also did so. Additionally, the median degree of prejudice increased while the median amount of fairness decreased.

These results conceptually contradict the social responsibility theory, which places a strong emphasis on the press's social responsibility to society and the requirement that media professionals uphold ethical standards when carrying out their duties. Biased

reporting will damage the public's trust and confidence in the media. Additionally, according to the deontological philosophy of ethics, a journalist should always consider the intrinsic value of a decision before acting in a certain way. According to the view, media professionals should vehemently oppose unethical and dishonest behaviours. He acts in a certain way because he feels a feeling of responsibility and obligation.

Findings on the difficult factors that undermined the ethical principles of objectivity and balance in coverage of the 2023 general election showed that at an average mean of 3.4 (N=196); the country's difficult economy, low pay, the lack of adequate and proper training of journalists on the core principles of professional journalism, the influence of the media owners' political interests, media ownership control, and the acceptance of gratification and brown envelope payments. The present study provides further evidence to substantiate the conclusions drawn by Geremew (2014) regarding the various factors contributing to the absence of objectivity and ethical concerns in the procedures of news collection, processing, and dissemination at Oromia Broadcasting Network. These factors encompass professional challenges arising from a dearth of adequately trained and independent journalists, the influence exerted by pressure groups that directly or indirectly impact objectivity and ethical considerations, as well as issues related to the vetting of news content.

4. Conclusion

There is no denying that the media facilitates democratic changes and strengthens democratic institutions by facilitating public engagement, without which democracy is but a façade. Adherence to the journalistic tenet of objectivity and balance, which relies on providing both sides of an issue and all facts and figures engaged in electioneering throughout the contest for political offices, is the only way the media can achieve this achievement. Journalistic ethics and principles should be adopted as a watchdog in order for ethical professionalism to flourish in journalism. According to the study's findings, journalists should place a high priority on impartiality and balance as a staff philosophy and content standard in order to gauge their professional integrity, which is the foundation of their credibility.

In light of the findings, the following suggestions are made;

1. Given that Imo State journalists understand the ethical principles of objectivity and balance in news reporting to a very high degree, it is advised that professional bodies continuously provide old and new journalists in media organizations with adequate orientation and re-orientation, training, and retraining on the ethics of professional journalism.

Given that the extent of compliance to the ethical precepts of objectivity and balance in the 2023 general election reportage by the journalists was low, the study recommends that the ethical precepts of objectivity and balance in journalism should be embraced and upheld by journalists as the foundation of professional journalism.

Having found out that harsh economy of the country, poor remuneration, lack of adequate and proper training of journalists on the core principle of professional journalism, influence of political interest of the media owners, media ownership control, and the acceptance of gratification and brown envelope syndrome from politicians by journalists were the challenging factors that militated against the compliance to ethical precepts of objectivity and balance in 2023 general election reportage by journalists, the study recommends proper remuneration of journalists and unrestricted freedom of operation devoid of media ownership interest and control.

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Procjena novinarske usklađenosti s etičkim načelima objektivnosti i uravnoteženosti u izvještavanju o općim izborima 2023.: studija o novinarima u saveznoj državi Imo

Sažetak

Rad se bavi pridržavanjem moralnih standarda nepristranosti i uravnoteženosti u izvještavanju novinara savezne države Imo (Nigerija) tijekom općih izbora 2023. godine. Kao temelj istraživanja poslužile su deontološka teorija etike i teorija društvene odgovornosti, a istraživanje se provodilo putem anketnog upitnika na uzorku od 200 novinara s područja savezne države Imo. Rezultati istraživanja su pokazali kako novinari savezne države Imo imaju vrlo visoku razinu razumijevanja etičkih načela objektivnosti i uravnoteženosti u izvještavanju vijesti, s prosječnom ocjenom 3,6 (N=196). Opseg poštivanja etičkih načela objektivnosti i uravnoteženosti u izvješćima o općim izborima 2023. od strane novinara bio je nizak u prosjeku od 2,7 (N=196). Sukladno nalazima, autori su dali preporuke.

Ključne riječi: izbori, etički principi, novinarstvo, reportaža, objektivnost, uravnoteženost



Kizito Nzube Alaekwe is currently a Masters candidate of Mass Communication at Imo State University, Owerri. His research interests cut across broadcasting, advertising, public relations, new media research, journalism and media studies. He has acted as a research assistant for MEGEIN in collaboration with WACC. While as a postgraduate student, Kizito, so far, has over ten published journals both on local and international journals to his credit. He had as well, co-authored with notable scholars in the field of Mass Communication.



Alexander Chima Onyebuchi, PhD is a lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication, Imo State University, Owerri. He is also the Secretary General of the Centre for Information and Communication Research, and a member of different professional bodies, including: the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), the National Institute of Management (NIM) and the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN).



Philomena E. Umoren, PhD, is a senior lecturer in the department of Mass Communication, Akwa Ibom State University and a veteran communicator with research interest in trends in business and organisational communication as well as gender concerns in development communication. She has a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). She has published well-researched and scholarly contributions in both local and international journals. At present, she heads the department of Mass Communication in Akwa Ibom State University and a scholar in ACCE.



Fabian N. Okalla, PhD, is lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication at Imo State University, Owerri. He has several journal articles and book chapters to his credit. His research interests are in media and gender studies, journalism, new media, and public relations. On several occasions he has served as a project officer for Media and Gender Enlightenment Initiative (MEGEIN).



Nkemdirim Marypeace Idih, PhD, is a lecturer in the department of mass communication, Imo State University, Owerri. With a Bachelor's degree in mass communication, a Master's degree and a Doctorate degree in mass communication; she has published journal articles in reputable journals both in Nigeria and abroad. Her research interest is on media and gender studies, journalism, new media, and public relations as well as broadcasting. She is a member of the Association of Communication Scholars and Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN).



Etumnu Emeka Williams (OND, BSc MSc) is currently a doctoral student of mass communication at Imo State University, Nigeria. He was among UNESCO's top three research prize winners across the Non-Sahel West African region in 2020, and his research focuses on journalism and media studies, new media, broadcasting, advertising and development communication. Etumnu is a member of the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE) and the Association of Communication Scholars and Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN), as well as being the Imo State Coordinator of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW).