Assessment of the Social Media Policy in the Daily Trust Newspaper

[1]**Anthony Iorver Igyuve, PhD and** [2]**Simon Echewofun Sunday**

[1]Department of Mass Communication,

Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

[2]Department of Mass Communication,

Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Abstract

This research work titled 'Assessment of the Social Media Policy at the Daily Trust newspaper was done to evaluate how effective the policy has being in regulating the social media activities of journalists in Daily Trust newspaper. The survey research method was applied with a census survey of one hundred and five (105) journalists as the respondents by using the Questionnaire. Further applying the Interview Schedule research instrument, five (5) respondents from the human resources department of the media house were interviewed. Findings revealed that the highest enforcement level of the social media policy by the media organisation is by reminding the journalists about the policy but none of the respondents have ever been sanctioned over violations as they claimed to comply with the policy. With the introduction of the policy, a significant number of the respondents reduced their use of the social media platforms, signifying some level of apathy. Some threats to the implementation lJof the policy were identified and among these are, the possibility for circumventing the policy aims by using proxy social media accounts to cover defaults. The study recommends that, there should be a review of the policy implementation framework to address poor

implementation. The organisation must apply real sanctions such as surcharge and suspension instead of mere reminders in the implementation. The media outlet should also include violations on WhatsApp and other messenger applications in the policy.

Key Words: *Social Media, Policy, Enforcement, Compliance, Journalist, Daily Trust*

Introduction

Social media platforms enabled with the use of the internet were initially created to advance human networking imagined after the World Wide Web (www) network. However, as the spate of improvement in the platforms continues to grow, social media has come to have its own space and is cutting across all facets of life and profession including the practice of journalism.

Journalism is concerned with the gathering, processing and dissemination of information and ensuring that members of the society know happenings in their environment. *Chapter II, Section 22 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999* as amended entrenches the critical role played by the media and journalists when it said: "The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people." This gives the backbone to the press being referred to as the watchdog of the society. The press carries out this function in its various formats – print, broadcast and the online media.

Adaja (2012, p.15) posits that the professional norms of good journalism include, in particular, the following; truthfulness, objectivity, neutrality and detachment. With the advent of social media platforms and other internet tools, the need to adhere to such professional standards is raising more concern as violations of ethics become prevalent.

Social media are the future of communication because it is a countless collection of internet based tools and platforms that increase and enhance information sharing. Didiugwu, Ezugwu, & Ekwe (2015, p.133) citing Belch (2009) aver that this new form of media makes the transfer of text, photos, audio, video and information in general increasingly flowing among internet users. Some platforms have created online communities where people share as much or as little personal information as they wish with other members.

Top most among these platforms in Nigeria are Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp (a text messaging form) etc.

While scholars have appraised the impact of social media in delivering instant report and enhancing the reach of information, there are critical sides of the social media that are deemed to have given rise to invasion of privacy and contributing to fanning the embers of violence in countries where they are unregulated. Ekwueme & Ugwuta (2017, p.27) posit that social networks help people to stay connected with one another regardless of distance. They note that however useful and creative it may be, it also has its darker side especially as it concerns unethical practices in the name of journalism.

Prevalent among the unethical posers by social media are the spread of fake news, the tendency to spread hate speech, plagiarism, obscenity, invasion of privacy and copyright violation. These issues form the core challenges that have become widespread in journalism with the adoption of the social media.

To stem the tide of ethical violations on social media, the National Assembly introduced an anti-social media bill. However, media experts have seen this as offensive and that it spells doom for the practice of journalism. Taking cognizance of this especially in the count down to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, the Federal Government along with civil societies and other critical stakeholders, rolled out the revised edition of *The Nigerian Media Code of Election Coverage in 2018* to guide media houses, journalists, political parties, and other stakeholders against violating the cardinal ethics of journalism.

The increasing awareness on the need to tackle ethical violations of the social media has caused media houses to begin to adopt social media policies to guide the conducts of their staff and journalists on how they 'live' on the social media sphere. The argument is that whatever such staff propagates on the social media platform gives a reflection and image of where they work.

The *Daily Trust* newspaper unveiled its social media policy in 2018 and had put it into operation. This paper assessed the level of enforcement and compliance of the social media policy in these media houses.

Statement of the problem

The internet revolution has redefined the concept of communication. It has brought about positive changes by empowering individuals who were silenced before, creating access to easy, cost-effective, quick communication with a wider reach. The area of communications further changed as social media platforms emerged in the 1990s. Apeh (2016, p.175) argues that social media offer the professional and non-professional journalist, opportunities to be active participants in news content creation. However, this low-cost and high-speed dissemination mechanism brought its drawbacks because it became a channel to facilitate the spread of hate speech, foster plagiarism, spread of fake news and other unethical dealings in the practice of journalism.

Addressing these vices in the practice of online journalism in the age of media convergence (fusion of print and audio-visual platforms through the internet) is quite imperative.

In 2018, *Daily Trust*, a private national newspaper unveiled its social media policy to guide their employees while they are active on any social media platform. This study assessed this policy to determine how much level of enforcement the media house has given to the content of the policy. It assessed what was the extent of compliance from the employees – (focusing on only journalists) of the media house and how the journalists reacted towards this delineation of their activities on the social media.

Objectives of the study

1. Assess the enforcement level of social media policy at *Daily Trust* on the activities of their journalists.

2. Ascertain the compliance level of the social media policy of journalists at *Daily Trust*.

3. Determine the effects the policy have on the frequency of social media platforms usage by journalists at *Daily Trust*.

4. Evaluate the influence the social media policy of the media house has created on the activities of their staff.

5. Challenges associated with social media policy implementation at *Daily Trust*.

Research questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of enforcement of social media policy at *Daily Trust* on the activities of journalists?

2. What is the level of compliance by journalists to the social media policy of *Daily Trust*?

3. Does the social media policy affect the frequency of *Daily Trust* journalists' engagement on social media platforms?

4. What influence has the social media policy of the media house created on the activities of their staff?

5. What are the challenges associated with the social media policy implementation at *Daily Trust*?

Conceptual clarification of journalism and social media

Journalism has been described over the years as a constitutionally recognised profession in Nigeria following the framework of the freedom of expression and of the press as enshrined in Sections 22 and 39 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is a profession regarded as an arm of the government machinery of a nation. The British terms it as the "Fourth Estate of the Realm" while the Americans simply refer to it as the "Watch Dog of the Society" because it is the mirror in which the society reflects its image (Akinfeleye, 2008). The various definitions stem out from the vital roles of its mobilisation, agenda setting, shaping of public opinion, developmental discourse as well as its surveillance in the human societies   In an attempt to define journalism, Bittner (2001, p.2) posits that the concept of journalism was derived from the word, 'Journal'; it refers to a book or diary for recording the daily account of events. Okunna (2002, p.5) while asserting to this, she defines the mass media to be "all the organizations, such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, films and other means of reaching a mass, heterogeneous audience simultaneously."

Journalism is a profession that is widely ranged having various sub-branches. As such it is broadly categorized into the print and the broadcast journalism or media. There is third emerging aspect which is the New Media. According to Agba (2002, p.6), it is a new journalistic approach that sprang up globally within

the millennium. It is upon this new media concept of journalism that the social media thrives. The internet has given more live to journalism as through the various platforms of websites, blogs and the social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.), more Nigerians are now participating in the process of news dissemination.

Abubakar (2011, p.47) cited in Adaja & Ayodele (2013, p.68) defines social media as "both internet and mobile based apparatuses that allow people to easily share and discuss information." Furthermore, Gelashvili, T. (2018, p.15) describes the social media as an umbrella term and can take many forms, including blogs (e.g., Twitter), content communities (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia) etc.

Policy as a term either means 'ethics', 'law', or 'regulations'. Cochran & Malone (2014, p.3) note that policies are purposive courses of action devised in response to a perceived problem. Policies are filtered through a specific policy process, adopted, implemented through laws, regulatory measures and enforced by an agency. The existence of policy often calls for its enforcement and then, its compliance. Knapp & Ferrante (2012, p3) notes that there is the assumption that people will engage in negative behaviour if they do not fear some form of punishment. Thus as (Keel, 2005) cited in Knapp & Ferrante (2012, p4) puts it, policies, norms, laws and their enforcement are intended to create awareness that negative behaviour will be detected and violators appropriately punished. The concept of compliance refers to the act of obeying an order, rule, or request. Le Grand (2005, p1) defines compliance as the act of following the rules. While these rules are often external requirements, and they are many and varied, compliance involves following the organization's internal rules, policies, and procedures, and acting in accordance with ethical practices.

Review of Related Literature

The rapid adoption of internet by journalists is a global phenomenon. The process by which computerization or digitalization impacted upon the media of the 21st Century has moved on many fronts and at different speeds. Agba (2007, p.83) notes that "with desktop publishing and word processing packages, particularly the page maker, the production of newspapers, magazines, journals etc. has become an interesting business more so with the use of video display terminals (VDTS)." There is also another trend

that sprang from the emergence of internet is citizen journalism. Ezeibe & Nwagwu (2009, pp.65-66) argue that this has made it a reality for everybody to be media creator, owner and actor instead of passive user.

Dwyer (2014, p.11) observes that this media convergence arises because social networking is based on sharing while media industries repurpose shared content. To better reach their target audience effectively, most mass media organizations (broadcast and print) have adopted more forms of ICT that includes the social media platforms. They are presently connected to the social media in much similar manner like the individual members of the society (Apeh, 2016, p.177). It is common to see traditional newspapers like *Daily Trust*, *Punch*, or TV stations like *NTA*, *Channels*, *TVC* and even radio stations like *RayPower*, *Hot FM* having accounts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp just to reach more of their audience and readers.

In spite of the strength of media convergence and the gains of social media application in journalism, there are rising concerns about their violations. Invasion of privacy is one of these violations. Nwanne (2017, p.37) posits that in reporting, journalists must show a high level of professionalism and introspection so that an individual's reputation is not needlessly destroyed or his/her privacy unnecessarily invaded. This belief is corroborated in the tenets of the Social Responsibility Theory of the press. The Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalist (1998, pp.11-17) highlights the imperative of this need to protect the privacy of an individual.

According to Talabi (2011, p.17), obscenity was once a time a taboo in journalism but that is not the case in Nigerian online journalism. Far still, the contemporary society does not see any evil in it as it was before. The challenge the social media platforms have brought is that even if the traditional media refuse to publish such material, the podcast, bloggers, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and others could be used to publish same information with more capacity to go viral and reach more people beyond the Nigerian shores. Furthermore, Onah & Nche (2014, p.2235) posits that most of the social media sites often provide room for users to upload and share pictures and videos. They argue that the opportunity provided by social media platforms to upload pictures and videos have been abused as many users share risqué pictures of themselves or celebrities and promote indecent and obscene views.

With the increasing use of social media comes the risk of violating copyright laws and liability for copyright infringement. Many materials are reproduced, re-edited, disseminated and shared through social media platforms without such bloggers or online journalists bulging about the consequence in line with the law on copyright. Okoh, Izuogu, & Adeleye (2017, p.5) therefore submit that there is the need for the establishment of a legal construct to guide the recognition and exploitation of intellectual property rights. This should be done with authority, and actions should be expedited in light of the tremendous pace at which content is being created and consumed in Nigeria.

Omilusi (2017, p.161) describes hate speech as words of incitement and hatred against individuals based upon their identification with a certain social or demographic group. Hate speech on the social media has a wider reach, higher reaction and more effects. Leets (2002, p.223) asserts that it violates the individual's dignity, resulting in humiliation, distress and psychological or emotional pain. Similarly, Nemes (2002, p.220) avers that hate speech can provoke pain, distress, fear, embarrassment and isolation to individuals. Further studies of the effects of online hate speech show that greater danger can stem from the normalisation of hate through social media.

In defining fake news, Allcott & Gentzkow (2017) submit that they are news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers. This includes intentionally fabricated news and articles that originated from satirical websites. Okoro et al 2018, p.454) adduce that it would not have been possible to the current degree at which fake news thrives without the introduction of the internet. This is because the internet and social media like Facebook and Twitter made it easier to spread deceptive news.

Duru (2016, p.589) defines plagiarism as the obvious lack of acknowledgement of sources and sometimes outright plagiarism is a major challenge in online journalism practice in Nigeria.

The ethics of the profession of journalism demand that all sources of information be attributed. It is said that attribution enhances the credibility of the medium and protects it from falling into legal disputes, should the story be a fabrication or contains libel or defamation.

Takwa (2017, p.11) argues that the entirety of social media violations becoming prevalent is due to the lack of regulation for the social media in Nigeria even when it is getting easier to access them daily.

Researchers are developing more ways to tackle social media violations. One of these is the introduction of social media policy. The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) based in the United States describes social media policy as a guideline that provides guidance for employee use of social media, which should be broadly understood for purposes of this policy to include blogs, wikis, microblogs, message boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, social networking sites, and other sites and services that permit users to share information with others in a contemporaneous manner. The anti-fraud organisation in 2017, introduced a 12 point procedure on what should be the ideal content of an organisation's social media policy. To ensure policy guidelines are complied with by employees of organisations, Cilliers (2013, p578) sees enforcement as key. There must be procedures for verifying that the commitments companies make to adhere to the policy have been implemented. There should also be clearly stated obligations to remedy problems that may arise out of a failure to comply with the principles. This means that sanctions must be sufficiently rigorous to ensure compliance by the members of the organization.

With the suspension of the anti-social media bill in 2016, Nigeria is yet to have any full-fledged law to regulate social media. The prevalence of social media violations widened during the rundown to the 2019 general elections, and to stem this tide, the Nigerian press Council (NPC), the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), media houses, civil societies and other stakeholders agreed to reviewing the Nigerian Media Code of Election Coverage (NMCEC).

This was the first practical effort for Nigeria to enforce certain self-adherence rules that takes into account social media activities. It gave the responsibilities of enforcement ad compliance to media organisations and journalists (NMCEC 2018 Revised, pp.10-12).

The *Daily Trust* newspaper is a national publication of Media Trust Limited (MTL). Reporters and correspondents of *Daily Trust* use blackberry and android phones to file reports through emails to the various desks while they post such top stories on the WhatsApp platforms for instant online publishing. Asuni & Farris (2011, p.10) note that *Daily Trust* newspaper has been on Facebook since June 2010. Its number of fans increased from 32,000 before the 2011 election to 65,000 immediately after the elections. In 2019, the paper has over 500,000 subscriber base which is far higher than the total print (print copy)

distribution of about 50,000. The reporters of *Daily Trust* have the moral obligation to promote their story and others published by the paper on social media sites. Thus, all of the reporters of the paper have a Facebook account, and or a Twitter handle. Taking cognisance of this and with the growing reach of the paper, the board of Media Trust Limited in November 2018 rolled out a social media policy to guide *Daily Trust* journalists and non-journalists (administrative staff) in their dealings on the social media. An electronic copy of the circular was obtained from the human resources department.

The media in Nigeria is not the only sector that is developing or has developed a social media policy for its staff. The Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) has done the same too. The Defence headquarters in Abuja published a handbook on social media used to guide its force on June 11, 2018. The Policy Handbook restricts soldiers from using offensive language and other unethical terms while using the social media.

In the insurance subsector of the financial sector, AXA Mansard has created a document which it calls the AXA Mansard Communication Policy (AMCP, 2015, pp1-6) to deal with internal and external communication as well as employees' presence on the social media. Its Social Media Usage Policy seeks to address reputational concerns of the firm. It directs that all members of staff need to present themselves within acceptable levels of decorum in their personal social media space particularly if it is known by their followers or connections that they work for AXA Mansard.

The trending adoption of social media policy by corporate organisations is not only in Nigeria. There are vast studies about this elsewhere especially in the United States. A 2013 empirical research conducted by Francois Quintin Cilliers on 'The Role and Effect of Social Media in the Workplace' in Kentucky, United States buttresses the emphasis this particular study places on the assessment of compliance of social media policy in *Daily Trust* and *NTA*. Cilliers in his study cited a result of a survey where about 1,400 college students which is over 56 percent of college students indicated that "if they encountered a company that banned access to social media, they would either not accept a job from it or *would accept the job and find a way to circumvent corporate policy*," (Cilliers, 2013, p568).

In another survey he cited, Cilliers found that 33 percent of young professionals have "Considered the Unrestricted Use of Mobile Devices and Social Media at Work When Making the Decision to Accept or

Reject a Job Offer" in the US. The research then concludes that ensuring productivity in the workplace can be difficult for employers without established rules or policies to provide certainty regarding the proper use of internet facilities and media. Corroborating this awareness, Kelleher (2009) & Daugherty (2011) assert that most employers have drafted workplace policies to address employees' use of social media and their potential misuse of employers' systems.

Equally, Opgenhaffen, Michael and Scheerlinck, Harald did a study in 2014 on 'Social Media Guidelines for Journalists: An investigation into the sense and nonsense among Flemish journalists'. Their findings of an analysis of 20 in-depth interviews of journalists who have and use their Twitter accounts reveal that the introduction of rules concerning the use of Twitter was unnecessary.

The argument from the 20 respondents is that the journalist's common sense should be enough to deal with the platform in the proper way. A number of the journalists even find the rules (social media policy of their media houses) a curtailment of individual freedom (Opgenhaffen & Scheerlinck, 2014, p1).

Theoretical Framework

The Deterrence Theory is premised on the fact that the threat of punishment through some form of sanction could make certain people to avoid taken some cations. Elliot (2003, p.1) argues that it is a way of achieving control through fear. The control of behaviour is effected because the potential offender does not consider the behaviour worth risking for fear of its consequences.

Elliot (2003) cited the definition of the proponent, Beyleveld thus: "A person is deterred from offending by a sanction if, and only if, he refrains from that act because he fears the implementation of the sanctions, and, for no other reason." Aptly capturing the basic assumption of this theory, Elliot (2003, p.2) notes that, 'Deterrence is therefore but one compliance-gaining mechanism'.

In the case of *Daily Trust* social media policy, the media houses had to threaten management actions for defaulters, announcing the policy and disseminating the content to all employees through circulars and emails to sensitise them to be knowledgeable enough about the policy.

Complementing this theory is the social responsibility theory. According to Littlejohn & Foss, 2009), the theory draws the attention of journalists (and by extension, the audience to whom technology has conferred the status of content creators) to the fact that they have freedom attached with the responsibility to the society. In summary, Okunna (2002) notes that the basic principles of this theory is the emphasis on the public right to know through a free and responsible press. It further holds that although the theory holds journalist accountable for continuous dissemination of information to the public, the societal responsibility of journalist to disseminate only truthful information must never be abused irrespective of the platforms being embraced as technologies are changing.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research method. Obasi (2000, p.132) defines survey research as a process of eliciting data from a target population through questionnaire or interview instrument and subjecting such data to statistical analysis for the purpose of drawing conclusions.

Record from the Human Resources Department of *Daily Trust* reveals that there are one hundred and fifteen (115) journalists and editors at editorial department of the headquarters in Abuja. Therefore, the total population for this study was one hundred and fifteen (115) journalists and editors who are employees of *Daily Trust* newspaper at the headquarters in Abuja.

Sampling Technique

The researcher adopted the census survey technique. A population may be studied using one of two approaches. It could be by taking a census, or selecting a sample from the population and studying that sample. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics – ABS (2013), census is a complete enumeration, while the sample is a partial enumeration. The paper focused on the entire population of one hundred and fifteen (115) journalists and editors in the two media houses, to elicit responses on enforcement, compliance level, effects and impact of the social media policy on them.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Ethical violations by social media users

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Plagiarism	14	13.3
Fake news	28	27.6
Hate speech	30	28.6
Invasion of privacy	16	15.2
Obscenity	17	16.2
Total	**105**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey 2019

The data in Table one shows the prevalent ethical violations by users of social media of whom journalists are part of. Majority of the respondents say hate speech and fake news are the top violations while fewer respondents identified plagiarism as a common ethical violation.

Table 2: Awareness of social media policy in Daily Trust

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Aware	89	84.8
Not aware	16	15.2
Total	**105**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey 2019

As shown in Table two, majority of the Daily Trust journalists are aware of the social media policy. However, a handful does not know if such policy exists.

Table 3: Awareness on sanctioning of defaulters by Daily Trust

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Aware	98	93.3
Not aware	7	6.7
Total	**105**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey 2019

Data in Table three reveals that almost the entire journalists' population in Daily Trust is not aware that one of them may have been sanctioned over any breach of the social media policy rule.

Table 4: Does social media policy restrict journalists' internet freedom?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	43	40.9
Agree	22	20.9
Disagree	26	24.8
Strongly disagree	14	13.3
Total	**105**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey 2019

Majority of the respondents (40.9% and 20.9% combined) as reflected in Table four agree that the social media policy of the *Daily Trust* restricts their freedom to undertake various activities whenever they are on the internet. However, there are those who say the policy does not affect their usage of the internet.

Table 5: How social media restricts journalists' internet freedom

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Restricts critical comments	28	44.0
Sharing of posts	21	32.3
Visits to certain sites	10	9.5
All options	6	9.2
Total	**65**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey 2019

As in Table 5, at least 65 respondents (40.9% and 20.9% combined) agreed that the policy restricts their internet freedom. This figure accounts for 61.8% of the respondents' population. Majority of this group (44%) say the restriction is on them not allowed to make critical comments on the social media. Another significant number of respondents (32.3%) points to the limitation in sharing of posts on the social media platforms. Few of them (9.5%) identified restriction in visiting certain sites on the internet while fewer respondents (9.2%) identified all the options of restriction.

Table 6: Strategies for tackling ethical violations by journalists when using the social media

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Periodic training and sensitization	38	36.2
Self-censorship	32	30.5
Taking disciplinary action on defaulters	20	19.0
All options	15	14.3
Total	**105**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey 2019

In Table six above, respondents identified strategies for tackling violations by journalists when they are using the social media. Majority (36.2%) recommended periodic training and sensitization, another significant category (30.5%) say journalists should engage in self-censorship (knowing what to say or do

ethically when using the social media). Others (19%) believe the organization should retain the social media policy by taking disciplinary actions on journalists when there are infractions. Then, there is the last category of respondents (14.3%) who embraced all the options.

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the major findings of the study. The data obtained and analysed for this study reveal much about the compliance and enforcement of the social media policy at the *Daily Trust* newspaper.

Research question one: What is the level of enforcement of social media policy at *Daily Trust* on the activities of journalists?

From the analysis of data, the enforcement of social media policy at *Daily Trust* on its journalists is still at its infant stage. This is evinced from the majority responses presented in Table two where majority of the respondents are aware that they are supposed to abide by the social media policy of the company. However, they adduce in Table three that they are not aware of any case of sanction of any of them in the event of a breach since the policy kicked in one year ago. From this finding, the lack of sanctions shows the poor level of enforcement which could greatly reduce the compliance level among the journalists of *Daily Trust*.

This is consistent with Elliot (2003) position about Deterrence Theory when he states that to gain compliance, there must be a mechanism that could deter people from a particular act, and that is enforcement.

Research question two: What is the level of compliance by journalists to the social media policy of *Daily Trust*?

Although journalists at *Daily Trust* know of their social media policy rules, they revealed that sanctions have not been meted to anyone of them. Hence, compliance level is deemed not to be optimal among them. This is in tandem with the Deterrence Theory where Elliot (2003) posits that the premium

effect of enforcements is seen in an increased compliance level. The research avers that, high compliance level can only be achieved when there are active sanctions that would deter others from breaching rules.

This position is shared by Kelleher (2009) & Daugherty (2011) as they assert that most employers have found the need to enforce actions on social media violations by drafting workplace policies to address employees' use of social media and their potential misuse of employers' systems.

Research question three: Does the social media policy affect the frequency of *Daily Trust* journalists' engagement on social media platforms?

The frequency of *Daily Trust* journalists engaging on the social media could be have been altered as majority response in Table four. Most of them believe that the policy has restricted their internet freedom and thus could create apathy for some of them on the frequency at which they use to visits various social media platforms and sites on the internet. But there are fewer journalists in the company who do not feel restricted on the internet by the introduction of the policy; thus, their frequency of engagement may not be altered.

Although employers have found it imperative to institute social media policies, the findings in this study that, the social media policies may not alter the employees' frequency of engagement on the social media platforms is in tandem with the finding of Opgenhaffen & Scheerlinck (2014) that scores of journalists believe that their common sense should be enough to deal with the social media platform in the proper way thereby making the initiation of the social media rule unnecessary.

The finding is further backed by the social responsibility theory of the press as averred by Littlejohn & Foss (2009), and Okunna (2002), that journalists have the huge responsibility on ensuring the public right to know through a free and responsible press; the societal responsibility of journalists to disseminate only truthful information must never be abused.

Research question four: What influence has the social media policy of the media house created on the activities of their staff?

The introduction of social media policy in *Daily Trust* has not doubt created some influences on the journalists' activities especially as it relates to the use of the internet and the social media. Analysis of responses in Table 5 shows that from the 61.8% of journalists who agreed that they are restricted on the internet by the policy, majority (44%) identified the limitation in their capability to engage in critical comments and discourse on the social media. Others point to the limitation in sharing of posts on the social media platforms, and the restriction in visiting certain sites on the internet. These are the major ways the journalists' activities on the social media have been influenced.

In summary, the full enforcement of the policy by the company would mean they will be less active. Corroborating this particular finding is the study by Opgenhaffen & Scheerlinck (2014), which found that many journalists find the social media rules of their media houses a curtailment of individual freedom.

Research question five: What are the challenges associated with the social media policy implementation at *Daily Trust*?

From the analysis of responses, the critical challenge of the social media policy implementation is that majority of the journalists are not comfortable with a social media policy guiding them as they agree that it restricts their internet freedom. However, they are not aware of any sanction of any erring journalist in the meantime which is why the impact of the policy is not so heavy. The Deterrence Theory advanced by Elliot (2003) which is the anchor for this study recommends the infusion of sanction and the full implementation of those sanctions if there is to be recorded level of compliance.

From the analysis of journalists response in Table six, majority agree that trainings and self-censorship (controlling themselves on the social media) should apply and not the social media policy that emphasizes sanctions. This implies a resistance from those journalists especially as they see the policy as one that restricts their internet freedom. However, there are fewer journalists in the category that wants stiffer disciplinary action taken on the defaulters of the already existing social media policy.

The self-censorship approach agreed to by the respondents corroborates the findings of Opgenhaffen & Scheerlinck (2014) where it was found that journalists could use their common sense to deal with the social media platforms in the proper way. Equally, some respondents in their findings even find the rules (social media policy of their media houses) a curtailment of individual freedom.

Conclusion

This study assesses the social media policy at *Daily Trust* to determine the enforcement and compliance level. Although findings show that journalists are aware of the policy, they have not reported any of them that have been sanctioned in the case of infractions. There is however resistance by majority of them as they believe that their internet freedom is being restricted by the introduction of the policy, a finding that is corroborated in a similar finding by Opgenhaffen & Scheerlinck (2014)where journalists say the social media rules of their media houses a curtailment of individual freedom.

It is pertinent to note that there are journalists who do not feel restricted on the internet by the policy and are part of the minority respondents who advocate for stricter enforcement of disciplinary action by the company to raise the compliance level of the policy. These journalists belief in self-censorship which is a postulation in the social responsibility theory, analysed by Littlejohn & Foss (2009), and Okunna (2002), that the societal responsibility of journalists to disseminate only truthful information must never be abused.

Recommendations

This study recommends the following:

1. The management of *Daily Trust* should review the social media policy since it is one year after it was introduced to determine if it is effective.

2. There is need for periodic sensitisation and training of journalists as some of them are not aware of the policy. Although ignorance may not be an excuse for breaching it but that could enhance the compliance level.

3. The poor or no record of sanction of defaulters of the policy indicates a dip in the policy enforcement. Hence, the social media monitoring committee of the Human Resources department should be strengthened.

4. There are complaints of restriction on certain sites, these could affect the news gathering and monitoring capability of journalists. Sites that deemed not to be so harmful in terms of social media violations like YouTube should be opened if the monitoring committee is strengthened.

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