

# **Regulatory Framework for Citizen Journalism: A Public Assessment**

**Obiageli Okafor**

Enugu State University of Science and Technology

&

**Onyike Ifeanyi Ebenezar**

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

&

**Chiaha Damian Chukwuemeka**

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

&

**Daniel Okwi Patience**

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

## **Abstract**

Following the recent comments by scholars, professionals and media experts that most of the publications in the new media are scandalously packaged and malignant to journalistic ethos, this study examines the workings of citizen journalism, its features and impact in Nigeria from the backdrop of the need for a regulatory framework. Survey and descriptive research instruments were used to collect data for analysis. A sample of 400 respondents was drawn from the 722,664 population of people in Enugu metropolis. The analysis revealed the lack of a strong regulatory framework as the bane of citizen journalism. It was also revealed that the phrase `journalism` has been found to give participants in this social network a false sense of professional conduct. Based on this, the researchers

recommend the replacement of citizen journalism with a less conventional term like multi-platform-audience participatory communication (MPAPC)

**Keywords:** Journalism, Regulatory framework, Citizen Journalism, Participation

## **Introduction**

Communication has been variously defined by media experts as the interaction, transactional process and the sharing or establishment of commonness between and/or among people who are bound by either ethno-lingual, cultural and or geographical affinity (proximity). The ultimate aim of communication was for man to first understand himself, his neighbours and take dominion over the environment. It is in fact a very important part of human existence, "...an inescapable factor of our existence. Our society has become highly mobile and as children, teenagers, youths, and adults we came and continue to come in contact with numerous people on daily basis" (Ndolo, 2006, p. 1). What this means is that the centrality of communication in man's activities cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, for a person, group or society to perform effectively in any endeavour, there must be an effective communication network – a network of people inter-linked by a common interest – to share meaning.

In the earliest stage, people communicated through verbal and non-verbal cues which signified different things to different people of different climes, but which were perfectly understood and applied by the communities that invented them. As the world advanced, the complexities involved in sharing meaning made human beings seek alternatives to the primitive modes of communication. According to MacBride *et al* (1981, p. 31), "Human beings sought to improve their ability to receive and assimilate information about their surroundings and at the same time to increase the speed, clarity and variety of their methods for

transmission of information.” The turning point, however, came through the invention of the *Moveable type* by Johannes Gutenberg. Thus, the era of mass communication was born.

According to Kluth (2006), cited in Daniel (2012, p. 1), “... within decades moveable type spread across Europe, turbo-charging an information age called the renaissance... in the centuries that followed, social and legal systems adjusted (with copyright laws, for instance) and books, newspapers and magazines began to circulate widely; the age of mass media had arrived.”

Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, radio and television channels emerged to add variety and to break the monopoly of the print. However, information dissemination became more liberal, when people discovered that they could boycott the bottlenecks associated with the traditional media. The first experiment came in 2001, centuries after the invention of the moveable type, when Ben and Mena Troth, high-school sweet hearts who had been laid off during the dotcom bust built a blogging site through which Miss Troth talked about little anecdotes from her childhood. When this online journal of theirs – *Dollar Short*, became very popular, the Troths, decided to build a better blogging tool which they called “*moveable type*”. Today, the second *Moveable type* is now the software of choice for celebrity bloggers. This also marks the beginning of a very gradual transition to a new era – the age of personal or participatory media (Kluth, 2006) cited in Daniel (2012, p. 1). Thus, citizen journalism or participatory journalism was born.

Citizen journalism is a rapidly evolving form of journalism where common citizens take the initiative to report news or express views about happenings within their communities. It is news of the people, by the people and for the people (Banda, 2011). It is a people-centered, largely online, movement of the so-called 'we the media' (Gillmor, 2006) cited in (Banda, 2011, p. 27).

Citizen journalism kicked off to provide equal opportunity for the citizens of the world to freely interact without fear or letdown. Since the principles of equity and justice demand for reasonableness and fair treatment, this brand of journalism was initiated in the spirit of the free market place of ideas where all will have equal broadband access, equal platform, and liberty to source, upload, download, and publish without the stringent measures imposed by the media gatekeepers. In any case, whether the contents of this journalism (social) platform appear reasonable and fair remains to be adjudged. The media space has been hijacked by amateurs and people (mostly youths) who are not trained for journalism. For this reason, experts argue, most reports here are not in line with journalistic ethos. The media have been awash with complaints of invasion of privacy, character assassination, bastardization of information, sensationalized reports, scandals, propaganda, and the manipulation of communication contents (especially videos), as well as publications that are offensive to good taste (Daniel, 2012).

The question, therefore is, why has it been difficult to caution offenders or to set a regulatory guideline to govern these networks? This, analysts like Banda (2011) and Daniel (2012) argue, is because it knows no nationalities and, therefore, bound by no terrestrial boundary. Is this so? What is the view of the public on this? Do they know the implications of regulating or not regulating citizen journalism? This scenario and more motivated this work to find out the public perception of this brand of journalism and the need for it to be regulated.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are:

- 1) To find out whether the residents of Enugu metropolis in Nigeria are aware of the workings of citizen journalism.
- 2) To ascertain how the residents of Enugu metropolis in Nigeria perceive the workings of citizen journalism.

- 3) To find out if the contents of citizen journalism conform to the regulatory principles of the Nigerian conventional journalism practice.
- 4) To know the public's views on the need for a regulatory framework for citizen journalism.

### **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) Are residents of Enugu metropolis aware of the workings of citizen journalism?
- 2) How do residents of Enugu metropolis perceive the workings of citizen journalism?
- 3) Do the contents of citizen journalism conform to the regulatory principles of the Nigerian conventional journalism practice?
- 4) What is the public perception of the need for a distinct regulatory framework for citizen journalism?

### **Citizen Journalism: Uses and Implications**



Fig.1: The social media web.  
SOURCE: Onyike, et al. (2011).

The social media can be likened to the spider's web, which is built with the combination of interconnected, weak-looking, threadlike cables that magnetizes or traps all sorts of prey for the spider and those that may depend on the spider one way or the other for their daily meals. Such may include reptiles and birds. Likewise, the social media web provides all sorts of information for those exposed to it. This information could be either good or bad depending on each person's persuasions (Onyike *et al*, 2011).

Citizen journalism forms part of the social media since it is being practiced via the instrumentality of this social network. *Facebook, U-tube, Blackberry Messenger, Android, Whatsapp, Hi5, 2go, ipad, Blogs* and the *Internet* are all channels for citizen journalism.

Citizen journalism is fast becoming the media for the masses and by implication is now part of everyday activities of some people. Glaser (2006), cited in Lassica (2003, p. 1) notes that:

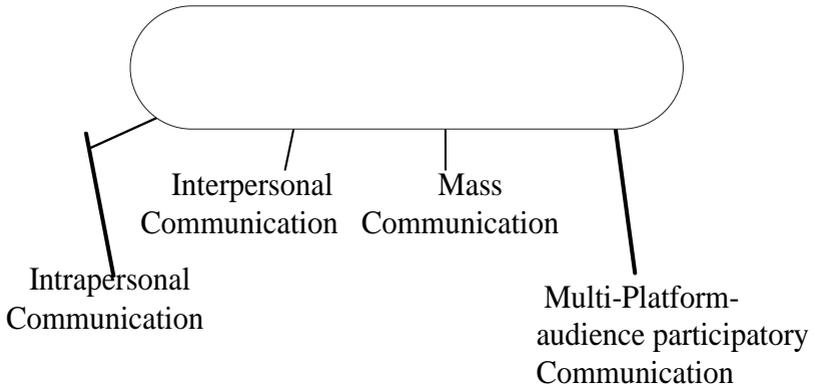
The idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the Internet to create, augment, or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others.

The above suggests that citizen journalists report information; beef up existing reports from either the conventional media or other citizen journalists by broadening the report and adding pictures to support it. They can also point out errors in a report, thereby paving way for an objective and factual account of an event or issues.

Like Glaser, Lassica believes that citizen journalism could not have been possible without the instrumentality of modern technology and the Internet. According to Lassica (2003, p. 1), “citizen journalism is usually found on-line. In fact, the emergence of the Internet with blogs, podcasts, streaming video, and other web-related innovations is what has made citizen journalism possible.”

This brand of social communication has added a fourth leg to the tripod of communication. Thus we have:

**Fig. 2: Communication Quadri-pod**



**SOURCE: Our field survey (2012)**

**Intrapersonal Communication:** This has to do with impulses, intuition etc. It is communication within some one's subconscious mind.

**Interpersonal Communication:** Interactions between two or more people. It involves a two-way communication (i.e. exchange between sender and receiver(s)). Feedback is instant and measured.

**Mass Communication:** This is a technology-mediated communication. It involves the simultaneous transfer of messages or information to a diversified audience. Feedback can be delayed here and opinion may not be easily aggregated.

**Multi-Platform-Audience Participatory Communication:** This can be best explained as the combination of interpersonal and mass communication. It is highly interactive and provides a 'village assembly' kind of mass communication. Although interactions here are not physical, (face-to-face) yet it still works at the same proximal rate, (i.e. people who are not within the same geographical proximity can still chat as though they are physically together). It is technologically manipulated,

and reaches as many audience members like that of traditional media. *Facebook*, for example is immediate; it utilizes multiple platforms (channels) of communication. In addition, within these channels are inter-linked (sub) channels within them. For example, *facebook* has room for private chat, as well as group discussion and even broadcast channels.

Citizen journalism (an offshoot of multi-platform audience participatory communication) kick started to disprove the argument that 'he who owns the media, owns the voice of the people.' (Daniel, 2012). Today, with increasing participation in uploading and downloading information online, citizen journalism is fast gaining ground over the conventional media. The implication is that the big media conglomerates like CNN, BBC, Aljazeera, and others now resort to citizen journalism – the idea is that the professional journalist cannot be everywhere all the time (Anorue *et al*, 2012; Ekwueme *et al*, 2012). They now have *YouTube*, *facebook* and *Twitter* online accounts to augment their conventional journalistic practices. The CNN *i-report*, Fox News and Joy TV's *u-report* are cases in point. They are designed to allow amateurs to upload newsworthy happenings in their areas (Daniel, 2012). Also, innovations in new media technologies have forced professional media houses into embracing audience participation, - a concept hitherto alien to the profession. Today, vox-pop, opinion polls, letters to the editor and phone-in-programmes are means through which the audience's opinion can be measured or aggregated.

However, despite these innovations in the traditional media, a fear exists among some media quarters that citizen journalism may sink the conventional media into oblivion – especially the print except there is collaboration between these two. But even at this, the bone of contention is what the basis of collaboration would be since both of them work in opposite directions.

## **The Critical Environment of Objectivity in Citizen Journalism**

Objectivity has to do with the ability to free oneself from personal prejudice or impartiality. In journalism, it calls for truthful, fair and balanced account of issues and events without being influenced to add or misrepresent issues either by the object/subject under investigation or other extraneous variables which may be affected by the outcome of the investigation (reportage). “It also has to do with the separation of fact from opinion.” (Uwakwe, 2005:90).

For one to be objective, therefore, many factors need to be taken care of, ranging from the environmental dynamics of the workplace and other exogenous factors which condition the internal processes of a person's psychological make-up. Chief among these is the journalist's right to choose what is news and how to react to or handle it without violating the policy of his organization. Despite this, media gatekeepers (governments, media owners, and editors) still conveniently dictate to the reporters. The “corporados,” Redman (1986, p. 1) infers, “can especially exert a subtle control over our information by emphasizing some items more than others.” He further argues that:

Most owners and editors no longer brutalize the news with... (a) Heavy hand... Most common is something more subtle, more professionally respectable and effective: the power to treat some unliked subjects accurately but briefly, and to treat subjects favourable to the corporate entity frequently and in-depth.

Redman's assertions suggest that the degree of prominence given to an issue/event is not driven by the 'let the public be informed' philosophy of the media, but by the extent to which it profits the media owners. Media experts like Ben Bagdikian, Magnus Enzensberger, and others criticized this over-bearing influence of gatekeeping on information

dissemination and support media democratization and the horizontality of communication links at all levels of society (Enzenberger, 1970, p. 265). These media experts believe that big media conglomerates together with the political class form part of the oppressor group in the society. It is this dissatisfaction with the institutional basis of conventional media that has caused their proponents to question the role the mass media can play in the body politic. At the center of citizen media and, therefore, citizen journalism lies the idea of undermining institutional solidification of the mass media (Banda, 2011).

Citizen journalism infers that the experiences of participant observers in an event or issue present a more reliable and complete picture of that event than one from the perspective of an outsider. It forces contributors to think objectively, asking probing questions and working to understand the context so that their representations will be useful to others (Educause, 2007). Conversely, analysts argue that the quality of any citizen journalism project reflects the perception of those who choose to participate and such projects can be havens for triviality and unreliable content. According to information from Educause (2007:3) citizen journalism has potential to:

Implicitly validate content that might be inaccurate, offensive, or otherwise lack credibility. A tool intended to boost the trustworthiness of reporting might therefore result in a loss of confidence in the news. While conscientious professional journalists are careful to separate supportable evidence from opinion or speculation, many citizen journalists have a weaker sense of what constitutes a reliable story or free conjecture. Consumers of citizen journalism should understand that however well-intentioned a citizen journalist might be, reading

the news with a skeptical eye is good practice.

From the fore going, it will not be out of place to argue that objectivity of the press (both conventional and citizen journalism) is nothing but a legacy in antiquity, which might never be achieved after all. From the inception of journalism in Nigeria, media output has not been anything short of speculative, subjective, or manipulated content, which best serves, the whims of its propagators (Onyike, 2012). The lack of autonomy and independence of the media were some of the reasons enunciated for this. The emergence of citizen journalism was hailed globally as the solution to the lack of objective journalism (reporting), but unfortunately, this media space, analysts argue, have been fraught with scandalously packaged, speculative and highly opinionated reports which in most cases are riddled with anecdotes that may be demeaning to certain quarters of the society.

### **Media Laws, other Regulations, and Citizen Journalism in Nigeria**

Law and communication deserve explanation here because a co-relationship exists between them. Thus, laws exist because human beings communicate. Communication is fundamental to man. Like all human rights, it is said to be inalienable and imprescriptible) (Ezeugwu *et al*, 2000). On the other hand, man lives in a world of laws. The necessity for these laws is for the regulation of human interactions in any society. In the area of communication, law is made for two purposes – to promote the good of the citizens and to preserve the interest of the nation (Okoro & Okolie, 2004). Since, as of necessity man must interact with his environment (family and community) the outcome may breed trouble or cause disaffection between and among people if not regulated.

Ezeugwu *et al* (2000:1) define law as:

A synthesis of order and justice serves the purpose of resolving conflicts and protecting interests of

human aggregation in an orderly manner thus obviating the need for recourse to self-help or other illegal procedure, which may give rise to insecurity and chaos.

In most countries, there are standardized rules and principles that guide public communication and journalistic practices. “These rules are made by the government for the regulation of mass media professionals so as to ensure correct conduct by them.” (Okunna, 1995, p. 9). In Nigeria, these laws range from privacy laws, defamation, contempt of court, obscenity; passing off, copy right, to official secrets laws (Ogbuoshi, 2005, p. 209; Okoro, 2004, p. 65). The need for these laws is to assist journalists to make sound decisions and build credibility in their vital role of providing the public with the power to make important decisions, thus serving society in an ethically responsible and constructive manner (NBC, 2006).

Since the advent of citizen journalism, however, its contents have in most cases called to question the effectiveness of the media laws and ethics as well as the regulatory bodies charged to monitor and regulate the media. There have been allegations of invasion of personal privacy from the public; uncensored publication of diplomatic information; glorification of criminality; irresponsible reportage of government activities and uncensored video footage of crisis and violence.

The implication of this is the creation of a society without values and the enthronement of virtues capable of causing disaffection among people and nations. Again, going by the speed with which citizen journalism is being embraced, one can predict that the world will soon degenerate into a society without cerebral capacity (to distinguish right from wrong) that would adopt anything from citizen journalism without question. This has shown in the way people (especially youths) responded to the “Arab Awakening” that destroyed many governments. The “Occupy London group” which galvanized people into a powerful

protest pressure group is yet another recent example. A replica of the London group 'Occupy Nigeria' would have achieved similar fit if not for the timely intervention of the state security agents.

Nevertheless, the lack of a regulatory framework, many observed, (Ekwueme *et al*, 2012; Daniel, 2012) is the root of this brazing, 'who cares' type of guerrilla journalism. A typical example is the uncensored video footage of the killing of the four students in Rivers State monitored on *Twitter*. The after effect of that report was the riot that led to the burning of twelve houses and some arrests. In addition, a former governor of Jigawa State was alleged to have been defamed on social media. The culprit was arrested and charged to court. He was let off the hook when the trial judge submitted that the court does not have jurisdiction over crimes committed in the social media (Daniel, 2012).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on the Social Responsible Theory. This theory, according to Okenwa (2002, p. 4), “focuses on the consequences of the media and the attendant activities on the society, and places demands of responsibility on the operators without undermining the importance of freedom”. The Social Responsibility Theory of the press places such demands of responsibility on the press because of its central role in the development and stability of the society. The press has the right to publish but that right carries with it the duty not to subvert (Ekwueme *et al*, 2012, p. 8). They are, therefore, to publish facts in a way that give them meaning without undermining the interest of the society. McQuail (2005, p. 172) notes that:

The media have obligations to society and media ownership is a public trust. News media should be truthful, accurate, fair, objective, and relevant. The media should be free, but self-regulated. The media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct. Under some circumstances,

government may need to intervene to safeguard the public interest.

This theory originated from the Hutchins Commission of 1947, which was commissioned to address the failings of the press. The report coined the notion of social responsibility and named the key journalistic standards that the press should provide a full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context, which gives them meaning (McQuail, 2005).

This theory was adopted because it stresses the negative implications the distortion of facts, bias, sentiments, or misinformation can have on the sovereignty, security and development of society. Journalists (professionals & citizens) should be mindful not to abuse the freedom the cyberspace provides but endeavour to provide up-to-date, truthful, balanced and fair accounts of issues and events in such a way that will not cause offence to any one encourage violence or political instability in the society.

## **Method**

The design of this study is descriptive and survey in nature. The technique adopted for the study are the questionnaire administration and face-to-face interview. In addition, data from journals and books were considered relevant for this work. The target population of this study is the entire 36 States of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), but since it is almost impracticable to assess the entire country, the study narrowed to Enugu metropolis. Out of the 722,664 human population of Enugu metropolis based on the 2006 population census figures, a sample size of 400 was selected using the Taro Yamane formula for sample size determination.

Since the instruments included an interview schedule and a questionnaire, the researchers decided to interview 20 professionals in Enugu metropolis, while the remaining 380

respondents were administered the questionnaire. The 20 respondents were picked based on their awareness of social networks, legal issues, and journalistic/media studies.

### **The Interview**

Those interviewed included professional journalists, lawyers, IT experts, and Lecturers. Table 1, below shows how the sampling was done. The interviewees were selected in such a way that ensured that all the aforementioned groups were adequately represented.

**Table 1: List of interviewees**

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Outfit/office</b>	<b>No</b>
Journalists	Coal-city FM	2
	NTA	1
	Dream FM	1
	Sunrise FM	1
Lawyers	Ministry of Justice	2
	Mezuo Associate	2
Lecturers	ESUT	2
	IMT	2
	OSISATECH	2
IT experts	Uranium	3
	Delick Web	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

The interview questions are as follows:

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
RQ1	(i) Are you exposed to citizen journalism? (ii) If yes, what is the extent of this exposure? (iii) Do you think Nigerians are conversant with the working of citizen journalism?
RQ2	(i) What is your perception about citizen journalism? (ii) How does it/ has it affected you? (iii) What are the arguments for and against citizen journalism in Nigeria? (iv) By your estimation, has citizen journalism impacted positively on Nigerians. (v) What are the negative effects of citizen journalism on Nigerians?
RQ3	(i) What is the necessity for the regulation of media activities? (ii) Are you aware of the regulatory standpoint of the conventional media? (iii) Do you think that citizen journalism practice conform to the conventional media laws in Nigeria.
RQ4	(i) Do you think citizen journalism practice require a distinct regulatory framework for its operations.

### **The Questionnaire**

The researchers considered it appropriate to use the multi-stage sampling technique in selecting the sample for the study. This technique, according to Ogbuoshi (2006, p.95), 'necessitates the use of various sampling techniques to get the sample.' Cluster, Quota and Systematic sampling techniques were, therefore, used for this purpose. Enugu metropolis was divided into 10 clusters while quota sampling was used to allocate the 380 copies of the questionnaire across the clusters as shown below:

**Table 2: The cluster zones**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Clusters</b>	<b>Quota</b>
1	Independence layout	30
2	Achara layout	50
3	Trans-Ekulu	30
4	Obiagu	30
5	Uwani	50
6	Asata	50
7	New Haven	40
8	Emene	30
9	Abakpa	40
10	G.R.A	30
	<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>

N.B: The quota allotted to each cluster zone was based on its population.

On the other hand, systematic sampling technique was adopted in selecting the streets at the first stage and then the houses in each selected street. The systematic interval order of seven was used for this.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The analysis are presented in both quantitative and qualitative formats, but with more emphasis placed on quantitative data. Thus, quantitative method was used to analyze research questions 1, 2 and 4, which entailed the use of simple percentage formula

presented in tables and pie charts. However, quantitative approach was used to address research question three.

**Research Question 1: Are the residents of Enugu metropolis in Nigeria aware of the workings of citizen journalism?**

**Table 3: Residents of Enugu Metropolis Awareness of the Workings of Citizen Journalism**

Options	Frequency	%
Yes	380	100
No	0	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

A look at Table 3 above shows that all the respondents were unequivocal in their agreement that Nigerians are aware of the workings of citizen journalism. In addition, the interview, which asked a number of questions in a bid to elicit reliable responses from the respondents, also revealed that apart from having knowledge of citizen journalism, Nigerians also participate actively in citizen journalism.

**Research question 2: How do the residents of Enugu metropolis in Nigeria perceive the workings of citizen journalism?**

**Figure 3: Residents of Enugu Metropolis Perception of the Workings of Citizen Journalism**

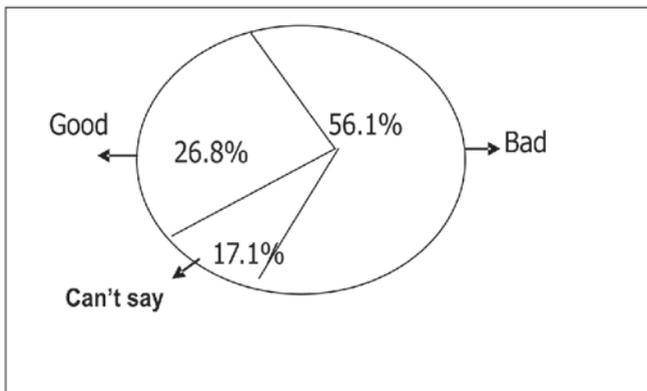


Figure 3 reveals that 26.8% of the respondents see citizen journalism as a good phenomenon, where as 56.1% thinks otherwise. However, 17.1% were undecided on the issue. It is, therefore, apparent, going by the responses that citizen journalism deserves to be re-engineered to ensure the greater good of the masses.

The interview also revealed that citizen journalism does more harm than good to Nigerians. The reason, the respondents argue, is that most Nigerians are copycats and would stop at nothing to imbibe or copy what they see online. Although they are of the agreement, that it has brought some good to the society too. Such good include media liberalization and an increase in the quotient of citizens' awareness of their rights as citizens and their increased participation in governance. They, however, warn that the negative effects/trends in citizen journalism, if left unchecked, might cripple many societies.

### **Research question 3: Do the contents of citizen journalism conform to the regulatory principles of the Nigerian conventional journalism practice?**

To answer this question, 20 respondents were interviewed as shown by the sampling procedure. The respondents were unanimous in their disagreement with the above question. Some of the respondents were of the opinion that the activities of citizen journalists deserve to be regulated considering the central place of information dissemination and acquisition in the life of the nation and the effects of such information on the psyche of the audience (participants) if it lacks merit or injurious to some persons. However, others suggested that citizen journalism should be allowed to operate without regulation since it is the only medium through which people can freely express their natural tendencies and opinions without the long hand of the law hanging around them.

On the other hand, the respondents believe that citizen

journalism does not conform to any written law or code of conduct in Nigeria or elsewhere. The reason, they argued, lies in the philosophy that led to its establishment – the free market operations where every citizen is allowed to participate on equal basis. This kind of journalism is assumed, to pass through the self-righting process where one determines what is reasonable or palatable for the audience based on his own moral judgments.

**Research Question 4: what is the public perception of the need for a distinct regulatory framework for citizen journalism?**

**Table 4: Perception of the Need for a Distinct Regulatory Framework for Citizen Journalism**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	326	85.8
No	17	4.5
---	37	9.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 shows that 326 of the respondents (85.8%) agreed that there is need for a distinct regulatory framework for citizen journalism while 37 (9.7%) were undecided.

The interview conducted, showed also that citizen journalism needs to be regulated. The judgments were based on the incessant allegations of misrepresentation of facts, invasion of privacy, scandalous news reportages and the dissemination of damnable video footage of crimes, disasters et cetera.

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of the results, this study concluded that citizen journalism has had great influence not just on our socio-political lives as individuals but in all spheres of our national co-existence. Like every venture, it has its pros and cons. If well utilized, citizen journalism can be of greater benefit to the society but considering the direction it is towing, if unchecked, it can degenerate into a social monster capable of running many nations down.

## **Recommendations**

This study makes the following recommendations:

In view of the damages of exposure to citizen media/journalism can do to the image of the country, the researchers are of the opinion that Nigerians should be made to understand that though they have a fundamental right to freely express themselves, the existence of these rights are imbued with duties and obligations to the society. Such duties include the avoidance of reports considered repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience, or one that may have an adverse effect on the nation's diplomatic relations.

The results show that citizen journalism is not being guided or regulated by any law or journalistic principles. The libertarian persuasion which forms the basis for citizen journalism, if unchecked, experts argue, is akin to the anarchist persuasion which suggests that peace or harmony is achieved not by submission to law or by obedience to any authority. The anarchist rejects authoritarian government and maintains that voluntary institutions (like blogs, wikis, vlogs and other social networks) are best suited to express man's natural social tendencies (Ezeugwu *et al*, 2000, p. 2). However, considering the problems this freedom to interact has caused (e.g. *wikileaks* scandals and media terrorism), it becomes pertinent to set guidelines for its operations.

There should be an international court of justice with jurisdiction to try offences and crimes committed online. In addition, special investigative bureaus should be set up and equipped with special gadgets to track down offenders on cyber space.

Lastly, journalism is too professional to be left in the hands of amateurs, quacks and people with little or no knowledge of what professional journalistic principles entail. These researchers are therefore of the opinion that "citizen journalism" should be replaced with a less formal term like 'online social interactive

media' or “multi-platform-audience participatory communication.”

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