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Assessing the Effectiveness Usage and Ethical Practice of Social Media as a Tool for Information Dissemination: A Case Study of Media Houses in Lusaka (Television Outlets)

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Abstract

The study aimed at assessing the effectiveness usage and ethical practice of Social Media as a Tool for Information Dissemination: A case study of Media Houses in Lusaka (Television outlets). The study was guided by the following objective which assesses the effectiveness of using social media as a tool for information dissemination, assess how media ethical practices are applied on social media user and ascertain how social media and the users are regulated to maintain media ethical practices. The study employed a case study design. Structured and Semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Data was collected using questionnaires and guides from 75 respondents that include Media Institutions, law enforcement institution, student, media practitioners and the members of the public who use social media as a tool for information dissemination. The collected data was analyzed in form of descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Microsoft word and excel. Findings were presented in graph/charts and discussions thereof. The findings indicated the need to strengthen legal institutions and come up with laws that will be strong enough to ensure media ethical

practices and deter people from abusing social media. The study further recommended that government should develop strong Legal framework that will ensure media ethical practices are followed by the users of social media in Zambia, come up with clear policies with regards to media ethic for Media Institutions and other users of social media, translate media ethical practices in local languages and make them available to the public, increase public awareness on the importance of media ethics on social media This should also be supported by the inclusion of non-selective stiff penalties that are well spelt out as a way to deter would be abusers. The government needs to show leadership and commitment by supporting the implementation of policies, licenses and laws by sufficiently training and allocating enough human and financial resources required action. Government should allocate enough funding to law enforcement agencies so that they can effectively conduct sensitization or provide interventions such as the involvement of the media to increase awareness of abrogating media ethic.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Media Ethical Practices, Social Media Users, Public Information, Information Dissemination

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The birth of media ethics as we know it coincides with the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It would not be wrong to say that the journalism of that period consisted mostly of a small opinion press based on economic subscriptions and political patronage. Over time journalism has become a growing sector and has become one of the most important advertising sources with sales in large circulation. The mass commercial press has become a powerful informant of public opinion, mediating between the public and governments through mass communication. Journalists, who were at the center of these changes, started to establish associations and write ethical codes in order to raise standards and protect journalism from external influences. The rules of ethics largely provided an institutional basis for journalists to be professional and, prioritize the public interest, report impartiality, separate news, and opinions, and maintain editorial independence (Ward, 2010:142-143; Barnhurst and Nerone 2001:1-2 ^[1]).

1.2 Problem Statement

The rise of social media is arguably the fastest paradigm shift in communication mankind has ever experienced and the benefits cannot be overemphasized because of obvious reasons - to network with friends, meet new people, make academic research, participate in online debates, share photos and videos with others, share opinions and details of everyday life, get up-to-date public information and entertainment. Despite all these, observations and interactions have shown that most users abuse it.

However, this study intends to assess the effectiveness usage and ethical practice of Social Media as a tool for Information Dissemination.

This in turn helps provide a clearer understanding of the need to regulate the media to ensure the dissemination of credible information that may be used to make decisions about elections, which is essential in achieving a fair, credible, and honest election.

Therefore, research gaps in the effectiveness of social media as a tool for information dissemination include, limited understanding of social media's impact on specific populations, insufficient examination of ethical practices, Lack of comprehensive models for information dissemination, inadequate exploration of social media's role in knowledge mobilization, limited understanding of the impact of social media on traditional citation metrics, investigating the role of influencers and user-generated content.

Therefore, by addressing these research gaps, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of information dissemination on social media and develop more effective strategies for leveraging these platforms.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Social Media as a Tool for Information Dissemination; an examination of Usage and Ethical Practices using television outlet in Lusaka as a case study.

1.4 The Specific Objectives

- Analyse effectiveness of social media as a tool for information dissemination; An examination of usage and ethical practices using television outlet in Lusaka as a case study.
- Verify how these media ethics are applied on social media as a source of public information.
- Ascertain how social media and the users are regulated to maintain media ethical practices.

1.5 Research Questions

- How effective is social media as a tool for information dissemination, and what factors influence its effectiveness?
- What role do ethical practices play in promoting effective information dissemination on social media?
- How do different social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) impact the dissemination of information?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The effectiveness of social media as a tool for information dissemination can be understood through several theoretical frameworks that include:

Social Penetration Theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) which suggests that relationships develop through gradual disclosure of information. In the context of social media, this theory describes how users share and receive information, and how trust is built through consistent and transparent communication.

Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, (1974) also posits that users actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs. In the context of social media, uses and gratifications theory helps explain why users engage with certain types of content or platforms, and how these uses impact information dissemination.

Social Learning Theory according to Bandura, 1977 contents that social learning theory suggests that people learn new behaviors and attitudes by observing others. In this case therefore, the theory explains how users learn from and are influenced by the content they see, and how this impacts information dissemination.

Other than that Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000), suggests that social networks and relationships can provide valuable resources and benefits by building and maintaining relationships, and how these relationships impact information dissemination.

In this case therefore, these theoretical frameworks provide a foundation for understanding the complex dynamics of social media and information dissemination. By applying these theories, researchers will gain insights into the factors that influence the effectiveness of social media as a tool for information dissemination.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The research will benefit the Information and Communication University, different people, organization, government and other agencies especially those that use social media as a source of public information. This study will be an important contribution to highlight media ethical practices, how they affect social media as a source of public information and what punishment is meted out to law breakers. The study will also help policy makers and media practitioners in devising appropriate media ethical practices for people who use social media as a source of public information. The research will also help future academicians and researchers who will be interested in assessing the effects of media ethical practices on social media as a tool for information dissemination for media institution and other social media users in the country case studies.

1.8 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focused on individuals who have had some experience in using social media as a source of public information in the last three years. The study will be conducted in Lusaka province at the University of Zambia, Information and Communications University Zambia News and Information Services, Zambia National Broadcasting Cooperation, and Cavendish University in Lusaka district. The participants were at least above 20year old and uses social media as a source of public information.

1.9 Operational Definitions

- Self-regulation is the ability to understand and manage your behaviours and your reactions to feelings and things happening around you.
- Transparency: The openness and accessibility of

government actions, decisions, and processes to the public, enabling citizens to hold public officials accountable.

3. **Public Policy:** The system of laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities adopted by governmental entities. Public policy reflects the decisions made by authorities to address issues within society (Dye, 2013) ^[5].
4. **Governance:** The traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised, including the processes of decision-making and the processes by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented).
5. **Media Institution:** Entities engaged in the collection, production, and dissemination of news and information to the public. This includes newspapers, television and radio broadcasters, and digital media platforms operating within Lusaka (McQuail, 2010). The study focuses on how these organizations support investigative journalism.
6. **Media Ethics:** "Issues of moral principles and values as applied to the conduct, roles, and content of the mass media, in particular: journalistic ethics and advertising ethics. (New Oxford Dictionary).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview

The use of social media is growing at a rapid pace and the twenty-first century could be described as the "boom" period for social networking. According to reports provided by Smart Insights, as at February 2019 there were over 3.484 billion social media users. The Smart Insight report indicates that the number of social media users is growing by 9% annually and this trend is estimated to continue. Presently the number of social media users represents 45% of the global population. The heaviest users of social media are "digital natives"; the group of persons who were born or who have grown up in the digital era and are intimate with the various technologies and systems, and the "Millennial Generation"; those who became adults at the turn of the twenty-first century. These groups of users utilize social media platforms for just about anything ranging from marketing, news acquisition, teaching, health care, civic engagement, and politicking to social engagement.

2.2 Concept of Ethics

Stories that involve police misconduct are highly publicized on social media platforms. Such stories posted online can shape the minds of those who watch them. Across media platforms, topics of the criminal justice system and crime-related stories are topics with content that can influence citizens' attitudes toward legal actors (Intravia *et al.*, 2018) ^[9]. With this in mind, many community members do not have direct experience with the police but still have negative views of them. The Bureau of Justice Statistics survey (2018) stated that only 21% of U.S. residents had contact (even minor incidents) with law enforcement over a year (Rosenberger & Dierenfeldt, 2020) ^[22]. Sadly, the information posted on social media sites is not statistically correct (Shi *et al.*, 2018) ^[24]. This suggests that citizens' opinions and perceptions are formed independently of real-world experiences (Chio *et al.*, 2019). The media often shows authorities in the criminal justice system as being unable to address essential crime issues (Shi *et al.*, 2018) ^[24]. It appears that there are more negative videos of police

being posted on social media than positive ones. Not only has the coverage of negative police shootings and other negative events increased, but so has the coverage of these stories on all media sources (Intravia *et al.*, 2020) ^[10]. Both news and social media tend to show or share stories where law enforcement has used deadly force on an unarmed person.

In many cases, videos posted on social media platforms are the only interactions people have with law enforcement. As citizens' personal experiences with crime and law enforcement are limited, the media can serve as a social agent providing them with vicarious experiences (Choi, 2019). Many people do not interact directly with police, so the videos and images they see shape the perceptions they hold. Since most people do not engage directly with law enforcement officers, the media plays an essential role in shaping their perceptions of officers (Graziano & Gauthier, 2017) ^[7].

2.3 Effects on Communication Patterns and Language

Social media platforms have introduced novel communication patterns and transformed language use. The brevity imposed by character limits on platforms like Twitter has given rise to succinct and direct communication. Emojis, memes, and hashtags have become integral elements of online discourse, influencing how individuals' express emotions and convey messages. This shift in communication style raises questions about the potential impact on linguistic norms and the way language evolves in the digital age (Hassan *et al.* 2018) ^[8]. The rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok has fundamentally altered how people communicate. Traditional face-to-face interactions, which once dominated social exchanges, have been significantly supplemented, and in some cases replaced, by digital communication. This shift allows for instant connectivity, transcending geographical boundaries and time constraints. Social media has become a vital tool in maintaining relationships and enabling global communication, creating virtual spaces where individuals can interact regardless of physical distance.

For instance, social media platforms increasingly filter the information made available to their users (Jones 2017) ^[11]. This filtering can increase the fragmentation and polarization of society through the creation of information cocoons. These serve to deliver information to individuals aligned to their convictions and beliefs, creating situations where people can come to believe information that is false and fail to learn about things that are true (Sunstein 2018) ^[26]. The potential of social media to compromise social wellbeing coupled with their pervasiveness in society corroborates a necessity to mediate their practices (Barber and Bettez 2014) ^[2].

2.4 Ethical Implications of Social Media Users

Social media has become ubiquitous in modern life, and its widespread use has brought about a range of ethical implications for its users. Privacy is one of the most pressing ethical issues in social media. Social media platforms often require users to share personal information to create a profile. This data is then used to personalize the user's experience on the platform and target them with advertising. However, this practice has raised concerns about the misuse of personal data and the potential for data breaches. Social media users must be aware of the risks involved in sharing

their personal information online and should take steps to protect their privacy. The spread of misinformation and fake news is another major ethical consideration for social media users. False information can have serious consequences, from undermining democratic processes to endangering public health. Social media users should be aware of the importance of fact-checking and should strive to share accurate and reliable information.

2.5 Approaches of Ethics

Ethical communication helps people to grow to their fullest potential, by emphasizing value of the other individual. Both parties in the communication exchange are reliable, appreciated and valued to have a positive communication. One cannot imagine a life without rules, values and ethics. The laws and ethics are for everyone which includes individual, business, society, journalists and media. Sheila Reaves (1989) ^[21] in her article, "Digital Alteration of Photographs in Magazines: An Examination of the Ethics" addressed Media ethical issues in photography. As Reaves stated, new computer technology of photographs allows editors to change the content of photographic images, colors, and objects or people can be removed from or added to pictures. The journalistic codes of ethics are based on the premise that the news media exists to provide citizens with the information they need to function in a free and democratic society.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study used descriptive case designs using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative design for accuracy in terms of data collection and more reliable information in terms of research results.

3.2 Target Population

Target population According to Lewis, A. (2007) ^[15] population refers to individuals or elements that the researcher interfaces with. The study population of 150 respondents comprised of media practitioners from selected media houses, ZICTA, the students from the University of Zambia, Lusaka University and Cavendish University and bloggers from Lusaka.

3.3 Sampling Design

According to Touvila, 2019 "Sampling is a process used in statistical analysis in which a predetermined number of observations are taken from a larger population" (Touvila, 2019). This study used a probability sampling method. "Probability sampling means that every member of the population has a chance of being selected" (McCombes, 2019) ^[16]. This method uses a form of random selection to collect data. There are four types of probability sampling: Simple random sampling, Systematic sampling, Stratified sampling and Cluster sampling. This study will use Stratified sampling as a technique.

3.4 Sample Size Determination

A sample size generally depended on five study design parameters: minimum expected difference or also known as the effect size, estimated measurement variability, desired statistical power, significance criterion, and whether a one- or two-tailed statistical analysis was planned. Therefore, Lusaka district and more especially the television outlets

and universities targeted have a hive of social media activities that requires media ethical practices especially on social media as a tool for information dissemination. Other than that, media and law enforcement institutions are all based in Lusaka hence the need for sampling to be done in Lusaka. The researcher therefore, sampled about 150 respondents.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The researcher obtained data from the field using questionnaires and face to face interviews with interviewees. The researcher used questionnaires which were both open and closed ended for respondents to answer. Self-administered questionnaires were employed containing both open-ended and close-ended question.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data Analysis refers to the examination and evaluation of what has been collected in a survey or experiment (Neelkumar Patel, June, 2018) ^[18]. In this case the researcher tried to uncover underlying structures by extracting important variables, detecting any anomalies and testing any underlying assumptions by the community on issue to do with the effectiveness of media ethical practices on social medias as a source of public information. Therefore, the researcher analyzed using both Qualitative and Quantitative methods.

3.7 Triangulation

Researcher triangulation means multiple observers are used, rather than a single one. More researchers, in effect, conduct multiple observations, although not all play equally prominent roles in the process. Triangulation involves using multiple data sources or methods to confirm the results, providing a fuller picture of the research question under investigation (Denzin, 2017) ^[4]. The researcher triangulated using multiple methods, data sources, theories, and/or investigators to address a research question. This strategy helped the research to enhance the credibility of findings and mitigated the presence of any research biases in my work. Here data from different times, spaces, and people was used to give out the needed perspective of the research.

3.8 Limitations of the study

Due to the complexity nature of the study, it was difficult to collect information from some target individuals and institutions. Some target groups did not want to present data which was considered 'damaging' to their reputation, as a result, caution was exercised when generalizing the results of the study. However, the researcher relied on triangulation to validate data.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The researcher protected respondents by keeping the information given confidentially and where there was a need to reveal, consent was first obtained. The questionnaires did not include the names of the respondents for issue of privacy and secrecy. The consideration of ethics in research is of growing importance. For example, ethical issues in business associated with high profile companies such as Enron, Arthur Andersen, and WorldCom have raised attention from the public, policy makers, business practitioners, and universities (Nill & Schibrowsky, 2005; Singhapakdi, 2004) ^[19, 25]. Confidentiality will be strictly maintained;

participants' identities will be anonymized, and any identifying information will be removed from the data to prevent unauthorized access. Data will be stored securely and used solely for the purposes of this study.

4. Presentation of Findings

4.1 Background Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic information of the respondents was important for identifying other variables that may not have constituted the central objectives of the study but which were credible for conceptualization of possible intervening and confounding factors on the effectiveness usage and ethical practice of social media as a tool for information dissemination. These include, age, gender and location of respondents. The variable asking respondents "media ethical practices" was meant to gauge the extent to which social media users abide by media ethics. Descriptive and inferential statistics were undertaken and presented in tables and graphs.

4.2 Presentation of Quantitative Findings

Television outlets in Lusaka, Zambia, are actively using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp to disseminate information to their audience. Television outlets in Lusaka, Zambia, are quite active on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, using them to disseminate information to their audience. In fact, a study found that most journalists in Zambia value Facebook for professional purposes, such as contacting sources and researching stories. Research suggests that these outlets use social media to interact with their audiences, gather and verify information, and enhance the impact of their stories through extended reach and feedback.

Studies have shown that social media has improved the way television outlets in Lusaka gather and disseminate news, with benefits including real-time reporting, increased audience engagement, and access to a wider audience.

The research targeted 30 respondents drawn from television stations in Lusaka where the experts were interviewed to give their side regarding the use of social media platform as a tool to reach out to the public with information.

The study looked at the age groups of individuals charged with the responsibilities of running social media pages for television stations in Lusaka and the results indicated that 44% were those between the ages of 25years to 30years, at 30% where those at 30years to 40years, 19% those at 40years to 50years and 7% those above 50years.

4.2.1 Age groups of individuals running social media pages for television stations in Lusaka

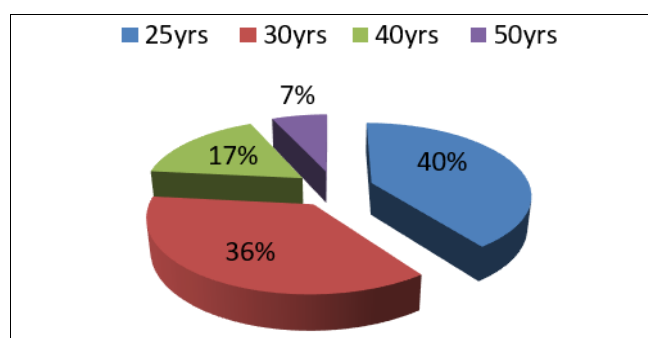


Fig 4.2.1: Age group of social media users

4.2.2 Gender Respondents

The total number of respondents sampled in the study area was 75 and these included media practitioners, students, law enforcement agencies and selected community members. Information on gender distribution revealed that there were more females than males using various social media platforms in the study area. Males were 30 representing 40% compared to their female counterpart who were about 45 representing 60% as shown above.

Despite this slight gender disparity, focus group discussions and concerned institution or stakeholders were carried on with respondents participating actively without any hindrances. During the discussions especially with the youths' students at the Cavendish University and law enforcement agencies, it was discovered that most of the users didn't follow or abide by media ethical practices.

Observations by the researcher also indicates that like others even media practitioner don't abide by media ethical practices in their day to social media activities. Other than that, the findings also showed that most of the social media users abrogate media ethics deliberately.

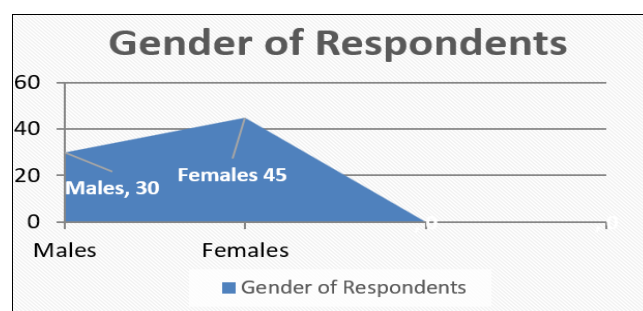


Fig 4.2.2: Gender of Respondents

4.2.3 Preferred Social Media Platform

Television stations in Lusaka prefer using Facebook and YouTube to reach their audience. Many stations, such as Channel Broadcasting Company Limited (CBC), have a strong presence on these platforms, sharing news, entertainment, and engaging content. This allows them to connect with their viewers, increase their online presence, and drive engagement.

Other popular social media platforms used by TV stations in Lusaka include Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram. These platforms enable stations to share updates, promote their programs, and interact with their audience in real-time. By leveraging these platforms, TV stations can expand their reach, build their brand, and stay competitive in the digital landscape.

Therefore, going by individual social media platforms, Facebook came first at 43%, followed by You Tube at 30% while WhatsApp and Twitter were at 17% and 10% respectively.

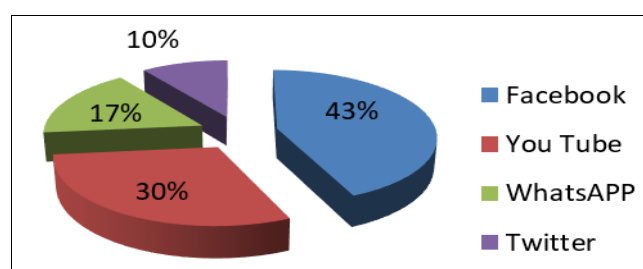


Fig 4.2.3: Preferred Social Media Platform

4.2.4 Most Effective Social Media Platform

The research findings indicate a resounding endorsement of social media's effectiveness, with a significant 83% of respondents deeming it effective. The remaining 17% consider it fairly effective, suggesting that social media has virtually no detractors; with no respondents indicating it's ineffective. This overwhelmingly positive response underscores social media's potency as a tool, highlighting its potential to achieve desired outcomes.

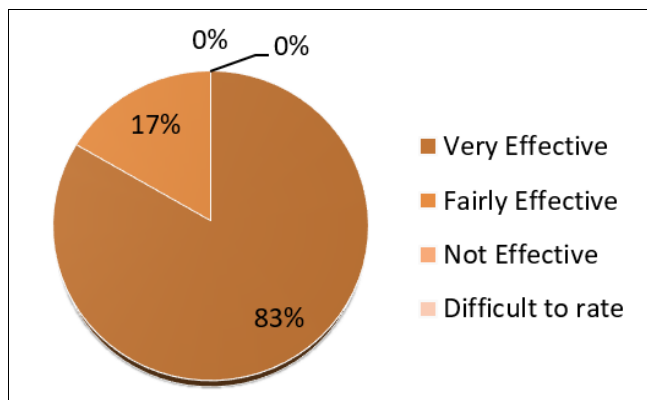


Fig 4.2.4: Most effective Social media platform

4.2.5 How often television stations use social media

The research findings show that television stations in Lusaka are super active on social media, with a 100% daily usage rate. This means every single station uses social media daily, indicating a strong reliance on these platforms. The absence of any stations reporting usage at several times a week, weekly, or rarely used suggests a consistent and intense social media presence. Looks like Lusaka's TV stations are glued to social media.

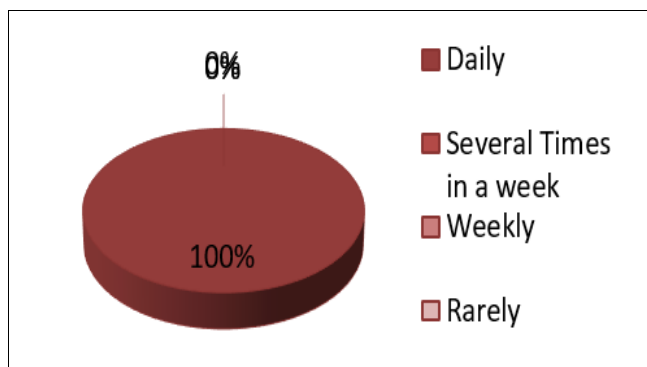


Fig 4.2.5: How often television stations use social media

4.2.6 Ethical Practices Considered

Television stations in Zambia have a significant influence on public opinion and discourse. As they leverage social media to disseminate information, they adhere to ethical practices that prioritize accuracy, fairness, and responsibility. By adopting these ethical practices, TV stations can maintain public trust, promote responsible journalism, and contribute to a healthy media landscape in Zambia. Therefore, the research finding show that accuracy and credibility of information at 64% is a key factor for all television stations that were interviewed, then followed by privacy and confidentiality at 22% while intellectual property rights and others were at 10% and 4% respectively.

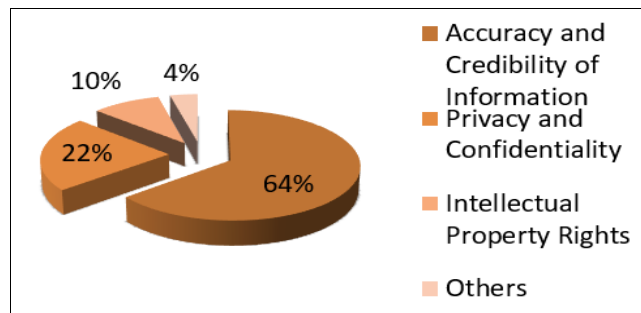


Fig 4.2.6: Ethical Practices Considered

4.2.7 Responses on the effectiveness of media ethical practices on social media

The results revealed that 80% of respondents indicated that media ethics on social media weren't as effective in curbing misinformation, obscenity, fake news, scamming and cyber bullying among others. About 12% recounted that media ethics on social media were very effective citing example of hate speech cases in Zambia that have been taken to court as a result of the recklessness of some social media users. 7% of the respondent indicated that media ethics on social media were fairly effective while 1% weren't sure of the effectiveness of media ethics on social media. The findings from the research were based on the questionnaire administered in English and are given in the table and pie chart below.

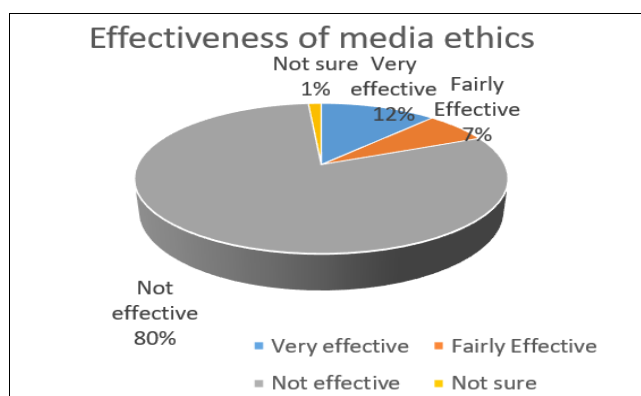


Fig 4.2.7: Effectiveness of media ethical practices on social media

4.2.8 Responses on how Media Ethics are applied on Social Media Users

Social media has blurred the lines between personal and public communication, making it essential for users to apply media ethics to their online behavior. Here are key considerations:

1. Responsibility
 - Think before posting: consider the potential impact of your words and actions.
 - Be accountable for your content: own up to mistakes and correct them.
2. Accuracy and Truthfulness
 - Verify information before sharing: fact-check and sources.
 - Avoid spreading misinformation: don't share unverified or false information.
3. Privacy and Confidentiality
 - Respect others' privacy: don't share personal info without consent.

4. Authenticity and Transparency

- Be genuine and authentic: represent yourself truthfully.
- Clearly label sponsored content: disclose affiliations and biases.

Therefore, research findings indicate that 30% of the media houses ensure privacy, and then 27% ensure whatever is transmitted or posted for public consumption is accurate whilst 23% ensure truthfulness and 20% ensure objectiveness respectively. By applying these media ethics, social media users can promote a positive online environment, respect others' rights, and maintain a healthy digital community.

4.2.9 How Media ethics are applied

There is general consensus among media professionals that they cannot operate in an ethical vacuum. The nature of the media demands standards. While there are many ways of understanding and interpreting standards, actually having established systems in place induces cohesion in media practice.

Therefore, the result indicates 30% of interviewees acknowledged there should be balance stories of information considering the fact that social media has a domination in terms of providing information to young people. Other than that, it was further discovered that 27% of the respondents believe media ethics can be applied very well is users disseminate information that is self-censored and accurate. Social media is an open platform that has made most users abuse it and misinform the public. In this case therefore, hence about 23% of respondents called for users to be truthful in their activities on social media while 20% of the other respondents complained of social media users not being objective in the way they provide information to the public.

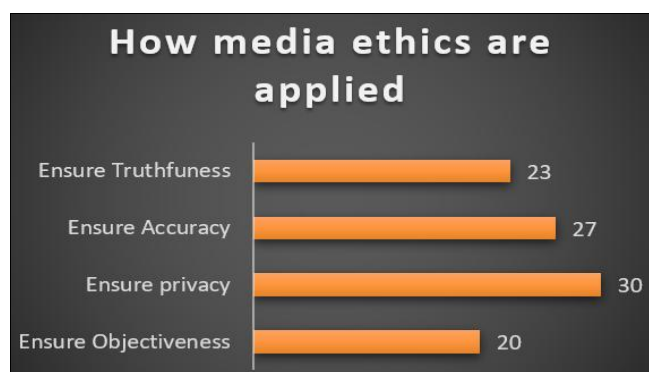


Fig 4.2.8: How Media Ethics are applied

4.2.10 Response if there is specific Law that deals with Social Media

There is no specific law that deals with social media in Zambia. Discussions around legislating social media use need to consider the freedom of expression and other rights, which constitute essential foundations of a democratic society. Regarding respondents having knowledge on the law that deal specifically with social media, 80% of them had no knowledge of the law on social media. 11% of the respondents were aware of the drafted or proposed bill on social media use while 9% were not sure and didn't know anything.

However, we have legislation that has a bearing on the use of social media in the country such as freedom of expression that every person is entitled to the fundamental rights and

freedoms contained in the Constitution. However, the freedom of expression is not absolute as it is measured against the interest of defence, public safety, morality, public health; and protecting reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons. Other than that, the right of privacy of every person regardless of his or her socio-economic status in society must be respected. This is more vividly explained in the Zambian Constitution, Article 17 (1) where it states that; Except with his own consent, a person shall not be subjected to the search of his person or his property or the entry by others on his premises.

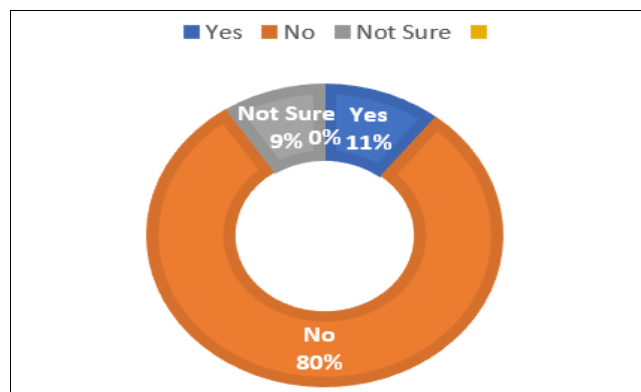


Fig 4.2.9: Response if there is specific law that deals with social media

4.2.11 Any Ethical Dilemmas Encountered by television stations in Lusaka

The research findings indicate that the majority (67%) of television stations in Lusaka don't encounter significant dilemmas when using social media for info dissemination, suggesting they're navigating these platforms effectively. However, 33% do face challenges, highlighting areas for improvement and potential support needs. The takeaway? Most stations are sailing smoothly, but some need a hand steering through social media complexities!

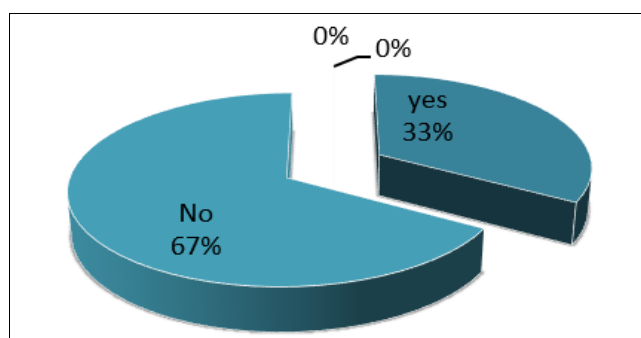


Fig 4.2.10: Ethical Dilemmas Encountered by television stations in Lusaka

4.2.12 Responses on how social media and the users are regulated to maintain media ethics

The right to express oneself is a fundamental human right outlined in International Law. However, most societies would agree there are types of expression that are not acceptable and which conflict with other human rights, such as promoting hate speech. For this reason, Governments use laws to limit freedom of expression if it conflicts with other human rights, such as the protection of the rights or reputations of others, national security, public order, public health and morals. Therefore, 67% of respondents

acknowledged that government authorities use the cyber laws to regulate the conduct of social media users though not effective enough to completely stop hate speech and posting of obscene materials. 13% of the respondent said some social media owner censor the material or information posted on the platform while 11% noted that authorities block social media user account for individuals at the request of the government. Unfortunately, governments, private institutions and individuals around the world can abuse such limitations, using legislation and the judicial system unjustly to control expression and quash opposing views. And in line with this view about 9% of the respondents said some social media accounts get closed as a way to regulate them and ensure media ethical practices are adhered to.

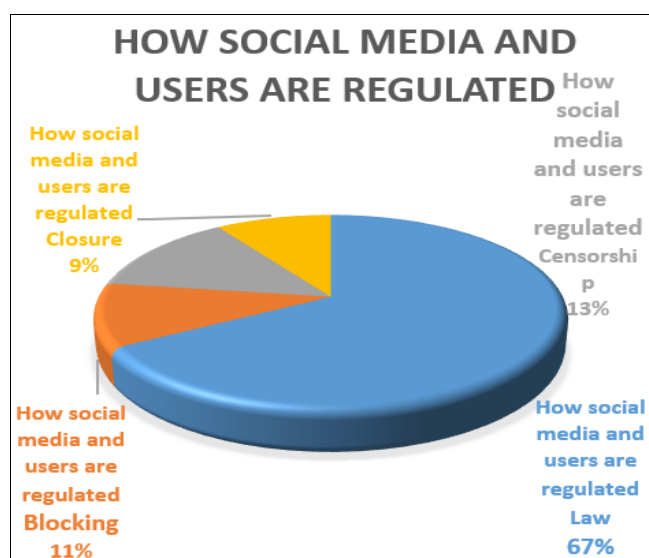


Fig 4.2.11: Responses on how social media and the users are regulated to maintain media ethics

4.2.13 Effectiveness of The Country's Policies on Media Ethical Practices on Social Media

All too often, however, social media threat to children and young people presented by the abrogation of media ethics is merely stated with sufficient scrutiny of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the measures adopted to protect them, hindering accountable evaluation and policy deliberation. While there are many positives about social media, the abuse by the users overshadows the benefits. Important gaps in our understanding of media ethical practices, social media related harms, and children's involvement in the abuse must also be recognized. And from the findings, 53% of the respondents emphatically stated that the policies on social media abusers were not very effective looking at the escalation of abuse of social media by users. 27% of the respondents said the policy was effective but lack serious implementation by law enforcers while 20% recognized the policies on social media as ineffective.

The findings were done qualitatively and quantitatively. Debates about which policy initiatives can prevent or reduce the damage that social media cause to the public good are informed by scientific evidence. As such, there is considerable agreement on the importance of prevention and appropriate targeted interventions for social media users.

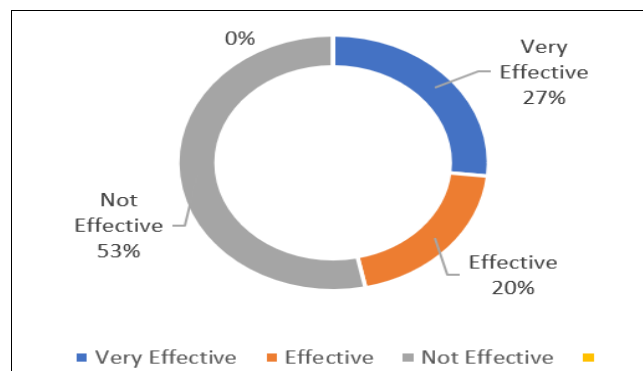


Fig 4.2.12: Effectiveness of the country's policies on media ethical practices on social media

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for information dissemination in Lusaka, Zambia, transforming the way people access and share information. Studies have shown that social media platforms, particularly Facebook and YouTube, are widely used for news dissemination, with many television stations and organizations leveraging these channels to reach their audience.

4.3.1 Effectiveness of Social Media

Research has revealed that social media is an effective means of disseminating information in Lusaka, with a significant positive relationship between social media marketing and brand awareness. A study on the University of Zambia found that social media marketing activities, such as interactivity, informativeness, electronic word of mouth, and trendiness, significantly increased brand awareness.

4.3.2 Key Findings

- Social media usage is widespread in Lusaka, with many individuals accessing news and information through these platforms.
- Television stations, such as ZNBC, and ZANIS are leveraging social media to disseminate economic information and promote financial inclusion.
- Social media has been instrumental in promoting civic engagement and community development initiatives in Lusaka.

4.3.3 Challenges and Limitations

Despite its effectiveness, social media faces challenges in Lusaka, including:

- Limited internet access and high costs.
- Low digital literacy rate.
- Misinformation and fake news.
- Limited formal social media policies and guidelines.

4.3.4 Conclusion

In all, the study revealed that social media has improved the speed and reach of information dissemination in Lusaka; with a significant proportion of respondents indicating that they access news and information through social media platforms. The study also found that social media has enabled real-time engagement between television outlets and their audience, allowing for feedback and interaction.

Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that social media is an effective tool for information dissemination in Lusaka, Zambia. Television outlets in Lusaka are leveraging social media platforms to reach a wide audience and engage with their viewers in real-time.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

The media which is an important profession and social building block is a business line that requires social responsibility. Considering the degree of impact of the work done, the public aspect outweighs it. There are social sensitivities that such a strategic business line for the public should pay attention to in every respect. The fact that the work done is in the public interest should be the criterion sought first. The press and the media, which are the most fundamental elements in democracies, should be aware of and responsible for this role. In a professional group serving in the public sphere such as the media, protecting the interests of society is an irrevocable responsibility. While the press and media help to institutionalize and take root in democracy, they also play a critical role in raising social awareness. The press creates public opinion through individuals, and the public ensures the functioning of democracy with their opinions. Global media ethics can be shaped around four critical groups of freedom and responsibility due to the difficulties that arise. These are (Tehrani, 2002:72).

Therefore, this study set out to assess the effectiveness of media ethical practices on social media as a source of public information using Lusaka as a case study. Through a comprehensive analysis involving 75 respondents from various media institutions, the study provided valuable insights into the current state of media ethical practices on social media as a source of public information in Lusaka.

The findings indicate that abiding by media ethics on social media users is important because it leads to truthfulness, objectiveness, accuracy and self-censorship in dissemination of information for public consumption. A majority of respondents acknowledged that media ethics have been abrogated on social media because the laws are less effective in curbing issues such as cyber bullying, invasion of privacy and posting of obscene material on various social media platforms. However, media ethical practices on social media users are more often than not ineffective, with many respondents pointing out that tangible changes policy and governance practices that are biased in application when one abrogates them. This inconsistency is attributed to factors like policy issue, political interference, inadequate and ineffective awareness programmes.

Carolyn Cohn relates Ethics as a concept of what is good, bad, right and wrong. It gives room to what is generally accepted and not accepted amongst people. In social media, our right way of doing things is commensurate to the way we think and our right thinking on how to power the media in the right way as we engage people in the right way. She added that Etiquette is a code of behavior within the context of our society. In social media, the right etiquette equals doing the right way. There definitely is a right way and a wrong way to use social media. Using a social media network simply means joining a very large community. Therefore, what is best for us with regards to generally accepted principles should be practiced. It is of utmost importance to respect the boundaries of others. Aggressive targeted marketing has no place in social media. Your motivation for being a part of the community is to give others the benefit of your experience and to build

relationships with other members of your community.

5.2 Recommendation

To address the challenges and unlock the full potential of media ethical practices on social media as a source of public information in Lusaka and beyond, the following recommendations are proposed. These measures aim to enhance the practice, foster accountability, and solidify the enforcement of media ethics on users of social media in the country.

1. Increase Public Awareness on the importance of media ethics on social media users

Continuous user education should be put in place for the students on how to use social media for their educational improvement and sounding warning to them on the over-indulgence in social media which could have a negative influence on their performance

To ensure investigative journalism resonates with the public, media organizations should prioritize outreach strategies that engage communities and enhance public trust. Initiatives such as public forums, town hall discussions, and interactive social media campaigns can bridge the gap between journalists and their audiences. By showcasing the societal impact of investigative stories, journalists can foster greater appreciation for their work and encourage civic participation. Collaboration with community leaders and civil society organizations can further amplify the reach and impact of investigative journalism.

2. That abuses of the media policy be dealt with by the law.

3. Political Parties use the social media for the benefit of citizen and should avoid inciting statements that may possibly ignite instability.

4. That social media policing be carried out regularly as a way of monitoring to react to conflicting issues that may be disturbing towards good governance.

5. That strong sensitization be done with regards the right use of the internet.

6. That Penalties be levied for unethical use of the social media.

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