



Are We at their Mercy? A Perceptual Study of Journalists on the Ethical Implications of Citizen Journalism

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ABSTRACT

This study examined what could be the perception of Imo State based mainstream journalists on citizen journalism. The democratic-participant media theory was used as the theoretical foundation. The survey research approach was employed in the study. 180 registered journalists in Owerri formed the population and due to the manageable size of the population the census principle was adopted. The questionnaire was used to gather data. The instrument was face validated. The analysis was done using percentages and the hypothesis was done using SPSS statistical tool. Findings revealed that at an average of 59 percent respondents perceived citizen journalism as not reliable when it comes to source of information for news; citizen journalists are not well disposed to carry out journalism job properly and that citizen journalists do not consider truth, fact etc before publishing. Also on the average 54.4 percent result confirmed that among professional journalists citizen journalism is nothing to write home about and hence they do not accept it in carrying out their own job of journalism. It was recommended that citizen journalists should be trained on the journalistic ethical guidelines so that they will know the implications of flouting journalistic guiding principles and that professional journalists should endeavour to keep maintaining their practice of scrutinizing news coming from citizen journalism so that their integrity will not be under question.

Keywords: Journalist; journalism; citizen journalism; ethics; news; professionalism; Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, professional journalists and the traditional media have lost their monopoly on journalism. With the increasing popularity of new media technology, ordinary folks without professional journalism training are now practicing the profession [1]. "Public journalism," "participatory journalism," "democratic journalism," "guerrilla journalism," and "street journalism" are some of the words used to explain this sort of journalism. In general, citizen journalism is a rapidly expanding form of journalism in which regular people take the initiative to report news or express opinions about local events. It is news about and from the people, written by and for them [2].

Citizen journalism is a word that became popular at the start of the twenty-first century as an amateur form of journalism intended at resolving society's widespread distrust of the media. With citizens' participation in the informational process, a broader aperture in the configuration of the public agenda was stimulated, as was the contribution to a wider plethora of sources before entrepreneurial monopolies, and journalism was renewed to a large extent due to recent digital technologies [3]. Anyone can be a journalist in citizen journalism; anyone with a mobile phone or a camera can be a witness to an event, film it, and distribute it to the rest of society [4].

Citizen journalism has grown in popularity around the world over the years. Citizen journalism, sometimes known as "We media," is regarded as a total democratization of journalism. This viewpoint implies that anyone, regardless of class, creed, or occupation, can now conduct journalism without having to go through formal journalistic school [1].

Ordinary citizens who were previously barred from expressing their ideas due to the bureaucracy of the traditional media have found sanctuary in citizen journalism. Thanks to modern media technology such as social networking and media-sharing websites, as well as the increasing ubiquity of cellular phones, people all over the world can now report breaking news significantly faster than traditional media institutions [1].

Etika [5] contends that keeping up with environmental occurring and events is essential

to our individual life, as well as our social well-being. Certain violations committed by citizen journalists, on the other hand, are adding to the growing concern about the emerging style of journalism. They undoubtedly play a significant role in augmenting the mainstream media by reporting on incidents and events that occur in their near vicinity. According to Sibanda [6], citizen journalism is done by those who are not professional journalists. Individuals who are viewing events via their own eyes and experiences. Because of smart phones and social media, the way we perceive journalism is changing. The participants theorized that the fact that anyone may be a journalist by promoting new forms of communication creates a threat to journalism's practice and profession, which is riddled with ethical and legal issues [4].

According to Willson [7], citizen journalism is a source for information that lacks credibility. Lara (2013) as cited in Anyanwu, et al., [4] accused citizen journalists of disseminating inappropriate content and spreading violence through recordings and pictorial presentations. Journalists have stated that they are restricted in what they can report and what they cannot disclose in their publications as a result of tight legislation implemented to regulate the operation of media outlets.

The term citizen journalism is controversial, according to Okoro, Diri, and Odii, citing Glaser [8], because many professional journalists say that only a trained journalist can appreciate the rigors and ethics associated with reporting the news. This is why Etika [5] argues that the new media encourages citizen journalism and as such give rise to high volume of fake news. Hence the study seeks to investigate journalists' perception of the ethical implication of citizen journalism in Owerri metropolis in Imo State.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Ethics is one thing that guides the practice of journalism. No wonder journalists are always advised to be ethical conscious when carrying out their responsibility.

Journalism practice over the years has held on to truth, objectivity, fairness, balance etc. as the tenets of journalism. These tenets have come under serious threat since the coming of citizen journalism. Citizen journalism is a new trend that

has brought about various debates among scholars and professionals alike. Some feel it gives room for people to report issues that the mainstream media failed to report, while some are of the view that they are misleading because most times facts seem to be distorted or compromised, which is totally against the principle of journalism practice. This is why Etika [5] argues that citizen journalism news efforts have been centred on hoax and unverified sources, which is against the principle of professional journalism. In view of this, Odii [1] observed that people, including journalists, seem to criticize it, that citizen journalism is misleading, fallacious, subjective, and haphazard in quality coverage and its veracity is always questionable.

Based on this, what could be the perception of Imo State based mainstream journalists on citizen journalism? It is against this backdrop, that this study sought to investigate journalists' perception of the ethical implications of citizen journalism in Imo State.

1.2 Research Question

These research questions guided this study

1. What is the perception of professional journalists as regards the practice of citizen journalism?
2. What is the level of acceptance of citizen journalism among professional journalists?
3. To what extent citizen journalism poses an ethical threat to mainstream journalism?
4. Do professional journalists make effort to sensitize citizen journalists on the ethical implication of their act on journalism?

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₁: The extent citizen journalism poses an ethical threat to mainstream journalism is dependent on professional journalists efforts in sensitizing citizen journalist on the ethical implication of their act on mainstream journalism.

2. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

This study finds expression on Democratic - Participant Media Theory. Dennis McQuail first proposed this theory in the 1980s. This theory "requires that the present bureaucracy, as well as commercial and professional predominance in media systems be broken down, in order to guarantee-easier media access for all potential users and customers," according to Folarin [9].

"There is a need for horizontal rather than vertical (top down) communication in this approach," writes Ojobor [10]. The reaction to the commercialization and monopolization of public broadcasting organizations provided the impetus for democratic-participant theory [10]. According to McQuail [11], one of the key elements of the theory is that individual people and minority groups have rights of access to media (rights to communicate) and rights to be serviced by media according to their own needs [10].

This theory advocates for media liberalization for the benefit of the people it is supposed to serve. It thinks that in order to improve their situation, people should have open access to communication tools. The theory's principle strongly challenges the mainstream media's monopolistic and rigid structure. That is why Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaoma [12] noted that according to the theory every individual and every part of the society like religious institutions churches, mosques and many others in the society should have access to the media so that they too can air their views about happenings in the society. The theory calls for establishment of local media so that people can meet their own needs and that potential users of the media can have access to them. Going by the theory everyone in the society should be allowed to have access to the media. With new media the access to media has increased given room for citizen journalists to operate.

The theoretical significance to the research is based on the fact that it is based on the right of individual citizens to access the media. This study, on the other hand, focuses on public participation in the gathering and dissemination of information. As a result, this theory will assist explain why citizen journalism is the way it is, despite professional media's ethical concerns.

3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 The Concept of Journalism

Journalism can be seen as an activity guided by ethical standards of verifiable information shared in the public interest [13]. Journalism, according to Noor [14], is the gathering and editing of current events for dissemination through news media. It might also be thought of as a daily activity including the use of words, sounds, or pictures to satiate human curiosity with a word that is always curious about what is new.

Because of the observation that both print and electronic media journalists distribute to the public, the introduction of journalism and its medium, electronic and print, has removed a lot of ignorance in society. Journalists are persons who work in the field of journalism. They collect information from the general public and provide it to the general public as well. At the time of its creation, Enwefah [15] believed that journalism, which is the examination and reporting of events, occurrences, issues, happenings, and other aspects of society to a big audience, was the exclusive domain of men.

The World Book Encyclopedia defines journalism, according to Onyeagba [16], as "the profession of reporting incidents that may be of public interest." Journalism is the process of obtaining, preparing, and broadcasting news, as well as related commentary and feature stories, through a variety of media including pamphlets, news magazines, radio, film, television, billboards, the internet, and books. Journalism, according to Onyeagba [16], is the practice of gathering, evaluating, verifying, and disseminating information about current events, trends, topics, and individuals. Journalists are those who work in the field of journalism as a profession. As a result, it has a worldwide impact while remaining as little as the coverage area of the tiniest weekly newspaper.

Journalists and other current terms refer to men and women who work in the news gathering field. Journalists use a range of media to report on global events, including newspapers, magazines, and radio and television news rooms.

3.2 The Concept of Citizen Journalism

Sibanda [6] opines that citizen journalism is done by people who are not professional journalists. People who are seeing events through their own eyes and experiences. Citizen journalism is a term used in the media to characterize journalistic activities carried out by ordinary people, according to Noor [14]. It implies that citizens directly report on the issues they are experiencing. People have been able to speak out about issues that they believe should be addressed because to citizen journalism. As a result, these people have earned the moniker "citizen journalists." A "citizen journalist," according to Duffy, Thorson, and Jahng [17], is a person who is not a trained professional but may report about his or her neighborhood or community despite not being certified. Citizen

journalists or amateur reporters are members of the general public who watch, read, or listen to mainstream media. Earlier, citizen journalists would have been "on the receiving end of a media system that ran one way, in a broadcasting pattern, with high entry fees and a few firms competing to speak very loudly, while the rest of the population listened in isolation from one another," according to Press Think blogger Rosen [18]. He, on the other hand, claims that they are no longer in that circumstance. Citizen journalism was made possible through aid of new media. New media refers to the digital media channels that have emerged as a result of the advancement of information and communication technology in people's lives. Internet, mobile applications, and social media are examples of them that citizen journalists rely on for their job [19].

Citizen journalists frequently insert themselves into stories, and many consider themselves to be citizen activists. Others are proactive news gatherers who attend and report on specific events, such as local town hall meetings and international topics. Journalism is rarely their primary employment, and few are compensated for their work. Citizen journalism is a more horizontal and conversational sharing of news that is "always unfinished," as opposed to traditional journalism, which presented news to its audience as a finished product in a vertical manner [20].

Participatory and democratic journalism are other terms for citizen journalism [21]. Other terms for citizen journalism include: "public journalism," "civic journalism," "stand-alone journalism," "networked journalism," "open source journalism," "crowd-sourced journalism," "collaborative journalism," "grassroots journalism," "community journalism," "bridge media" and so on [22]. One of the most commonly recognized and broad definitions of citizen journalism was proposed by Bowman and Willis [23], who defined citizen journalism as the act of nonprofessionals actively participating in the process of obtaining, reporting, evaluating, and disseminating news and information. This definition incorporates all forms of citizen journalism now in use.

Citizen journalists, on the other hand, are citizens who create material and/or generate dialogue about civic, health, and other themes that are vital to community strengthening but lack a professional media experience. Citizen

journalism, according to research, can be utilized for a variety of purposes, including giving information during risk/crisis events and encouraging people to participate in political campaigns [24,25]. Citizen journalism is an alternative way activists gather news and report them outside the mainstream media organizations. In most cases they lack the professional training [26,27].

3.3 Professional Journalism Reactions to Citizen Journalism

The ways in which citizen journalism and professional news media have interacted has been the topic of significant research. Scholars followed suit, focusing on identifying growing typologies of involvement (commenting on stories, message boards, polls, and so on) and procedures forming in reaction to public participation [28,29].

Many traditional news institutions were less than excited about these early encounters, according to studies, as a "clash of cultures" erupted in which amateur material, powered by a burgeoning participatory ethos, clashed with professional journalists' perceived demands to preserve their authority [29,30]. The BBC, for example, saw UGC as primarily source material for stories, while others saw it as a resource-intensive diversion that distracted journalists from serious reporting [31]. Indeed, it appears that many news organizations' initial approach was geared to keep audience engagement low-key and on the terms of the professionals.

However, some publishers, under pressure from the participatory zeitgeist, have responded by offering limited venues for citizen journalism. The BBC launched Have Your Say in 2005, CNN launched iReport in 2006, and Nigerian television stations broadcast eyewitness stories.

Some professional news outlets, such as these projects, attempted to draw clear lines between professional and citizen content, resulting in citizen journalism segregation patterns such as the "playground" model or the "UGC ghetto" [32,33]. Citizen contributions are viewed as a mirage by some academics, who refer to them as a "interactive illusion" [33].

In several cases, citizen journalists were not even allowed on the playground. Instead, their material was rejected or dismissed as unethical, untrustworthy, too subjective and emotional, of

poor technical quality, or simply un-newsworthy [34,35]. Citizen journalism has been criticized in the past for being too scattered to present a comprehensive picture of significant news events [36]. In several cases, citizen journalists were not even allowed on the playground. Instead, their material was rejected or dismissed as unethical, untrustworthy, too subjective and emotional, of poor technical quality, or simply un-newsworthy [34,37]. Citizen journalism has been criticized in the past for being too scattered to present a comprehensive picture of significant news events [36]. Such opinions have been found in a variety of studies of Western democracies, including among student journalists who are not yet professionals [38,39,40]. As a result, while news organizations are increasingly employing citizen content, they are also developing new routines to strengthen their positions and limit the citizen's role in news production. In what these academics [37,41] refer to as "transparency as strategic ritual," CNN in the United States, for example, shamelessly strives to preserve its authority by emphasizing to audiences that citizen information is unprofessional and cannot be authenticated."

3.4 Issues Bordering on Professionalism and Journalistic Ethics

Journalism takes pride in generating and sharing accurate and dependable information that has been thoroughly scrutinized and cross-checked through news production techniques. A number of writers are concerned about the truthfulness, correctness, objectivity, and legitimacy of citizen journalism news made and distributed [42,43]. Although there are occasional gaffes in traditional news reporting, they are rare in the workplace. However, with citizen reporting, laxity is common, and in some cases, purposeful, in order to instigate unhealthy events or avenge personal wrongdoings. For instance, during the first wave of COVID-19 citizen journalists spread false news that 5G network is related to COVID-19 and it is a plan to reduce the world population. This unsubstantiated and ultimately erroneous rumour had a significant negative impact on the effort in fighting the virus as at that time. This tale, along with several others, has raised major doubts about the legitimacy and utility of citizen reporting, as well as the amount to which it can be trusted. It is difficult to imagine the consequences for public order, societal stability, and the economy. As a result, it produces news that is questionable in its validity. This is a really challenging situation [44]. Ekwueme [44] citing Opennewsroom (n.d) noted that:

Potential false news reports are just one of the many possible ramifications of sourcing news from anonymous sources. The news could be factually correct, but have flaws like blatant disregard of ethics, lack of objectivity, impartiality and balance. It could also be a hidden agenda or opinion sugar coated as fact or a libelous or defamatory statement that puts subjects in the story in bad light. In mainstream media, a process of verification and checks called gate-keeping can weed out any such inaccuracies and biases.

Citizen journalism has hurt several professional journalistic traits, but effective writing looks to be the most seriously harmed. As can be seen, citizen journalism's terminology is frequently dirty, insipid, illogical, and in poor taste. Citizen journalists have almost no regard for proper etiquette or decency. In most citizen reports, colloquialism, slang, jargon, cliches, and unknown abbreviations abound. It makes no difference to them although Confucius warned: "What is spoken is not what is meant if the language is incorrect. What should be done remains undone if what is said is not what is meant. Morals and art will erode if this is not addressed. Justice will be tainted if morality and art degrade; If justice is mishandled, the people would be left in a state of helplessness. As a result, there must be no arbitrariness in what is spoken; this is more important than anything else."

Agbese [45] may have been thinking about citizen reporters when he bemoaned that, "Despite the valiant efforts of people like Newman, the language killers continue to prowl our newsrooms, their hands stained with the blood of beheaded information and dismembered language. They continue to drive a stake through the heart of the English language, armed with cliches, jargon, foreign words and phrases, and muddled thinking."

Journalism ethics, according to Ward [46], is a sort of applied ethics that examines what journalists and news organizations should do in light of their societal duties. Citizen journalists have fared no better in terms of journalistic principles of truth and objectivity. According to Ward and other scholars, objectivity is a significant and crucial component of excellent and credible journalism [47]. Ward is convinced that truth and objectivity are the cornerstones of effective journalism since the urge to portray two sides of a subject appears to be universal [46].

Similarly, Kaplan [48] argues that great journalism demands the eradication and possible influence of one's own thinking values when investigating and reporting a story.

Citizen journalists are wary about neutrality in reporting at best. This is exacerbated by the fact that some mainstream journalists have recently openly questioned the utility of objectivity in modern media reporting, instead favoring ideals such as balance, transparency, and fairness [49]. "The web's disciples believe this intrinsic need for objectivity to be outmoded and incomprehensible. Others believe that impartiality is steadily fading away, owing to the advent of online journalism [50].

4. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Etika [5] conducted a research on citizen journalism and its effects on professional journalism in progressive societies, finding that citizen journalists played a crucial role in the 2019 governorship election in Cross River State. They include a wide range of stories from all corners of the state, revealing all manner of irregularities and violence that occurred during the election. Snatching ballot boxes, double voting, vote buying, and many more incidents were documented on social media platforms. According to the findings, citizen journalism has become an important aspect of modern society since it has given voice to the voiceless.

Dare [51] investigated the rise of citizen journalism in Nigeria, focusing on Sahara reporters in particular. The social backdrop for the emergence of citizen journalism in Nigeria, as well as the technological platform on which it operates, are explored and analyzed in this inquiry. What effect has this type of journalism had on both conventional media and, more crucially, Nigeria's participatory democracy and governance process? According to this study, the interactive and investigative vacuum in Nigeria's traditional media prompted the formation of Sahara Reporters. Nigerian populace have been electrified, informed, and empowered by its journalistic style. Odii [1] did a study on citizens' opinions of citizen journalism's effects on Nigerian democracy, and discovered that citizen journalism had both positive and bad effects on the country's democracy. According to the report, while citizen journalism aided Nigeria's democracy, it also spread misinformation and fanned election violence in the country. Citizen journalism is not a low-cost option for Nigerians

to participate in the country's democracy, according to the survey.

Min [52] in a study revealed that the recent public and citizen journalism movements have provided some insights into how present and future journalism might assist democratic public life. It was also revealed that the term "conversation" depicts news as a process of negotiated social meaning and should be used to organize today's journalism. In today's citizen journalism, traditional journalistic ideas such as impartiality and distance may no longer be applicable, while new journalistic ideals such as interactivity and transparency are on the rise. Tracy [53] conducted research on environment and democracy: citizen journalism in the digital age, which indicated that the people can now readily and affordably make news utilizing new two-way digital tools. The ecological news paradigm, on the other hand, requires persons who make news to consider the consequences of their actions, not merely to report but also to prevent misleading people. Okoro et al. [8] studied citizen journalism's prospects and limitations in Nigeria. As seen by renowned citizen journalism websites, citizen journalism is proven to be a huge phenomena in Nigeria. It was also determined that, because of its interactivity and ability to broadcast news in milliseconds, citizen journalism has posed a serious threat to Nigeria's conventional media. While community journalism has enhanced people's access to a variety of news in Nigeria.

Suárez-Villegas [3] carried out a study on citizen journalism and opinions from journalists across Europe and the participation of citizens in the information process, generating new forms of connection with professional journalists and the media, was proven to be one of the most significant advances in journalism during the last decade. As a result of this transformation, a new journalistic culture based on dynamic audience engagement has emerged, which has benefited information processing in a variety of ways. This active audience engagement, however, cannot support so-called citizen journalism since it lacks the necessary circumstances to ensure excellent information and a healthy and civilized public debate.

Hood [54] conducted research comparing citizen journalism to professional journalism in terms of trustworthiness and professionalism. This was determined using a believability and professionalism scale. According to the articles

used in the study, news consumers do not think professional journalists are more trustworthy than citizen journalists, but they do think conventional journalists' content is more professional. Citizen journalism and mainstream journalism: Noor [14] researched the issues raised by amateurs, and found that citizen journalism does not pose an immediate danger to mainstream journalism because it is still in its infancy. In truth, citizen journalism has the potential to be a useful news source. It is beneficial in bringing to light stories that are not accessible to professional journalists. According to a study by Anorue, Obayi, and Onyebuchi [55] on the benefits, challenges, and prospects of citizen journalism in Nigeria, the challenges facing citizen journalism in Nigeria are immense, and include computer illiteracy, difficulty accessing the internet, and the high cost of 'surfing' the internet. Despite these challenges, citizen journalism has been discovered to give significant benefits to the country. Broader coverage of events, more urgency in media reports, and the promotion of ICT in the country are only a few of them. In terms of citizen journalism's potential in the country, the findings indicated that citizen journalism will aid in the development of an information society and increase the number of Internet users.

Citizen journalism has had a substantial impact on the field of journalism, according to Ekwueme, Obayi, and Nwachukwu [50], who did a study on the subject, emphasizing on journalistic ethics and professionalism. It has, for example, essentially liberated news distribution from the grasp of a few powerful media moguls and made it available to any literate adult with a cell phone. Citizen journalists bring all of the previously unreported areas and topics to the attention of the western-dominated media. However, as a result of all of this, there have been abuses, the most serious of which is a lack of journalistic ethics and professionalism in the management and authoring of news. This has frequently ended in embarrassment and alarming developments.

Angese, Okoro and Etumnu [56] carried out a study on adherence to journalism code of ethics by journalists in Bayelsa State. It was found that 45% of respondents have high level of knowledge on the code of ethics of journalism practice in Bayelsa State. It was also revealed that the degree to which journalists in Bayelsa State adhere to the code of ethics of journalism practice is low. The researchers therefore conclude that given the fact that just 45% of

journalists have good knowledge of some journalistic ethical code, the issue of non adherence will keep being a problem.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this investigation, the survey method was used. The purpose of a survey is to describe, document, analyze, and interpret existing or past situations. The survey approach is the best research design for this study because it allows journalists opinions to be sampled regarding citizen journalism [57]. As a result, the study's target population is the National Union of Journalists' registered and practicing journalists (NUJ). According to the NUJ Factsheet, the number of journalists under NUJ in Imo State is 180. The study sample size was the entire population of registered and practicing journalists under the NUJ which is 180. The reason for studying all the elements in the population is because it is manageable. In census principle, the entire population is studied. The instrument for this investigation was a questionnaire. The questionnaire items were in nominal and likert scale format which is relevant for the purpose of the study. This research work adopted the face validity in which the instrument for the study was face validated by an expert. This was done in order to ensure that the instrument to be used is in line with the research questions. In administering the instrument a face-to-face method was adopted to ensure easy retrieval of the questionnaire. For analysis of data, the researcher made use of the simple percentages method; mean analysis and chi-square (SPSS) were used as the statistical tool for testing the hypothesis.

5.1 Data Presentation and Analysis (Result)

This section focuses on data presentation and analysis. From the 180 copies of questionnaire administered to respondents 175 (97%) was found usable in this study meanwhile 5 (3%) was not valid for the study. Therefore, analysis was done in based on the valid copies of questionnaire returned.

According to the results of the Table 1 study, 84.6% of the respondents agreed that citizen journalism is not a dependable source of news information. This indicates that a larger proportion of respondents believe citizen journalism is untrustworthy as a source of news information.

Table 1. Responses of respondents on citizen journalism is reliable as source of information for news

| Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 66 | 15.4 |
| No | 148 | 84.6 |
| Can't say | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 2. Responses of respondents on citizen journalist are well dispose to carry out journalism job properly

| Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 66 | 37.7 |
| No | 76 | 43.4 |
| Can't say | 33 | 18.9 |
| Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 2 shows that 43.4% believe citizen journalists are not well equipped to do their jobs correctly. This indicates that the vast majority of respondents believe citizen journalists are ill-equipped to do their jobs correctly.

Table 3. Responses of respondents on citizen journalism consider truth, fact etc before publishing

| Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 56 | 32 |
| No | 86 | 49.1 |
| Can't say | 33 | 18.9 |
| Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 3 shows that 49.1 % believe citizen journalists do not examine truth, fact, or other factors before publishing. This indicates that the majority of respondents believe citizen journalists do not examine truth, fact, or other factors before publishing.

Table 4. Respondent Responses on do you any way get aid from citizen journalism when preparing your reports

| Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 50 | 28.6 |
| No | 98 | 56 |
| Can't say | 27 | 15.4 |
| Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The analysis from the above Table 4 revealed that 56% of the respondent disagreed that they get aid from citizen journalism when preparing their reports. This implies that a greater percentage of the respondent confirmed that they do get aid from citizen journalism when preparing their reports.

Table 5. Respondent Responses on do you believe or accept report coming from citizen journalism

| Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 35 | 20 |
| No | 90 | 51.4 |
| Can't say | 50 | 28.5 |
| Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The analysis from the above Table 5 revealed that 51.4% of the respondent confirmed that they do not believe or accept report coming from citizen journalism. By implication, a greater percentage of the respondent confirmed that they do not believe or accept report coming from citizen journalism.

Table 6. Responses of respondents on what extent do you accept report from citizen journalism?

| Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Large extent | 9 | 5.1 |
| Moderate | 27 | 15.4 |
| Low extent | 41 | 23.4 |
| Not at all | 98 | 56 |
| Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The analysis from the above Table 6 revealed that 56% of the respondent confirmed on the extent of acceptance that they do not accept report from citizen journalism. This implies that a greater percentage of the respondents do not accept report from citizen journalism.

The analysis from the Table 7 showed that 78.9% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the practice of citizen journalism can affect the way people perceive news from journalists. This implies that majority of the respondent agreed that the practice of citizen journalism can affect the way people perceive news from journalists.

The analysis from the Table 8 states that 81.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed

respectively that the fact that anyone can use their gadget to post just anything in the name of news can affect the way people take in news from mainstream journalism. This implies that greater percentage of the respondent agreed that the fact that anyone can use their gadget to post just anything in the name of news can affect the way people take in news from mainstream journalism.

Table 7. Responses of respondents on do you agree that the practice of citizen journalism can affect the way people perceive news from journalists

| Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Strongly | 60 | 34.3 |
| Agree | 78 | 44.6 |
| Disagree | 32 | 18.3 |
| Strongly | 5 | 2.8 |
| Disagree | | |
| Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 8. Responses of respondents on you agree that the fact that anyone can use their gadget to post just anything in the name of news can affect the way people take in news from mainstream journalism

| Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Strongly | 69 | 39.4 |
| Agree | 74 | 42.3 |
| Disagree | 23 | 13.1 |
| Strongly | 9 | 5.1 |
| Disagree | | |
| Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 9. Responses of respondents on whether citizen journalism poses an ethical threat to mainstream journalism

| Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Strongly | 60 | 34.2 |
| Agree | 57 | 32.6 |
| Disagree | 43 | 24.6 |
| Strongly | 15 | 8.6 |
| Disagree | | |
| Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The analysis from the Table 9 states that 66.8% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed

respectively that the citizen journalism poses an ethical threat to mainstream journalism. This implies that greater percentage of the respondent strongly agreed that citizen journalism poses a threat to mainstream journalism.

Table 10. Responses of respondents on whether do professional journalists use their platform to campaign against unprofessional journalism such as citizen, journalism?

| Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 90 | 51.4 |
| No | 35 | 20 |
| Can't say | 50 | 28.5 |
| Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The analysis from the Table 10 states that 51.4% of the respondent confirmed that professional journalists use their platform to campaign against unprofessional journalism such as citizen, journalism. This implies that greater percentage of the respondent agreed that professional journalists use their platform to campaign against unprofessional journalism such as citizen, journalism.

Table 11. Responses of respondents on how often professional journalists make efforts to sensitize those who engage in citizen journalism on the ethical implication of their act

| Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Very often | 58 | 33.1 |
| Rarely | 108 | 61.7 |
| Not at all | 7 | 4 |
| Can't say | 2 | 1.1 |
| Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The analysis from the Table 11 showed that 61.72% of the respondents confirmed that professional journalists make efforts to sensitize those who engage in citizen journalism on the ethical implication of their act rarely. This indicates that majority of the respondents are of the view that professional journalists make efforts to sensitize those who engage in citizen journalism on the ethical implication of their act rarely.

5.2 Test of Hypothesis

H₀: The extent citizen journalism poses an ethical threat to mainstream journalism is not

dependent on professional journalists efforts in sensitizing citizen journalist on the ethical implication of their act on mainstream journalism.

List 1. Chi-square tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 253.402 ^a | 9 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 242.414 | 9 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 123.207 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 175 | | |

a. 9 cells (56.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .0.

Decision: Result of the chi-square test reveals that the $X^2=N=253.402^a$, $p<0.05$ therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate is accepted. Meaning that the extent citizen journalism poses a threat to mainstream journalism is dependent on professional journalists' efforts in sensitizing citizen journalist on the ethical implication of their act on mainstream journalism.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Data analysed revealed that at an average of 59% respondents perceived citizen journalism as not reliable when it comes to source of information for news; citizen journalist are not well dispose to carry out journalism job properly and that citizen journalists do not consider truth, fact etc before publishing. In journalism, truth, fact, accuracy etc are highly held onto because they are the cardinal points that define mainstream journalism; unlike citizen journalism that do not usually bother to verify the story before spreading and this perhaps has inform the position of mainstream journalism over the citizen journalism. In line with the finding, Odii [1] observed that citizen journalism had both positive and negative consequences for Nigerian democracy. While citizen journalism helped Nigeria's democracy grow, it also spread misinformation and fueled election violence in the country, according to the study. The study also found that citizen journalism has a high level of participation in Nigeria's democracy. Similarly, according to Suárez-Villegas [3], the so-called citizen journalism cannot be justified because it lacks the required circumstances to assure quality information that promotes productive and civilized public debate. From the theoretical

standpoint the democratic participant theory gives room for active participation in the communication process however in this case citizen journalists leverage on such opportunity and spread falsehood in the name of news as indicated by the finding.

Analysis of data it was revealed that on the average 54.4% respondents confirmed that among professional journalists citizen journalism is nothing to write home about and hence they do not accept it in carrying out their own job of journalism. It is the low level of trust professional journalists has on citizen a journalist that is why they hardly carry citizen journalists seriously owing to their different background. In agreement to this finding Min [49], revealed that classic journalistic concepts such as impartiality and distance may no longer be effective in today's citizen journalism, while new journalistic principles such as interaction are on the increase. This research backs up the claims made by experienced journalists. Their attitude toward adopting citizen journalism is based on what they believe the hypothetical findings reflect, as well as the citizen journalist's attitude toward journalistic values like truth and objectivity. However, according to Ekwueme et al. [50], the arrival of citizen journalism has had a significant impact on the discipline of journalism. Abuses have occurred as a result of their work, the most serious of which is the lack of journalistic ethics and professionalism in news management and writing. This has frequently resulted in embarrassing gaffes and concerning developments.

Analysis of data revealed that at an average of 75.8% majority of the respondents studied confirmed that citizen journalism poses an ethical threat to mainstream journalism to a large extent. This finding conforms to the finding of Okoro et al. [8], according to their findings, citizen journalism is becoming a major phenomenon in Nigeria, as seen by prominent citizen journalism websites. Citizen journalism, as practiced by the Sahara Reporters, has posed a severe challenge to Nigeria's mainstream media. In contrast, according to Noor [14], citizen journalism does not pose an immediate danger to conventional journalism because it is still in its infancy. This discrepancy may be due to the study's location, as Noor's research was conducted in the developed West, where residents are more nationalistic. Individual citizens and minority groups have rights of access to media (rights to communicate) and to be served by media

according to their own needs, according to democratic-participant theory ideas. Citizen journalism, in doing so, poses a danger to conventional journalism in some aspects especially as it concern ethics and the image of the profession.

The data analysed findings revealed that on the average of 56.5% professional journalists use their platform to campaign against unprofessional journalism such as citizen, journalism and that professional journalists make efforts to sensitize those who engage in citizen journalism on the ethical implication of their act. Having known that there are ethical threats to mainstream journalism as a result of the activities of citizen journalism the professional journalists who have been trained go at length to sensitize citizen journalists on the danger of their unprofessional conduct in the field of journalism that has been known for sacredness of fact. In line with this finding Suárez-Villegas [3] revealed that unprofessionalism can affect the condition and quality of information given by citizen journalism and as such it will certainly affect constructive and civilized public debate. Okoro, et al. [8] stated that in times of emergency, citizen journalists should refrain from spreading incorrect information through the news because such an act could obstruct rescue efforts. As a result, there is a clear need to educate Nigerian citizen journalists on how to properly use this new type of journalism. Tracy's studies also demonstrated that the public can now readily and affordably make news utilizing new two-way digital tools, according to Tracy [52]. The ecological news paradigm, on the other hand, requires persons who make news to consider the consequences of their actions, not merely to report but also to prevent misleading people.

7. CONCLUSION

In this era of digital technologies almost everyone is striving to be a journalist even without professional training. Journalism is built on the sacredness of truth and objectivity, but in most cases that have not been the case with citizen journalism. In fact, the professionalism of journalists should be addressed by the professional community in different levels, taking into account important examples of practice, trends, etc. As citizen journalism has been characterized with distortion of fact and lacking objectivity. These are almost certain to occur because the majority of those involved are not journalists by profession and hence lack the

necessary training. As a result of the findings, it was concluded that citizen journalism is not what one should rely on when it comes to source of information for news as those who engage in it are not well disposed to carry out the journalistic functions properly because in most cases they publish distorted facts. Their orientation need to be changed so that ethics come first and activities are trustworthy.

8. RECOMMENDATION

In line with the findings the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Citizen journalists should be trained on the journalistic ethical guidelines so that they will know the implications of flouting journalistic guiding principles.
2. Professional journalists should endeavour to keep maintaining their practice of scrutinizing news coming from citizen journalism so that their integrity will not be under question.
3. Citizen journalism should always be practise with a sense of responsibility so that the mainstream journalism can leverage on them for the utmost interest of the public.
4. The fact that 56.5% of the respondents which is little above average confirmed that professional journalists' campaign against citizen journalism practice is not enough, they should do more in sensitizing them about the danger of the practice.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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