

MEDIA ETHICS, PROFESSIONALISM AND COVERAGE OF THE APO SIX KILLINGS IN ABUJA, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study on Media Ethics Professionalism and Coverage of the Apo Six Killings investigated whether the media followed professional ethics of journalism practice as a benchmark in their coverage of Apo six killings. The study adopted the survey method of research while the instrument of data collection was the questionnaire. The survey established that contrary to the widely held view that Nigerian Media indulge in unethical conducts in news reportage, they were applauded for their professionalism. The study concluded that the role of media ethics in journalism practice in Nigeria and the entire world cannot be overemphasized. Consequently, it was recommended among others that journalists should continue to maintain high level of professional standards in the discharge of their duties.

Keywords: *Media, Ethics, Professionalism, Apo Six killings*

INTRODUCTION

According to Egbon (2006), journalism is often criticized and hardly enjoys public confidence as a result of what journalists do or fail to do. Every profession is usually guarded and guided by certain laws, rules and regulations - whether formally coded or only recognized as conventions. The professional must therefore maintain some decorum and keep to certain standards of integrity to earn trust and respect and command respect in the performance of his chosen career. The idea of journalistic ethics in this study is used as an anvil to test its application in the coverage of Apo Six Killings which took place in Abuja on June 7, 2006. According to Webster Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, ethics is from the Greek word "ethikos", which means the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation; a set of moral principles or values; the principles of conduct governing an individual or group.

Merill and Barney (1982) and Egbon (2006) describe ethics as the branch of philosophy that helps determine what is right to do. It is very much a normative science of conduct, with conduct considered primarily as self determined and voluntary. It is a sort of self-regulation and self enforcement. It is of course, related to law but it is of a different nature. Ethics according to Eweluka (2004) relates to moral action, motive of character, ethical emotions; also treating of moral feelings duties or conduct, containing precepts of morality, professional right or befitting; conforming to professional standard of conduct.

Ethics generally are a set of principles that have been standardized and codified to guide the conduct of a group of professionals. Most of these professionals have the study of ethics embedded in their curriculum, and they know that, a deliberate attempt to operate outside the confines of the ethical codes of their professions could earn them a ban.

Black, Steele and Barney (1995), Nyitse (2002) see ethics in journalism practice as reasoned, principled and consistent thinking about how journalists can maximize the truth telling obligation while minimizing harm to vulnerable news sources and consumers. They came to a conclusion that, ethics in journalism is about the individual responsibility, about excellent journalism and about the critically important contribution excellent journalism makes to society. Ethics in journalism unlike in other professions like medicine, law and architecture, must be learned and developed by the practitioners themselves if they are to be fair, objective, accurate and balanced in their reportage and presentation of news. The ApoSix are the six Igbo traders who were brutally killed by the Nigeria Police on June 7, 2005 on Gimbiya Street Area II. They include: Miss Augustina Arebu, Ifeanyi Ozo, Chinedu Meniru, Isaac Ekene, Paul Ogbonna and Anthony Nwokife.

Police brutality remains one of the most human rights violations in Nigeria. The Apo Six is one of them. It is, however, not possible to consider each of the events that is reported in the media for examination. The study is therefore, limited by the fact that, only one case of police brutality and extra, judicial killings by the Nigeria Police Force in Nigeria was selected for analysis. However, the media on many occasions have been accused of under - coverage and sometimes downright and misinform the public. It has also been accused of unprofessional acts in the coverage of up-heavels in the country. This study will lead to greater understanding of the roles of the media as a watch - dog of the society. It will enable the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) to embark on massive education of its officers and men to check the spate of extra - Judicial killings, brutality, torture and arrests of innocent citizen. The study will also serve as a historical documentary for the affected families of the Apo Six and generations yet unborn on the injustice that was meted out to the innocent civilians by an agent of government (Nigerian Police Force) that was supposed to protect them.

Relationship Between Ethics and Law in the Media: Egbon (2006) avers that: while law is something socially determined and socially enforced, ethics is personally determined and personally enforced. Nyitse (2002) opines that in examining the role of ethics in the practice of journalism, it is pertinent to examine the relationship between law and ethics. There is the general tendency among practising journalists to substitute one for the other. Ethical considerations are quite apart from legal considerations in the selection of news items, including photographs. Both deal with the good and the bad, the evil and right and their interrelationships in the practice of journalism law and ethics. Black, Steele and Barney (1995) agrees that while law and ethics are a constant interplay in journalism practice, they are in no way the same. One cannot and does not serve in place of another. They contend that ethics is not the same as law, and ethical constraints are not the same as legal rules. Throwing light on the issue they took the position that:

Ethics articulate what we ought to do in order to be moral individuals and professionals, while law concentrates on the bottom-line below which we should not fall. Ethics deal with the minimal standards. There is a common tendency today to equate ethical standards with legal standards and for victims of unethically behaviour to seek legal remedies for perceived ethical lapses.

Duyile (1988) explains that ethics is not law; it is a principle or order that guides behaviour. The journalist operating in whatever condition he finds himself must be guided by the principles that guide his conscience which dictates his action Duyile (1988). He further states that while the journalist and indeed any person may react to the social conditions of his environment and develop the urge to join the bandwagon, there is a natural law that sometimes provides a constant check on his movement, his willingness to share the pollution and participate. The law spells the "dos and don'ts" of the club to which he belongs and from where he practises his profession.

The Journalist and Ethics of the Profession: Nyitse (2002) avers that ethics is imperative to the practice of journalism and trying to keep ethical codes in journalism is like working through a minefield. Most journalists are entrapped by ethics. They have to take a decision and make a choice of the stories they file and all these very tasking moments have to be surmounted within a very short time because journalists work with deadlines. According to Egbon (2001), media ethics is such a tacky issue that requires not only a discussion but also a deliberation and careful differentiation. Egbon (2006) says modern journalism, is fast changing and we need capable hands to do the job. In order words, there is dire need for competent interpretative reporters trained in law and in all the major natural and social sciences. There is need for journalists to be trained in education, political science, public health, chemistry, medicine, physics, social welfare, urban studies to use their expertise to better journalistic goals. The media is viewed as a distinct profession of great social importance exercising special powers that require special regulation and checks. At the same time, to handle questions of ethics in journalism profession must be a matter of personal integrity for the individual media practitioner with or without recourse to a written code. According to Merrill and Barney (1982), a responsible journalist is the journalist who tempers his journalism with reason, sensitivity and commitment, the journalist who synthesizes "freedom", "rationality" and "duty". We shall now try to narrow the various ethical possibilities in the practice of journalism to what is known as micro - ethics philosophy of the press and macro - ethics philosophy of the press to enable us examine the Nigerian journalistic performance.

MICRO-ETHICS AND MICRO ETHICS

Philosophy of the press according to Havistendahl (1973), that the micro - ethics philosophy contends that the ethical thing for the journalist to do is to quote the source correctly and describe the event accurately without any personal bias or extrinsic intrusions. After that, the journalist job is done and is not responsible for the effects of what readers or listeners make of the news as a reaction, whether temporarily or cumulatively.

The ethical orientation is towards the source than the consumer. The argument being that "in the long run humanity will benefit because the truth will be told without fear or favour; the guilty will be punished, exposed or at least identified, and the innocent will benefit". That of course, is the assumption. This school advocates for a full disclosure of news because it is in the best interest of the media consumers to know what is going on; therefore it is ethical. The macro - ethic journalist differs as he claims that an act must be

judged ethical or unethical by its consequences. The macro - ethicist contends that if the effects of act are more negative than positive for humanity as a whole, the act is unethical. While the argument of micro - ethicist is that his job is just "to hold a mirror up to society and reflect what is there; "the micro - ethicists accept this view point but out that the mirror is raised selectively "only a very few of the world events reach the print or air waves.

Essence of the Journalist Code: The new code of ethics for Nigerian journalists starts off with a preamble that enjoins all who would participate in the profession of journalism to abide by the professional and ethical standards set forth in 14 categories. In summary, this deals with editorial independence, accuracy and fairness, piracy, privilege/non disclosure; decency, discrimination, reward and gratification, violence, children and minors, access to information, social responsibility, plagiarism and copyright. Under these categories, the code prescribes the right attitudes towards the practice of journalism. It very succinctly and precisely sketches what ought to be done and what should not be done, against the background of establishing good conduct and morals within the rank and file of those engaged in the professional practice of journalism.

In fact, it is very much in tune with the code of ethics of other international organizations like the International Federation of Journalists, etc. whose credos deal on the right to truth, professional integrity, non - disclosure of confidential source of information, social responsibility, fairness and accuracy and respect for human dignity. Even the UNESCO has its own draft of the international ethics, which stresses accuracy, high standard of professional conduct, respect for people's reputation, truth and faithful reporting of all events by journalists. The point is that the code of ethics for the Nigerian journalists is quite in line with what is obtained elsewhere in the world. Codes of professional conduct have become globally accepted as an effective instrument for assisting journalists to behave ethically and make journalism a quality profession.

Common Ethical Problems in Nigerian Media: To Nyitse (2002), one of the greatest problems of journalism practice in the world is the observance of ethical practice by journalists. These problems, however, vary from one society to another as they are governed by their different moral values and the gamut of those other values that ensure responsible conduct. Okunna (1995) and Nyitse (2002) contend that ethical problems in mass communication do not exist in isolation, but exist as the overall ethical issues and problems in the society. According to her, mass communication is a social process and the mass media work in conjunction with other social institutions that make up the social system. She posits that every society has its moral problems. Because the journalist is a member of the society and mass community is just one of the many social institutions that constitute the social system, any meaningful discussion of ethical problems in the particular society within which the mass media operate. The Nigerian society for instance, suffers from all sorts of ethical maladies, which have defiled all cures over the years. Indeed, the Nigeria, media behave as if there are no guidelines for their operators. They behave as if there are no guidelines for their operations, as if there are no codes that direct their operations, and they behave as if there are no laws that guarantee the rights of those they assail with pleasure.

A serious problem for the concept of ethics in Nigerian Journalism is posed by the environment within which the practicing journalist operates. Momoh (2003) captures this bleak and frustrating atmosphere, thus:

how can we as media practitioners operate in a polity where everyone breaks the rule; where the journalists are poorly paid or not paid at all; where record keeping is so defective that people can pay their way out of crimes; where the officials who are supposed to give information hoard it; where there is total loyalty to the family and the ethnic group and ritual protection for their misdeeds, where those who should serve, enslave the people through robbing the treasury.

Okunna (1995) states that the Nigerian society is filled with all sorts of ethical maladies that have defiled all cures over the years. She attributes the major cause directly or indirectly to the all encompassing problem of materialism. Under this umbrella of materialism Okunna (1995) itemized bribery and corruption, kickback, ten per cent, kola, settlement, the Nigerian factor. Other unethical problems that plague the Nigerian society and its media according to her are sycophancy, nepotism, squandermania, character assassination, pressures, brown envelope, moonlighting etc. Moonlighting according to Okunna (1995) is for different reasons but, particularly to make ends meet, journalists sometimes take two jobs, often working for competing employers. This leads to divided loyalty and jeopardizes the interest of the journalist and that of employers. It could also lead to lack of objectivity because when one is working at two places, one wouldn't want to write anything that could affect the interest of both. Contributing in the same vein, Nyitse's (2002) treatise reveals the following:

Accuracy and fairness: The biggest problem facing the Nigerian journalist is misrepresentation of facts, unjust treatment of their subject matter influenced by bias and outright presentation of falsehood as news.

Sycophancy: Nigeria media is replete with extravagant, excessive and insincere praise singing of top - government functionaries, business moguls and patrons for the purpose of currying favour or ingratiation.

Bribery and corruption: Several writers on ethics in Nigeria media agree that bribery and corruption which come in various colours and shapes constitute a major ethical dilemma to the Nigerian Journalist. This limits his ability to achieve the optimum or ethical standards stipulated in the codes of ethics of the profession as laid down by the Nigerian Press Organization.

Pressure: Particularly during the military regimes the Nigerian media operate under severe pressure not to offend the military high command with their draconian decrees which are enacted and put in place to check the excesses of journalists.

Self-censorship: The concept of self - censorship has become so central in the discussion on ethics in the media that it cannot be taken lightly in discussing ethics in Nigerian media. It has to do with responsibility and maturity whether with the reporters who file in their stories or the editors who make the choice of which story to use and where to place in the case of newspapers or magazines, or prominence in the case of radio or television.

Agenda Setting Theory: In an article entitled: "Broadcasting plus Integrity equals better image for Africa" filed by Kabir Alabi Garba and published by the Guardian (2006, November Pg 88), the Agenda setting theory was defined by Professor Gerald Igyor in simple terms thus Agenda setting claims that what the media finds important will eventually be mirrored in what people think are important. From agenda setting stems the formation of public opinions and the distribution of pros and cons of a particular issue or people. This will efficiently shift the focus of attention away from immediate effects on attitudes and opinions to longer term effects on cognition.

Specifically focusing on the agenda setting function of the media. Lang, K. and Lang, G. (1966) observe that the media force attention to explain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, and have feelings about. Perhaps, this hypothesized agenda setting function of the mass media is most succinctly stated by Cohen citing Janowitz and Hirsch (1981) note that, the press: may not be successful most of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. Folarin (1998) posits that agenda setting implies that the mass media predetermine what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a given setting. Agenda setting does not ascribe to the media the power to determine what we are thinking about. They set agenda for political campaigns for instance. The elements involved in agenda setting include:

- (a) The quantity or frequency of reporting.
- (b) Prominence given to the reports through the headline, display, pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines; films, graphics, or timing on radio and television.
- (c) The degree of conflicts generated in the reports and
- (d) Cumulative media effects over time.

This theory is significant and relevant because one of the tenets of agenda theory states that the mass media predetermine what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a given society. Agenda setting claims that what the media find important will eventually be mirrored in what people think are important. Thus, the media (print and electronic) can help track the killers of the Apo six through the quantity, frequency and continuing coverage of news reports.

POLICE BRUTALITY AND EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS IN NIGERIA AND AN OVERVIEW OF PRESS COVERAGE

It is undoubtedly true that the media has been performing its social responsibility function to the Nigeria Public by constantly condemning acts of police brutality and extrajudicial killings in its coverage. This can be exemplified in a story filed by Moses John with the title "2 policemen to die by hanging for robbing commuters of N1.4m" and published by Leadership Newspaper (2006: July 18, pages 1 & 2) part of the story reads thus four years ago, three policemen with Kogi State Command were formally charged to court for culpable homicide, armed robbery and criminal conspiracy: Benjamin Oyakhire, Jimoh Michael and Gerhon Saba on the 17th February, 2001 left their duty post in Okene,

mounted an illegal road block and robbed a group of traders coming from Osun State to the North on a business trip.

The traders apparently afraid of communal strife in Okene, were said to have sought the assistance of the police personnel on duty for protection. The three constables lured the traders to a remote secondary school premises, murdered them, took their money worth N1.4 million naira and burnt them with the bus they were travelling in. One of the traders escaped and his subsequent action led to the arrest of the policemen. On the 17th of July 2006, the Supreme Court sentenced two of the three accused persons to death by hanging. During 2005, and in years before, torture, ill-treatment extrajudicial killings arbitrary arrests and detention and extortion often perpetrated by or with the knowledge of senior police officers remained widespread and routine. Impunity from prosecution remains the biggest single obstacle to combating this problem.

In a story filed by Dada Aladelokun with the title "Because of N20.00", the Saturday Punch (2005: July 25) chronicles the above unfortunate trend thus example of police brutality and extrajudicial killings by the police in 2005 alone includes the February 20th shooting in a car of a 17 year old girl in Makurdi, Benue State and the planting of her underwear in the car to portray the false and pedestrian charge of her having sex the shooting of a youth in Owo, Ondo State, who was labeled a wanton robber; the killing of two brothers on June 5 in Port Harcourt and the police claiming a case of mistaken identity; the shooting in same month in the crowded city in Ilorin, Kwara State of two passengers of a commercial vehicle over the drivers refusal to part with N20.00; there was also the shooting of Jumoke Sule an 18 year old remedial student of Ahmadu Bello College of Agriculture Kabba.

On June 7, 2006 six people were killed at a police checkpoint in Gimbiya street Abuja. In response to a nationwide outcry the mass media professionally covered the conundrum which made the Federal authorities to take the highly unusual step of bringing five police officers to trial on charges of homicide, and eventual compensation was paid to the bereaved families by the Federal Government. This is buttressed by Kabiru Mailafia in a story titled "DSP Yari: whither the rule of Law" and published in the Saturday Independent (2005: January 21) part of the story reads thus:

...without the coverage by the media the Apo incident in which six innocent Igbo traders were shot and killed on the 7th of June, 2006 as armed robbers by gun - no policemen on patrol duty would have died a natural death and justice would have been buried along with it. The role of the media in the course of Justice in this country has reduced the excesses and abuses by an institution like Nigeria Police Force, who believes that they do not have to be accountable to the public whose interest they purport to serve. A society without respect for law will suffer a reversion to jungle tendencies, in which case our constitution that guarantees our fundamental rights will no longer be worth the paper it is written on.

However, the main aim of this study is to find out if the media coverage of the Apo Six Killings followed professional ethics of journalism practice. Based on the above context, the following research questions were formulated for the study.

- 1 Did the Mass Media coverage of the Apo Six Killings follow professional ethics of journalism practice?

- 2 To what extent did the Media coverage expose police culpability in the Apo Six Killings?
- 3 Is the Nigerian Public appreciative of the role played by the media in the coverage of the Apo six killings?

A comprehensive research hypothesis was formulated in null form to tentatively answer the formulated research questions. Thus, there is no significant difference concerning the ethical practice in the coverage of the Apo Six Killings.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research design was adopted for the study. The research instrument employed by the study for the collection of data is the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed primarily to determine how the media covered the Apo Six Killings, whether it was based on journalistic ethics. Divided into four parts, the questionnaire explored the demographic details of respondents (age and education). This information is pivotal to the study in many respects. Educated respondents are better equipped to appreciate or evaluate the conduct of the media in its coverage of the Apo Six Killings. Part two deals with the source of information on media coverage of the Apo Six Killings while part three and four of the questionnaire centered of performance of the media in its coverage of the Apo Six Killings. Direct contact was employed in administering the questionnaire to the respondents. This was to forestall poor rate of returning the questionnaire.

Out of the 120 copies of questionnaire administered 100 were returned, representing 83.3%. In the process of administering the questionnaire the researcher took advantage of the face-to-face contact with the respondents to explain the aims and objectives cum necessity of the study. Respondents were eager about the filling of the questionnaire obviously because the Apo Six Killing was a national tragedy that attracted wide condemnations in Abuja in particular and the entire nation in general. The questionnaire contained 8 items to which the respondents duly provided their responses. The media analysis of the Apo Six Killings span from June 7, 2006 - November 30, 2006. This is because the Apo Six traders were killed by Policemen on June 7, 2006 and the media commenced their coverage immediately up to November 30, 2006 when the Judicial Commission of Inquiry, set up by the Federal Government which was headed by Honourable Justice Oluşunbo Goodluck rounded off her assignment. The span is 148 days. However, the study did not cover all the 148 days. This was mainly because of cost implications and the time involved in carrying out a more elaborate analysis of the population, hence the result to random sampling.

There are 13 items in the questionnaire which respondents were expected to mark. The responses were counted, and computed in percentage for the purpose of comparison. Inferences were then made in the attempt to draw generalizations about the sample as well as between sample and universe. We adopted simple percentage as a tool for data analysis to determine coverage of the Apo Six Killings and chi-square to test the only research hypothesis formulated for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
0-15	10	10
15-50	60	60
50 and above	30	30
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Table 2: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Degree and above	45	45
NCE/OND	30	30
O'Level	15	15
Not educated	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork 2011

Table 3: Source of Information on Media Coverage of the Apo Six Killings

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Newspapers/Magazines	25	25
Radio	35	35
Television	40	40
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork 2011.

Table 4: Awareness of Media Reports on Apo Six Killings

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Are you aware of Apo six killings?	Yes	90	90
	No	10	10
	Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Table 5: Knowledge of Alleged Perpetrators of Apo Six Killings

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
How were they killed?	In an accident	0	0
	Armed robbers	0	0
	The police	95	95
	Not sure	5	5
	Don't know	0	0
Total		100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Table 6: Believability in Media coverage of Apo Six Killings

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Do you believe the media applied professional ethics in the coverage of the Apo six killings?	Absolutely	90	90
	Never	0	0
	Sometimes	10	10
	Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2001

Table 7: Percentage Ethical Considerations in Media Coverage of Apo Six Killings

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
How do you consider the media coverage of the Apo Six Killings	Accurate	35	35
	Fair	30	30
	Bias	0	0
	Objective	35	35
	Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2001

The table 1 data reveals that majority of the respondents were within the age bracket of 15-50, followed by the 50 and above age range while those under the 0-15 age bracket recorded the list percentage. The age factor was considered necessary because it is only respondents who are adults that would be able to critically evaluate professionalism in the coverage of the Apo Six killings. Table 2 indicates the educational qualifications of the respondents. It was revealed that the respondents were sufficiently educated as majority of them have degrees. Those respondents with Diploma and Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) seconded the ranking while those respondents with O' Level and those with no formal education constituted a quarter of the entire respondents. In the light of the foregoing therefore, it is expected that majority of the respondents could read and understand English Language and so would be able to appreciate whether the coverage is ethically and professionally handled. Table 3 shows the sources through which the respondents were informed about the Apo Six Killings by the media. Television was found to be the only medium through which the highest number of respondent were informed about the killings.

The study found that this was because television is an urban medium with an appreciable degree of appeal. Moreover the Apo Killings took place in Abuja, a cosmopolitan Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria where most people have television sets in their homes and offices. Closely following the television is the radio thus justifying the potency of the broadcast media in the coverage of national tragedies. Finally the newspapers/ magazines made up a quarter of the information medium. This could be due largely to the poor reading culture amongst Nigerians. This is corroborated by a story filed by Amaka Abayomi with the title "Adult Nigerians have lost faith in their ability to read" published by Vanguard (2011: April, 18 page 41). The story reads in part:

Over the years, several researches have proved that reading is one of hobbies a person can have. But it's saddening to say that majority of Nigerians, especially the adult population, hardly read. In fact, the saying that if you want to hide anything from a Nigerian, write it in a book is very true as the average Nigerian has lost faith in the ability to read.

On the whole, the researcher found that all the respondents were sufficiently informed on the Apo Six Killings by the media through their continuing and persistent coverage. Table 4 is on percentage awareness of media reports on Apo Six Killings. The result on the table indicates that almost the entire respondents answered in the affirmative that they are aware of Apo Six Killings due to reports emanating from the media on the issue. While only an infinitesimal percentage of the respondent answered in the negative. This shows that the media made adequate contributions in their coverage of the Apo Killings.

Table 5 indicates that none of the respondents agreed that the Apo Six neither died by accident nor armed robbers attack. But it is gratifying to note that almost all the respondents allegedly said that the Apo six were killed by the Nigerian Police. This implies that majority of the Nigerian Public suspected the police were behind the killings and not by accident nor armed robbers. Only a negligible proportion of the respondents said they are not sure of the killers of the Apo six. This also brings to fore the fact that, given the hullabaloo generated by the Apo Six imbroglio Nigerians were not in doubt as they tracked the real killers through their continuing patronage of media reports on the issue. Table 6 is on the believability in media coverage of Apo Six Killings. The result on the table shows that most of the respondents said they believe the media reports absolutely while none of the respondents said they never believed in media reports on the killings. However, a meager number of the respondents were indifferent as they said they sometimes believed the media reports. The implication of the result on the table 6 is that, most Nigerians have confidence in the ability and capability of the media to professionally cover national tragedies like the Apo Six Killings.

Table 7 is on ethical considerations in media coverage of Apo Six killings. The results clearly elucidate that some respondents said the media coverage of the Apo Six Killings was accurate. This means the coverage was correct and precise; factual and provided due attribute and verifying of sources of stories. While other respondents said the coverage was fair. This implies that the coverage gave equal treatment to the subject matter in the stories or reports without favour. None of the respondents said the media coverage gave equal treatment to the subject matter in a story or report without favour. None of the respondents said the media coverage of the Apo Six Killings was bias. This means the coverage was devoid of the tendency to support or oppose a particular person or thing or idea in an unfair way by allowing personal opinion to affect their judgement, 35% scored the coverage as being objective.

This implies that, the coverage was not influenced by personal opinion or prejudice. The overall feeling emanating from the results is that the media coverage of the Apo Six Killings was founded upon sound ethical judgement. The result corroborates the fact that the Nigerian press since 1959 has remained the beacon of hope for Nigerians as stated in Unah (1995) who acknowledged that in spite of the perceived lapses in the press coverage of national crises, one could still give it (the press) a pass mark, especially in the areas of professionalism, dynamism and resilience. Data presented are further used to answer research questions formulated to guide the study.

To answer the first research question, a perusal of table 7 which is on ethical consideration of media coverage of the Apo Six Killings shows that 35% of the respondents said the media coverage of the Apo Six Killings was accurate. While 30% respondents said the coverage was fair. None of the respondents said the coverage was bias. In the same vein, 35% of the respondents said the coverage was objective. The implication of the result on table 7 is that media coverage of the Apo Six Killings was founded upon sound professional ethical judgement of journalism practice. None of the respondents agreed that the Apo six met their Waterloo neither by armed robbers nor by accident. Also

no respondent could say they were not aware of the killings. But it is gratifying to note that, 95% of the respondents allegedly said the Apo Six were killed by the Nigerian Police.

The hypothesis tested at significance level of 0.05 had the calculated chi-square as 23.23 and the table value as 7.81, hence, the comprehensive hypothesis that there is significant difference concerning the ethical practice in the coverage of the Apo Six Killings was rejected, which is an indication that the media coverage of the Apo six killings was bench-marked on ethical practice in Journalism. This signals that the media is concerned with the issue of ethics in carrying out their mandates. Statistically computed, the difference on the ethical coverage position between the two was significant. The role of media ethics in journalism practice in Nigeria and entire world cannot be ignored. Egbon (2006) submits that the journalists work is like no other job. What they write and how they write it torches inevitably on the lives of other people. Careless or even deliberate mischievous publications can ruin many lives and properties, as has been witnessed in our present day journalism. These self-centered egoistic journalists can also by slavish adulations create or make celebrities out of nincompoops in our mist, thereby perpetrating the poverty, indiscipline and under development of our nation. But we cannot unceasingly continue to lament on the ills and unethically practice of journalists in Nigeria without a factual and constant review of their performance. It is against this backdrop that, this study was undertaken, mainly to find out if the media coverage of the Apo Six killings followed professional ethics of journalism practice.

Our investigations revealed that, the media coverage of Apo six Killings was founded on sound ethical judgement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the analysis and interpretation of data collected for the study, the roles of the media ethics in journalism practice in Nigeria and the entire world cannot be ignored. It then behooves on the journalist to do much more to curb their irresponsibility which aggravate the already rotten state of affairs in the society. This study was undertaken to find out if the media coverage of Apo Six killings followed professional ethics of journalism practice. Contrary to widely held view that Nigerian journalists are fond of breaching code of professional practice. This study has proved otherwise. There was empirical evidence to support that the media were professional in the coverage of the Apo Six killings as shown in the study.

Based on these, journalists should continue to maintain high level of professional standards in the discharge of their duties. In spite of the difficult environment in which the Nigerian journalists operate, in the interest of society journalists should strive to always adopt high ethical standards in the discharge of their constitutional and God-given responsibilities. Ethics should be taught in institutions of higher learning as a separate subject and not tagged to Law of mass media, as is presently the case in many higher institutions.

Ethical Values	Frequency Observed (fo)			Frequency Expected (fe)			
	NsP	Mag.	TV	Radio	NsP	Mag	TV

Accuracy	6	4	5	8	4.28	4	3.5	3.5
Fairness	2	5	0	0	4.25	4	3.5	3.5
Objective	2	1	5	2	4.25	4	3.5	3.5
Bias	7	6	4	4	4.25	4	3.5	3.5
Total	17	16	14	14	17	16	14	14

$NsP = Newspaper. Tab = x^2_3 = 7.81.$

The null hypothesis was reject.

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