

Citizen Journalism and Its Rise to Prominence in the Context of the Nigerian Contemporary Society

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Abstract

Over the past few decades, Nigeria has seen a major change in its media landscape with the emergence of citizen journalism. The issues accompanying the growing adoption of the concept continue to generate concerns in the media landscape and the larger society. Therefore, this study explored the role, development, and impact of citizen journalism in Nigerian society. At its heart, the problem is the difficulty for mainstream media in engaging with urgent problems and the erosion of trust between the public and traditional news outlets. Information can now be shared by ordinary citizens on social media, which has led to the rise of citizen journalism. This study, therefore, applied gatekeeping theories and the concept of the public sphere to provide insights into the manner in which citizen journalism has subverted mainstream media narratives. Employing a systematic literature review methodology, the researchers relied on secondary sources (e.g., journal articles and reports) and examined the factors that gave rise to this new journalism. Findings showed that citizen journalism can facilitate the transmission of news but also creates problems due to misinformation and ethical concerns. In the end, the researchers showed that citizen journalism empowered many Nigerians to be heard, particularly in political events and crises, although it presented unique challenges. The recommendations focused on the need for more media

literacy campaigns and stronger regulatory frameworks to combat the threats of misinformation.

Keywords: citizen journalism, disinformation, media literacy, social media

Introduction

The evolution of the Internet created a situation where disseminating information is easier than ever. Consequently, this innovation has made citizen journalism an integral part of any modern discourse. News was previously the domain of traditional media institutions like newspapers, radio, and television stations. This is no longer the case, as the Internet and mobile devices have worked to shatter that monopoly on information, especially in the Global South, including Nigeria. Social media and other digital tools created the possibility for the common man to be actively engaged in the creation and distribution of news, hence giving rise to citizen journalism (Chioma, 2024). It is a space and an act that enables a traditionally passive audience to become active content creators in their own right.

As noted above, citizen journalism can also be referred to as participatory journalism. It can be described as the act of ordinary citizens reporting on events, often through social media; however, they do not possess professional training. The concept came about largely due to its characteristic as a democratized platform that allows participation, with citizens empowered to have their voices heard (Peña-Fernandez, Larrondo-Ureta, & Agirreazkuenaga, 2024). In Nigeria, events such as the #EndSARS protests marked a momentous rise in citizen journalism. This was especially prevalent, as many believed that the mainstream media during this period were highly biased or too apathetic toward the situation (Otuya-Asahro, 2024). These instances have highlighted the role of citizen

journalists in filling the void left by established media houses.

Citizen journalism, while beneficial in many ways, continues to face some criticism due to matters concerning accuracy and credibility. The absence of formal training among citizen journalists, in addition to the speed at which social media operates, has resulted in cases of misinformation and fake news (Zakari et al., 2024). This has caused scholars like Ogba and Dugga (2024) to argue for the establishment of ethical frameworks and media literacy interventions that might help combat the risks posed by this new form of journalism. In line with this thought, Chioma (2024) noted that mainstream media platforms worry about the competitive threat that citizen journalism poses, which also tends to skip accepted editorial and gatekeeping processes.

The importance of examining the case of Nigeria in relation to citizen journalism is self-evident. It is worth noting that Nigeria is the most populated African country and has an active socio-political environment. This makes the country a good case study, particularly with the focus on the effects of citizen journalism. The democratic value of a well-informed public is widely recognised, and citizen journalism sustains that value. The rise of citizen journalism also creates a lot of uncertainty with respect to information control, the roles of conventional media, and how citizen journalism should navigate and operate within the formal media world. This study, therefore, was conducted to ascertain the contribution of citizen journalism in Nigeria's media system while appraising the pros and cons of the phenomenon. Through this study, the researchers tried to augment the existing literature on citizen journalism by

providing an analysis that draws from the particular socio-political context of Nigeria.

Citizen Journalism in Nigeria's Media Landscape

The mainstream media in Nigeria nowadays are under strain from issues like censorship by the government, the bias of ownership, and the slowing down of news cycles, which have led to lapses in coverage at vital points. To fill these gaps, citizen journalism has emerged and taken centre stage, particularly in the context of crisis and protest, contributing to real-time, unshaped news reporting. Yet, this increase has come amid notable fears regarding the credibility, reliability, and ethics of citizen journalists, creating an urgent demand for regulatory frameworks and media literacy to govern the practice (Ogba & Dugga, 2024). This is due to the powers of citizen journalists in matters of agenda setting and public opinion formation among social media users, who are the bulk of the audience.

Prior to the era of citizen journalism, the traditional forms and their owners were accused of too much power and control of public discourse and news flow. In fact, even in contemporary society, these media are still seen as powerful and relevant because the relationship between the new and old is not that of cancellation but of integration (Al-Quran, 2022). It was the crises of relevance, reputation, reach, and resource that sparked the debates about the displacement of mainstream media (Deacon et al., 2024). However, in the face of the growing interactive, high-choice media sphere, the audience is better empowered. They have the power of choice and the liberty of being co-creators but not without their peculiar challenges of abuse. Imagining a space without the high interactivity occasioned by digital media and the citizen journalism concept would amount to mental exhaustion due to the difficulty of imagining periods with

fewer choices to be heard. Therefore, this study examined citizen journalism and how it rose to prominence in Nigeria.

At its core, citizen journalism is about non-professionals reporting the news. It is frequently interpreted as a type of community media, where citizens assume the responsibilities of reporters by distributing information (Nwaoboli et al., 2024). The rise of smartphones and social media has led to the increasing prevalence of this type of journalism, with individuals able to report on events as they happen. In Nigeria, citizen journalism, when properly harnessed, serves as a potent tool for advocacy and accountability where coverage by traditional media is limited or scuttled by political, commercial, or corporate interests.

Citizen journalism often faces criticism because most citizen journalists typically lack professional training and formal guidelines to follow. Additionally, the fast-paced nature of social media propagation often causes unverified or false information to spread like wildfire, which holds especially dire consequences during times of political discord or national crisis. This has been corroborated by Munene (2024), who argued that social media contributes to the spread of fake news in African society. Additionally, Inobemhe et al. (2020) identified various social media platforms as enablers of fake news in Nigeria due to the push to share before verifying the source of information. This is the idea of citizen journalism, where information is shared without recourse to the traditional fact-checking measures practiced in the mainstream media landscape.

Social Media

Social media is a term used to identify modern platforms through which information sharing and interactivity are enabled, promoting communication among users in a manner previously unimagined. The role of social

media in the growth of citizen journalism is significant. Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are platforms where people decide to write the news, express opinions, or share what they are doing even before journalists do (Chioma, 2024). Social media platforms are becoming very important for communication and mobilisation. For instance, they have helped organise protests, share updates and codes, provide information, and post proof of police brutality (Otuya-Asahro, 2024). Social media bypasses mainstream media gatekeepers and allows for a more democratised flow of information. Some of the unique characteristics—such as speed, ease of access, and lack of regulation—are challenges, especially in reigning in content and disinformation.

Notwithstanding this, social media continues to be a major enabler of citizen journalism across Nigeria. Social media's immediacy and reach enable citizen journalists to cover events in real time and often provide quicker and more diverse reporting than mainstream media. Chioma (2024) buttressed the foregoing point that citizen journalism is greatly influenced by social media platforms. Furthermore, Nkomo and Themba (2018) explained that citizen journalism enabled by social media has added new layers to journalism practice from the perspective of communication and interaction with audiences. However, the lack of regulation of these sites creates fertile ground for misinformation to thrive, which in turn erodes the credibility of citizen journalism as a phenomenon.

Misinformation and Ethical Concerns

One of the biggest challenges with citizen journalism is the issue of misinformation. In contrast to professional journalists, who are trained to follow strict editorial guidelines and ethical codes of conduct, citizen journalists are not subjected to such rules and are therefore more liable

to spread false or misleading information (Tse, 2024). This is particularly a great concern in Nigeria, where political tensions and social unrest are further complicated by the challenge of fake news and misinformation. The rise of fake news presents a serious challenge, as both citizen journalists and social media users can be blamed for the dissemination of fake news in events like elections or protests (Zakari et al., 2024).

However, with these challenges come the possibilities of regulatory frameworks and media literacy programs that enable citizen experts to disentangle the complexities of the news. Training on ethical reporting and fact-checking could mitigate such negative aspects of citizen journalism because the anomaly will not only promote the degradation of the media but also save time from wasted efforts. Prebunking and inoculation were also identified as part of the antidote for curing misinformation (Freiling et al., 2023). Prebunking is a concept that explains the act of protecting users from being manipulated and misinformed online by simply warning them before they are exposed to the content so designed. Inoculation, on the other hand, is a concept from medical sciences but used in this context to mean the use of pre-emptive refutation to weaken the spread of misinformation, like vaccination efforts (van der Linden et al., 2020). These are ethical measures to curb the spread of misinformation in the Nigerian media space.

The Role of Citizen Journalism in Reshaping the Nigerian Media Landscape

The Nigerian media landscape has been strongly affected by citizen journalism, which has restructured the processes of producing and consuming news. In the past, the media were accessed through a handful of gatekeepers—the journalists and editors—who determined what information was made available to consumers after a thorough sifting

and editing process. However, the advent of the internet and social media has caused a shift in this power dynamic, giving everyday citizens a role in what we see as news. This opened the doors of news to a wide range of active voices in society (Nwaoboli et al., 2024).

Citizen journalism in Nigeria is most prominent during socio-political unrest or crisis. During the #EndSARS protests, for example, many Nigerians used their social media handles on platforms like Twitter (now X) and Facebook to report cases of police brutality and to organise protests (Rasheed, 2024). Alternative media after-action accounts were provided by citizen journalists that bypassed mainstream media, which were either slow to respond or overtly biased in their reporting. This change not only undermined traditional media companies' monopoly on news but also introduced complex questions about how citizen journalism could encourage transparency and accountability in society.

However, citizen journalism has also faced criticism despite the identified positive dimensions. Proponents of traditional media question the training and ethical standards of citizen journalists, which they believe are necessary for accurate and responsible reporting (Zakari et al., 2024). These concerns are exacerbated by the sudden spread of false information on social media channels, leading to the conclusion that an increase in citizen journalism is responsible for the lack of trust in the media (Altay et al., 2025; Idiongo, 2024). Nevertheless, the contribution of citizen journalism to the evolution of Nigeria's media space cannot be overemphasised, as it is empowering ordinary citizens and amplifying the voices of previously marginalised groups.

Challenges and Opportunities in Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism has created many opportunities for news reporting but has also created numerous challenges. The issue of credibility remains one of the most visible challenges. Citizen journalists, unlike professional journalists, have no formal training in journalistic ethics or practice (Ahmad et al., 2024). At least, this is how the concept itself has been conceptualized by several scholars (Chadha & Steiner, 2015). It raises concerns about the accuracy of their reports, especially within a digital age where fake news is widespread (Otuya-Asahro, 2024). Misinformation is dangerous to social peace during sensitive political moments like the period before elections because it heightens tensions and leads to civil disorder.

At the same time, the advent of citizen journalism also creates multiple opportunities. In climes where traditional media are non-existent or have to overcome political or economic censorship, citizen journalists can fill an important role. While some have raised concerns about the lack of information control by traditional media, the role of citizen journalism has been crucial in Nigeria, where government censorship and media ownership structures have precluded independent reporting (Ogba & Dugga, 2024). They have been blamed as the ones who brought the stories—the dirty stories that no one wanted to publish.

Scholars have argued for the need to develop media literacy programs and create ethical guidelines for citizen journalists in order to better capture the potential of citizen journalism while avoiding its dangers (Zakari et al., 2024). However, the role of citizen journalism can be strengthened to become a force for the good of society if citizen journalists are trained and equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide accurate and responsible reporting.

Integration of Citizen Journalism into the Formal Media Landscape

In Nigeria, there is a raging debate on whether citizen journalism should be a part of the formal media landscape. The supporters of this approach optimistically note that citizen journalists can add to traditional media reporting with a perspective from the ground-up approach to journalism. For example, the Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria led to the emergence of citizen journalists who reported happenings within their communities, informing the world about events in their localities, though mainstream media could not operate because of the security situation (Agbasimelo & Kenechukwu, 2023).

However, some critics say that the hybrid form of citizen journalism in the formal media arena can be a threat to journalistic standards. If one takes a course in journalism, for instance, it is typical to learn about journalists' ethics and how to write fair, informative, newsworthy stories. Citizen journalists, on the other hand, typically have no such training and may be more susceptible to bias or sensationalism (Tse, 2024). As a result, some people claim that citizen journalism and traditional media should be separate (Darbo & Skerdal, 2019; Noor, 2017). Others have also advocated for robust regulatory frameworks to govern citizen journalism (Alade et al., 2025; Ineji, 2021).

Nevertheless, there is growing awareness of the benefits that citizen journalism could provide to the media landscape. Citizen journalism can play a valuable role in creating a democratised, more vibrant, and diverse media ecosystem by offering alternative points of view and amplifying the voices of everyday people (Stephanie, 2024; Togtarbay et al., 2023). However, efforts must be in place

for a robust and functional media environment. To achieve this potential, clear ethical standards and accountability mechanisms must be established by the concerned authorities. It may also require synergy among different stakeholders to achieve this onerous task.

Review of Empirical Studies

Many researchers have made attempts to unmask the issues of citizen journalism and related sub-areas of research. Rasheed (2024) examined the role of the internet in identifying social media functions in the emergence of citizen journalism in Nigeria during the #EndSARS protests. It was about ordinary citizens using platforms like Twitter to cover police brutality and organize protests. The results showed that citizen journalism was crucial in amplifying the voices of protesters and attracting global attention. The study also highlighted the difficulty in dealing with misinformation, as false reports spread widely during the protests. This further buttresses the potential of social media as channels/platforms for citizen journalism, while emphasizing the need for fact-checking processes.

In related research, Nwaoboli et al. (2024) carried out an empirical study on the adoption and perception of citizen journalism among journalists and residents in Lokoja, Kogi State. Results showed that citizen journalism had received considerable approval among the masses; however, traditional journalists were bitter about its validity. Respondents pointed to the speed and accessibility afforded by citizen journalism as its key benefits, but they expressed concern over the absence of editorial oversight. The research findings suggested that citizen journalism would not go out of fashion; however, the need for collaboration between citizen journalists and mainstream media emerged to raise the standards of news making.

Relatedly, Arimitan and Nwankwo (2021) investigated journalism practice in Nigeria and the effect of citizen journalism. The researchers revealed that citizen journalism heralded the liberalization of communication as well as the democratization of the media landscape. They further showed that the citizen journalism phenomenon is a double-edged sword as it presents its own challenges due to its harmful nature, enabling the spread of hate speech, dissemination of falsehood, despondency, and fear, among others. The researchers concluded that media ecology (in Nigeria and elsewhere) is being rapidly transformed by media technologies-facilitated citizen journalism and other communication forms.

Additionally, Ogba and Dugga (2024) conducted a study on the influence of citizen journalism (CJ) on political participation: a study of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. This study emphasized the role of citizen journalists in mobilizing the public through social media to influence voter turnout. Citizen journalism was found to contribute greatly to raising political awareness among younger voters. Findings of the study further showed that citizen journalists aided by misinformation during the election cycle could confuse voters. The researchers demonstrated that citizen journalism can indeed be democratizing; however, it must go hand in hand with effective fact-checking and accountability mechanisms.

Another study by Zakari et al. (2024) examined the impact of citizen journalism on citizens' perception of government communication acts in Nasarawa State. Citizen journalism, particularly via online platforms, had an ambivalent effect on public perception, the study showed. Although some valued the speed and availability of news from citizen journalists, other citizens were more worried about the correctness of the news. Approximately 97% of

Web 1.0 vs. Web 2.0 citizen journalist sites referred to themselves in this way, in part because they are the only alternative to news networks, which are checked by the distribution system, and Web 1.0 journo-politicos.

Abraham and Otunla (2024) examined the role of citizen journalists in the coverage of security threats in Nigeria, especially in the northern part of the country, where the menace of insurgency frets the populace. It was revealed that citizen journalism offered critical coverage of security incidents in locations where traditional media could not operate. The researchers also demonstrated the potential dangers of information that has not been verified, especially in times of crisis. They recommended that guidelines be developed for citizen journalists to ensure that their reports are accurate and do not inflame tensions.

Furthermore, Obagwu (2023) conducted an empirical study on the public perception of citizen journalism practice in North-Central Nigeria. The researcher suggested that citizen journalism was positively favored among people, who took a positive attitude toward its natural role in amplifying alternative views to news events. Worries were expressed about the unregulated nature of the platform and the potential for citizen journalists to transmit false information. The researcher revealed that citizen journalism could improve democratic discourse but emphasized the need for improved training and oversight to ensure that it meets journalism standards based on professional norms.

Theoretical Framework

Public Sphere Theory

The *public sphere* theory was first introduced by Jürgen Habermas (1962). From Habermas, one could learn the idea of the public sphere as the space where people gather to talk and discuss public issues in society, free from the control of the state or corporate entities. To set this in the

context of Nigeria, social media platforms act as a contemporary public sphere for individuals in the country to converse about political and social issues, avoiding traditional gatekeepers, including the mainstream media. It is in this space where citizen journalism—enabling ordinary citizens to partake in the news-making process instantly—is flourishing. This development may appear beneficial for democratic ideals such as freedom of speech and transparency, but it also presents a challenge to established media institutions that have long held a monopoly on information.

In the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria, for example, citizen journalism demonstrates how the public sphere is no longer limited to mainstream media sources (Rasheed, 2024). This movement, powered largely by social media, showed how citizens could raise their voices in unison and hold people accountable. It is, therefore, against this background that the public sphere theory was used to analyze the rise and increasing influence of citizen journalism in contributing to the public agenda in Nigeria today, as seen in this study.

Gatekeeping Theory

The gatekeeping theory was first introduced by Kurt Lewin in 1947 and focuses on how information is filtered and controlled before it ever reaches the eyes of the people. Historically, journalists and editors served as the gatekeepers, determining what was newsworthy and what a story looked like. Technology, however, has upended this process with the rise of citizen journalism. Many still point, in recent days, to new opportunities given the prevalence of technology. In this era, anyone can root their business in the digital world and have access to the potential for global reach without the space or cash restraints of the early years of the 20th century—anyone with a basic web connection and enough time can become both creator and consumer. On

the one hand, this creates some pathways for new voices to be seen. It, however, has the potential to proliferate unbridled information, which encourages the spread of fake news (Zakari et al., 2024).

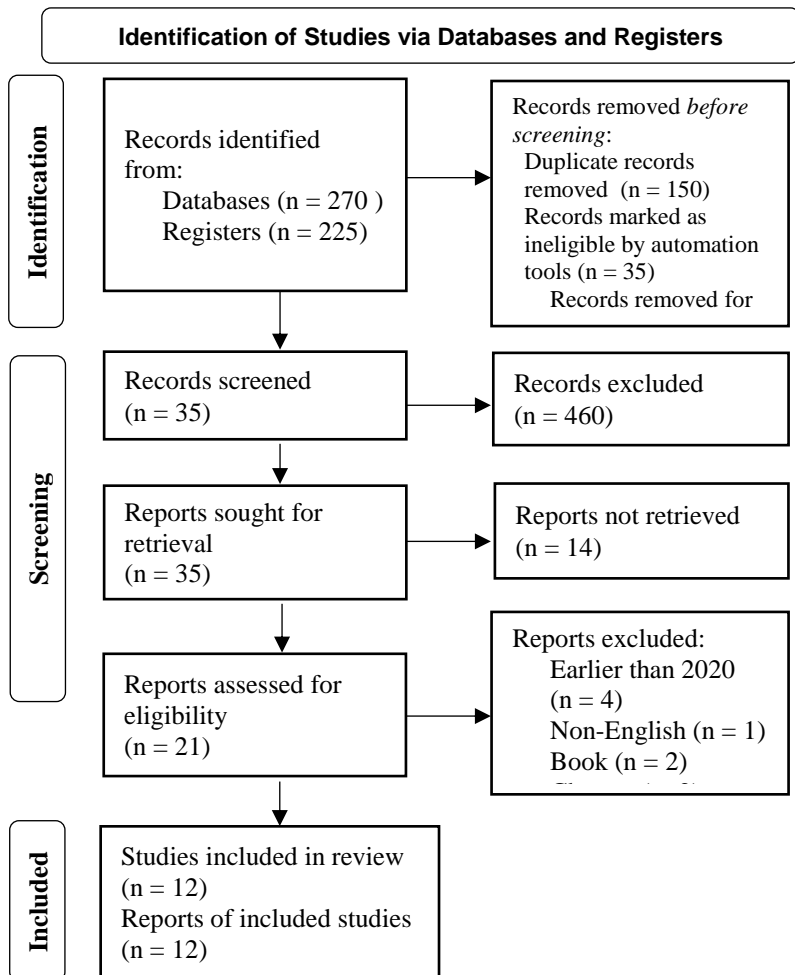
The gatekeeping theory is a useful framework for understanding the challenges faced by traditional media in Nigeria because of the rise of citizen journalists. The fact that citizen journalists are not bound by the same editorial policies and ethical standards means that the reliability of what they share may not always be guaranteed. However, in times of political strife, citizen journalists have provided vital coverage that mainstream news outlets may gloss over or undersell. This interaction between citizen and traditional journalism is at the core of analysis in the study.

Methods

This study is based on a systematic literature review to explore the rise and impact of citizen journalism in Nigeria. In this case, the method is grounded in a thorough literature review, which includes academic articles—excluding books and online resources—to explore the elements that have led to the rise of citizen journalism. This method is deemed most appropriate for this study to thoroughly investigate the theoretical issues as they relate to the practice of citizen journalism in Nigeria. The study answers its research questions by synthesizing existing studies. Databases such as ResearchGate and Scopus were primarily relied upon, in which keywords such as “citizen journalism,” “fake news,” “misinformation,” and “Nigerian media space” were searched. Inclusion criteria were recency and applicability. ResearchGate was included as a database because a greater number of Nigerian researchers actively use the platform. In the selection process, studies conducted between 2015 and 2024 were selected for review and analysis. Language and time of publication were the main exclusion criteria. Consequently, studies published prior to 2015 were

excluded, as were those not written in English. The PRISMA flowchart (Figure 1) below illustrates the process undertaken by the researchers to arrive at the final selection of articles for review and analysis to comprehensively address the research objectives.

Figure 1
PRISMA Flow Diagram



Results and Discussion

Following the systematic literature review process, three themes emerged, aligning with the research focus of this study. Accordingly, the themes identified from the reviewed literature include: “Citizen journalism as a tool for political participation,” “Challenges of misinformation and fake news,” and “The need for media literacy and ethical guidelines.” Therefore, discussions are organized about these key themes.

Citizen Journalism as a Tool for Political Participation

This theme addresses the contribution of citizen journalism in Nigeria, and findings demonstrate that citizen journalism serves as an impetus for political participation in the country. Citizen journalists covered the electoral processes and spurred voter participation during events like the 2019 and 2023 general elections (Ogba & Dugga, 2024). The findings further align with the public sphere theory, which posits that citizen journalism has democratized the flow of information while enabling greater political participation. This is especially noticeable on social media, where citizen journalists can break news and comment on political developments as they happen. This is made possible due to the ease of access, usability, and interactive nature of social media platforms to which the practitioners are exposed.

The study conducted by Arimitan and Nwankwo (2021) showed that citizen journalism allows for democratized media spaces where diversity and popularity can be easily achieved. Therefore, the researchers of this study draw from the reviewed study that citizen journalism has also facilitated new avenues for public speech and modes of communication. These modes were previously accessible only through established media gatekeepers. The essence lies in democratizing the flow of information around

the world and enabling more direct and participatory forms of political dialogue and communication with broader audiences. The viable alternative avenues created for amplifying previously silenced voices have generated renewed hope for all classes of people—the poor, the rich, and the elite in society. It further reduces media monopoly, though not without several challenges regarding professionalism.

Political activities in Nigeria are also promoted by the citizen journalism phenomenon through focused coverage (Obagwu, 2023). The researcher demonstrated that citizen journalism-oriented reportage in Nigeria mainly centers on politicians, with politics as the central theme. It is seemingly used as a tool to settle scores, the researcher noted. In essence, due to the lack of professionalism, political matters and related topics are not objectively presented across platforms. The implication of this result is that, although there is popularity in the use and acceptance of citizen journalism as an alternative to mainstream media, there are glaring professional lapses. Nevertheless, it offers platforms for all to participate in politics, as seen during the 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections.

Challenges of Misinformation and Fake News

The second theme emerged as a direct answer to the second part of the second research question. Since the first part was seemingly addressed by the preceding theme on the pros, this dealt with the cons. Findings showed that the rise of citizen journalism has brought considerable challenges, especially regarding misinformation. Some of the empirical studies appraised showed that the unregulated nature of the social media platform(s) has led to the prevalence of disinformation on those platforms, especially relative to political unrest or political crisis (Hassan, 2023). Moreover, the gatekeeping theory provides a useful lens for

understanding the challenges posed by misinformation in citizen journalism. This problem has been compounded by many citizen journalists having little training and not working under the same codes of conduct as professional journalists. The proliferation of fake news during the #EndSARS protests, and the 2023 elections highlights the need for stronger regulatory frameworks and fact-checking mechanisms.

Findings from another study also showed that citizen journalists post information considered to be fake news that instils fear in people (Uche et al., 2021). The fake news circulated by virtue of citizen journalism sometimes takes a security dimension. Fake news can cause serious challenges to the security of lives and property in Nigeria, and several studies on fake news and hate speech have shown the dangers both pose to the polity (Inobemhe et al., 2020; Inobemhe et al., 2021). This has been acknowledged as a major challenge to the citizen journalism idea, specifically because of the difficulty in policing virtual platforms such as social media through which citizen journalists broadcast their content. With access and a lack of capacity to verify and fact-check information on timelines, citizen journalism and the associated technological affordances enable the spread of fake news, deepfakes, and hate speech across platforms through posts, comments (reactions to posts), and different other ways.

Guanah (2024) saw through these issues and revealed that social media platforms boost fake news propagation and yellow journalism in Nigeria. What this implies is that as citizens gain more access to citizen journalism's information dissemination points (social media in particular), there is a seeming increase in persons who practice junk journalism, while the spread of fake news remains unabated. This is another major challenge identified

herein because citizen journalism promotes access to information with no serious gatekeeping activities, as in the case of the traditional news medium. The absence of trained and serious gatekeepers implies that information flow remains uncontrolled, and so fake news and all sorts of misinformation can be promoted by the citizen journalist. This is common in contemporary Nigerian society.

The Need for Media Literacy and Ethical Guidelines

This theme is based on research question three, which is about the need to recommend policies to deal with ethical and regulatory issues of citizen journalism. A push for the creation of media literacy programming and ethical protocols for citizen journalists has been presented (Zakari et al., 2024). These recommendations are consistent with the public sphere theory, which emphasizes the importance of rational-critical debate in a democratic society. By teaching the public how to critically evaluate information received through various channels, media literacy programs can also contribute to knowledge-driven practice. Additionally, ethical guidelines could help more citizen journalists adhere to a code of conduct to remain on the good side of morality. These steps are critical to ensuring citizen journalism maintains a constructive role in Nigeria's media space without adding to misinformation. Once done in the right way and from the right perspective, there could be a reprieve in respect to the indiscriminate dissemination of falsehood in the country's alternative "mediasphere."

Social media and access have made fake news and misinformation a trend of some sort (Zannu et al., 2024). This is based on the study conducted by the researchers, where emphasis was on the application of media literacy to stem the tide with respect to the spread of fake news and misinformation across Twitter (now X) and Instagram. The study showed lower levels of media literacy among users of

these social media platforms. Consequently, the researchers concluded that one of the ways out of the challenge of fake news and misinformation is to emphasize media literacy because better literacy levels culminate in good handling of information. Put another way, users with digital media literacy will more likely hesitate to share unverified information, thereby slowing down the spread of fake news and misinformation on our digital media spaces, which are explored by citizen journalists in the contemporary world.

A multidimensional approach that includes regulatory, technological, and educational interventions is required to address the fake news and misinformation menace common in contemporary Nigerian society. The foregoing is based on the study by Ugwu and Ugwuanyi (2024), where it was highlighted that media literacy and education, online revenue models, and related technological approaches may be the way out of the menace in Nigeria. A critical evaluation of the challenges exposes a common problem, and that is the speed at which people share bad news (in this case, fake news, misinformation, or outright falsehood). This implies that the solution must be people- or user-oriented, where people must be made aware of the need for fact-checking through enhanced media literacy. This was also emphasized by Arikebi and Ikharo (2024) with the point of argument that fact-checking is necessary to curb the spread of fake news in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, citizen journalism has the power to reshape the Nigerian media landscape, facilitating unprecedented channels for political participation and public engagement. This, however, also brings some considerable challenges, such as misinformation and lack of ethical oversight. Another significant challenge is that the role of citizen journalism is still in a very nascent stage; it needs to

develop regulatory frameworks, citizen journalist training, and media literacy of the public to fully exploit its potential. This provides significant leeway for the integration of new and social media channels into the all-important journalism practice of gathering, processing, and disseminating information to the audience across multiple platforms and access points, typified by the ever-growing technological innovation offered in the 21st-century mediasphere. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations may be useful for media practitioners, policymakers, and educators:

1. Media literacy programs should be introduced at both the community and national levels to educate the public on how to critically assess the information they receive from citizen journalists and other online sources.
2. Clear ethical guidelines should be established for citizen journalists to ensure that they adhere to basic journalistic principles such as accuracy, fairness, and accountability.
3. Traditional media outlets should seek to collaborate with citizen journalists, providing them with the training and resources needed to improve the quality of their reporting while maintaining journalistic standards.

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