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Titled:

PUBLIC SPHERE WITHOUT DECORUM!
REINING- IN THE MEDIA IN THE
ERA OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM

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Public Sphere without Decorum! Reining- in the Media in the Era of Citizen Journalism

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Protocol

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My Beloved Family

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Preamble

I feel so delighted to present the first inaugural lecture from the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, the first in the Department of Mass Communication, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, and the 14th in the University Inaugural lectures series. Today gives me yet another opportunity to share with the world this anecdote that is laced with nostalgic feelings of my numerous years of struggles and striving. Without sounding immodest, I can give myself a warm pat on the back and say to myself “well done, your resilience and determination paid off”. I grew up loving and wishing to study journalism even though I was good in the Sciences. My dad also preferred the Sciences but because he was a teacher, he understood the need not to coerce a child into a program against their wish.

However, joining the religious life opened up a new chapter in my academic life. My congregation sent me to Germany to study nursing. This was totally against my preference, but, since I had made the vow of obedience, I could not complain or express my desire to be a journalist. I was worried but I kept praying and hoping that one day the opportunity to go back to journalism would come. Because God is faithful, that day finally came. It so happened that one day, while I was recovering from a major surgery in BadKrenznach, Germany, some sister friends visited me on my sickbed and in the course of our hearty conversations, they hinted me that the new administration of my congregation had announced that those in nursing sciences who preferred other careers/courses should come for a change in their course. Though they warned me that it could come at a cost that may not be pleasant, but indeed, like I told them that day, it was a prayer answered. The warnings notwithstanding, I made up my mind to try! That decision to try is the reason I am standing before you today as a Professor of Communication.

Inaugural lectures of this nature give the opportunity to only not synchronize our thought processes from the beginning of our academic sojourn but to also emphatically reaffirm the intellectual positions and

perspectives that have guided our years of academic inquest. Hence, the title of my lecture today: **“Public Sphere without Decorum! Reining-in the Media in the Era of Citizen Journalism”**.

1.0.Introduction

The popular maxim that “one cannot not communicate” by Paul Watzlawick epitomizes the centrality of communication in our everyday living. Apart from distinguishing us as human beings, this reality also speaks to the naturality of communication regardless of the form or dimension it takes.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, this is at the heart of my inaugural lecture today. My research undertaken over the years has reflected this common understanding that so long as we live, we communicate; even in the grave, we still communicate the ephemerality of life. Okunna (2018, p.3) explains it thus: “communication is probably the most fundamental of all human activities – so much so that it is often asserted that communication is life”.

My inquest into the relevance of communication in the human society propelled me to; at the same time explore the different facets of communication as well as the various platforms that enable communication, otherwise known as media or channels of mass communication. Therefore, my research has touched on the broad area of communication and the media of communication. As such, I have beamed my research light on the infinite interactions between the media and the society. These have led to the myriad of studies I have conducted in the area of Broadcast journalism, new media and society, health communication, gender and communication, political communication, Behaviour Change Communication and strategic communication.

It is important I set this background to establish the invaluable place of communication in our lives as it touches on the nucleus of our existence. All put together could suggest that communication in all ramifications have positive correlations with our existence. However, communication

without responsibility could be disastrous and inimical to our collective harmonious and mutual co-existence. I pay attention to these manifestations using instantiations from my personal studies and from the realities around us all, and I use these to proffer ways to resolve the conundrum of communication without responsibility.

1.1. Journalism in Perspective

There are some lexical differences in the definition of journalism, but as noted by Ugbo (2020, p.1), “there is a convergence in the meaning ascribed to it. Thus, journalism is said to be a business of keeping records of daily occurrences and making them available to the public through a medium of communication.” However, I will take a step further to emphasize that the very nature of the technologies of communication has expanded the fluidity of the term “journalism” as a profession and especially as it concerns the mode of practicing it. Journalism as a term is derived from the Latin word “diurnalis” meaning a “daily register or a diary” – which is a book that documents daily events.

Journalism as a profession entails a deliberate effort by a journalist to source, process, and disseminate daily newsworthy events to the general public to cater to their informational needs or serve other purposes as may be intended or otherwise (Ugbo, 2020). The Chambers 20th Century Dictionary defines journalism as a profession that engages in writing for “public journals.” A similar definition from Webster Third International Dictionary sees journalism as “the collection and editing of the material of current interest for presentation, publication or broadcast.” For Fraser, the term “journalism” connotes all the formats in which news is produced and delivered to the public. Eric Hodgins of Time Magazine further defines it as a process of sending timely, accurate, and truthful information from a source to the public through a medium of mass communication.

From the above definitions, one could deduce that journalism is not a haphazard action that feeds the public with half-baked or unverified

information. We could see from the definitions that journalism requires high level of diligence, commitment, and responsibility. According to Ugbo, Chinedu-Okeke, and Ogbodo (2022, p.2), “journalism can be distinguished from other reporting activities through different characteristics and principles. Whether broadcast or print, the journalist follows the same principles (timeliness, proximity, prominence, consequence, oddity, and human interest) and is guided by the same determinants/values (objectivity, accuracy, balance, currency, brevity, conciseness, and clarity) in gathering news materials.” To what extent these cherished norms and values of a professional journalism practice reflect in today’s internet-enabled citizen journalism practice is certainly in doubt and this is a matter of grave concern. And this is at the heart of my discourse today.

1.2. The Concept of Citizen Journalism

In the recent times, the proliferation of both the Internet and the affordability of smartphones have revolutionised and redefined the scope and practice of journalism all over the world (Asogwa, 2020). This change has created a shift in the creation and consumption of media messages, as people increasingly create and consume news through e-readers, smartphones, and other personal information technological devices, as opposed to the traditional forms via the newspapers, magazines, radios, or television (Asogwa, 2020a; Asogwa, 2020b; Asogwa, 2019). Today, we are very conversant with the term “User-Generated-Content,” meaning we have all directly and indirectly become content creators and at the same time, content consumers. We have all become “citizen journalists” in one way or the other by virtue of our active engagement with the social media and other internet-enabled platforms.

Citizen journalism, also referred to as participatory journalism, is an “alternative and activist” (Radsch, 2013, p.2) form of journalism where citizens or general public play an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing, and disseminating news or information (Wall,

2015). The underlying principle of citizen journalism is that ordinary people, who are not professionals, can be the main creators and distributors of news contents (Seong-Jae, 2016). The advent of new media, such as online news websites and social networking sites, in addition to the increasing popularity of smartphones, have made citizen journalism more viable across the globe (Gilardi, 2016). Citizen journalism, which introduced new ways of communicating and engaging the public, has created a shift in technology that enables individuals to create and access more news than before and at a faster rate (Zeng, Jain, Nguyen, and Allan 2019). Citizens frequently report breaking news more quickly than professional reporters. Citizen journalists may be activists within the communities they write about, but there persist some criticisms from professional journalists who have accused proponents of citizen journalism of abandoning the primary goals of objectivity and accuracy in reporting thereby leading to the production of content lacking in quality and verifiability (Seong-Jae, 2016).

1.3 Platforms of Citizen Journalism

As I have noted earlier, the advent of the Internet and rapid advancement in technologies have stirred up a paradigm shift in the conventional journalistic styles of news sourcing, reporting, and general content creation. These shifts have expanded the available information production and flow channels and empowered citizens with the slightest knowledge of technology to create their own contents. Thus, the internet and the associated media are the primary enablers of citizen journalism. Specifically, social networking platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Blogs, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, WeChat, and WhatsApp encourage and facilitate citizens' engagements with other citizens who participate in creating news contents through writing, commenting, liking, linking, and sharing of such information. The widespread and frequent use of social media in recent years has created a number of opportunities and challenges for the cherished decorum in the *public sphere*. Some of these enablers are discussed below:

1.3.1 Facebook

Facebook as a social network site has proved a critical enabler of citizen journalism in all ramifications. It is among the most popular social networking sites (Miller, 2019; Facebook Reports First Quarter 2021 Results; Hu, 2016). The Facebook has a unique feature that allows for the integration of all the attributes of the mainstream media channels in communication. In other words, Facebook has an unlimited flexibility that brings about an interesting convergence. Users can upload as well as download all forms of media texts (audio-visual and written texts). All that is required to be able to fully use the Facebook platform is an internet-enabled device and active subscription for internet. The flexible feature of Facebook has empowered **people to build a community and bring the world closer together**. However, the unlimited access that Facebook provides offers a functional and dysfunctional opportunities especially in moments of uncertainties like the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2023 Nigerian presidential elections that was equally keenly contested online. On the positive side, people get to report on-the-spot happenings and most often set agenda for reportage for the mainstream media. On the flip side, the swiftness of information dissemination and the gateless nature of the platform has made it one of the conduits for fake news and misinformation flow as most information circulated are uncensored and/or unverified. In recent times, Facebook has launched certain algorithm to detect and filter out false or misleading contents (Bakshy, Messing, & Adamic, 2015) but has that reined-in the tide of misinformation and disinformation flow from Facebook?

1.3.2 YouTube

YouTube is another key enabler of citizen journalism. It is a social networking site that supports the sharing of videos (Allgaier, 2019). The popularity of YouTube is explained by the active engagement of citizens on the platform. According to BBC News (2016) YouTube content creators globally upload over 100 hours of content per minute and its users watch more than one billion hours of videos each day. Like Facebook, YouTube offers unfettered access to citizens to disseminate

and consume video contents within the privacy policy and terms of service regulating the platform. The enormous popularity of **YouTube** makes it a choice tool for information flow (Gilliland, 2018). As always, the gateless nature of the platform has also opened up the floodgate of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news that must be put under check.

1.3.3 Weblogs

Weblogs commonly referred to as “blog” is an online information website. It is personal online space where citizens discuss subjects of common interest (Blood, 2000). It is also an important enabler of citizen journalism. The emergence and growth of blogs in the late 1990s coincided with the advent of web publishing tools that facilitated the posting of content by non-technical or professional users who may not necessarily be computer or technologically savvy (Mutum & Wang, 2010). The blogs are valuable platforms that serve a range of surveillance functions through the activities of ordinary citizens. As such, people rely on blogs for a range of information including disease outbreaks as experienced in the COVID-19 pandemic, civil education, security, education, and host of others.

1.3.4 Twitter (now X)

Twitter is a popular social networking site that allows users to disseminate information in 280 characters of text called ‘tweets’ (Kim & Valente, 2021) although verified blue-ticked users can have up to 4000 characters of text. Its primary purpose is to connect and allow people share their thoughts with a large audience. However, the nature of Twitter provides the public with a way to ask questions directly, allowing the concerned stakeholder to provide immediate feedback. The recent 2023 presidential election was at some point considered to have been keenly contested on Twitter platforms. There were robust civic and political engagements between the electorates and the public office holders, contestants, and other relevant institutions concerned with the conduct of

the elections especially the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

1.3.5 Instagram

Instagram is a free mobile check-in application for online photo-and-video-sharing and social networking. Instagram allows users to edit and upload photos and short videos through a mobile app. Instagram's popularity has led to an increment in the number of social networking sites which encourage the use of photo and video forms (Kim & Kim, 2020). Instagram is an engaging platform that laces critical information with entertainment. Therefore, the infotainment potentials of Instagram is incredibly high, and people leverage on that feature to disseminate information that are sometimes not in good taste.

2.0 Citizen Journalism and the Public Sphere

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, here, I will establish the connection between citizen journalism and public sphere. As I explained earlier, citizen journalism entails active engagement in public discourses by the ordinary (usually “untrained”) citizens. Our current experiences in communicative acts on the various internet-enabled platforms reflect the original ideas of Habermas’ public sphere.

In retrospect, the idea of Public Sphere was mooted by a German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. Public sphere was originally conceived as an arena for debating or deliberating on issues that are of public interest. It is a place of free ideas and exchange. The concept of freedom of expression and democracy found root from the public sphere principles as espoused by Habermas. Public sphere in this context is homologous to the principle of egalitarian society and today’s active public empowered by the internet. The public sphere is a space for public opinion formation. Oxford Bibliographies (2018) describes the public sphere as a social space in which different opinions are expressed, problems of social concern are discussed, and collective solutions are developed communicatively. The emergence of media of communication added

great impetus in meaning to all that Habermas' ideas of public sphere represented. Thus, the media was conceived as a marketplace of ideas.

The principles espoused in public sphere, although pre-dated the internet, tended to reflect our current experience with the emergence of social media powered by the internet. As we all witness today, there is a low barrier of entry in the internet space. Scholars like John Thompson have come up with ideas that depict the new internet experience. According to him, the internet has paved the way for “despatialized” public sphere in which participants or users are not bound by time and space; the platforms are non-ideological, which suggests that each participant comes in with their individualized ideological bags. Opinions are therefore not unidirectional. In addition, the audiences are more and more fragmented, widely scattered, but nonetheless bound by a sense of ‘communityness’ through common/shared interests (Asogwa, 2020a; Asogwa, 2020b; Asogwa, 2020c; Asogwa, Ojih, & Onoja, 2018; and Asogwa, 2015).

3.0 Journalism Practice in the Era of Citizen Journalism: The Gains and Pains

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I will x-ray the practice of journalism in the era of citizen journalism within the lens of my previous research. I have taken some time to study in detail the various facets of journalism practice in today's gateless media space. My research outputs on this theme have largely presented the functional as well as the dysfunctional roles of the social media in particular in modern day journalism practice.

Fundamentally, the cardinal functions of the media in the society are sustained and counted as crucial gains (Asogwa & Ojih, 2012). Harold Laswell articulated these functions to include Correlation, Surveillance, Entertainment, and Cultural Transmission.

3.1 Correlation and Surveillance Functions: Our Localized Experiences

There are countless events that have occurred and still occur in our societies where media power is made manifest. I have extensively documented these experiences in relation to the media roles in our society (see Asogwa, 2021; Asogwa, Okeke, Ezeah & Gever, 2020; Asogwa, 2020a; Asogwa, 2020c; Asogwa, 2019; Asogwa, 2018; Asogwa, & Samuel, 2018; Asogwa, & Ejembi, 2017). As we already know, the media not only plays the watchdog functions in our society, but they also help us to make meaning from complex happenstances in our environment through in-depth reportage, interpretation, analysis, and reviews. These are evident in the various newspaper editorials, radio and television commentaries and documentaries, etc. that we encounter and consume on a daily basis.

Specifically, one of the critical recent incidents that shook the root of our existence was the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. The global community was thrown into confusion and desperate moves were made in search of solutions through vaccines. At the centre of the awareness creation and sensitization was the media informing the public about the pandemic and also informing people on how to stay safe. Vaccines were eventually produced but the level of uptake remained abysmally low especially in Nigeria. It was against this backdrop that **Asogwa (2021)**, in a study of Nigerian Media Coverage of Medical Progress on COVID-19 Vaccine, systematically explored the level of vaccine uptake and factors that shape people's decisions in that regard. The study found that the media play crucial roles in shaping or influencing people's decision. Through the correlational function, the media embarked on creating conscious awakening in the people on the need to protect themselves through proper vaccination. Thus, all media platforms were awash with information on COVID-19 vaccine and largely debunked the increasing conspiracies against COVID-19 vaccines. In other words, the issue of COVID-19 vaccine uptake was largely promoted in the media.

Asogwa (2020) further upheld the assumptions of the Agenda-Setting Theory by observing that “newspapers in particular perform their social responsibility to the society better by setting agenda on issues of public interest” (p.4) as reflected in the COVID-19 vaccine uptake campaigns. However, the “media performance of social responsibility function through agenda setting differs according to the media genre” and other vested interests (Asogwa, & Salawu, 2016b).

Furthermore, **Asogwa**, Okeke, Ezeah, and Gever (2020) observed that the power of the media is also expressed in its framing approaches. In our study of framing approaches adopted by television to report the ethno-religious conflicts in Southern Kaduna, we found that war-oriented frames were mostly adopted and came to the conclusion that how issues are framed in the media have implications for conflict escalation or de-escalation (Asogwa, Okeke, Ezeah & Gever, 2020; Asogwa, 2020c; Onayinka, Asogwa, Ajijola, & Ige, 2019; Asogwa & Atulukwu, 2018a; Asogwa, & Atuluku, 2018b; Asogwa, Ojih, & Yabagi, 2017; and Ezeah and Asogwa, 2013). News frames, through choice of language and news angle/direction, are some of “the strategies that the media practitioners use to influence the views that people hold about an issue” (Asogwa, et al. 2020, p.4). As such, journalists and practitioners must be wary of that understanding and integrate the awareness in their writings. However, in all these, media content, most of the times, remain a reflection of the owners’ vested interest (Asogwa & Salawu, 2016b).

The surveillance function of the media is reflected in our common attribution of the media as the watchdog of the society. The media through investigative reportage hold government and political elites accountable (Asogwa, & Ekwueme, 2012; and Asemah, &Asogwa, 2012). Thus, the media promotes transparency in the society. With the passage of the Freedom of Information Act in 2011, the media is technically further empowered to discharge its functions without restraint although still within the ambits of the law (Asogwa, Attah, & Iyere, 2012; and Asogwa, Attah, & Iyere, 2011). As noted by Onoja, **Asogwa**, and Itodo (2020), in reference to the media and fostering of robust electoral

processes, “...free media nurture transparency and spread important electoral information among members of the society” (p.1). This openness is emphasized in the social media gateless space and is counted as one of the gains of the open access media. The “social media through its features of speed, participation, and interactivity is championing unparallel opportunities for dialogue and interaction among citizens” (Onoja, Asogwa, & Itodo, 2020, p.4).

4.0 Media and Decision-Making

As McCombs and Shaw noted in the agenda-setting role of the media, the media could be and has become so powerful in directing our minds on what to think about. The media can therefore frame the public’s perception and attitude to issues in the area of politics, purchases, health, marriage etc. In fact, the media is intricately linked to and remain a handy guide in our critical decision making. In ‘Computer-Mediated Advertising as a Correlate of Buying Behaviour among Youths from Southeast Nigeria’ (Asogwa, 2020), I identified that exposure to computer-mediated advertisement positively affects buying behaviour as shown in **Table 1** below:

Table 1: *Exposure to computer-mediated adverts and buying behaviour*

Exposure to CMA and buying behaviour	Exposure to CMA	Buying behaviour
Exposure to CMA		
Pearson correlation	1	.666**
Sig. (one-tailed)	.362	.000
N		362
Buying behaviour		
Pearson correlation	.666**	1
Sig. (one-tailed)	.000	.362
N	362	

Note CMA = computer-mediated advertising.

**Correlation is significant at .05 level of significance.

The data suggest that the youth's level of involvement in computer-mediated communication has implications for behaviour change (p.7). The hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between exposure to CMA and buying behaviour of youth was accepted in the study. This relationship can as well be generally linked to other associations or connections between behavioural and attitudinal changes and exposure to the mass media as have been upheld in many theories of communication including the cultivation, social learning, and planned action theories.

In a related study on 'Newspaper Framing of Lassa Fever and the Health Behaviour of Residents of Ebonyi State' (**Asogwa, 2019**), I made a salient observation which indicated that the frame adopted by media inadvertently shaped public's responses to the issue under focus. Specifically, newspapers' framing of the Lassa fever helped the public to take certain health decisions to stay safe. The framing approach adopted influenced the health behaviour of the public in the area of avoiding contacts with rodents, keeping food away from rodents as well as keeping their environments clean (See **Table 2**).

Thus, the study concluded from the tested hypothesis that positive media frames as depicted by the *gain frame* tend to resonate more with the public and makes greater impact (Asogwa, 2019).

Similarly, our study of influence of televised breast cancer prevention campaigns on women in Kogi State (**Asogwa & Oluwakemi, 2018; Asogwa, 2017**) indicated that majority of Nigerian women practiced breast self-examination as a result of their exposure to televised breast cancer prevention campaigns (see **Tables 3 and 4**).

Table 2: Newspaper frames and respondents' health Behaviour

Frames			Health Behaviour			Total
			Avoiding rodents	Keeping food away from rodents	Clean environment	
Framing	Loss frame	Count	42	75	28	145
		% of Total	12.2%	21.8%	8.1%	42.2%
	Gain frame	Count	120	69	10	199
		% of Total	34.9%	20.1%	2.9%	57.8%
Total		Count	162	144	38	344
		% of Total	47.1%	41.9%	11.0%	100.0%

Source: *Fieldwork, 2019.*

Table 3: Respondents' Perception of the Effectiveness of Television Breast Cancer Prevention Campaigns

Options	Frequency	Percentages
Very effective	77	19.4
Effective	194	48.9
Undecided	41	10.3
Less effective	74	18.6
Not effective	11	2.8
Total	397	100

Table 3 shows that the majority (68.3%) of the respondents perceived the breast cancer prevention campaigns to be effective because it elicited positive response from them. This resulted in adherence to the campaign messages, and this yielded a positive health outcome among the women.

Table 4: *Practice of Breast Self-Examination and Clinical Breast Examination as a Result of Exposure to Television Breast Cancer Prevention Campaigns*

Options	Frequency	Percentages
Strongly agree	137	34.5
Agree	93	23.4
Undecided	27	6.8
Disagree	91	22.9
Strongly disagree	49	12.9
Total	397	100

Similarly, as could be seen from Table 4 above, the respondents affirmed that they practiced breast self-examination as a result of their exposure to the media campaigns. This view is represented by more than half of the respondents (58.1%). From their responses, it was deduced that such exposure enabled them to realize the need for constant self-examination and they readily keyed into the practice. It helped them to take such important health decisions since they realized it was in their best interest as proposed by the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Health Belief Model.

Asogwa (2018) conducted another study that assessed the knowledge and use of family planning methods among women of reproductive age in Bauchi State through the media campaign programme tagged “Get it together”. The power of the media in influencing decisions was also upheld in the study. Specifically, it was found in the study that exposure to mass media campaigns is useful for the reduction of population’s use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs; encouraged cancer screening, and decreased birth and HIV infection rates (p.7, cited in Asogwa, 2018). In other words, media campaigns are potent in eliciting desired behaviours in the area of family planning among the public population.

However, we have noted in our study of strategic communication as an inevitable tool for HIV/AIDS campaigns: evidence from Offa

community, Kwara State (**Asogwa & Esimokha, 2018**), that, in an attempt to package media messages designed to elicit behavioural change, efforts must be made to put the active audience (who have now developed powerful protective schemata that enables them to filter out messages that do not resonate with their held cognition) into consideration. To that extent, it would be counterproductive to deploy certain appeals in packaging the message. The audience and their context must be adequately understood. The studies conducted in this regard yielded some level of ambivalent results indicating the divergent perspectives that naturally arise in issues of public interest. Specifically, while **Asogwa** and Salawu (2016a) and **Asogwa** and Oluwakemi (2017) in their study of *Electronic Media Programming for HIV/AIDS Behavioural Change in Lokoja* and *Media Public Enlightenment Campaign and Awareness of Hepatitis B in Lokoja Metropolis of Kogi State*, respectively, came up with the recommendation that the “media needs to come up with a powerful fear appeal message to force a change of behaviour and opinion on the people” (p.60) based on the prevailing findings/circumstances at the time, this recommendation seems not to be valid in the contemporary audience demography as shown in **Asogwa & Esimokha (2018)**.

In our subsequent study (**Asogwa & Esimokha, 2018**), we identified that fear appeal-based messages for instance, do not significantly bring about any behavioural change towards the HIV/AIDS disease, rather such appeals will only succeed in arousing the curiosity of the people to ultimately ignore the fear and engage in high-risk behaviour that will eventually predispose them to the threat. As surprising as this may sound, it is evidential that persuasion yields more positive result than threats in eliciting certain behavioural responses from the people. Therefore, persuasive messages are more potent in eliciting the desired behaviour change (**see Tables 5 and 6, pp.6-7**).

Table 5: *Results of effectiveness of fear appeal, messages in controlling HIV/AIDS pandemic*

Variables	Frequency (n=337)	Percentage (%)
Creation of fear		
Yes	140	41.5
No	165	49
I can't say	32	9.5
Reasons for Effectiveness		
It may encourage those that are fearful	26	7.7
It makes people to be aware of the need to stay alive	86	25.5
It shows the consequence of contracting the disease	21	6.2
The illiterates get more scared and modify their behaviour	2	0.6
Inappropriate reasons	3	0.9
No reason	2	0.6
It may encourage those that are fearful	26	7.7
It makes people to be aware of the need to stay alive	86	25.5
It shows the consequence of contracting the disease	21	6.2
The illiterates get more scared and modify their behaviour	2	0.6
Reasons for Ineffectiveness (NO)		
It only increases people's curiosity about these risk behaviours	19	5.6
People cannot get scared by what they don't understand	13	3.9
It hardens some people's heart and so ignore the fear	49	14.5

Adequate awareness is what is needed rather than fear-based messages	52	15.4
It may prevent people from going for screening	21	6.2
Inappropriate reasons	6	1.8
No reasons	5	1.5
Vague responses		
It doesn't scare people as they do not believe HIV/AIDS is real	28	8.3
No reason	4	1.2
Source: from fieldwork, 2015		

Table 6: *The uses of fear appeal in HIV/AIDS messages are effective in preventing people from promoting the spread of the disease.*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Never true of me	114	38.8
Rarely true of me	73	26.7
Something true of me	55	16.3
Often true of me	64	19
Almost always true of me	31	9.2
Total	337	100
Source: From field study 2015		

5.0 Media, National Security and Unity

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, as stated earlier, the media could also be a veritable tool for surveillance and national security. However, with the emergence of internet-based media, there are concerns about critical security breaches and some unintended consequences due to the gateless nature of the internet space. This ambivalence in the functional and dysfunctional roles of the internet-based platforms reflected in my recent study. In the study *Internet-Based Communications: A Threat or Strength to National Security?* (Asogwa, 2020), it was observed that internet-

based communication could be a potent tool for surveillance, whistleblowing, and creating awareness on national security threats. Through social media in particular, people could be alerted on the existence of security threats (Asogwa, 2020, p.7). (See **Tables 7, 8, and 9**).

Table 7: *Relationship between Internet-Based Media and National Security Threats.*

Grouping	X^{2cal}	Df	P	Critical value	Decision
National security Internet-based media	401.356	7	.01	3.841	Sig

Table 8: *Positive Associations between Internet-Based Media and National Security*

ITEM	R	P VALUE	DECISION
1. AWARENESS	.903**	.001	Sig
2. ALERTNESS	.687**	.001	Sig
3. ALARM	.726**	.001	Sig
4. TRACKING	.765**	.001	Sig
5. INFORMATION ON ACTORS OF NATIONAL SECURITY	.733**	.001	Sig

**Correlation is significant at .05 level of significant.

However, the study observed that there are observable predictors to the negative impact of internet on national security (see Table 9 below).

Table 9: *Negative Association of Impact of Internet-Based Communication Channels on National Security*

ITEM	R	P VALUE	DECISION
1. RECRUITMENT	.703**	.001	Sig
2. FINANCING	.787**	.001	Sig
3. TRAINING	.728**	.001	Sig
4. RADICALIZATION	.869**	.001	Sig
5. INCITEMENT	.830**	.001	Sig

**Correlation is significant at .05 level of significant.

According to the data shown in Table 9, the internet has proven to be a fertile ground for the recruitment of agents who can pose national security challenges; it is also culpable in terrorism financing, radicalization, training, and has been used as tool for spreading incitement that may be inimical to national security. Our experience with the unending issue of Boko Haram terrorism in the Northeast Nigeria is a pointer to this dysfunctional role of the social media in particular. The terrorists deploy the social media to propagate their ideology, create a sense of autonomy, and induce fear in the minds of the vulnerable masses. When they (the terrorists) succeed in activating the panic button, people unwittingly join in their mission for imaginary protection. For instance, we have seen series of online videos where the terrorists flaunt their arsenal of sophisticated weapons including rocket propelled grenades/rocket launchers for shooting down aircrafts, armoured personnel carrier, and even cases of gruesome killing of Nigerian soldiers. All these embolden the terrorists and cause serious psychological damage in the nation’s effort to maintain the security and sovereignty of Nigeria.

Furthermore, in our study of the *influence of Biafra-related social media contents on the acceptance of IPOB agenda in South-East Nigeria*, Onayinka, Asogwa, Ajijola, and Ige (2019) noted that social media creates a fertile platform for the formation of ideological echo chambers.

People consciously expose themselves to media contents that agree with their perceptions of social reality. Thus, we found in the study that IPOB members take active role in seeking information relating to IPOB from the social media and participants are eager to share or spread information within and outside their circle to show that they have not been wrong in their perception (p.57). Such narratives as circulated on social media were triggers to the escalation of conflict within the region as was manifested in the recent *sit-at-home* policy enforced by non-state actors within the Southeast region. However, as noted by **Asogwa** and Ojih (2017) in their study of *Newspaper Coverage of the Renewed Biafra Agitation in Southeast Nigeria*, there are factors that shape framing and coverage of issues in the society. Specifically, ideology affects coverage generally, including direction and prominence given to stories.

Onayinka, **Asogwa**, Ajjola, and Ige (2019) further noted that, in the case with IPOB members, there is reliance only on the media that is favourable to IPOB and this continually reinforced their beliefs. In other words, people readily form alliance and affinity with media that are consistent with their held cognition. This simply suggests that media messages in all ramifications could be a veritable tool for conflict de-escalation if strategically tailored in that direction.

Dunu, Onoja and **Asogwa** (2017), in the study *Rethinking Ethnic Identity through the Media for Sustainable National Development in a Multi-Ethnic Society*, pointed out that a positive media has the potential to reinforce unity and acceptance of differences and diversities to strengthen a society. If there were more positive coverage of various groups, there would be fewer negative stereotypes, suspicions, segregations etc. which will invariably translate into mutual and peaceful co-existence and by extension, national development for a multiethnic nation like Nigeria. Ethnic identity remains a viable part of every nation's socio-political life and has the capacity to serve as agent of socio-political mobilization – tool for healthy rivalry that can promote better living, nationalism, and patriotism among others.

In my quest to determine audience responses and/or views on media roles in the promotion of national security and unity, we did a study on *Lokoja Residents' Perception of the Promotion of National Unity by the Nigerian Mass Media* (Asogwa, 2018). Findings from the study corroborated extant literature that the media could perform a functional role of building national cohesion through a sensitive and responsible reportage. My findings reinforced other research efforts which have shown that the media can provide national unity by educating the public to love one another, avoid ethnic bigotry and/or chauvinism, eschew religious and political sentiments, promote tolerance, jettison cultural stereotype and promote dialogues among Nigerians (see **Tables 10 and 11**).

Table 10: *What are the ways through which the media can promote national unity in Nigeria?*

Scale	SA(5)	A(4)	U(3)	SD(2)	D(1)	Total	X	Decision
Educating the public to love one another	118	111	44	40	42	355	3.6 ≈ 4	Accepted
Educating the public to avoid ethnic religious and political sentiments	108	121	37	45	45	355	3.5 ≈ 4	Accepted
Promoting tolerance	92	110	51	68	34	355	3.4	Accepted
Educating the public on the benefits of national unity	115	117	50	36	37	355	3.3	Accepted
Discouraging cultural stereotype	111	118	51	37	38	355	3.6≈ 4	Accepted
Promoting dialogue	113	119	49	38	36	355	3.6≈ 4	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 11: *What are the challenges in the use of mass media for promotion of National Unity in Nigeria?*

Scale	SA(5)	A(4)	U(3)	SD(2)	D(1)	Total	X	Decision
Existing press laws	114	112	45	41	43	355	3.9≈ 4	Accepted
Ownership factor	105	123	38	47	44	355	3.5≈ 4	Accepted
Remuneration of journalists	94	105	52	63	36	355	3.4	Accepted
Level of adherence to ethical guide	116	118	52	32	38	355	3.6≈ 4	Accepted
Consciousness of social responsibility	112	119	52	38	34	355	3.6≈ 4	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Sustained narratives such as outlined above will inculcate in the minds of citizens the cherished values of mutual co-existence and respect for diversity which are staple requirements for national unity and peace.

6.0 Erosion of Cultural Values

One of the functional roles of the media in the society is the promotion and maintenance of cultural norms and values. The emergence of the internet and social media has opened up the space for an unprecedented inculturation – which, in this context, means integrating external cultures into traditional culture. Of course, this is an inescapable product of globalization which the internet has created. Social media platforms in particular, have expanded the level of the younger generations’ (especially the Generations Z, X, and the Millennials) information technology skills and assimilation of other foreign contents. These contribute to their level of academic performance and overall education. **Asogwa** and Oluwakemi (2017) in their study of *Usage of New Media Technology Channels among Undergraduates of Kogi State University, Anyigba*, affirmed this assertion when they found that majority use the new media technology for chatting (see Tables 12 and 13).

Table 12: *What is New Media Technology used for?*

S/N	Options	Respondents	%
1.	Chatting	141	41.1
2.	Playing online games	27	7.9
3.	Musical download	Nil	Nil
4.	Academic Purpose	60	17.5
5.	Watching movies/download	13	3.8
6.	Making friends	9	2.6
7.	Downloading games	0	0
8.	More than one use		
9.	Chatting and playing games	20	5.8
10.	Chatting, academics, and watching/movie downloads	25	7.3
11.	Chatting, playing games, musical downloads, and making friends	19	5.5
12.	Chatting, downloading games, musical downloads	29	8.5
13.	Total	343	100

Table 13: *Gratifications derived*

S/N	Options	Respondents	%
1.	Escape from boredom	Nil	Nil
2.	Entertainment and relaxation	143	41.7
3.	Getting information	154	44.9
4.	More than one option		
5.	Escape from boredom, entertainment and relaxation, and getting information	46	13.4
6.	Total	342	100

About upholding Nigeria’s cultural values and according it appreciable representation at global level, we observed in our study of the *Representation of Nigerian Indigenous Culture in Nollywood* (Asogwa, Onoja, & Ojih, 2015) that Nollywood dwells much on the negative aspect of the nation’s cultural practices to the detriment of the nation’s image. Again, we noted in the study that the practice of imitating foreign cultural values at the expense of Nigeria’s rich cultural heritage in pursuit of popular audience, profit maximization, is needless and purely antithetical and represents a huge step back for Nigeria and the continent’s fight against cultural erosion and imperialism by western cultures.

Within the Nigerian setting, there is high level of moral decadence and juvenile delinquencies, which may not necessarily be all attributed to emerging media culture, but certainly, to a large extent. I have interrogated this phenomenon over time and the results seem to be consistent. In 2017, I collaborated with other scholars to examine the *Socio-sexual Interaction of Social Networking Sites among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Kogi State* (Ojih, Asogwa, & Onoja, 2017). We confirmed from the study that the social networking sites are ready platforms for an unfettered expression. “The social mobility provided by these sites make them all the more attractive to the students and somehow infectious to others (inactive or indifferent observers). Therefore, there is an obvious uninterrupted exodus of youths from the offline world to the online world” (p.147). The anonymized platforms offer the students the needed cover for sexual expressions especially for the shy and naïve ones (see Tables 14, 15 and 16).

Table 14: *Respondents' use of SNSs (multiple choice allowed) (n=376)*

Institutions	KSU (n=218)		FCE (n=62)		FPI (n=96)		Sub Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Relationship/Dating	122	16	42	25	56	22	220	58.5
Sexual satisfaction	48	6	12	7	11	5	71	18.9
Escapism	123	17	38	22	49	20	210	55.9
Religion	97	13	25	14	38	16	160	42.6
Information/Research	126	17	23	13	34	14	183	48.7
Social Expression	101	14	14	8	24	10	139	37
Social participation	121	16	15	9	26	11	162	43.1
Others	7	1	4	2	6	2	17	4.5

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Table 15: *Themes that dominate discussion on SNSs as many as are applicable (n=376)*

Institutions	KSU (n=218)		FCE (n=62)		FPI (n=96)		Sub Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Academics	179	18	37	11	41	10	257	68.4
Gossip	97	9	32	10	29	7	158	42
Politics	100	10	30	9	28	7	158	42
Love	101	10	38	11	51	12	190	50.5
Sex	36	3	18	5	25	6	79	21
Dating	104	10	41	11	43	11	188	50
Health	39	4	12	4	18	5	69	18.4
Fashion	87	8	32	10	46	12	165	43.9
Events	97	9	29	9	39	10	165	43.9
Sports	99	9	39	12	40	10	178	47.3
Religion	98	9	22	7	39	10	159	42.3
Others	7	1	2	1	0	0	9	2.4

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Table 16: *Factors that endear respondents to the use of SNSs for social purposes (n=376)*

Institutions	KSU (n=218)		FCE (n=62)		FPI (n=96)		Sub Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Response								
Privacy	67	31	16	26	20	21	103	27
Freedom	52	24	12	19	22	23	86	23
Ease of use	14	6	9	15	15	16	38	10
Affordability	21	10	7	11	16	17	44	12
Accessibility	33	15	9	15	11	11	53	14
Portability	18	8	5	8	11	11	34	9
Others	13	6	4	6	1	1	18	5
Total	218	100	62	100	96	100	376	100
Social participation	121	16	15	9	26	11	162	43.1
Others	7	1	4	2	6	2	17	4.5

In our study of *Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and Sexual Behaviour of Tertiary Institutions Students in Kogi State, Asogwa*, Ojih, and Onoja (2018) found that social networking sites contribute to student's formative sexual behaviour via their exposure to nude/semi-nude, pornographic, and other sexual innuendos on social media platforms. These experiences on the SNSs influence them.

Table 17: *Sexual materials often portrayed/exchanged on SNSs (n=376)*

Institutions	KSU (n=218)		FCE (n=62)		FPI (n=96)		Sub Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Nude/Semi Nude Pictures	61	28	18	29	31	32	110	29
Pornographic Scenes	28	13	10	16	17	18	55	15
Pornographic Sites	42	19	6	10	16	17	64	17
Sexually Suggestive Language	79	36	28	45	29	30	136	36
Others	8	4	0	0	3	3	11	3
Total	218	100	62	100	96	100	376	100

Source: *Fieldwork, 2014*

Asogwa, Ojih, and Onoja (2018) further observed that the influence of exposure to sex-related contents especially among the youths is both positive and negative; however, the negative impact is more pronounced, debilitating, and far-reaching on their psyche (p.58). These days, it is not strange to see an avalanche of students’ sexual escapades on social networking sites, such as the cases of Babcock University, University of Lagos, University of Ilorin students, etc. which trended on social media recently. Nudity is now a money-making venture. There is currently an increase in the “fan-only” contents on Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok where youths release their nudes for premium subscription and followership. In other words, distribution and exposure to sexual contents on SNS is our “new normal”, although, we seem to pretend about it. The high level of moral decadence among our children is staring us in the face and calls for urgent action to sanitize the system.

This, indeed, is our reality; “the complications of the ‘digital age,’ the confusion of the ‘digital natives’ and the concern of the ‘digital migrants’ – the uninitiated analogue generation” (Asogwa, Ojih, & Onoja, 2018, p.59) who may also be accomplices in the moral bankruptcy.

7.0 Media and Good Governance

Media in its correlational function is considered as the watchdog of the society as well as the fourth estate of the realm. The media plays a crucial role in directing the tide of governance. The media has a unique way of rallying the masses to embrace policies geared towards development. The media at the same time creates the platform to hold governments accountable. According to **Asogwa (2018)**, good governance thrives when there is full participation of citizens, and efficient flow of information and dialogue between citizens and governments (p.31). This is achievable through a two-way flow of communication: from the government to the governed and the governed to the government. The media remain the conduit through which this process can flourish. It creates a platform for a robust political debate as we experience them today; sets agenda for good governance through stimulating the

mechanism of transparency and accountability and ultimately performs the watchdog roles.

Unarguably, communication is the oil that lubricates the engine of development in the society in general. And this is made possible through the mass media.

8.0. Unethical Practices and Media Regulations: Reining-in the media without the Journalists?

As the media is the conduit through which information is communicated to the members of the public, journalists remain the brain behind the communication. In other words, communication does not just happen without the journalists who source, package and transmit it. Consequently, it becomes necessary to imagine what a regulated media could be without reining-in the journalists. Journalists wield enormous power; little wonder the maxim “the pen is mightier than the sword”. They direct the flow, tone, and mood of every communication disseminated. Journalists determine news frame or news angles which can invariably shape public opinion, responses, attitudes, and/or dispositions towards the issues reported (**Asogwa & Ejembi, 2017; Asogwa, & Asemah, 2012**).

Part of the study we conducted was to explore journalists’ performance in the face of insurgency in Nigeria (**Asogwa & Atuluku, 2018; and Asogwa & Ekwueme, 2012**). We noted in the study that journalists’ reportage of insurgency has moderately helped in addressing the problem of insurgency in Nigeria. According to our findings, journalists devised certain strategies such as disguising, eavesdropping to report on security and insurgency in order to de-escalate their ravaging impact (**Asogwa & Atuluku, 2018, p.63**) (see **Tables 18, 19, 20, 21**).

Table 18: *Does Acceptance of Brown Envelope Affect Objectivity of News Reporting?*

Option	Frequency	Percentage
It does not	23	25.8
It does	42	47.2
Does not always	14	15.7
Undecided	10	11.2
Total	89	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 19: *What are the reasons for acceptance of brown envelope in Kogi State?*

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Poor remuneration	40	44.9
Pressure from news sources	24	27
Poor journalistic training	15	16.9
Harsh economic situation	10	11.2
Total	89	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 20: *How is brown envelope perceived in your station?*

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Brown envelope is perceived as a gift from news sources and not as bribe	44	49.4
Perceived as bribe	10	11.2
As a special privilege enjoyed by journalists in the practice of journalism	25	28.1
Undecided	10	11.2
Total	89	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 21: *What are the influences of the brown envelope syndrome on journalism practice in Kogi State?*

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Important issues are downplayed	35	39.3
Truth is covered up	20	22.5
Professionalism and ethics are trampled	20	22.5
Makes journalists toothless	14	15.7
Total	89	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

9.0. Have We Lost Our Privacy and Security in the Open Cyberspace?

While the media have impressive functional roles in the society, the dysfunctional roles are evident and could be counted as the pains in our media experience. Our world is so saturated with mediated contents such that we cannot stay away from the avalanche of messages that inundate us on daily basis. In fact, the internet has created an information superhighway with encumbering information overload. It is just so difficult to cope with the loads of information that are available to us. In a collaborative study (Asogwa, Okeke, Gever, & Ezeah, 2020), we found that the impact of media is felt on every sphere of the public engagement platforms, advertising inclusive. To this end, we observed that advertisers have capitalized on the potency of the social media to package, promote, and disseminate intrusive advertisements, largely unsolicited to the unsuspecting consumers (Asogwa, et al. 2020). It is a common experience to see advertisements pop up in your routine internet surfing and could even be a condition to access the actual content you seek. This experience most times is irritating, disruptive, and distracting. But then, we live with the experience in our everyday quest to gratify our numerous media and communication needs.

Asogwa (2019), in a similar study that examined public perception of the influence of digital media on cyber security in Nigeria, found that the

digital media are significantly and negatively affecting cyber security breaches, and promoting cybercrimes. These extend to financial fraud, time of data recovery and reputational image damage (p.367).

Table 22: *Influence of Digital Media on Cyber Security Breaches*

S/N	Item statements	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	People use digital media features to access individual’s personal data	3.2	.88	Accepted
2.	People use digital media features to access corporations’ data	3.1	.89	Accepted
3.	People use digital media features to duplicate individual’s online profile	2.8	.77	Accepted
4.	People use digital media features to duplicate corporation’s website	2.9	.69	Accepted
5.	People use digital media features to manipulate individual			

The study found some sort of ambivalence in public’s view on safety and privacy in internet-based media. Paradoxically, while freedom and unfettered access is guaranteed in the cyberspace, there is a general sense of loss of privacy and autonomy in the autonomized and decentralized digital platforms. As such, the issues of identity theft (impersonation), privacy, hacking, human trafficking, and cyberbullying, etc. were all identified as critical issues of concerns with the ‘unregulated’ space (Asogwa, 2019). The study, therefore, proffered some recommendations including legislations with stiffer punishments; prosecution of those alleged to have been engaged in cyber security breaches; media sensitization campaigns against cyber security breaches and public sensitization on how to prevent cyber security breaches and increased privacy. These recommendations all align with my current propositions and will be discussed further in this lecture.

10.0. Nigerian Social Media Regulation Policy: When the Sacred Cow is involved!

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, the global community today feels the empowered public sphere with the emergence of the internet. I have noted in this discourse that the internet has revolutionized the manner in which communicative acts are conducted with plenitude of merits and demerits. In essence, Nigeria is not alone in contending with the enormous challenges associated with the gateless communication pathway. As a matter of fact, authoritarian states like China have long promulgated and implemented some restrictive policies against social media use in particular and the internet in general. Advanced democracies like the United States of America and the United Kingdom have also sought avenues to checkmate social media use through legislation, especially after the Capitol riot in 2021 largely attributed to the former president Donald Trump's inciting posts on the social media. In Nigeria, the #EndSARS protest, the most mobilized protest in the history of Nigeria's democracy, is still very fresh in our memories. Many believe that the idea of the protest was hatched on twitter pages and the mobilization for participation thereafter. These go on to reinforce the earlier established fact that the media in general and the social media in particular have proven to be potent tools for social engagement especially in expressing discontent with bad governance and oppressive regimes.

To that extent, the Nigerian government has realized that social media, if left unchecked, could be an avenue to undermine national sovereignty and de-legitimatize under-performing administrations as witnessed in the country in the last seven years of the President Buhari's administration. In one fell swoop, the Nigerian Federal Government, through the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) introduced the code of practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms/Internet Intermediaries in June, 2022 (Jaiyeola, 2022). This code of practice was targeted at internet service providers including the internet intermediaries under which the social media is classified. Of course, there are already existing regulatory codes for the mainstream

media superintended by such regulatory agencies as the Nigerian Communications Commission, the Nigerian Press Council, the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission, etc. Under the NITDA code of practice, the Interactive Computer Service Platforms comprise sites that provide reviews, gaming platform, and online sites for conducting commercial transactions. While the Internet Intermediary include all social media operators, websites, blogs, media sharing websites, online discussion forums, streaming platforms, and other similar platforms. With the NITDA code, all these platforms are expected to function or operate within the ambits of the regulatory codes.

Part of the regulation stipulates that such large platforms as Twitter and Facebook shall:

On demand, furnish a user, or authorized government agency with information on: (a) reason behind popular online content demand and the factor or figure behind the influence (b) why users get specific information on their timelines.

These regulations, in my opinion are timely but on a condition that effective caveats are instituted to guide against abuse. The Social Responsibility theory of the media promotes self-regulation, although cannot be determined in its rights without obvious controversies. However, there is a question of sincerity and embeddedness of politics on the side of government. Specifically, we are all witnesses to the Federal Government of Nigeria's Twitter ban on June 4, 2021. Twitter was considered to have gone overboard by touching a sacred cow when the platform deleted President Buhari's tweet. It calls to question the challenge of double standard in implementing a constituted code of practice. Again, as contended by other school of thoughts, these codes are mere rules that do not have the backing of the act of parliament which invariably whittles down their binding force as a law (Abayomi-Olukunle, 2022). Then I ask, what is the way forward?

11.1. Parting Shot! Reining-in the Media Collectively, where do we come in?

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, it is my desire for us to establish a common ground from this lecture today. And our point of intersection will lie in our collective resolve to rein-in the media through a process of deep-rooted basic knowledge of media principles and operations, that is, through **Media Education**. The concept of media education is not new in media and communication literature; however, the implementation has been a mirage. The idea of media education, as the name implies, entails a deliberate approach to educate, train, and empower people to develop the needed competencies to engage with and/or consume media contents including developing a knowledge of media operations and structure (Media Education Foundation, 2023; Lamonaca, 2021). This becomes necessary when we realize how the media exert different degrees of influence in the way we conduct our daily affairs. This is certainly true and real whether we admit it or not. Lee (2010) referred to this media influence as the “invisible curriculum of the mass media” (p.2). A deliberate but strategic process of implementing media education remains the surest way of equipping people to readily recognize possible media influences as well as condition the people to engage with the media responsibly.

In the public sphere, we all find our voices. We have the powers to say, and the right to be heard. But like the common adage says, “when everybody is talking at the same time, nobody is actually talking” no sense will be made. Here comes the need for regulations; for all of us to wear our responsibility caps. Responsibility entails thinking before talking; verifying before circulating; empathizing in criticism; being assertive in enforcement, amongst others. I therefore, wish to reinforce the assumptions of the Social Responsibility Theory in this lecture to reiterate the need for an informed media use especially in this era of citizen journalism; to foster that sense of responsibility; and to guide not only the professional practitioners but indeed, you and I that have been caught up in the web of citizen journalism to communicate with

responsibility and in total compliance with set down rules, regulations, and code of ethics guiding communication in general.

Unverified information has done a lot of damages in our society. We are not unaware of the series of panic attacks associated with fake news especially during the pandemics like the Ebola outbreaks and the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria; protests that have resulted in wanton destruction of property and loss of lives especially in post-election violence in the north as a result of some unchecked utterances that went viral in the media. These are some instances of negative implications of unregulated and dysfunctional communication in our society.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, we already established that media of mass communication is so powerful that it could build or mend as well as destroy at even a greater rate. Therefore, the cherished tool must be protected and maintained for greater efficiency. Here comes the recommendations' going forward:

1. **Media Education to be mainstreamed into the National Curriculum at all Levels:** Media literacy is the way to go. In this era of citizen journalism driven by communication technologies, everyone must acquire the media literacy skills to communicate in this open space. I therefore reiterate the need for a strategic integration of **Media Education** in our mainstream education curriculum. The reason for this recommendation is not far-fetched; it takes a trained mind to be responsible. In other words, responsibility is a product of training acquired through education. It should therefore be our collective responsibility to enforce a compulsory media education and for all of us to, at the same time, make ourselves available for such education since we cannot do without the media and communication.
2. **Media regulations must be de-politicized:** While it is extremely difficult to separate the media, including its vested interests and ownership from politics, policymakers must learn and deliberately work towards drawing a clear line between

responsibility to the society through the tenets of good journalism, quality governance and politics. In this instance, good governance must begin where politics ends, and vice versa. Enforcement of media regulations must never be selective. The hammer of enforcement should be allowed to freely fall on all defaulters regardless of status or affiliations.

3. **We must engage and communicate with decorum:** Every human being has been generally endowed with the gift of rationality. This singular gift and characteristic distinguish us from other animals. We have been gifted by nature to discern good from evil; right from wrong etc. why we seem not to realize and use this free gift remains a puzzle.
4. **There is need for institutionalized ethics of communication that must be certified:** For all of us to communicate with decorum, it is important we as a matter of necessity take at least a certificate course in communication.
Before one is appointed into any management or administrative positions, such a person must run certificate courses in some aspects of communication. This will also make public office holders, managers, and administrators to be responsible communicators. The Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, FUYOYE is already pioneering this effort. Our online certificate courses will soon be available and accessible just for a token fee. Avail yourself of this opportunity and be trained to communicate ethically.
5. There should be gender sensitivity and general empathy in our communication. We must learn to respect the rights of others especially women in the open sphere. If we are sensitive to people's feelings, then we must think, pause, before we compose, post, or repost any message. Therefore, part of media regulation should include removing all avenues that tend to isolate or limit equal access and participation by all especially the underrepresented groups in our society (women).

So today, Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I stand to reaffirm the need for decorum **in our engagements in the public sphere and the need to collectively rein-in the media for all of us to enjoy the gateless communication space.** But for us to maintain the desired decorum in the public sphere, media literacy remains the key!

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MY SOUL NOW GLORIFIES

My soul now glorifies
The Lord who is my savior
Rejoice for who am I
That God has shown me favour

But by His power the great
The proud the self-conceited
The kings who sit in state
Are humbled and defeated

The world shall call me blessed
And ponder on my story
In me is manifest
God's greatness and His glory

He feeds the starving poor
He guards His holy nation
Fulfilling what He swore
Long since in revelation

For those who are His friends
And keep His laws as holy
His mercy never ends
And He exalts the lowly

Then glorify with me
The Lord who is my savior
One Holy Trinity
Forever and forever.

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Profile of Professor Chika Euphemia Asogwa

Professor Chika Asogwa was born into the family of late Chief Pius Ejinima and Lolo Agnes Oyibo Asogwa on 1st of April, 1974. She had her primary school education at Premier Primary School, Ehalumona and her secondary school education at Girl's Secondary School, Isieniu, Nsukka. She obtained Diplomas in German and Italian Languages from the Institut Teutonicus Landstuhl, Germany and the Siena University of Foreigners, Siena, Italy respectively. Prof. Asogwa obtained her B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in Mass Communication from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy between 2006 and 2008. She finally bagged a PhD in Social Communications from the Pontifical Angelicum University, Rome, Italy in 2010.

Upon return to Nigeria in 2011, she enrolled for a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) with the National Teachers Institute, Kaduna; affiliated to Usman Danfodiyo, University, Sokoto which she completed in 2012

Prof. Asogwa's research interests/specialization cuts across the field of Broadcast Journalism; Social /New Media Studies; Gender and Behavioural Change Communication Studies; Health Communication and Strategic Communication.

Academic Career

Kogi State University, Anyingba (KSU)

Prof. Asogwa's professional career life has focused on the development of Nigeria's University Education. She has served at different capacities in various universities as an academic and as an administrator. She served as the Head of Department, Mass Communication at the Kogi State University (KSU), Anyingba from 2011 to 2016 and served in various prominent committees in the same university. Specifically, she was the Mass Communication Department's Postgraduate Coordinator, from 2011 to 2012; Member of the Departmental Appointment and Promotion Committee from 2011 to 2016; Member of KSU Faculty Management Board from 2011 to 2016; Senator at Kogi State University from 2011 to

2016; Member of Research and Ethics Committee (CHS) from 2015 to 2016; Member, Senate Committee Taskforce on Keep KSU Clean and Green from 2012 to 2016; Member KSU Convocation Committee on Publicity in 2012; Member KSU Matriculation Sub-Committee on Publicity in 2012; Resource Person, Kogi State University Consultancy Services, Human Resource Development and Training Programmes in 2014; Member KSU Students Disciplinary Committee from 2014 to 2016; Member KSU SUG Electoral Committee between 2014 and 2015; Member KSU Staff Certificate Verification Committee from 2014 to 2016; Member KSU Youth Friendly Centre Committee in 2016; and Member KSU Central Scheduling Committee in 2016.

Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE)

She transited to the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti and single-handedly started the department of Mass Communication in 2016. That placed her as the pioneer Head of the Department till 2021. While serving as the Head of Department, she doubled as the Deputy Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, a Senator, and eventually the acting Dean of the faculty in 2021. Prof. Asogwa featured and still features very prominently in numerous committees in FUOYE. Just as she did at her former place of work, KSU, she has served (and still currently serving in some capacities) as: a Senator Federal University Oye-Ekiti from 2016 till date; Member Faculty Management Board, FUOYE from 2016 till date; member of Staff Files Verification Committee in 2017; Member Committee on Review of Appointments in 2021; Chairperson University Sports Committee from 2021 till date; Member Committee on Review of APER form of non-teaching Staff in 2021; Member, Curriculum Committee of Senate from 2021 till date; Member, Steering Committee for the establishment of a College of Medicine in 2021; Member, University Central Research Board from 2019 till date; Member Management Board for Sandwich and Affiliate Programmes from 2021 to 2023; Member University Budget Planning Committee in 2021; Member, School of Postgraduate Board from 2021 till date; Member, Procurement Committee from 2021 to 2023; Member Reconciliation committee in

2021; Member of Governing Council, Federal University Oye-Ekiti from 2020 to date; Director Academic Planning 2021 to 2023; and currently the pioneer Dean of Faculty of Communication and Media Studies.

Grants and Awards

Prof. Asogwa has attracted numerous grants and awards including the TETFund conference grant to Spain (2023); TETFund NIGRANT Research Training in Cologne, Germany (2022); TETFund Research grant (2021); TETFUND Book/Manuscript Sponsorship (2019); Travel grant by TETFUND for a conference in Chicago, USA (2016); Travel grant by TETFUND for a conference in United Kingdom (2015); and Travel grant by TETFund for a conference in Berlin, Germany (2013).

She was among the few Nigerian Communication Scholars who received the maiden prestigious African Council for Communication Education's (ACCE) Scholars and Membership of the Council (SACCE) Award in January 2023.

Creative Outputs/Publications

Prof. Asogwa has authored several books including: "Public Relations Mix", "Models and Theories of Communication", "Broadcast Production Techniques: A Comprehensive Guide", and "International Advertising and Propaganda." She has over seventy (70) publications in books, book Chapters, journal articles and conference proceedings to her credit.

Membership of Editorial Boards/Editorial Engagements

Prof. Asogwa has sat (and still sits) at the editorial board of several prominent journals. For instance, she was the Editor of Kogi State University Journal of Mass Communication from 2011 to 2016; Associate Editor, International Journal of Communication, UNN from 2012 to date; Editorial Consultant, Journal of General Studies, Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja from 2012 to 2014; Editorial Advisory Board, Makurdi Journal of Communication Research in 2013; Associate Editor, Novena Journal of Communication from 2017 to 2020; Associate Editor,

GOJAS Journal (ESUT) from 2018 to date; Associate Editor, IAA Journal of Communication from 2018 to date; Editor, Journal of Contemporary Humanities and Social Sciences in 2019; and currently, the Editor of FUYOYE Journal of Communication.

Membership of Professional Bodies and Conferences

She has featured in international and local conferences where she made meaningful contributions through paper presentations in Germany, USA, UK, Spain, Ghana, etc.

Prof. Chika belongs to several professional associations including: the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE - Nigeria); Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR); Member Research and Development Network; Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC); Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN); and International Society for Development and Sustainability (ISDS).

External Examiner and Graduate Supervision

Prof. Asogwa has successfully supervised over one hundred (100) B.Sc., twenty-seven (27) M.Sc., and four (4) PGD students. She has functioned as PhD External Examiner (two (2) PhD candidates and four (4) MSc. students) at Afe Babalola University in 2022; External examiner, Federal Polytechnic, Offa from 2016 to 2020; and External examiner, Wesley University, Ondo State from 2017 to 2022.

Prof. Chika Asogwa is a religious and belongs to the Daughters of Divine Love Congregation.

Previous Inaugural Lecturers

S/N	Names of Lecturers	Titles of Lectures	Dates
1.	Prof. Cecilia Olufunke Akintayo	The Place of Plant Oil Derived Products as Sustainable Replacement for Petrochemical Products in Industries	April 12, 2019
2.	Prof. Rasaki Ojo Bakare	The Healing Properties of the Performative Trinity for a Troubled Society	July 17, 2019
3.	Prof. Jeremiah Shola Omotola	The Troubled Trinity: Elections, Democracy and Development in Nigeria	December 14, 2021
4.	Prof. Mojisola Adenike Oyarekua	Economic Potentials of Under-Utilized Staples for Sustainable Infant Nutritional Requirements in Nigeria	December 15, 2021
5.	Prof. Emmanuel Gbenga Olumayede	Atmospheric volatile organic compounds and particulate matters pollution in Nigeria cities: the inconvenience of the aerosol	2022
6.	Prof. Olugbenga O. Amu	Waste to Strength: The Experience of Stabilization in Road Construction	November 30, 2022
7.	Prof. Tajudeen Bolanle Opoola	Linguistics and Languages as Scientific Tools for Nation Building: The Nigerian Perspectives.	January 19, 2023.
8.	Prof. Abiodun Akeem Ajiboye	The Seeds and Seedlings: The Homes and Occupants, The Recipes for an Aggressive Agro-Revolution in Nigeria	Feb. 7, 2023

9.	Prof. Bukola Olalekan Bolaji	Renewable Energy and Natural Refrigerants: The Veritable Tools for Solving the Major Environmental Problems	February 14, 2023
10.	Prof. Babatunde Afolabi	Cutthroat Obligations: Quandary in Acres of Diamonds	July 19, 2023
11.	Prof. Azeez Olusola Olaniyan	Nigeria and the Undying Spirit of Separatism	August 15, 2023
12.	Prof. Olaitan Akinsanmi	The Prodigious Capabilities of Electromagnetic Field and the Absolute Reliance of Techno-Dynamism on their August Existence	November 17, 2023
13.	Prof. Olusola J. Ojo	Rocking the Rocks and Unearthing the Earth for the Benefit of Mankind	December 12, 2023