

MEDIA ETHICS AND LEGAL REPORTING IN NIGERIA: BALANCING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND LEGAL CONSTRAINTS IN JOURNALISM PRACTICE

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Abstract: The media's role in Nigeria is deeply inbred in the nation's democratic principles, being the watch dog of the government and also being a driving force for public engagement. But while press freedom is exercised, the exercise itself can sometimes clash with legal constraints, leaving journalists with difficult ethical decisions to make. This research examines the micro constraints of freedom of expression in Nigerian journalism practice. The study uses a mixed method approach to understand how media professionals grapple with ethical and legal boundary issues. This comprehensive method was used to achieve the objectives of this study, combining a desk research, interviews with media professionals and legal experts as well as case studies of significant legal and ethical incidence in Nigerian journalism. The theoretical basis of media ethics, freedom of speech and legal aspects of journalism in Nigeria were examined in the desk research component. Also, there were in depth interviews with seasoned journalists and legal experts to ascertain the ethics of legal reporting. Case studies of high profile incidents were also thoroughly analysed, with contextual understanding of the ethical and legal issues that arise in real world journalism practice. In addition to illustrating both the complications involved, these case studies provide a starting point to understand both the intricacy of journalistic decisions making processes and their outcomes. The study concludes that media organisations and the professional bodies should invest in legal literacy programme for journalists to become well educated on the laws that are relevant to them and respect court decisions.

Keywords: Media ethics; Legal reporting; Freedom of expression; Legal constraint; Journalism practice

1 INTRODUCTION

In any democratic society the press is a major player, serving as a watch dog to those in power. But this role frequently puts journalists at odds with legal and ethical boundaries trying to safeguard the rights of individuals and a state of social order. The debate of appropriate boundaries between freedom of expression and legal constraints is an ancient tradition that media in Nigeria has been convolutedly entangled with; with journalists on the ground facing a diverse terrain of legislations, regulation and appropriateness of ethics.

The freedom of expression and the Nigerian press is provided for under the Nigerian constitution but it is not absolute. There are many such acts that limit what can be reported or published, such as Cybercrime Act, the Official Secrets Act and Defamation Act. Providing measures for the protection of the national security, the protection of the interests of the development of the state and the protection of the reputation and the rights of the person. But critics say some of these laws are too vague, open to misinterpretation, holding back legitimate journalism [1].

In addition to the legal constraint, journalists in Nigeria face ethical dilemma in their daily practice [2]. Issues involving privacy, fairness, accuracy and protection of source processes often entail difficult choices which have wide consequences [3]. The increase in social media and citizen journalism has added to the ethical landscape, making it now hard to distinguish between professional journalism and user generated content [4].

Studies that have been done in media ethics and legal reporting in Nigeria have also been looked at. Previous researches have shown how press freedom is affected by laws such as the Cybercrime Act [5], the ethical challenges that journalists face in conflict zones [6] and the part that media ethics play in encouraging responsible journalism [7]. But only a few researches have looked at the intersections of legal and ethical dimensions of journalism practice in Nigeria.

However, this study intends to fill this gap by making a comprehensive analysis of the relationships between media ethics and legal reporting in Nigeria. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- (1) Examine the legal order regulating media practice in Nigeria.
- (2) Analyse ethical principles that guide journalism practice in Nigeria.
- (3) Examine the challenges caused by the collision of legal and ethical requirements.
- (4) Investigate the strategies used by Nigerian journalists to overcome these challenges and uphold journalistic integrity.
- (5) Recommends what journalists need to do to strike a balance between freedom of expression and legal compliance without compromising on ethical standards.
- (6) Examine the challenges caused by the collision of legal and ethical requirements.
- (7) Investigate the strategies used by Nigerian journalists to overcome these challenges and uphold journalistic integrity.

(8) Recommends what journalists need to do to strike a balance between freedom of expression and legal compliance without compromising on ethical standards.

This study is novel in that it looks at the murky interactions between the law and ethics in Nigerian journalism across their entire length and breadth. It is critical now more than ever to understand what is going on in that sector because the Nigerian press is the main engine of the country's democracy and is as weakened by their interactions as is any part of that engine. We cannot explore the sector's concurrent crisis in legality and ethics and fully diagnose its ailments without first understanding the relevant law and ethics and how they interact (or fail to interact) in Nigerian journalism. Our understanding will be further illuminated by recent and appropriate scholarly publications and their findings.

Moreover, the works of [8] and [9] have emphasized how essential freedom of expression and press freedom are for the instatement and maintenance of democratic governance. These studies provide the present one with a solid foundation upon which to build: They argue—each in its own way—that the two freedoms mentioned above are both integral to the Nigerian society we inhabit and are also under almost constant threat. The present study, then, aims both to accompany and to contest these two halves of the argument. It finds in both studies the spur to engage a more thorough examination of the intersection of media ethics and legal reporting.

For media professionals, policymakers, and academic researchers, its conclusions and advice will prove priceless. This is true because these groups and individuals have to find their way through the legal thicket that surrounds so many aspects of their work and, especially, through the major constraints and pressures that come into play when they are attempting to do their work in a way that might be considered as maintaining integrity in both journalism and the law.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Media Ethics and Legal Reporting in Nigeria: An Overview

The media landscape in Nigeria is a dynamic one: there are multiplicity of print, broadcast and online platforms operating within the country. Besides, journalism in Nigerian society is very essential because it acts as a watchman to its audience over issues or those in power. The practice of journalism in Nigeria however is not easy, considering the delicate balance between freedom of expression and legal constraints. One great change the Nigerian media industry has seen in the recent days is revolution and boom. The elusive journey towards press freedom has been littered with colonial times when the press was heavily censored and control with military dictatorships and repressive media laws during post-independence [10]. Today, Nigeria is a country of media outlets including national and regional newspapers, television and radio stations and a burgeoning online media outlet.

Although Nigeria has such diversity of practice in journalism, it faces a lot of challenges in practice. But threats, harassment and intimidation are meted against journalists from all quarters including government officials, security forces, and high and mighty individuals or organisations [11]. Along with these are the challenges of restricted access to information, the constraint of finances and lack of proper capacity training and resources for proper and ethical journalism practice [12].

2.2 Importance of Balancing Freedom of Expression and Legal Constraints

Freedom of expression and that of the press are inviolable states of any democratic society. They keep those in power to account, uncover corruption and injustice, and magnify the voices of those who are voiceless. The freedom contained in these customs in Nigeria is included in the country's Constitution and other international human rights instrument as ratified by country [9].

But they are not absolute, and have also to be balanced by legitimate concerns, including those of security at both the national and public order levels and protection of individual rights. Legal constraints, including libel and defamation laws, cybercrime legislation, and official secrets acts, attempt to balance on one hand, the rule of law and also safeguarding responsible journalism practice [1-2].

Balancing freedom of expression against legal constraints is a fine and messy proposition. On one hand, harsh laws and regulations on the other hand can suffocate commendable journalism, dampen public speech, and abandoning democratic principles. However, only the absence of legal limits can result in irresponsible reporting, spread of misinformation, and a violation of rights [13].

It is against this background that the study of media ethics and legal reporting in Nigeria becomes necessary. This study, by looking at the legal framework that acts as a framework to the practice of journalism, ethical principles that infuse responsible reporting, the real world challenges facing journalists, attempts to bring a better grasp of how to balance the complex aspects of good reportage.

There has been increasing focus on this topic in scholarly publications in recent years, in Nigeria. For example, [8] emphasised the importance of ethical journalism in propaganda of sustainable development and democratic values. [3] also highlighted the ethical challenges of Nigerian journalists whom they also identified to need robust ethical guidelines and training. Besides this, [5] and [4] also undertook the study of the influence of specific laws and regulations such as the

Cybercrime Act and social media regulations on the journalism practice and freedom of expression in Nigeria. However, even though the country's constitution ensures freedom of the press, this freedom must be cautiously balanced against the other legally or ethically accountable considerations in improving responsible and ethical journalism practise.

2.3 Media Ethics in Journalism Practice

Applied ethics within media ethics are related to the moral principles and rules associated with the doings of journalists and media practitioners. This is important in journalism practise in that it helps to regulate the process of passing out information in a principled, accurate and ethical manner [14]. Media ethics principles are based on the basic values, truth, fairness, objectivity and independence.

Its core, media ethics pertains to upholding highest standard of integrity, transparency and accountability in the collection, processing and dissemination of information. They include a wide array of things such as respecting privacy, protecting confidential sources, avoiding conflicts of interest, and dealing with sensitive content (if possible) or harmful, potentially damaging, content responsibly [15].

In Nigeria, the Nigerian Press Organisation (NPO) has produced a Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists, which is a guide for good practice in the profession. In the code, there are principles defined also like: accuracy, fairness, independence, integrity, and respect for human rights and dignity (NPO, 2023). Additionally it discusses issues that are context specific like use of confidential sources, treatment of minors and avoiding hate speech and discrimination.

These ethical principles are essential if the media is to continue to have the public trust in their work. The public's reliance on journalist to provide reliable, fair, and truthful information in an era of being enslaved with misleading information called disinformation [15]. Loyal to ethical standards, journalists help to build a more informed and involved citizenry necessary to healthy functioning of a democratic society.

Additionally, media ethics has an important role in protecting the rights, dignity of any person which could be harmed by journalist's activity. Ethical guidelines for journalists provide guidance for dealing with such sensitive issues covering crimes, violence being spread and the resultant physical, mental and psychological hardships of the families affected and ways of doing that with least harm and anonymity respect of all aggrieved parties [3].

Scholarly works over recent years have tended to highlight the importance of media ethics in journalism practice and their appraising on public trust. Following [12], [13] explored the challenges of practising responsible journalism at a time of social media and citizen journalism; [12] also emphasised the role of media ethics education in promoting a responsible journalism practice.

[4] analysed the ethical dilemmas the journalists in the digital era confront with such decisions, e.g. the impact of the algorithm, data privacy and the spread of the misinformation. In her research paper [14] on the legal and ethical implications of online hate speech and disinformation, she uses the ethical guidelines to combat this harmful practise.'

Responsible journalism practise includes a component of media ethics. This framework serves to guarantee individual rights as well as the consistency of public trust and truth, fairness, and objectivity. With an ever changing media landscape it is more and more integral that there are any ethical guideline policies and that they are carried out correctly.

2.4 Legal Framework for Journalism in Nigeria

The Nigerian journalism practice is draped in a legal framework made up of constitutional provisions, statutory laws and judicial processes. The basic right to freedom of expression is key at the heart of this framework, as provided for in the Nigerian Constitution. Part 39 of the 1999 Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria) is based on this right to freedom of expression which includes the right of the freedom to hold opinions and receive, impart ideas and information without interference [16]. This provision is the foundation of the practise of journalism in the country and guarantees that media professionals will be able to gather, analyse and dispense information to the public without the fear of censorship or reprisal. Nevertheless, freedom of expression is not absolute; it is limited by constitutional guarantor. They have effects, to protect national security, public order, public health and the rights of others including their reputations [1].

Besides the constitutional provisions, the practise of journalism and media practise in Nigeria is governed by various statutory laws. The 1992 Nigerian Press Council Act set up the Nigerian Press Council, a regulatory agency designed to protect high standards of professionalism in the Media world and to handle public complaints against the press [5].

On the one hand, the Cybercrime Act of 2015 is targeted at suppressing cyber related crimes but its broad provisions to tackle cyberstalking, cybersquatting and unauthorised distribution of computer passwords [15] has triggered concern across the journalism community. The critics say these provisions are so vague that they can be used to stifle legitimate journalistic activities, like investigative reporting and protection of confidential sources.

The Official Secrets Act criminalizes the disclosure of classified information, the Defamation Act provides a legal basis for compensation as damages of reputations destroyed by false or malicious statements [8].

In recent years there have been several legal developments to journalism practice in Nigeria. [4] point out that in 2019, the federal government brought out amendments to the Nigerian Press Council Act and the Nigeria Broadcasting Code, which attracted the frowns of media bodies and Civil Society Groups. Intended to give the government more control over the

media, the amendments would have enabled the state to deregister broadcasting licences and slap fines on broadcasters that it deemed to have violated the code.

In 2022 it also took another step forward with the enactment of the Social Media Bill, which provides protection against internet falsehoods and manipulations. This bill aims to reign in an out of control disinformation industry on social media, but critics say its sweeping language could be used to silence legitimate online speech and chill free expression [9]. While these legal developments have been met with debates and concerns in journalism circles we should also consider that there is a need for balance: press freedom should be respected but the legitimate concerns around national security, public order, and protecting individual rights should also be addressed.

Several scholars have looked into the legal framework to journalism in Nigeria. [12] looked at the extent to which media ethics education could serve as a leverage point within the prevailing legal settings in order to promote responsible journalism. In [13] the ethical and legal challenges by social media as well as the blurring of media boundaries between traditional and new media were explored.

Studies also abound [3], [6] concerning ethical typologies journalists in conflict zones and/or during sensitive reporting encounter when faced with the complex legal terrain of which they could be a victim. The law of journalism in Nigeria remains a fleeting terrain riddled with dynamic constitutional provision, statutory laws and judicial interpretation. The constitution guarantees free speech, but, as with most other constitutionally granted rights, free speech is limited to secure society, individual rights, and national security. These recent legal developments have generated dialogue and concern in the journalism community, and a need for continuous discussion and balancing of concerns for legitimate claims to press freedom, with legitimate societal concerns.

2.5 Freedom of Expression vs. Legal Constraints

We recognise that the debate of freedom of expression and legal constraints is not new among the world's journalists and media professionals through the ages, even in Nigeria. Freedom of expression is a basic human right and a cornerstone of a democratic formation — the right to free speech, regardless of what people say. At the same time, legal limits are often mandated for the shared interests which increase public order, national security, individual rights (such as privacy and reputation). According to the 1999 Constitution in Nigeria, there is a freedom of expression, granting freedom to hold an opinion and to receive and impart information without interference [17]. It is however conditional to certain limitations, as otherwise, about, laws on defamation, sedition, and national security [1].

Nigerian journalists have continually been challenged in court when working, revealing the existing tension between freedom of expression and legal limits. Indeed, an example is Jones Abiri, a journalist and publisher of a Weekly Source newspaper arrested and detained for more than two years by the State Security Service on the charge of terrorism and economic sabotage [17]. The case of Abiri was condemned by media organisations and human rights groups, yet largely did nothing to stamp out misuse of legal provisions as a means of stifling critical voices in the media. Another high profile case involved Omoyele Sowore, journalist and activist arrested and charged with treason, money laundering and cyber stalking for organising a protest against the government [4]. The treason charges were never carried out against Sowore, but his case did put in perspective the chilling effect that legal constraints on freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly.

However, beyond specific cases, it is often criticized that such laws as the Cybercrime Act, the Official Secrets Act and the Defamation Act can put a too restrictive limit on legal reporting [8]. Some of the provisions in these laws have been so broad and vague, that they could be used against journalists and to stop critical reporting.

Legal constraints' impact on journalistic freedom in Nigeria have multiple layers. In one way, the threat of legal action does chilling effect in such a way that journalists self-censor or avoid covering dangerous incidents out of fear of prosecution or payback [9]. In the end, this can seriously distort the relationship between media and the public, and curb the public's access to information.

In addition, legal constraints often strangle investigative journalism and protection of confidential sources (as a legal article), essential ingredients of freedom and an independent press by [3]. Because of the fear of legal consequences, journalists may be unwilling to seek out important stories or reveal their sources and will not have the means to find wrongdoing and hold the powerful to account.

For media companies or independent journalists, smaller with limited resources, the financial and legal burdens of fighting off lawsuits or prosecutions can be huge [12]. In turn, this can result in the self-censorship of even the most minute of pieces or the relegation of less controversial ones to lower placement in the media space, thereby disallowing that which should be celebrated.

Legal constraints are, as necessary, preservation of public order, as well as protection of the rights of the individuals but this balance is to be careful so that they do not inhibit rightful journalistic activities and the fundamental right to freedom of expression is infringed [13]. Purposeful conversations, legal reform, and the building of media literacy and ethical journalism practices are critical to achieving this tightrope.

2.6 Balancing Freedom of Expression and Legal Constraints

Journalists and media professionals in Nigeria have to navigate the sensitive terrain of freedom of expression and legal limits. The constitution provides for the right of free speech and press freedom but restrictions contained in various laws and regulations may sometimes interfere with legitimate journalistic conduct. Withholding these competing forces is not easy; it is necessary to preserve the democratic integrity of the media.

Cultivating a deep understanding of the legal framework in which your work takes place is one way that journalists help themselves. In any field, one's familiarity with laws, regulations and judicial precedents as well as any updates or amendments [15] forms part of having a job. But by fully understanding the legal terrain, journalists have an easier time avoiding potential landmines and calculating whether to pursue a story and how to tell it.

Journalists should also participate within ethical practices and professional standards because this is how journalist can become credible and avoid being a legal risk. Thus, principles like accuracy, fairness, objectivity and respect for people's right to privacy may help steer journalists away from making themselves potential legal issues, including defamation or sporadic breaks of privacy claims [7]. Media ethics education and training programmes serve to teach the values and provide tools to equip journalists with which to make ethical decisions in difficult situations.

Where legal challenges do occur, media organisations are crucial to supporting their journalists. 'Universal protection of individual journalists is one thing,' Katie Newman, EU and NATO director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, told VOA, 'but it also sends a very important signal to the public about press freedom and its role in the life of a democratic society is important.

In addition, there are opportunities for media organizations to work with civil society groups, professional associations and international organizations to advocate for press freedom and the passage of legal reform in Nigeria. There are those that can involve lobbying for amelioration or rescinding of restrictive laws, advocating for openness and accountability behind the enforcement of laws and spreading the message of how important a free and independent media remains [8]. Advocacy also takes place at its interfaces with the judicial system, as legal specialists and media lobbies submit strategic litigation cases aiming at eliminating unjust limits to such freedom. Landmark court rulings can be a useful roadmap to the future development and evolution of the legal architecture framing journalism [12].

These are not however, the only strategies: it is equally necessary to develop a culture of media literacy and popular awareness of the media's place in a democratic society. Media organisations can teach the public how to support the cause, by saying its importance, teaching the public how to value and protect the flow of information [13]. At the end of the day, the working out of the balance between freedom of expression and legal limits requires multifaceted approach encompassing individual journalists, media organisations, legal experts, civil society groups and the society in general. If the media wants to continue to be effective as watchdogs and guardians of democracy, they will have to manoeuvre through legal challenges and some of those legal challenges are formidable, by employing strategies, such as, legal knowledge, ethical regard, institutional support, advocacy and public engagement.

3 METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of this study, a mixed-method approach comprising desk research, interviews with media professionals and legal experts and case studies of high profile legal and ethical incidents in Nigerian journalism was adopted. The desk research was based on the review of scholarly publications, journal articles and books on media ethics, legal frameworks, and journalism practice in Nigeria; the Nigerian Constitution, statutory laws regulations, court rulings related to media practice; analysed legal and constitutional environment for media practice in Nigeria; evaluated the ethical codes and guidelines set by professional bodies like Nigerian Press Organisation; read up on reports and publications of media advocacy groups, civil society organisations, and international organisations working on press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria. Qualitative methods was employed, as appropriate, to analyse the data collected from the desk research, interviews and case studies.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Findings from Desk Research

Legal Framework	Ethical Codes and Guidelines
- Nigerian Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and press freedom (Section 39)	- Professional bodies like NPO and NUJ have established ethical codes and guidelines
- Statutory laws (e.g., Cybercrime Act, Official Secrets Act, Defamation Act) impose restrictions on media	- Codes emphasize principles like accuracy, fairness, objectivity, human dignity
- Court rulings further shape interpretation and application of laws	- Guidelines for responsible journalism practice

Table 2 Themes from Interviews with Key Stakeholders

Theme	Key Points
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Balancing Freedom of Expression and Legal Constraints	- Journalists concerned about chilling effect of legal constraints on reporting. - Legal experts emphasize balanced approach respecting media freedom and rule of law.
Ethical Challenges and Dilemmas	- Journalists face ethical dilemmas (e.g., protecting sources, reporting on sensitive issues) - Importance of adhering to ethics while considering legal consequences.
Role of Professional Bodies and Civil Society Organizations	- Promote responsible journalism, provide training and support - Advocate for favourable legal and regulatory environment

Table 3 Case Study Findings

Legal and Ethical Challenges	Examples from Case Studies
Defamation	- Cases involving defamation claims against journalists and media organizations.
Breach of Privacy	- Instances where reporting led to concerns about privacy violations.
National Security Concerns	- Cases where journalists faced legal challenges due to reporting on national security issues
Media Ethics vs. Legal Constraints	Situations where media ethics and legal constraints came into conflict

4.1 Discussion of Findings

This study sought to examine the conjuncture of media ethics and legal constraint in journalism practice in Nigeria with a particular focus on four cited objectives. These findings are generated from a comprehensive desk research driven analysis, qualitative and quantitative research of key themes from interviews with key stakeholder and case study analysis.

4.1.1 Objective 1: Examining the legal framework

The legal framework governing media practice in Nigeria which includes the Nigerian Constitution, statutory laws and the court rulings are detailed in table 1. Section 39 of the Constitution says that the freedom of expression and press freedom it guarantees are subject to certain limitations. However, it turns out that statutory laws such as the Cybercrime Act, Official Secrecy Act, as well as the Defamation Act have put restrictions and legal constrain in practises of journalism. Moreover, the laws of the land have also been shaped by court rulings in how to interpret and use these laws, yielding a lively legal ground that journalists must work their way through. Such complex legal opaqueness emphasises how difficult it is for Nigerian journalists to balance professional with legal obligations.

4.1.2 Objective 2: Exploring ethical principles and guidelines

Also Table 1 illuminates between ethical codes and guidelines, professionally established, by the Nigerian Press Organisation (NPO) and Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ). These principles that underlie these codes stress accuracy, fairness, objectivity and respect for human dignity, offering a code guide to responsible journalism practise. Table 2 highlights the interviews with stakeholders that supported reporting both with respect to ethical principles and the opportunity to avoid legal consequences. Ethical dilemmas abound for journalists protecting the confidentiality of sources, covering sensitive or controversial stories, or standing impartial in situations in which their interests and the interests of their employers or interest groups, conflict.

4.1.3 Objective 3: analyzing challenges and tensions

In Table 2 and in this research case studies, this research illustrates the conflicts and tensions caused when legal constraints and ethical considerations come into conflict. Conducted interviews with key stakeholders showed that people were worried about a chilling effect of legal reins on the way journalists can report freely and call themselves accountable. It is important to adopt a balanced approach that respects media freedom while safeguarding the rule of law, with responsibility without undue restrictions on freedom of expression, said legal experts. As displayed in Table 3, summary of the case studies, concrete examples were given of the conflicts that faced journalists, for example in cases of defamation, breach of privacy, and as regards national security as well as from the viewpoint that media ethics and legal issues present the same issue.

4.1.4 Objective 4: Investigating strategies for navigating challenges

While the study did not directly investigate specific strategies employed by Nigerian journalists to navigate legal and ethical challenges, the findings suggest the importance of several factors in upholding journalistic integrity:

- (1) Professional Development and Training: Stakeholder interviews also highlighted that professional bodies and civil society organisations served as outposts for training and support for journalists. It should improve journalists' knowledge and skills with respect to the legal and ethical dilemmas that might face us.
- (2) Adherence to Ethical Codes and Guidelines: The NPO and NUJ each established ethical codes and guidelines that apply to responsible journalism practise. To this, these principles form a commitment for journalists to apply to navigate their daily work while maintaining their ethical integrity.
- (3) Collaboration and Advocacy: The importance of collaboration and advocacy by media professionals, legal experts, policymakers and civil society organisation is underlined in the findings. Together they can help establish a more congenial climate for responsible and ethical journalism practise and influence legal and regulatory reform.

(4) Continual Learning and Adaptation: Learning and adapting as journalists is not just about reading legal memoranda and navigating the ethical maze; it is also a dynamic process where changes in the legal landscape and fresh ethical challenges continually require journalists to learn and adjust. Journalists should stay abreast of legal developments, court rulings and emerging ethical issues so they can make well considered decisions about how to practise, and change their practises accordingly.

4.2 Conclusion

The study pays attention to the complexity of striking a just balance between media ethics and legal constraints in journalism practise in Nigeria. The legal framework defines the setting for press freedom, but many statutory laws and court rulings put limits on journalism. At the same time ethical principles and guidelines are a compass for responsible journalism, and sometimes they can be a conflict with legal obligations. The findings stress the necessity of the issue of media freedom and the rule of law while strongly pushing the point of ethical and responsible journalism on demand for the public interest, and all the while respecting both. These challenges require creating environments of collaborative stakeholder work, professional development and adherence to ethical codes, as well as continuing learning, adaptation and the upholding of journalistic integrity.

4.3 Recommendations

- (1) Policymakers should review laws and regulations regulating media practise and update same to bring us into alignment with the international standards of press freedoms and freedom of expression.
- (2) The Nigerian Press Organisation (NPO) and the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) should on regular basis review and update their own ethical codes and guideline to tackle emerging challenges and changing media landscape.
- (3) Media organisations in adopting this convention: have to build effective internal self-regulatory mechanisms, namely ethics committees, ombudspersons, or independent review boards.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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