

# **Citizen Journalism and Security Challenges: Audience Perception of Ethical and Security issues in Nigeria's online Journalism Practice**

**Adaobi Olivia Okeke (PhD)**  
Department of Mass Communication  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

**Chibuike Julius Nwosu (Ph.D)**  
Department of Mass Communication  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

**Elozona Chinwe Okpala**  
Department of Mass Communication  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

**Chinazom Lilian Ajagu**  
Department of Mass Communication  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

DOI: 10.56201/rjmcit.v8.no1.2022.pg40.55

---

## **Abstract**

*Citizen journalism has transformed the face of journalism practice in Nigeria and the rest of the world. The Internet has basically restructured the mode of news and information gathering and distribution. Unfortunately, not complying by the ethics of the profession has become its main challenge, a circumstance that is put down on some identified factors. Today, there is no distinct difference between the function of conventional journalism and citizen journalism. Conventional journalism, which is the established career of journalism, calls for different kinds of trainings, which could be through education or apprenticeship, for them to carry out their social responsibility function. This is a contrast in the case of citizen journalism, which is currently assuming the role of conventional journalism. This situation foretells undesirable effects to the journalism profession and has equally contributed to the rise of security challenges around the country. Situated within the framework of Source Credibility Theory, this study was designed as a survey. The population of study were residents of Awka metropolis from which a sample size was selected. Finding shows that major issues associated with the credibility of citizen journalism are issues of ethics, professionalism, and training which pose a security threat to the stability of the country. The study recommends that these challenges require to be crucially addressed before they cause mayhem and chaos in the country.*

**Keywords:** *Citizen journalism, Conventional journalism, Ethics, Security challenges*

---

## **Introduction**

The arrival of online media across the globe is a historic metamorphosis that has changed the practice of journalism and shaped the profession in a significant form. The distribution of editorial content through the Internet is fundamental to the practice of journalism online. Aliagan (2018). Digital journalism, which is also known as online journalism, is a modern form of journalism where editorial content is disseminated through the Internet as contrary to publishing through print or broadcast". Ersoy (2016). Editorial contents, particularly editorial on current issues, features, news, and analysis are disseminated through various digital media platforms. Nowadays, readers with connection to the Internet can be aware and informed of happenings around the world, right from the comfort of their homes. Online journalism has actually caused a huge drop in the consumption of the regular print media. Sales of print copies have nosedived, with visible implications to the business fortunes of media empires. Folashade, (2013). The Internet threatens the existence of traditional news media organizations in many ways. Newspapers might lose classified advertising to websites, which are often targeted by interest rather than geography. Tijani(2019) states that these media organizations are concerned about real and perceived loss of viewers and circulation to the Internet , reason why most regular print media organisations are now investing heavily in their online versions. Audiences for online journalism continue to increase. In 2008, for the first time, according to Greer & Mensing, (2016), more Nigerians reported getting their national and international news from the Internet, rather than newspapers. Young people, aged 18 to 29 now primarily get their news via the Internet, according to a PEW Research Center report (2010). Audiences to news sites has continued to increase as a result of the launch of new news sites, conventional news organizations has continued to invest in news online and there is continued growth in Internet audiences globally. Ilori, (2019) asserts that founded in 1999, the Online News Association is the largest organization representing online journalists, with more than two thousand (2,000) members whose main livelihood requires gathering or producing news for digital presentation.

## **Statement of Problem**

The emergence of new media and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, blogs, instagram and others has affected all spheres of human endeavor. This has mostly affected all spheres of human endeavor. This has mostly affected news gathering and dissemination process since it has empowered individuals who have access to these platforms to become a journalist in his or her own right. However, the gateless nature of these new media platforms and the issue of media, news and source credibility has become a challenge as the web 2.0 characteristics of the social media makes for ubiquity of news in the face of the attendant issues which border on ethical and security guidelines. There is blatant disregard to ethical standards that is required in the journalism profession. Traditional media journalists often depend on citizen journalists as their news source without proper verification which could lead to escalating very sensitive national issues that could threaten the peace of the society. This study therefore takes a wholistic

look at the ethical challenges and security challenges gathering data from Awka residents who have had their own share of security issues faced in the practice of online journalism and the ways they can be tackled.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to investigate Audience perception of the ethical and security issues in Nigeria's online journalism practice. Specifically, the study pursued the following objectives;

1. To ascertain the proportion of Awka residents who are exposed to the practice of citizen journalism.
2. To find out how Awka residents view the reportage of issues and events through online journalism.
3. To determine the extent Awka residents use citizen journalism posts as news source.
4. To find out the extent the practice of citizen journalism poses a security challenge to the society.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What proportion of Awka residents are exposed to the practice of citizen journalism?
2. How do Awka residents view the reportage of issues and events by citizen journalists that practice online journalism?
3. To what extent do Awka residents use citizen journalism posts as news source?
4. To what extent does the practice of citizen journalism pose as a security challenge to the society?

### **Literature Review**

From the establishment of Iwe Irohin in 1859, the Nigerian mass media have not failed in the attempt to be abreast with modern technology. Nevertheless, incessant underdevelopment and poor governance have hindered its ability to assimilate and utilize recent advancements in technology. (Nwajinka 2013). The Nigerian mass media might be left behind unless the chain of economic recession is shattered and a higher level of development documented. Before the arrival of online journalism in Nigeria, several newspapers made an impression in the country. Most of the outstanding ones were: The Nation, The Vanguard, This Day, The Punch, The Guardian, Nigerian Tribune, Business Day Daily Trust, Leadership, Daily Independent, National Mirror, New Telegraph, Champion, Daily Sun and most recent, Authority Newspapers, Blue Print, Peoples Daily, The Union and the Nigerian Pilot . The print, which was dominated by the hard copy mode, was evidently indisputable. There was a trial of a strictly online newspaper in

Nigeria between 2003 and 2010. The likes of Sahara Reporters, the Nigerian voice, Gamji.com, and Elombah.com were among the early comers in the experiment.

Formerly, many did not see the online evolution in Nigeria as a significant threat to the regular print until later, when their influence became evident in various sectors of the society. Presently, the catalogue of online newspapers in Nigeria is endless. Outstanding among them, besides the earlier listed are: The Pulse, The Cable Linda Ikeji Blog, Naija gists, Premium Times, Nigerian Eye, Naij.com, The Agenda (Agendang.com), Atlantic Reporters, Daily Post, The Eagle Online, Breaking Times, Osun Defender, Sweet Crude Reports, Information Nigeria, Olufamous.com, YNaija.com and Signal Nigeria. Others include: Encomium Nigeria, The Trent, Today Nigeria, Ventures Africa, Nigerian Finder, My School Gist, Net Media, Spread Media, Naija Parrot, Omojuwa.com, 247 u-Reports, Cyber Naira, Naija Parrot and many others. As a matter of fact, the fear of online newspapers is the beginning of wisdom in public offices in Nigeria today as public officers are constantly monitored and made to give account of their stewardship at some point in time.

Aliagan, (2018) opines that information dissemination has been made easy through online journalism and has put in check the monopoly of media owners in the country. This means that it is no longer easy for major media owners to choose to either stifle or distort reports. In fact, as information is tried to be managed in public institutions, online newspapers aid in blowing up such reports. This has in no little way, aided whistle blowing in Nigeria and served as a monitor on the activities of public office holders. Ilori, (2019). Certainly, the Internet is the greatest communication tool invented by man in recent times. This is because of the power of convergence it has, which has also been used to bring other traditional media to a common ground (Chile, 2015). The advantages of online publications are vast. They include: Prompt release of reports, unfettered access, interactive and enables for immediate feedback, needs little capital to set up, Demands fewer personnel. Notwithstanding the excitement that has ushered the arrival of online media, it has its shortcomings which are: The challenge of navigating the World Wide Web, Inadequacy of Internet facilities/technology in some localities, ethical/professional challenges, faceless and non-verifiable physical office address, with most online newspapers operating as illegal entities.

### **Online Media versus Traditional Print Media**

With the advent of the internet, newspaper proprietors were puzzled as to the right approach towards its usage (Jones & Salter, 2019). Their initial response was to send out their entire information on the web through a procedure known as shovel ware (Jones & Salter, 2019). This was the first tactical error by the newspapers (Gunter, 2013,). News consumers got used to free news thereby attempts to introduce pay walls (Greer & Mensing, 2016) Again, the arrival of news collectors and online advertising platforms such as Facebook, Yahoo, Google, LinkedIn, Twitter, Craigslist, Monster.com, amongst others, took over the readers and revenues of the newspapers (Jones & Salter, 2019). This development forced newspaper owners to explore for suitable business models that will ensure their survival. The presence of goggle news, twitter, facebook and other social networking media according to Rodman(2009) are equally changing the face of journalism.

Globally, Print businesses particularly, newspapers are facing many challenges. These are necessitated by the challenges of the dynamic times, changes in socio-cultural attributes in different societies, demographic changes which bring about current audience taste for news, economic challenges, and also the impact of new technologies (Smith, 1980; Jones & Salter, 2019). These challenges have of course denied them their readership and revenue. The advent of the Internet and new media technology is disorganizing the economic establishment of the newspapers, as many prospective readers are discovering alternative sources of news online (Daily Trust, 2012; Jones & Salter, 2019). Several scholars have nevertheless argued that this development is restricted to particularly the United Kingdom and the United States of America, with newspapers in Asia and Africa said to be enjoying an increase in economic growth (Franklin, 2009). In Nigeria, there's a rapid change in the aspect of newspapers. Tijani(2019) asserts that the emergence of online newspapers and other forms of new media presents a major challenge to the old-styled hard copy model of conventional media; a development that forced them to transform themselves in order to remain relevant. Currently, they have keyed into the trend and taken their online platforms more seriously. Nigerian newspapers can now be accessed on the Internet just like the New York Times, Le Monde of France, London Times, and others.

The challenge constituted by strictly online newspapers and social media platforms have kept newspapers working hard, thereby forcing them to conform to the trend. The Internet challenges traditional news organizations in various ways. Newspapers might lose classified advertising to different websites, which are usually projected by interest rather than geography. These conglomerates are concerned about real and perceived loss of viewers and circulation to the Internet (Folashade, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the Source Credibility Theory as propounded by Hovland, Janis & Kelly (1963) is an established theory that explains how communication's persuasiveness is affected by the perceived credibility of the source of the communication. The credibility of all communication, regardless of the format, has been found to be heavily influenced by the perceived credibility of the source of that message. Media credibility research has shifted from its focus from characteristics of individuals and personal source to characteristics to characteristics of media behaviors such as objectivity, accuracy, fairness and lack of bias. According to Hovland et al (1963), when becoming media active, source credibility is a very important aspect. The implication of this theory to the study is rooted in the fact that firstly, advancement in technology has changed the scope of journalism practice which has today birthed what is termed 'online journalism'. As Amaefule (2012) notes 'we are in an internet driven society where the dominant technology drives the face of social existence'. This argument no doubt complements that of McLuhan that the dominant media of the time shapes media existence as is experienced in the field of journalism through the advent and adoption of new media in the field of journalism. However, source credibility theory became apt for this study because the credibility of information online has come under close scrutiny because of the loose nature of the new media space. This gateless nature could affect the authentication of information made public which could lead to escalation of issues bothering on security.

## **Ethical Issues of Online Journalism Practice in Nigeria**

Ethics are crucial in journalism practice because they define acceptable codes of professional conduct. The emergence of online media has its ethical issues that need to be looked into. The advent of Internet has virtually made everyone a journalist just as Gutenberg made everyone conversant with the printer with the invention of the printing press. Citizen journalism has made it possible for everyone to be media owner, actor and creator, rather than being a passive user (Ezeibe & Nwagwu, 2009). They equally stated that citizen journalism gradually demeans the conventional kind of journalism, Thus, the information role that is carried out by professional journalism dissolves into the public domain. Some of the ethical issues are discussed below:

**Plagiarism:** The evident lack of acknowledgement of sources and most times outright plagiarism is a major challenge in online journalism practice in Nigeria. The ethics of the journalism profession requires that all sources of information be acknowledged. Acknowledgement boosts the credibility of the medium and safeguards it from falling into legal controversies, should the story be a fabrication or has libel or defamation issues (Talabi,2011). Nowadays, online platform extricate reports from other sources and decline to give credit to such sources.

**Accuracy:** In recent years, there have been inquiries over the degree of accuracy of reports published online, which many has been established as untrue. Several online platforms are considered to be mere rumor mills that do not bother to verify facts before going public. In spite of attempts by the online news outlets to break stories, there is still a doubt about the quality of journalism generated on the Internet. That doubt could describe the continued resistance of the traditional media to recognize stories sourced from the Internet. Most of the up and coming managers of online news media platforms lack adequate journalistic training, in comparison to those in the traditional media (Tijani,2019). In order to increase traffic to their news pages, some of them are quick to break stories in order to enhance their market positioning and increase popularity; but fail to follow a rigorous editorial procedure, targeted at ensuring accuracy.

**Obscenity:** Obscenity refers to any utterance or act that strongly breaches morality. Nudity, Sexual violence and Pornography publications are typical instances of obscenity. (Greer & Mensing, 2016).. Previously, this was a taboo in journalism practice, but, in recent times, it is predominant in online journalism and unfortunately the society does not seem to see anything wrong with it anymore. Often, information offensive to the public's sense of decency are published online, as opposed to ethical requirements and expectations. This is very worrisome especially as regards to the reportage on children and minors. Professionally, a journalist is not permitted to identify, either by name or picture, or interview children under the age of 16 who are associated with cases relating to misdemeanor, cultism and sexual misconduct, and other related offences, regardless of whether they are witnesses, defendants or victims. (Greer & Mensing, 2016). In today's world, profile of minors is applauded online, not putting into consideration the implications such will have on the lives and future of the concerned children.

**Decency in Reportage:** Asides from dressing in a manner that attunes to public taste, the use of offensive, vulgar and abusive language by a journalist is prohibited by ethics. Vivid details are not allowed to be presented, either in words or pictures, of violence, sexual acts and horrid

scenes by a journalist (Aliagan,2018). Nowadays, these kind of reportage are applauded online. As a matter of fact, such indecent materials are publicized as a way of drawing more traffic to such news websites.

### **Reasons for Non-Compliance of Ethical Standards in the field of Online Journalism**

**Lack of Adequate Training:** Most up- and -coming online news platforms lack adequate journalistic training, in comparison to those in the traditional media. Traditional media practitioners are not in any way absolved from culpability in unethical practices (Ersoy, 2016). Most of the traditional media practitioners are as guilty as their online counterparts. The quality of training for the traditional media practitioners themselves is also a source of worry. The journalism training institutes experience a shortage of the basic infrastructure required to train future journalists. Most of the training institutes fail to address contemporary issues in the journalism profession.

### **Academic/Field Experience**

The disparity between academics who teach journalism and professionals from the industry who train the students on “the field experience” is so wide. There’s need for re-training the students after they have graduated for them to have a hands-on in field journalism. Their new employers have to retrain them, before they are then ready to function as proper journalists (Yusha’u, 2013). It is not a helpful situation when academics that lack any form of field experience are assigned to teach practical courses in the profession. Again, one must have a passion to practice journalism in order to excel in the field. Joining the profession because of unavailability of jobs spells doom for the profession. This brings lack of professionalism which has ridiculed the media profession.

### **Citizen Journalism and Security Challenges**

Kaufman, Stasson and Hart (2019) explain that the credibility of citizen journalists as news sources is important to audience members. This is because it plays a big role in the way the audience interprets and understands information. An information wrongly interpreted can lead to escalation of sensitive societal issues that could trigger a security threat to a society. There are many changes in media and communication brought by mass self communication. One of the aspects is the interaction between content makers and the audiences. Before the mass self communication era, the relationship between the content maker and receiver was mostly one directional. Media professionals were normally the ones who decided what the media produces and distributes. Concerns and skepticism have been raised on the credibility of citizen journalism and online news content because of the questions of professionalism, anonymity and location of sender. (Tijani 2019). Greer & Mensing (2016) asserts that the addition of online news to the list of sources of information available to the public has led to concerns about the credibility as well as its perception by the public as a news source in relation to established and more traditional news sources. Citizen journalism credibility is a major concern as they have easy access to abundant sources but also run the risk of getting false information and passing it to the public without verification. An example of this is the security crises that rocked the eastern part of the

country with Anambra state being hit the most. There were a lot of killings in the state and most information got online pointed accusing fingers to different groups agitating to be heard. The security of the state was shaken to its very foundations because of loads of information flying around on the real culprits behind the killings. Instead of dousing tension most of the citizen journalism posts fueled the crises to a level that most citizens of the state had to now rely on the traditional media to get authentic information on the crises. Again, most Nigerian celebrities pay most online bloggers to hype their wealthy status through their posts thereby encouraging the youths to go into all sorts of shady deals to conform to societal expectations. The posts of citizen journalists bring to the sub-consciousness of consumers issues that could trigger security challenges reason why such posts should be subject to some form of verification and source credibility before posted for public consumption.

### Research Methodology

Survey was chosen as the research design and the area of study is Awka metropolis in Anambra state and this is because in recent times, Awka has experienced a surge in the level of security challenges and a lot of information has been found online as regards the security situation of the state. Hence, the justification for focusing on Awka metropolis. The population of Awka residents according to data sourced from the State Bureau of Statistics(2017) is 312,548. The population is multi-strata comprising people of varying educational and vocational backgrounds.

### Sample size and Sample Procedure

The researcher's sample size was 100. This sample size was suggested by Comrey & Lee (1992) as a fair representation of a population. He stated that the adequacy of sample size might be evaluated roughly on the following scale as stated below;

Sample size	Rating
100	Fair
200	Good
300	Very Good
400 or more	Excellent

The sampling procedure was multi-stage technique which involves following a series of logical steps in selecting sample units. Here, the researcher conducted her sampling in three stages. At the first stage, the researcher began by choosing five out of the 33 villages in Awka. The selection was made using the simple random technique which involves the application of computer-generated table of random numbers. At the second stage, the researcher chose two kindreds from each of the five villages, making 10 kindred in all. At the third stage, the researcher chose two extended families from each of the 10 kindred, which amounted to 20 extended families in all. At the last stage, the researcher chose five persons from each of the 10 extended families using accidental sampling technique. This eventually yielded the sought 100 respondents. . The four stages are illustrated in the table below.

Stages	Selections	Total
1st Stage	5 Villages from Awka	5x1=5 Villages



2nd Stage	2 Kindreds from Each of the 5 Villages	2X5= 10 Kindred
3 <sup>rd</sup> Stage	2 Extended Families from each of the 10 Kindred.	2 x 10 = 20 Extended Families
4th Stage	5 Respondents from each of the 20 Extended Families	5 x 20 = 100 Respondents.

The data collection instrument was questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised entirely close-ended questions. The questions were framed in such a way that they supplied answers to the research questions. A set of questions was designed to relate to particular research questions. The questionnaire had three sections with Section I bearing questions seeking the respondents' personal data, while other sections had questions aimed at answering the research questions. To test the validity and reliability of her instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot study using 10 respondents randomly selected from her population. The instrument was administered to the respondents who filled and returned them. Analysis of their answers convinced the researcher of her instrument's validity.

The researcher's method of data analysis was quantitative. Answers extracted via the questionnaire were recorded as numeral data. The frequency of each answer was found and the percentage computed accordingly. Statistical tables were used to present these data before the researcher proceeded to interpret them towards answering the research questions. Furthermore, the researcher employed Pearson's Chi-Square Test for the purpose of testing her hypothesis.

#### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The data extracted from the questionnaire were presented using statistical tables. The four research questions formulated for the study were answered by interpreting the data so presented. Thereafter, the findings were discussed.

<b>Items</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Number Distributed	100	100%
Number Returned	94	94%
Number Not Returned	6	6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data in Table 2 show that of 100 questionnaire copies distributed, 94 were returned while 4 were not. Thus, 94% response rate was recorded as against 6% casualty rate.

#### **Sex of Respondents**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Males	43	45.7%
Females	51	54.3%

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100%</b>
--------------	-----------	-------------

Table 3 shows that 42.7% of the respondents are males while 57.3% are females. This percentage would likely generate results that would reflect the experience of both male and female segments of the population of Awka metropolis.

<b>Items</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
15-20	19	19.8%
21-25	11	21.9%
26-30	37	39.4%
31-35	2	2.1%
36-40	10	10.4%
41-45	4	4.2%
46-50	8	8.3%
Above 50	3	3.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 shows that 19.8% of the respondents were 15 - 20; 21.9% were 21 - 25; 39.4% were 26 - 30; 2.1% were 31 - 35; 10.4% were 36 - 40; 4.2% were 41-45; 8.3% were 46 - 50; while 3.1% were above 50. The results from this table indicate that the age bracket with the highest frequency are the ages between 26 -30 and the lowest are those above 50years. This shows that most of the respondents for this study are in their active years.

**Table 5: Marital Status Distribution of Respondents**

<b>ITEMS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Single	59	62.8%
Married	35	36.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5 shows that 62.8% respondents were single while 36.5% were married. This table indicates that findings would likely reflect the experience of the diverse marital demographics in Awka metropolis.

**Table 6: Educational Qualification of Respondents**

<b>ITEMS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
1st School Leaving Certificate	23	24%

SSCE/Equivalent	34	36.2%
OND/Pre-degree Diploma	11	11.5%
1st Degree/ HND	21	21.9%
Post-graduate Degrees	5	5.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 6: shows that 24% had a first school leaving certificate; 36.2% had SSCE/Equivalent; 11.5% had OND/Pre-degree diploma; 21.9% had degrees/HND, while 5.2% had postgraduate degrees. This suggests that the respondents are literate and also likely to be knowledgeable enough to give proper insights to the subject under review.

### Analysis of Research Questions and Discussion of Findings

**Research Question 1:** What proportion of Awka residents are aware of the practice of citizen Journalism?

Here the researcher aimed to find out if respondents were aware of the practice of citizen journalism. The response is analysed below.

**Table 7: Respondents' Awareness of the practice of Citizen Journalism**

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	86	91.5%
No	8	8.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 7 shows that 91.5% claimed to be aware of the practice of citizen journalism as against 8.3% that claimed not to be aware of it. This indicates that more people have been exposed to information through the practice of citizen journalism which means that there is a tendency that a high percentage of Nigerians have the knowledge about the existence of the practice of citizen journalism and could source their needed information from them. Based on this, the answer to the first research question is that residents of Awka metropolis are aware of the practice of citizen journalism and have a high tendency of exposing themselves to information emanating from citizen journalists. Ebeze, Nwosu & Mozie (2018) partly agrees with this finding in their study where they stated that the public consume news through citizen journalism which the gateless nature of this form of media has helped journalists in their investigation and research but has somewhat affected the interpretative and investigative angles of journalism. The gateless nature as opined by these scholars has paved way for public awareness and consumption of news from citizen journalists.

**Research Question 2:** How do Awka residents view the reportage of issues and events by citizen journalists that practice online journalism?

Here, the researcher sought to find out how the residents of Awka metropolis view the reportage of issues and events by citizen journalists that practice online journalism.

**Table 8: Respondents' perception on the reportage of issues and events by citizen journalists**

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Credible	35	37.2%
Not Credible	44	46.8%
Don't Know	15	15.96%
Total	94	100

Table 8 shows that 37.2% tend to view the reportage of issues and events by citizen journalists as credible enough to serve as a news source while 46.8% claimed to view it as not credible enough to serve as sources of news and information. 15.96% of respondents do not know if they can be seen as credible or not as they are indifferent about it. These data show that more of the respondents obviously do not have a positive disposition to citizen journalism posts serving as a source of news as they do not trust the credibility of their information. However close to half of them appear to be more disposed to viewing it as credible enough to serve as a news source. Consequently, the answer to the second research question is that while a remarkable portion of the residents of Awka metropolis are tending to view the posts of citizen journalists as credible, yet even a more significant portion of the population view the posts of citizen journalists as not credible enough as most of their posts online cannot be verified. Meaning that despite the sophistication associated with the citizen journalism, a higher percentage of respondents still do not depend on their posts as a news source. While a lesser portion of the respondents do not know if they are credible or not to depend on it for information. Hood (2017) in his study agrees with this finding where he asserts that news consumers see professional journalists as more credible than citizen journalists and tend to verify any information from them before trusting the credibility of citizen journalists.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent do Awka residents use citizen journalism posts as news source?

**Table 9: Respondents' Level of Usage of citizen journalism posts as a news source.**

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Very High Extent	24	25.5%
High Extent	34	36.2%
Low Extent	26	27.7%

Not at all	10	10.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 9 indicate that 25.5% of respondents use the posts of citizen journalists as a news source to a very high extent while 36.2% use it to a high extent as a source of news, 27.7% of respondents use the posts as a source of news to a low extent while 10.6% do not use it at all as a source of news. These data show that more of the respondents use citizen journalist as a news source to a very high extent indicating that they trust the credibility of the posts enough to serve as an information hub for them. Most of the respondents use the posts to a high extent showing that in as much as they rely on it for news they still will do with a little verification to completely trust their credibility. Again, some percentage of the respondents use the posts to a low extent as they do not rely on its credibility and would rather verify from a more authentic source before they draw their conclusion on whatever information they come across through the posts. However, a low percentage of the respondents appear not to rely on the authenticity of citizen journalist posts and would rather get their news from another source. This means that the answer to the third research question is that a significant portion of Awka residents use citizen journalism posts as a source of news to a high extent. Holton, Homero, Zuniga and Cuddington (2013) corroborate this finding in their study where they found out that citizen journalism consumers utilize their posts as a source of news and information but do not show a significant identification with professional journalistic values.

**Research Question 4:** To what extent does the practice of citizen journalism pose as a security challenge to the society?

**Respondents' view on the extent the practice of citizen journalism pose as a security challenge to the Society.**

Items	Frequency	Percentage
To a Very High Extent	36	38.3%
To a High Extent	32	34.0%
To a Low Extent	15	16.0%
Don't Know	11	11.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 9 show that 38.3% of respondents view the practice of citizen journalism pose as a security challenge to a very large extent, 34.0% view it poses as a security challenge to a high extent while 16.0% think it is to a low extent. 11.7% of the respondents are ignorant of whether it poses a security challenge to the society or not. These data indicate that a large percentage of Awka residents who are the respondents feel that the practice of citizen journalism in the online space poses as a security challenge to the society to a very high extent because they do not trust the credibility of the practice as some of the news carried by them are fake and could lead to a lot of misinformation that could trigger security issues in the society. A significant percentage of the respondents view the practice of citizen journalism pose a security challenge to a high extent because they trust their credibility to some extent but are careful to verify their information from other sources. For these respondents, they need to be checked to ensure that they give out correct information to the public so as to minimise distortion of information that could lead to security challenges. However, some of the respondents view the practice could pose as a security challenge to a low extent because they trust their credibility and trustworthiness to a certain extent and does not see the practice as posing a serious challenge to security except for a few slips here and there which can be checked to ensure source credibility. Again, few respondents are ignorant of whether they pose a security challenge to the society or not. They are indifferent to the consequence of the practice to the society. This means that the answer to the fourth research question is that majority of Awka residents are of the opinion that the practice of citizen journalism in the online environment could to a very high extent pose as a security challenge to the society since most of the posts are subject to verification before ensuring source credibility. Semary & Khaja (2018) in their study corroborates with this finding where they stated in their study that the credibility of citizen journalism practice must stem from reporting news with objectivity and comprehensiveness to avoid misinformation of the general public that could lead to chaos and anarchy in the society.

## Conclusion

There is no disputing the fact that online journalism has transformed the face of media practice in Nigeria. It has enhanced citizens' journalism and has given a voice to Nigerians. It has equally enhanced whistle blowing, which is intended at exposing the rot in our society. New media and online journalism have assisted in consolidating Nigeria's democracy. The convergence of computer and telecommunications are the significant forces in the new technology of mass communication (Yusha'u, 2013). Nevertheless, blatant negligence to ethical and security issues and expectations constitute its greatest worry. Most online media practitioners have been found to violate the right to people's privacy, the code of conduct in terms of accuracy and fairness, and non-disclosure of information sources in certain cases leading to escalation of security challenges. Most of the online practitioners write their news stories to reflect their political, personal and economic interests at the expense of ethical demands of accuracy, fairness, balance and objectivity. It is undeniable that online journalism industry in Nigeria is growing speedily. A lot of individuals particularly the youths are now indicating interest in participatory journalism. The paramount challenge is that of making sure that the hallowed ethics of the journalism profession remain enthroned and security of the society maintained and assured.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were therefore made by the study:

1. Journalism is a noble profession and so anyone venturing into it to practice either as a traditional journalist or an online journalist should be qualified and be properly trained by relevant stakeholders on the tenets of the profession.
2. Self-regulation is vital for online publishers. They should come together as a union and agree on the ethical, operational and professional conduct that should guide them. Sanctions should be meted out on any online journalist that goes against the stated code of conduct guiding the union. The union should equally keep an eye on the activities of citizen journalists.
3. Online journalism courses should be introduced in journalism institutions that are yet to introduce it and then made mandatory for students to study. This will go a long way in sanitizing online journalism practice. This is with an intention to tackling the obvious knowledge and competence gaps in training of Nigerian Journalists as well as other communication professionals.
4. There should be a formidable partnership between media organizations. Citizen journalists and traditional journalists can exchange stories, train staff, utilize the by lines of reporters, and share offices as well in the areas where only one of the partners has a bureau. This would be helpful in addressing issues of originality, plagiarism and ethics.

## References

- Aliagan, I. Z. (2018). Examining survival strategies employed by Nigerian Newspapers against loss of readership and revenues. *Journal of New Media and Mass Communication*, 35(9), 451.
- Batta, H. E. (2009). Peace education, peace journalism, and conflict management in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Communication*, 7(1), 159-183.
- Bishton, D. (2011). The Evolution of Online Journalism. *The Handbook of Global Online Journalism*, 9(3), 55. Readers' Perception of Nigerian newspapers on the Internet. *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, 4, 26-34.
- Daily Trust. (2019). Kaduna newspaper vendors say online publication disrupt sales. Daily Trust.
- Ersoy, M. (2016). Peace Journalism and Traditional Journalism (p. 20). *Cyprus Newspaper*, newspaper article.
- Ezeibe, C. C., & Nwagwu, E. J. (2009). Media imperialism and Crisis of Development. *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 65-66.
- Folashade, T. (2013). Online Journalism. Retrieved from <http://kissfolablogspot.com.ng/2013/02/online-journalism.html>
- Franklin, B. (2009). Evidence Gathering on the current state of the Welsh Newspaper Industry—The future of newspapers: A Comparative Assessment. Broadcasting Sub-Committee.
- Greer, J. D., & Mensing, D. (2016). The Evolution of Online newspapers: A longitudinal content analysis, 1997-2003. In L. Xigen (Ed.), *Internet Newspapers: The Making of a Mainstream Medium*. London: Lawrence Associates Publishers.
- Griffin, E. (2000). *A first look at communication theory* (4th ed). Boston, Ma: McGraw-Hill.

- Gunter, B. (2013). *News and the Net*. London: Lawrence Associates Publishers.
- Ilori, T. (2019). *The Nigerian Cybercrimes Act 2015: Is It Uhuru Yet?* Retrieved from <http://www.orderpaper.ng/nigerian-cybercrimes-act-2015-uhuru-yet>
- Jones, J., & Salter, L. (2019). *Digital Journalism*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Nwajinka, C. O. (2013). *Information and communication technology in Nigeria*. In O. Uwakwe (Ed.), *Communication and National Development*. Onitsha: Afrika-Link Books.
- Rodman, G. (2009). *In a changing world—History industry controversy* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Talabi, F. O. (2011). *The Internet and Journalism practice in Nigeria*. *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, 11(10), 48.
- Tijani, F. (2019). *Online Journalism in Nigeria*. Retrieved from <http://kissfolablogspot.com.ng/>
- Yusha'u, M. J. (2013). *Online journalism and the ethical question in the Nigerian media*. Retrieved from <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/152326-focus-85-online>.