



Traditional and Digital Media: Balancing Regulation with Press Freedom in Nigeria

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Abstract

In the digital media, a lot appears to be happening, particularly in capturing a framework that caters to both traditional and digital media. This study was conducted to assess the regulatory framework that governs traditional and digital media in Nigeria. Furthermore, the researchers also sought to assess the impact of the regulations on press freedom as well as challenges faced by practitioners. The researchers relied on a survey to gauge the perception of carefully selected journalists, legal practitioners, and media consumers in the Southern Taraba senatorial district of Taraba State, Nigeria. The researchers purposively selected 300 respondents as representatives of the demographics and administered questionnaires. The retrieval rate was 94%, as 282 questionnaires were retrieved and usable. Data from the field survey indicate that the current regulatory framework does not address the dynamics of traditional and digital media. The capacity of journalists was also seen as affected by the regulatory framework due to the inhibitive factors and challenges identified, including intimidation, censorship, and a lack of clear media laws. The researchers concluded that excessive regulation undermines press freedom and recommended that stakeholders should always be engaged in drafting the regulatory framework.

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INTRODUCTION

Due to its critical role in influencing public opinion, promoting democracy, and guaranteeing government accountability, the media is frequently referred to as the fourth estate of the realm (Nnah, 2019). The media is a potent tool for social and political growth because of its capacity to inform, educate, and entertain. A free press is an essential component of a democratic society because it empowers people to hold authorities responsible, make educated decisions, and voice their opinions on domestic and international issues (Ekwunife et al., 2023). However, the extent of press freedom differs from nation to nation and is frequently impacted by sociocultural factors, legal frameworks, and political systems. These -

-elements, which are mostly dependent on the socio-political orientation and leaning, are evident in some countries but not in several others.

Traditional and digital platforms coexist in Nigeria's media landscape, with the former playing an increasingly important role in the country's information distribution systems and patterns. Traditional media forms of newspapers, radio, and television have long been the backbone of public discourse and news reporting (Godwin, 2023). Digital media, especially social media, have revolutionised how people consume and interact with news in recent years, increasing the accessibility of knowledge and so elevating citizen voices (Alzubi, 2023). Notwithstanding these developments, media regulation has been a divisive

topic in Nigeria since the government's policy plan is to control both conventional and digital media output (Santas & Inobemhe, 2021). This control is frequently predicated on a variety of factors, such as the excesses of practitioners and the risks associated with an unrestricted press system.

The history of press regulation in sub-Saharan African nations is intricate and multifaceted. Nigeria's traditional media regulation dates back to colonial times, when the press was strictly regulated to quell rebellion (Nzeaka, 2023). Following independence, several governments, both military and civilian, have used censorship, licensing, and legislative restrictions to exert varying degrees of control over media operations (Okon, 2021). While the National Press Council (NPC) oversees print journalism, regulatory agencies, one of which is the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), supervise broadcast media. However, critics contend that rather than promoting ethical journalism, the regulatory tools are instead employed to stifle press freedom (Oyinloye et al., 2024; Uchendu et al., 2025). However, a number of organisations were established to control the practice of journalism in the nation, beginning with the colonial era and continuing through the various military regimes and democratic administrations that have come after it.

On the other hand, social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, and X, in particular, provide new challenges for current media regulation. These platforms facilitate grassroots action and real-time information exchange, but they also present concerns associated with hate speech, disinformation, and cyberthreats (Akindoyin, 2024). In response to these issues, the Nigerian government has stepped up its censorship measures, including a 2021 temporary ban on Twitter and proposed legislation to control online content. These actions have generated discussions about whether they violate fundamental rights to free expression or are required to preserve public order and national security. According to Santas and Inobemhe (2021), this is due to the thin line that exists between the regulation of that nature and the

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infringement on the right of persons to free expression.

Maintaining democracy while addressing pertinent concerns about media ethics in connection to protecting national security in a nation requires striking a balance between press freedom and regulation. According to Musa and Antwi (2023), among the detrimental effects of overregulation are censorship, self-censorship, and a decline in investigative journalism. Furthermore, the researchers explained that such could also erode democratic institutions, causing them to wane in popularity. However, an unregulated and unmanaged media environment can encourage and facilitate the spread of propaganda, harmful content, and misleading information (Akindoyin, 2024). In our contemporary society, it is difficult to establish media regulations that support press freedom, ensure ethical reporting, and support the interests of the people. Various studies have shown the difficulty of balancing media regulations with ethical reporting and press freedom (Damisah et al., 2025; Jaafaru & Inobemhe, 2024; Oso et al., 2024).

In light of the foregoing, this study was undertaken by the researchers to examine the regulatory frameworks for both traditional and digital media, highlighting the difficulties faced by media professionals and the impact of governmental control on press freedom. The researchers also examined potential strategies for striking a balance between preserving journalistic freedom in the face of laws and trying to alter the media landscape.

Statement of the problem

Nigeria's communication structures and architecture have seen substantial modifications as a result of the rapid development of both digital and traditional media. Due to this circumstance, Nigeria has seen notable advancements that permit information sharing and public involvement in a variety of approaches (Erundu & Erundu, 2024; Nnamani et al., 2023), and this is the case in other parts of the world (Benlahcene et al., 2024; Suherlan, 2023; Shin et al., 2024). Similarly, there

were significant issues with rules and journalistic freedom as a result of the expansion. Therefore, the government's efforts to enact legislation aimed at preventing hate speech, disinformation, and other harmful content have also sparked legitimate concerns about potential abuses of media organisations' freedom and autonomy, as well as journalists' rights and privileges. Issues about the impact on press freedom, regulatory ambiguity, corporate influence, and challenges with digital media, public trust, and engagement are of special and significant importance.

When a society lacks clear guidelines and definitions for what constitutes appropriate material for digital and traditional media, regulatory ambiguity frequently results. For journalists and media professionals, the circumstance also results in a condition of perplexity. Additionally, the uncertainty may result in the restriction of free speech, the unequal application of laws, and arbitrary censorship. Its detrimental effects on press freedom are another cause for concern. Tight regulations frequently jeopardise press freedom because they put pressure on media outlets, encouraging self-censorship or emphasising the need to avoid reporting on government policies and actions. This is directly tied to the detrimental effect it has on the democratic era media's watchdog function. The impact is significant because of the increased need to safeguard the public interest through transparent governance, which requires the media to act in a way that holds the government and its representatives accountable.

Digital media has presented a unique challenge to media laws because of the speed of interchange and information availability brought about by the emergence and growth of social media platforms. This scenario also led to the proliferation of fake news across the online space (Inobemhe et al., 2020). It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for regulators to address these issues without violating people's right to freedom of speech. Given that media ownership concentration in Nigeria may raise significant concerns and interest in content regulation, corporate influence is another topic of attention. It becomes very challenging to

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strike a balance between press freedom and regulation while maintaining/funding media organisations, given their practices, which typically subject journalists' ethics to financial benefit. This is the cause of the crucial media ownership issue (Adelabu & Ikuesewo, 2021; Ezugwu, 2024; Oleyede et al., 2024). They may also have a problem with trust since they believe that the media is heavily regulated, which could lead to biases. Public discussions and civic involvement, which are crucial to a democracy's operation, may suffer as a result.

In light of these circumstances, this study was carried out to assess Nigeria's digital and conventional media regulatory frameworks in order to understand how limitations impact press freedom and ethical journalism. It was conducted primarily to create insights and bridge knowledge gaps through evidence-based data from carefully selected journalists in the media industry in Nigeria.

Research questions

1. How to examine the regulatory frameworks that govern digital and traditional media in Nigeria?
2. Discuss the impact of government regulations on press freedom in Nigeria.
3. What are the challenges faced by media practitioners due to regulatory policies?

Theoretical framework

Social Responsibility Theory

According to the social responsibility theory, the media should have freedom of expression, but they also have a duty to uphold professional and ethical standards to serve the public interest (Asemah et al., 2022). The libertarian philosophy's shortcomings, which held that the media should operate independently of the government, gave rise to this view. The libertarian model's critics countered that unbridled media independence might result in propaganda, false information, and sensationalism. Social responsibility comprises the following: i) disseminating factual and impartial information that benefits the public; ii) guaranteeing diversity in media content to represent various societal

perspectives; iii) preventing the dissemination of damaging or deceptive content, such as hate speech or fake news; and iv) serving as a watchdog by holding those in authority accountable while upholding journalistic integrity. Under the tenets of social responsibility theory, media outlets in Nigeria make sure to uphold journalistic standards while also advancing the country's growth. The Nigerian Press Council (NPC) Act, for instance, promotes accuracy and fairness in news reporting by placing a strong focus on professionalism. However, government meddling frequently makes it increasingly difficult for the media to successfully carry out its social duty.

Authoritarian Theory of the Press

The authoritarian theory was promoted because governments should maintain control over public discourse and impose strict restrictions on the media (Asemah et al., 2022). This theory assumes that the state has the authority to restrict press freedom to prevent threats to national security, cultural values, or political stability. Authoritarian governments have long used media regulation to control public opinion, suppress dissent, and protect the ruling class from criticism of any kind. There are four key examples of authoritarian media laws in Nigeria: the censorship of digital media, as demonstrated by the 2021 suspension of Twitter; the promotion and enthrone of state-controlled media organisations through propaganda at the expense of objective journalism practice; the application of laws that restrict practice, as demonstrated by the Cybercrime Act of 2015, which criminalised certain online expressions; and the constant and persistent harassment and arrests of active journalists who are accused of publishing information/news critical of the government or that appears to be presented in a way that is not friendly to the administration. It is correct to state that the many regulations enacted in Nigeria's media landscape constitute a hybrid system that encourages elements of authoritarianism and social responsibility. The press in Nigeria continues to have some degree of independence despite stringent

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government regulations that require investigative and critical reporting (Adebayo, 2021).

Relevance of These Theories to the Study

The authoritarian and social responsibility theories serve as the theoretical foundation for this study, which examines the media regulation structure. Authoritarian theory focuses on the government's tendency to silence voices deemed critical of it, whereas social responsibility theory emphasises the importance of press freedom for accountability and a democratic society. The pretence of national interests is frequently used to justify regulations. Therefore, this study was carried out to determine the tension between press freedom and government control, especially in the context of digital media in the digital age. In light of Nigeria's media regulatory system, these are taken into consideration. About the Nigerian media industry specifically, these ideas offer a framework for advancing knowledge on how to strike a compromise between government regulation and media freedom.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study's research design is a mixed research method, which combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. This was used to carry out a survey in addition to a thorough investigation that involved content analysis of various policy documents and frameworks. The survey specifically offered a chance to perform an empirical assessment of how journalists, media consumers, and legal professionals view the media regulatory framework in light of the shifting dynamics in the traditional and digital media scene. Additionally, interviews with journalists, media regulators, producers, and content creators were conducted in order to gather qualitative data. The qualitative component of the research design was used to assess issues related to press freedom, censorship, and the regulatory framework, while the quantitative component was to determine public perceptions of the difficulties and impacts on journalism practice in Nigeria.

Population

Stakeholders in Nigeria's media landscape, including journalists, regulators, and general media consumers, make up the study's population. The study's population consisted of both traditional media professionals, such as those in radio, television, newspapers, and magazines, and digital media professionals, such as those working on social media and online news platforms. Social media influencers, bloggers, and other types of digital content producers are among the other constituents of the population, as are regulators who are made up of representatives from the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the National Press Council (NPC), and other important stakeholders. Lastly, the demographic also includes general media consumers, such as viewers of traditional and digital media channels. This suggests that the population is diverse and may be trusted to offer insights from which inferences about the subject of enquiry can be made.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A representative sample of 300 respondents was purposefully chosen by the researchers, and it included 50 journalists from each of the digital and traditional media genres (25 each); 200 respondents who were classified as "general media consumers", which included professionals, students, and members of civil society organisations; and 50 respondents who were classified as "media regulators", which included the NPC, NBC, and other organisations responsible for cybercrime. Consequently, 300 people responded as a result. The final unit for questionnaire distribution and interview was determined using the multi-stage sampling technique. Convenience sampling was used to choose the Southern Taraba Senatorial Zone from the state's three districts, and purposive sampling was employed to select journalists, media regulators, and digital content producers with first-hand knowledge of Nigerian media laws. This technique was to ensure that only those with relevant knowledge and expertise participated in the study. To select general media consumers from a variety of demographics, including age groups,

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genders, educational backgrounds, and media consumption habits, stratified random sampling was also utilised. The stratification guarantees that the sample fairly reflects the variety of media consumers in Nigeria.

Method of Data Collection

The necessity for balanced statistics led to the adoption of both primary and secondary data sources for this study. The questionnaire and interview guide served as the study's main data collection tools. Topics based on the study questions, including media trust, press freedom, and regulation efficacy, were included in the Likert scale-based questionnaire. To collect quantitative data on public perceptions of the media regulatory framework and restrictions, copies of the questionnaire were distributed to media users. Selected digital content producers, media regulators, and journalists were interviewed using the standardised interview guide. Important topics of discussion included journalistic independence, digital media restrictions, censorship, and government control. The study also investigated secondary data sources to supplement primary data, including reports from the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Reporters without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) Act, the Nigerian Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) (2019), the Cybercrime Act of 2015, and pertinent works published in academic journals, textbooks, and chapters.

Method of Data Analysis

Techniques for both quantitative and qualitative data analysis were used in this investigation. Therefore, version 26 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilised to examine the quantitative data for this investigation. Descriptive statistics like percentages and frequency distribution tables were used to display the distribution. In addition, inferential statistics (such as chi-square testing and correlation analysis) were employed to ascertain opinions regarding the connection between rules and press freedom. Following the acquisition of transcripts from the

audio recordings made during the interview sessions, thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data. To ascertain relevance, the goals of this study were compared with the substance of the policy documents and reports. Press independence, censorship, journalistic ethics, and the influence of regulations are a few of the significant issues that have been recognised.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

The results provide empirical evidence on the impact of media regulation in Nigeria. Both quantitative and qualitative methods provided insights into the subject of enquiry, highlighting the key areas such as the regulatory framework that governs traditional and digital media in Nigeria, the impact of government on press freedom, and the challenges faced by media practitioners on account of the regulatory policies.

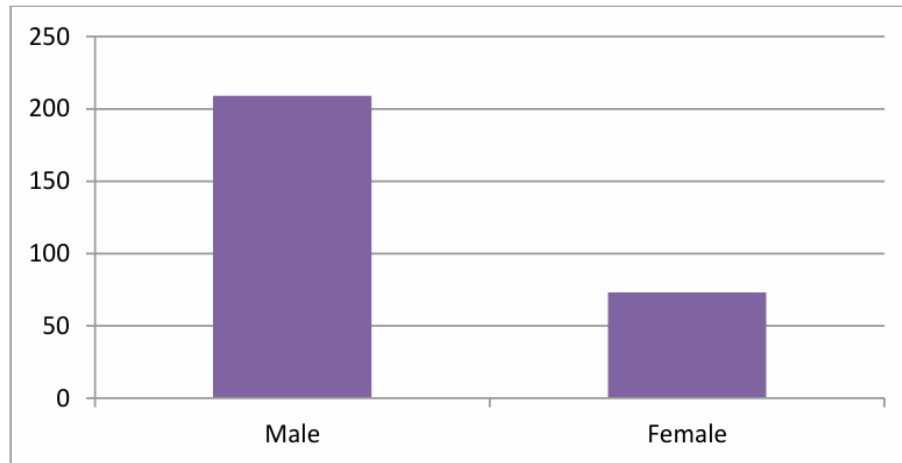


Figure 1. Gender of respondents

Figure 1 data show that more males took the survey, recording 74.1 percent of the total number of respondents that took the survey. Additionally, 25.9 percent of respondents are female. The gender

composition may not have a significant impact on the perceptions of this study, as the focus has no gendered perspective.

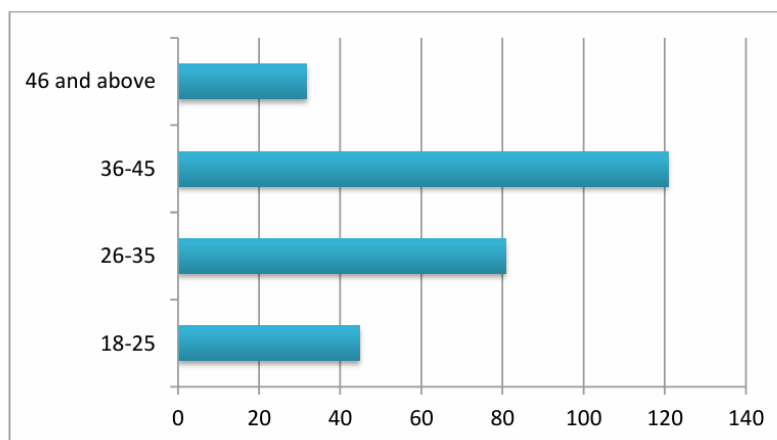


Figure 2. Age distribution of respondents

Figure 2 data demonstrate that the majority of the respondents are within the age bracket of 36-45

years. The category was closely followed by individuals between ages 26 and 35, who make up

28.7 percent. The data imply that the respondents are adult Nigerians who understand the context within which this study was conducted. The data in Figure 3 is about the profession of the respondents and shows that 56.4 percent of them are students. That is the majority population, as they are media

content consumers. However, a significant number of them are public servants, with 13.5 percent identified as journalists and 7.4 percent as legal practitioners. This implies that among the respondents are persons with a good understanding of the legal framework.

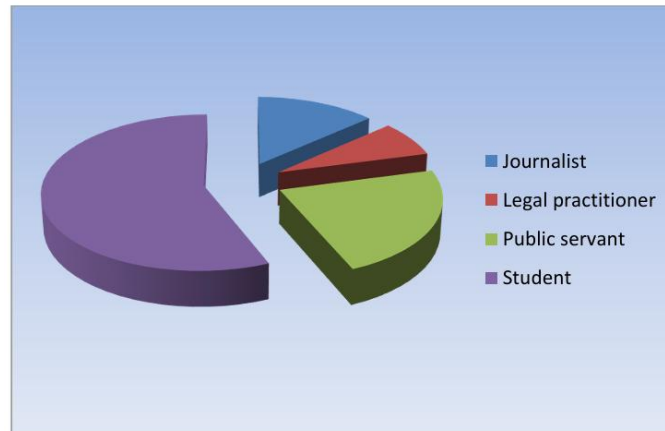


Figure 3. Profession of respondents

Figure 4 data demonstrate the years of experience of professionals among the respondents. Accordingly, the data show that out of the 39 professional journalists and legal practitioners that took the survey, 6 percent have 11 or more years of

experience, 4.6 percent are those with 6-10 years of experience, while 3.2 percent are those with less than 5 years of experience in legal and journalism matters.

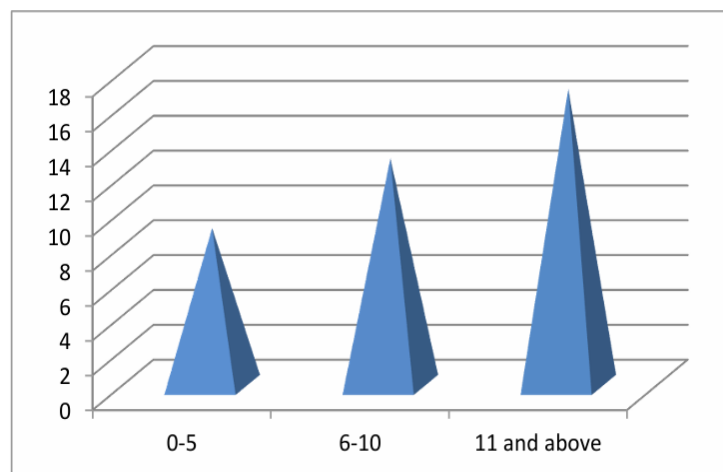


Figure 4. Respondents' years of experience

Table 1 data show that respondents disagreed with the notion that the current regulatory framework addresses the dynamics of traditional and digital media in Nigeria. Accordingly, 33.7 percent

strongly disagreed, while 24.5 percent simply disagreed. The implication is that the framework does not cater to the two media aspects – digital and traditional.

Table 1

The current regulatory framework addresses the dynamics of traditional and digital media in Nigeria.

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	50	17.7	17.7	100.0
Agree	23	8.2	8.2	82.3
Neutral	45	16.0	16.0	74.1
Disagree	69	24.5	24.5	58.2
Strongly disagree	95	33.7	33.7	33.7
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 data demonstrate that there is a clear distinction between traditional and digital media platforms with respect to the regulatory approach. Data show that 42.3 percent strongly agree with the

notion, just as 24.1 percent agreed with it. This implies that clearly, the regulatory framework that applies to traditional media differs from that which governs digital media.

Table 2

Clear distinction in the regulatory approach between traditional and digital media platforms in Nigeria

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	119	42.2	42.2	100.0
Agree	68	24.1	24.1	57.8
Neutral	23	8.2	8.2	33.7
Disagree	45	16.0	16.0	25.5
Strongly disagree	27	9.6	9.6	9.6
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 data show that 48.2 percent of respondents strongly agreed that government regulations affect the ability of journalists to report freely in Nigeria. Additionally, 24.5 percent also agreed to the notion. This is an indication that the regulations in place by

which the media industry of Nigeria is regulated impinge on the ability of practitioners to practise in a free environment. This means some restrictions inhibit the practice.

Table 3

Government regulations affect the ability of journalists to report freely in Nigeria.

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	136	48.2	48.2	100.0
Agree	69	24.5	24.5	51.8
Neutral	9	3.2	3.2	27.3
Disagree	36	12.8	12.8	24.1
Strongly disagree	32	11.3	11.3	11.3
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Data in **Table 4** shows that 46.8 percent strongly disagree with the notion that press freedom is better

protected in traditional media than in digital platforms under current regulations. Additionally,

25.9 percent also aligned with this idea by disagreeing with the notion. This implies that press

freedom is not guaranteed for practitioners in the traditional media genre.

Table 4

Press freedom is better protected in traditional media than in digital platforms under current regulations.

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	23	8.2	8.2	100.0
Agree	36	12.8	12.8	91.8
Neutral	18	6.4	6.4	79.1
Disagree	73	25.9	25.9	72.7
Strongly disagree	132	46.8	46.8	46.8
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 data revealed that the respondents agree with the notion that media practitioners face intimidation and censorship as a result of existing regulatory policies. Data as visualised in the table

shows that 46.8 percent strongly agreed with the notion, and 29.1 percent agreed with it. This implies that there is no press freedom in the country.

Table 5

Media practitioners face intimidation and censorship as a result of existing regulatory policies.

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	132	46.8	46.8	100.0
Agree	82	29.1	29.1	53.2
Neutral	9	3.2	3.2	24.1
Disagree	18	6.4	6.4	20.9
Strongly disagree	41	14.5	14.5	14.5
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 data indicate that the situation where the media laws are not clear creates confusion and legal risks for media professionals in Nigeria. As seen in the table, 42.2 percent agreed, while 36.9 percent of

respondents strongly agreed. This implies that ambiguity may be a challenge with respect to media laws in the country, putting practitioners at a disadvantage with respect to the law.

Table 6

Lack of clarity in media laws creates confusion and legal risks for media professionals in Nigeria.

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	104	36.9	36.9	100.0
Agree	119	42.2	42.2	63.1
Neutral	5	1.8	1.8	20.9
Disagree	36	12.8	12.8	19.1
Strongly disagree	18	6.4	6.4	6.4
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Discussions

This study was conducted to examine the regulatory framework in Nigeria and to ascertain the impact of regulations on press freedom and to explore challenges faced by journalists in their practice of journalism in the country. Accordingly, findings of the study show that the current framework does not address the dynamics in traditional and digital media, making it complex to practice in the landscape. Without the clear distinction in the framework, there seem to be restrictive tendencies in the practice in Nigeria. This is glaring in several dimensions. Studies conducted by Ibiang (2025), Obia (2023), and Oko et al. (2022) also demonstrated the issues in the current regulatory framework for the media in Nigeria. The gaps stem from the evolving adoption of digital platforms by many citizens and the citizen journalism factor that has continued to be accepted by many Nigerians. In some ways, this comes as content creation, yet it offers alternatives to traditional media and creates regulatory issues.

The data show that a combined 72.7 percent of respondents are of the notion that regulations imposed by the government affect the capacity of journalists to practice in a free society. Furthermore, findings of the study also demonstrate that 72.7% also feel that government policies, enforced by regulatory bodies like the NBC, significantly hinder press freedom. The findings of this study align with existing literature that highlights the restrictive nature of media regulations in Nigeria. This supports the argument made by Vareba and Zabbey (2023) that excessive regulation stifles journalistic independence and reduces the media's ability to serve as a watchdog over the government. Similarly, Adebayo (2021) highlighted how government control over traditional media limits investigative journalism, a finding that resonates with the results of this study.

Findings of this study also demonstrate that the traditional media enjoys no comparative advantage in respect of press freedom. By implication, the results also reveal that journalists in the digital sphere experience even greater restrictions (73%),

Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., July. –Sep, 2025, 14(3), 52-64 which align with the findings of Jacobs (2022) that the regulatory policies hinder free speech more than they curb misinformation. The infamous 2021 Twitter ban in Nigeria, government crackdowns on online journalists, and digital surveillance have all contributed to a restrictive environment for online media practitioners. These findings support Uchendu et al. (2025), who argued that digital media in Nigeria faces increasing censorship under the guise of national security and public order.

Furthermore, findings of the study show that 46.8 percent and 29.1 percent agree with the notion that media practitioners face intimidation and censorship on account of the existing regulatory framework. This constitutes a major challenge faced by practitioners, as restrictive policies that inhibit freedom are in place in Nigeria. Another challenge revealed in this study is the absence of clear media laws, which creates confusion and legal “landmines” for professionals in the country. This implies that the respondents understand the inhibitive and restrictive status of media laws and the regulatory framework put in place by the government. This result on intimidation of journalists aligns with findings of a study conducted by Oyinloye et al. (2024) that showed that laws such as the social media bill and the cybercrime act have a tendency for censorship and inhibit the rights to free expression.

CONCLUSIONS

The excessive government control seriously jeopardises press freedom in Nigeria, even while media regulation is necessary to uphold ethical journalism and avoid disinformation. The results demonstrate that there are substantial limitations for both traditional and digital journalists, with digital media professionals facing increased censorship as a result of social media crackdowns and Internet surveillance. Among several other things, excessive regulation of the media results in restriction of freedom of expression of journalists, erodes democratic values, affects public opinions, and also prevents investment in the media industry of a country. For the press in a society to be considered responsible and free, it implies that there is a proper

regulatory framework that includes just laws, moral journalism, and self-regulation on the part of practitioners.

In consonance with developed democracies of the world, Nigeria must develop frameworks in which media censorship is not permitted and free speech is safeguarded. This is possible through putting in place effective systems for monitoring, as well as providing support for press freedom and encouraging a fierce war against misinformation. This becomes imperative owing to the knowledge of the several negatives associated with stringent regulations, which often jeopardise job creation in content production and journalism, affect the digital economy, and hinder the media industry's innovativeness. In order to develop an accountable, independent, and robust media environment, Nigeria must ensure an equitable, open, and well-organised media policy that safeguards journalists, supports press freedom, and promotes ethical journalism. Finding a balance between press freedom and regulation requires a cooperative strategy in which the civil society, legislators, media professionals, and government must synergise and ensure that the media is strengthened to become the cornerstone of public accountability and democracy.

Recommendations

There is a need for the government of Nigeria to adopt global best practices and standards in its consideration of media regulations and laws. This will include the adoption of practical measures to ensure that, in the process of introducing the laws, there are no sections that impede people's rights. This may also include media organisations strengthening self-regulatory mechanisms through independent media councils. In turn, independent media councils should oversee the activities of media organisations at both the national and regional levels. This will ensure close monitoring of programmes and coverage to conform to the extant regulations of practice and profession.

To mitigate the impact of government regulation on press freedom, media practitioners should receive training on ethical reporting and

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fact-checking to combat misinformation. This can be achieved through training and retraining of journalists by media organisations and national and international partners to ensure that the media do not enable the spread of falsehood.

The government should engage stakeholders in drafting regulations that protect press freedom while ensuring responsible journalism. Regulations of the press are fragile lines that could be abused to gag the press. Therefore, stakeholders must converge and work out ways to ensure that the thin line is considered while regulations are being drafted.

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

Stephen Victor Gana: Supervision, Collection, Model Development **Kelvin Inobemhe:** Review & Editing, Analysis & Writing Original Draft, data curation, software

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval

The authors sought the ethical approval of the ethical committee of the Department of Mass Communication, Taraba State University, Jalingo and also considered ethics in providing ethical section in the survey ensuring that the individuals that participated in the study were informed of their rights and that they voluntarily participated in the study and can withdraw from it without prior notice.

Data Availability

The data used in this study are available upon request.

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