JOURNALISTIC PERCEPTION ON VERIFICATION OF NEWS ACCOUNTS FOR SELECTED PRINT MEDIA PUBLICATIONS IN UASIN-GISHU COUNTY, KENYA

BY

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DECLARATION

Declaration by the Student

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, for being my greatest motivators.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

News verification allows journalists to disseminate precise information that the public can use to base their decisions. Nonetheless, there are growing concerns in Kenya over inaccurate news reports disseminated in the mainstream media platforms which could have been prompted by inefficient news verification techniques employed by mainstream media as well as inadequate competencies possessed by journalists in verifying news. The aim of this study was to investigate journalistic perception on verification of news accounts for selected print media publications in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya with the goal of suggesting suitable interventions to facilitate verification of news accounts in order to disseminate accurate information. The research questions were: How do journalists perceive the journalistic practice of verifying news accounts for selected print media publications? What are journalists' perceptions in the possession of knowledge and skills on verification of news accounts for selected print media publications? What are the perceived pressures prominent in the journalists' decision to verify news accounts for selected print media publications? This study was guided by Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), gate keeping theory and social responsibility theory. The study adopted a qualitative approach and a case study research design owing to its ability to elicit in-depth information. The research population of interest comprised of fifteen key informants from Uasin Gishu County comprising of editors and journalists who were sampled purposively while news subjects and critical readers were selected based on journalists' references. Face-to-face interviews with informants and content analysis of selected six newspaper articles that met the inclusion criteria were used to collect data. The data collected was then analyzed thematically. Study findings revealed subconscious factors that might explain non-verification behavior include: journalists' lack of personal motivation mediated by their unfavorable wages, inaccessibility to valuable information, and journalists' routine behaviors of sharing news scripts among media colleagues. Further, journalists' shortcomings in evaluating the information they encounter are well documented in this study. The non-existent questioning of information, blurred distinctions between fact and opinion in news, poor news selection criteria that is biased towards selection of elite sources is an indication that journalists do not have the knowledge and skills to critically engage with news. This prevents them from discerning factual and inaccurate content because critical analysis of information demands conscious and thoughtful interrogation of information so that meaning can be interpreted. Additionally, the study finds that media deviates in some measurable way from a desirable standard of accuracy because of conflicting interests between journalists and pressure groups including the state and political actors, media funders, and editorial supervisors. The conflict of interests also arises from the immediacy nature of news cycle where journalists are forced to skip verifying news owing to the belief that news consumers expect speedy news. The study concluded that journalist's low self-efficacy and external locus of control serve as restraints that shape the news they produce. The study recommends that interventions aimed at promoting news verification among journalists should target development of implementation regulations for the existing policy on Access to Information, development of campaigns that create positive thoughts about the importance of verifying news, review of journalists' salary structure, commissioning of studies on news consumers' perceptions, and continuous upskilling, reskilling and training of journalists.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ATT   - Attitudes toward a targeted behavior

CEO   - Chief Executive Officer

KNH   - Kenyatta National Hospital

MCK   - Media Council of Kenya

MTRH   - Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital

NIIMS   - National Integrated Identity Management System

NMG   - Nation Media Group

PBC   - Perceived behavioral control

SG   - Standard Group

SN   - Subjective norms

SRT   - Social Responsibility Theory of the press

TPB   - Theory of Planned Behavior

UCC   - Uganda Communications Commission

UNESCO   - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

News- According to Niblock (2005), for content to be termed as news in the media, it has to be newsworthy in the sense that it impacts the lives of people, has some element of newness, and is a 'scoop'. The content has to be about queer and/or prominent people or present some element of conflict. In this study, news is operationalized as newsworthy information published on print media platforms and interpreted as non-fictional by journalists.

News subjects- These are informants or eye witnesses that journalists reach out to in search for information on topical matters of interest or accounts of events. The information provided is then selectively used by journalist as a building block in news construction.

Critical readers- The term refers to news consumers with news literacy. The term is operationalized in this study as news readers with ability to analyze news texts, identify reliable news sources, question the source of news stories, and interpret the stories while spotting the possible violation of the principle of factual reportage in the press.

Print media- Print media refers to material printed on paper in form of newsletters, brochures, memos, flyers, letters and

are designed for either public or private consumption within a specified environment (Kipphan, 2001). In this study however, print media is interpreted as written content available on traditional newspapers on a regular basis as a form of public communication. The study does not just refer to all content on newspaper but it specifically looks at content that qualifies as newsworthy news defined in preceding sections.

Journalist-

Niblock (2005) describes journalism as a gatekeeping process and journalists as individuals who construct new but compelling and factual content suitable for public consumption. In this study journalists are defined as gatekeepers who filter information that gets to the public through print media platforms. They are reporters who perform an interpretational role by inferring events, and framing the events in a particular social or cultural context to make it intelligible for news consumers.

News verification-

News verification, identifies journalism as a distinct form of communication in comparison to entertainment, propaganda, art or pure fiction (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). It is a process that entails journalists treating every piece of information they come across with skepticism (Godler & Reich, 2017), and evaluating it to ascertain its accuracy prior to

incorporating it in news reports (Brandtzaeg et al., 2016; Tylor, 2015). In the present study, news verification is looked at as a news-judgment process from discovery to transmission or publication of information on print media and does not exclude the reporting and writing stages of news.

Content analysis- This refers a research method used in searching the presence of particular words, themes, or concepts within qualitative data in form of text for purposes of determining meanings and relationships of the words, themes, or concepts. In this study content analysis is operationalized as a critical examination performed by the researcher on the language used within the news articles written by journalists in-order to search for bias, partiality, or any elements of inaccurate reporting to complement interviews data.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter covers an overview of the study on news verification in journalism. This study is based on the conviction that journalism is a discipline in the field of communication studies. News verification is situated in the sub-topic of news judgments and the subject of mass communication. There in the researchers' topic is journalistic perceptions on the verification of news accounts for selected print media publications. The study places its focus on journalistic pursuit of accuracy which broadly refers to the construction of factual, correct and truthful news items (Zelizer, 2009).

Accuracy in news is measured variedly and in one way it has to do with how journalists source information. News is likely to be perceived as accurate when information is obtained from credible sources (Kruikemeier, S., & Lecheler, 2018) and journalists challenge sources' claims as well as the public opinions they attempt to shape (Örnebring, 2016). This implies accurate news is expected to be free from bias towards any partisan political, ethnic or religious considerations but to achieve this information has to be drawn from diverse perspectives and different groups across the demographic spectrum within which one is sourcing information.

The other measure of accuracy is in the representation of news. For news to meet this threshold, the sources need to be transparent in the news (Matthews, 2012) and information sourced has to be used in the context within which it was obtained (McGlone, 2005). Further, the content has to be comprehensive (Urban & Schweiger, 2014) and free from sensationalism (McQuail, 2005).

News accuracy is essential in preventing the public from being misled. Generally, information that is not supported by strong evidence, is unclear and unambiguous is likely to cause people to make decisions that they would have otherwise not made had they been exposed to factual information. Factual errors are also likely to put people in harm's way by ruining their reputations. Accuracy has also been viewed as a critical component in achieving a well-functioning democracy (Schudson, 2008).

This routine practice of verifying news in newsrooms is usually a collective effort of journalists including field reporters, newsroom researchers, and editors. In as much as editors are not directly tasked with scouting for evidence to corroborate news stories like the field reporters and news researchers, they give approval before news is broadcast or published. Their role is to supervise reporter's work to ascertain accuracy and ensure that journalistic content meets editorial policies of the news organization.

1.1.1 Contextualizing of Journalists Perception on Verification of News Accounts on Print Media Publications

The background of the information under the topic of study is discussed in this section. In the academic context, the study is fit within a broader body of existing research and the contribution of other researchers on the topic under study is discussed. The existing societal discourse on the topic under study is discussed in the social context. This study places emphasis on perceptions about news verification role among editors, journalists, news subjects, and selected critical readers of mainstream print media in Kenya. It specifically concentrates on creating an understanding around journalists' attitudes towards validating news accuracy, perceived barriers and enablers of performing the role, and perceived social pressures within the interest population. Whereas accurate information is described as truthful, correct and verifiable content (Harcup, 2014)   inaccurate content refers to content with spelling,

punctuation, grammatical, and typographical errors (Brautovic, Mastrapa, & John, 2020). Inaccurate content could as well be categorized as any interpretation errors, omissions, misquotation, underemphasizing or overemphasizing, or headline distortions in news (Brautovic, Mastrapa, & John, 2020). McQuail (2010) further links accuracy to objectivity and states that any content that lean towards any side of the matter being presented should be termed as inaccurate news.

News accuracy has attracted scholarly work globally. In Australia for example, Watkins (2019) reports that science-related news is covered by general journalists who are not trained in science related matters and are therefore unable to conduct critical reflections about scientific matters. In the UK, Sumner et al., (2016) found that less scrutiny is given to information obtained from institutional press releases evident by the similarities of exaggerations and warnings on press releases and news reports examined. This state of affairs has been described in earlier research (Lewis et al., 2008; Weitkamp and Eidsvaag, 2014; Sumner et al., 2016) as the reliance on a single source of information; a routine practice that heightens inaccuracy in news reportage.

Factual errors in media reports can take several forms. In Ireland, Fox, Knowlton, Maguire and Trench (2009) found that 42% of the analyzed news in Irish newspapers had errors of omissions, incorrect information, or erroneous headlines. In the US, Dickson (1994) showed that factual errors are evident in news reports that appear to be biased because in such a case, journalists liberally fail to apply neutrality and objectivity in their reporting. Journalists may often use their organizational routines (the standardized rules) and organization goals to shape news consumer's opinions with a spin in the news content or an ideology.

A Media Innovation Centre (2021) report indicates that closer home in Tanzania, the print media has a significant increase in the number of news stories without sources. The report highlights that most news reports and analyses in Tanzania media landscape lacked fairness, the views of the sources used in news were taken out of context, and the news reports are biased against certain political and social groups with minimal critical appraisals of the discourses portrayed. According to the report, the challenge of low-quality content is as a result of skill gaps among journalists, lean skilled newsrooms, lack of sustainable business models that have subjected the media to pressure by financiers, and owner's editorial interference.

Indeed, The Media Council of Tanzania (2020) observed that owners often have political and personal agendas thus they tend to manipulate media content of the news organizations they own to suit their interests. In Tanzania, journalists also face the challenge of accessing information making it difficult for them to gather information from a variety of sources in the same routine practice that verification of news accuracy demands (Reporters Sans Frontieres, 2018). They are poorly paid and this encourages them to participate in unethical practices. For example, The African Media Barometer (2015) report revealed that most journalists in Tanzania only write reports about organizations or events, on condition that they are paid by the sources to do so. This implies that the stories are highly compromised in that they may sensationalize content, or misrepresent and distort facts.

The state is not different in Uganda where UNESCO (2018) observed journalists engaged in unbalanced reporting. The UNESCO (2018) study highlights those independent institutions such as Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) and the Media Council are responsible for regulating the media in Uganda but board members of these institutions are appointed by the Minister for Information leaving

them are vulnerable to political influence consequently affecting the quality of content that journalists produce. The media legal and regulatory regime in Uganda is also restrictive limiting journalist's freedom in performing their roles. A case in point was in 2019, when UCC used the Penal Code Act section 37 on national security to order the suspension of all broadcast editors who had allowed news about an opposition politician's press conference to be aired (Kakah, 2019). In such a case, tabloid news (where the media just engages in entertainment news, satire, and jokes) is likely to take over comprehensive news reports and further complicate the goal of distinguishing factual and deceptive content (Ogola, 2017)

In his study, Tumusiime (2016) observed newsrooms continue to suffer from a dearth of experts who can perform their roles professionally due to a high rate of journalism staff turnover in Uganda. Pekkonen (2018) on the other hand reported that the media in Uganda is often faced with the challenge of seeking economic value from advertisers and in this way information that is likely to paint financiers in the negative light gets sliced out of news reports even when the information is truthful. Further, journalists in Uganda often conduct self-censorship in fear of threats and harassment reportedly from the government, police and armed forces, especially during demonstrations (UNESCO, 2018).

In South Africa, Steyn & De Beer (2004) similarly concluded that journalist's inability to be accountable and critical about news is as a result of their lack of skills in writing and checking news accuracy. Further, inexperienced journalists lacked commitment and personal accountability towards news content.

The aforementioned global challenges in effect complicate journalists' task of providing the public with accurate information. Nonetheless, information on how

journalists' attitudes and competencies may induce intentions to verify accuracy in news reports prior to publication is still rare. The role that individual behavioral beliefs about news verification exercise plays in reducing news decisional errors is given some primacy in the present study. This is for purposes of building a skeptical theory that the journalist can make reference to and balance with other information verification techniques. The present study sought to collect in-depth information by interviewing research participants in the environs of Uasin Gishu County, in Kenya. The central question asked was: How can news verification be improved in-order to increase news consumers trust over news reports accuracy?

1.2 Background Information

The study took place in the year 2019 in Kenya, among mainstream journalists working in Uasin Gishu County. Kenyan media landscape consists of four major privately-owned media organizations that publish print editions. The Nation Media Group (NMG) issues *Taifa Leo*, *Daily Nation, Business Daily*, and *The East African*. The Standard Group Limited produces *The Standard* and *The Nairobian*. Radio Africa Group and Mediamax Network Ltd publish *The Star* and *People Daily* respectively (Media Innovation Centre, 2021). In recent times, the advancement of the internet has changed journalistic practices in all of these media establishments. Today there are new information sources known as citizen journalists (Ogola & Owuor, 2016) whose role in alerting journalists of events that are unfolding in varying locations cannot be ignored (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008).

1.2.1 Selected print media publications in Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya

The researcher selected four major dailies consumed in Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya as units of analysis to gain insights into the extent to which journalists observe the principle of accuracy in reporting and factors affecting success rate of factual reportage. Four top

national newspapers were selected to reveal the patterns in communication content produced by journalists working for the diverse media organizations thus providing multiple perspectives on the research problem under investigation.

The newspaper under study were: *Daily Nation, The Standard, The Star* and *People Daily* over the period from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. *Daily Nation* and *The Standard,* are the top newspapers by audience size and share in Kenya. Whereas *Daily Nation* had a 40% market share, *The Standard* had a 20% market share based on GeoPoll's Media Measurement Service data (2015). When filtered by location, statistics indicate that the top read local newspaper in Uasin Gishu County are *Daily Nation* 58%, *The Standard* 32%, *The Star* 1% *and People Daily* 1% (Media Council of Kenya, 2020). The wide readership and popularity of the four dailies nationwide and in Uasin Gishu county suggest that the dailies are the most influential and authoritative and therefore made the primary choice suitable for study.

1.3 Statement of Problem

Previous studies (The Edelman Trust Barometer Citation, 2017; King; Vergeer, 2018; Brandtzaeg Folstad, & Dominguez, 2018; Wasserman et al., 2019) have suggested that news verification role is crucial in restraining the dissemination of misinformation on mainstream media platforms, enhancing the reputation of a content creator and a media enterprise, empowering news consumers with information to make wise decisions, and consequently developing and maintaining news consumers' trust. In particular, Vergeer (2018) notes that when sources perceive a mainstream media platform as suspicious, it could have adverse implications on revenues for the media organizations since news consumers are most likely to unsubscribe from these sources of information and go for those they perceive as reliable in sharing honest information. Brandtzaeg Folstad, & Dominguez (2018) also say when news

consumers' trust lessens, they are forced to seek information from alternative sources such as individuals on social networks that in most cases are in the business of spreading unfounded information.

Despite the benefits of verifying news accuracy prior to publication, there is a growing concern in Kenya over inaccurate reports disseminated in the mainstream media platforms (Media Council of Kenya, 2016; Gathigi, 2017; Mwaura, 2018). These inaccuracies could have resulted from inefficiencies of the information verification techniques and methods that have been put in place such as the use of automated verification tools (Heravi and Harrower, 2016), source triangulation (Shapiro et al., 2013), and guidance provided in written rules (Onyango, 2013; Migichi, 2014). For instance, the adoption of automated verification tools is not such reliable in providing the necessary means of curbing erroneous reportage since the availability of the tools and journalists' readiness to use the tools cannot be guaranteed (Hassan et al. 2015; Brandtzaeg, et al., 2018; Kouts-Klemm, 2019). Additionally, the technique is limited to evaluating versions of truths that are universally agreed.

Though journalists' education and media literacy are partly considered as parameters that could potentially curb erroneous reportage, it emerges that even with a higher level of media literacy, journalists are still unable to implement the news verification role and disseminate accurate information content and so they end up sharing imprecise reports with the public (Tylor, 2015; Vergeer, 2018). Therefore, these inaccuracies could also have resulted from a lack of requisite skills in verifying news.

By taking information at face value, the public perceive journalists as manipulators of facts because the public's expectation of them is to objectively verify information

before releasing it for user consumption. It is at this point where the researcher recognizes that journalists' salient beliefs toward news verification from the point of sourcing content to disseminating it on mainstream media platforms requires an attention. This kind of information can inform interventions that can enhance performance of the news verification role among journalists.

1.4 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate journalistic perception on verification of news accounts for selected print media publications in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya with the goal of suggesting suitable interventions to facilitate verification of news accounts in order to disseminate accurate information.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore journalist's perceptions on news verification for selected print media publications

2. To assess journalists' perceptions about their competencies on verification of news accounts for selected print media publications.

3. To determine perceived pressures prominent in the journalists' decision to verify news accounts for selected print media publications.

1.6 Research Questions

In view of the problem background, the study asked the following questions:

Q1. How do journalists perceive the journalistic practice of verifying news accounts for selected print media publications?

Q2. What are journalists' perceptions in the possession of knowledge and skills on verification of news accounts for selected print media publications?

Q3. What are the perceived pressures prominent in the journalists' decision to verify news accounts for selected print media publications?

1.7 Assumptions of the Study

If erroneous reporting persists in mainstream media platforms, news consumers will eventually cease to perceive news organization as a trustworthy source of information. The researcher therefore makes assumptions that the negative impacts of misinformation suggest the need for change in the manner in which journalists process information prior to publication. The researcher proposes that beliefs have significant implications for strategies targeted to rectify journalist's attitudes towards news verification, increase their ability to verify news, as well as correct misperceptions (if any) about expectations of their social referents. Consequently, the plausibility of this view using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is assessed.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study explains the need for conducting this study by outlining its novelty, and the contribution it will make to the already existing body of knowledge. This study was necessary because some scholars have called for enhancement of journalists' level of media literacy, adoption of verification tools and adherence to written rules but this approach has not lessened errors in media reportage more specifically in Kenya. Therefore, the present study offers a new opportunity to explore journalists' readiness to take part in news verification and how their commitment plays a crucial role in mitigating errors. This is the gap in knowledge that justified this study which will further be discussed in chapter two under literature review.

The study will be of significance to media managers and editorial staff in giving them some insights that can work best in reducing erroneous reportage in mainstream media. The researcher also envisages that the findings of the study would expand on existing body of knowledge on journalistic professional roles and be used as a basis and reference point for further research.

1.9 Scope of the Study

In the scope the researcher explains the extent to which the study topic was explored by tailoring down specific areas of information covered. The researcher further outlines parameters within which the study operated by explaining its limitation in terms of sample size and geographical area and why certain aspects of the study were excluded.

1.9.1 Scope of the Study

This research sought to understand what journalists consider as issues complicating the verification of news accuracy while further exploring their general perception towards their existing competencies and how the competencies contribute to their perceived expectations of verifying news accuracy. The study also looked at how journalist competencies play a role in journalist's decisions over the nature of information that get past news media gates to the general public. It further examined threats from internal and external organs that journalists are subjected to when vetting news prior to publication.

In as much as the problem under study affects media houses and journalists countrywide, and might have required a wider scope in coverage, the study was limited to print journalists working in four leading National newspaper publishers with regional offices in the local area of *Uasin Gishu* County in Kenya. These are:

NMG publishing *Daily Nation*, SG Plc publishing *the Standard*, Media Max limited publishing *People Daily*, and Radio Africa Group publishing *the Star newspaper*. Mainstream journalists in the region present a rich case for studying the practice of news verification because they are an essential example of journalistic routine practices in other Counties.

The study strictly used the qualitative approach because this research design has the potential to produce instructive insights. Interviews and document analysis were the main data generating techniques. Despite the limitations, the work within the scope of this study was thorough enough to guarantee the trustworthiness of the research findings. It is worth noting that qualitative research demands ethics. Hence participation in the study was on voluntary basis and each participant was requested to sign a waiver acknowledging their participation consent. Numerical codes were further used to identify participants and guarantee anonymity.

1.9.2 Limitation of the study

Journalists work under strict story submission timelines. The researcher's expectation was that this could greatly impact the level of engagement with them since they might find it difficult to spare enough time in interview sessions. The researcher also anticipated incurring travelling costs to administer and collect interviews data and this would highly be limited by inadequate funds. Due to the limited time allocated to conduct academic research at Masters level of study, the study does not account for news articles beyond the temporal sampling frame that was selected from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. Within a bounded time-frame, the researcher anticipated difficulties in determining cases of faulty reportage in news reports that are ordinarily written by professional journalists expected to adhere to high standards of journalism.

Moreover, critical readers were to be sampled through journalists references and this, the researcher expected would pose a potential bias in evaluating their perspectives.

1.10 Structure of Thesis

This thesis contains five chapters.

Chapter one: Introduction and Background to the study - It provides introduction and background to the study, statement of the problem, aim, objectives, research questions, assumptions, Significance, and scope of the Study.

Chapter two: Literature Review- Provides theories underpinning the study and reviews empirical literature that informs the study. Existing gaps are also identified this chapter.

Chapter three: Research methodology- Provides the research approach, research design, population of the study, sampling procedure and data collection instruments. Reflections on the research process, validity and reliability, data analysis strategies, and Ethical Considerations are also discussed.

 Chapter four: Data presentation, analysis and interpretation – Provides the response rate, data gathered on journalists' perceptions on verification of news accounts in selected print media publications, journalists' perceptions about their competency on verification of news accounts for selected print media publications, perceived pressures prominent in journalists' decision to verify news accounts for selected print media publications.

Chapter five: Summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations - provides summary of findings, conclusion and recommendation. The thesis, suggestions for further research are also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A literature review is a comprehensive survey of previous research, scholarly articles, books, and other material relevant to the topic under study. The relevance of conducting a literature review is to give a theoretical base for the research by describing, summarizing, synthesizing and/or objectively critiquing the content relevant to the topic under study. In so doing, the researcher identifies the intellectual progressions in the field of study, learns and evaluates the research methodologies used previously, and finds strengths, weaknesses, and arguments in previous works. In this chapter, the literature on news verification in journalism is reviewed since the researcher's focus is to examine journalists' roles within this context. The researcher begins by discussing the theoretical framework that underpins the study followed by the rationale for the study based on the literature review.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework explains how concepts that serve as the basis for the study are related. The purpose of using a theoretical framework was to first provide a definite form and order to the area of inquiry thus serving as a guide on how empirical data would be collected and analyzed.

2.2.1 Theory of Planned Behavior

News verification is widely conceived as a cycle of planned activities ranging from sourcing information, preparing it into journalistic content, and deciding what to disseminate to the general public. It is therefore considered a planned behavior most suitable to be understood using Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) introduced by Ajzen (1985) which assumes that human behavior is planned. According to this

theory, an individual's planned behavior is determined by their intention to perform the behavior. Intention therefore, is the cognitive readiness to voluntarily act on a behavior and people are more likely to perform a behavior when their intentions are strong (Ajzen, 1991).

TPB further postulates that intention is a function of individual's attitudes toward the targeted behavior (ATT), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC). The three constructs can be evaluated indirectly by assessing corresponding salient beliefs which in turn determine intentions and performance of targeted behavior. ATT is assumed to be formed as a result of behavioral beliefs about the behavior, PBC formed on the basis of control beliefs, and SN is associated with normative beliefs. In this context, behavioral beliefs refer to individual thoughts about the outcome of performing a targeted behavior. The assumption is that these beliefs about consequences of an action guide individual's attitudes towards the targeted behavior and the attendant intention to perform it. Behavioral beliefs determine diverse individual's intentions and ultimately the performance (not) of an act (Ajzen, 1991). When individuals evaluate a targeted behavior and believe the outcome of engaging in it will be desirable, their attitudes towards it will be favorable, intentions to engage in the behavior become stronger and the likelihood of performing the act increases. When they negatively evaluate the consequences of engaging in the behavior, their intention to engage in it lessens and they would most likely fail to perform it.

Control beliefs refer to an individuals' perception of his/her control over the targeted behavior. Their perceived behavioral control is determined by the beliefs of how easy or difficult it is to perform the behavior, beliefs about availability of anticipated resources, and beliefs about ability to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991).When

individuals believe the targeted behavior is easy to perform, the necessary anticipated resources to perform it are available, they are able to perform it, and they succeeded at performing the behavior in the past, they will most likely perceive they have control over the targeted behavior, their intentions to perform it will be strong and they will ultimately perform it.

Normative beliefs are individual views regarding social pressures from their crucial social referents. If a person believes there is a social pressure to perform a behavior that comes from people s/he considers important, s/he will have the inclination to fulfill the expectations of the social referents and will ultimately perform the targeted act. But if the individual feels the social referents disapprove of them performing the behavior they will most likely fail to act on the behavior.

2.2.1.1 Relevance of the Theory to the Study

The TPB however does not account for subconscious influences on behavior. It does not explain how some behaviors may happen without the intentions to perform the behavior or without prior planning. To determine the journalistic subconscious influences on verification or non-verification of news accounts for selected print media publications, the present study looks at non-verification behavior as an unintentional behavior by asking the question of journalists' perceptions on verification of news accounts for selected print media publications. It extends the TPB model and examines how past habitual or routine behaviors, internal and external locus of control, and self-efficacy influence subsequent behavior. The criteria used to screen potential truthful, accurate, fair, objective, relevant, and comprehensive stories from all the information available on the news desk and reject other content does not have a theoretical underpinning in the TPB but can best be understood through the lens of Gate Keeping Theory discussed below.

2.2.2 Gate Keeping Theory

The term "gate keeping" was originally coined by Kurt Lewin (1947) and later developed to be used as a theory which creates an understanding around information filtering in the field of mass communication (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). In gate keeping, information is culled and crafted into limited number of messages that are allowed for public consumption (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). According to this theory, gate keepers control news that reach the public and news that stay behind gates (Welbers and Opgenhaffen, 2018). In the traditional media landscape, gate keepers can consist of media owners, editors, media researchers, and journalists.

Lewin (1947) used a metaphor to explain the role of editors in which he describes housewives as gatekeepers within a family who decided food consumption patterns. Analogously, editors are "gate keepers" who may use their ethical principles, news organizational policies, and biases to decide whether information will get published or discarded. Journalists on the other hand play the role by deciding what to report (Welbers and Opgenhaffen, 2018). The editors and journalists are further guided by publication deadlines, professional writing and editorial routines, personal values, attitudes, ethics, and socialization within the employing media organizations (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). There are also factors such as the idea of self-censorship in media organizations, advertiser's demands, pressures from government and interest groups, as well as news consumers that have an effect on the decision over news diffused to the public.

Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, and Wrigley (2001) revised the Gate keeping theory by studying how news gatekeeping forces relate to the coverage of Congressional bills. They wanted to understand forces that determine how prominently a bill is covered in news. They categorized the hypothesized forces into two: 1) the routine gatekeeping

force of assessing a bill's newsworthiness 2) the individual journalistic forces (education, political ideology, work experience, ethnicity, gender, voting behavior). Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, and Wrigley (2001) supposed that the newsworthiness of a bill would be more important than journalists' personal characteristics in determining how prominently a bill is covered in news. They therefore surveyed news writer's personal characteristics alongside editors' role of evaluating newsworthiness and theorized that only newsworthiness had a significant effect on the extent of coverage given to a bill.

2.2.2.1 Relevance of the Theory to the Study

Lewin's Gate keeping theory proposes circumstances that affect how journalists select facts to be released through to the public. It however negates the idea of individual traits contributing to the news selection process. Gate keeping in media can as well take place through framing in news media where journalists choose to gather and present facts that they believe will fit the frame of their specific news organization yet this might compromise the accuracy of a story.

In this research therefore, individual journalist's traits, and news values contributing to news selection and creation of media messages by journalists is given some primacy. The theory addresses the question on journalists' perceptions on their competencies to verify news accounts for selected print media publications. Journalistic knowledge and skills are viewed as a personal characteristic that may inform news verification practices. Written articles are similarly analyzed to determine the framing used and how it relates to the general concept of newsworthiness and accuracy of news. The societal obligation of journalists and the manner in which it informs their practices is not explained in the gate keeping theory but may be well understood within the frameworks of Social Responsibility Theory.

2.2.3 Social Responsibility Theory of the press

Social Responsibility Theory of the press (SRT) was coined by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) reinforces the importance of the press to fulfill certain obligations to society by acting in a professional way. It spells the obligation for media practitioners is to provide news that is relevant and trustworthy, as well as opportunities for diverse voices to be heard in the public arena (Siebert et al., 1956). SRT further posits that in fulfilling these societal obligations, the press should be free but be self-regulated. The responsibility of media professionals therefore, is to adhere to stipulated codes of ethics and professional standards of operation (McQuail, 2010).

The arguments of the theory were developed from the Hutchins Commission 1947 report, which stated that media professionals together with a free, responsible press geared towards public-interests have a role to provide truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning. It also has a duty to provide a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism, project a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society, as well as present and clarify goals and values of the society. The SRT also stipulates that the society and public have a right to expect high standards of media performance, and intervention can be justified to secure that right.

2.2.3.1 Relevance of the Theory to the Study

Through the SRT the study examines the extent at which journalist perceive there are pressures that control how responsibly they perform their normative roles. The SRT does not take into account that a responsible media can be under state control and therefore not in line with the principles of public service. It does not anticipate a situation where the media may be the mouthpiece for those in authority who fund the media and in such scenarios, journalists may fail to act ethically. The state may

further put in place censorship boards and establish institutions to regulate functions of the media making it difficult for the media to portray matters accurately. The present research therefore raises the question of pressures prominent in the journalists' decision to verify news accounts for selected print media publications and inform the public of what is happening around them in a truthful, accurate, fair, objective, relevant, and comprehensive way.

2.3 Review of Related Literature

The subsequent sub- sections give an overview of the existing literature related to the problem under study, a critical evaluation of the information, and gaps identified within the studies. The study is located in the body of existing literature.

2.3.1 Journalists' perceptions on news verification

The study of journalists and their professional roles in the society is not a new line of inquiry. Herscovitz (2004) focused on comparative research into journalistic professional role perceptions and reported that whereas Brazilian journalists view their extremely important journalistic role is to investigate government claims, American and French journalists respectively rank getting information to the public quickly and avoiding stories with unverified content as extremely important journalistic roles.

In Kenya, Ireri (2017) conducted a survey of 504 journalists on their role perceptions and observed that Kenyan journalists believe their most critical professional role is to provide citizens with information (61.3 percent), followed by the role(s) of advocating for social change (51.7 percent), supporting official policies (46.9 percent), motivating people to participate in civic activities (45.6 percent), and acting as watchdog of government (35.3 percent). In as much as journalists indicated their most

important role is provision of information to the public, cases in the print media tend to suggest the information provided is not always credible and accurate. For example, at a time when the president of Kenya was to preside over the re-launch of Rivatex textile factory, in Eldoret town, the *Daily Nation* published an article titled: "Jitters over Uhuru Kenyatta visit to DP Ruto turf amid growing rift," (20th June, 2019). The author of this story wrote, "Reports last evening indicated that President Kenyatta's handlers were uncomfortable with Mr Sudi speaking at the event and preferred the speeches be limited to the Uasin Gishu senator, governor and Mr Ruto before President Kenyatta makes his speech". The use of distancing words 'reports indicated' in the article suggest the writer lacked concrete evidence to ascertain the accuracy of the information disseminated to the public.

Journalist's inability to verify and ascertain the accuracy in information prior to dissemination could stem from the heavy workload they are assigned to perform in a day. For example, research has shown that a Kenyan radio journalist roughly produces 46 news items in a week while a television journalist roughly produces 33 news items in a week (Ireri, 2015). This means a journalist who works for six days in a week produces an estimate of between 5 to 7 stories in a day possibly limiting the time they need to check the quality of content they produce. But it also suggests that journalists may be holding the view that a news consumer is more interested in a lot of content that is disseminated at a faster speed and cares very minimal about the production process that requires analysis and interpretation of facts.

Perhaps the pressure to submit news and at a faster speed has given rise to a breaking news culture where journalists come across news stories but they take knee-jerk reactions by perceiving it as a scoop. A case in point where it was evident that media industry players did not take keen interest in carrying out consultations with their

information sources is a publication of an erroneous obituary of a businessman by *Daily Nation* on 7th February, 2018. The businessman (Jimmy Wanjigi) in the obituary is a prominent figure. A journalists' curiosity would have been aroused by claims of his death, enough to make them go and confirm the authenticity of the information. This erroneous information about Wanjigis' death would have been avoided before the paper went to press if journalists only viewed source information merely as an alert and at the same time a red flag that raises suspicion. Ultimately with a skeptical attitude, a journalist can be prompted to confirm claims beyond sources claims. Although this illustration may indicate sensationalism where journalists compete to be the first to report without counter-checking what their sources are saying it could as well be a prompt of the compelling obligation to verify news prior to its publication.

Their ability to disseminate accurate news could as well result from a settled tendency of arm chair journalism where journalists produce news scripts from their colleagues' scripts regardless of the factual errors that could be embedded in the scripts. For instance, the *Standard* (2019) and *Daily Nation* (2019) produced copies of newspaper editions carrying similar headlines: "Private schools top". This coinciding information by independent writers could imply that journalists believe in their colleagues' perception of reality hence any content borrowed from colleagues is assumed to be factual and requiring no verification. But the other question that arises is whether news organization have adequately provided necessary resources for journalists to independently scout for information and championed for the right to information access that can make them more in control of verifying news accuracy. It also implies there could be a myriad of factors within journalist's social context that inform their perceived behavioral control and ultimately their actual verification of news to

ascertain the information they disseminate to the public is intertwined with tangible evidence.

A group of scholars (Onyango, 2013; Migichi, 2014; Kamenchu, 2015) attempt to answer the question of how journalists think they can overcome the challenge of disseminating inaccurate content and observe that reportorial errors could be curbed if journalists adhered to guidance provided in their written rules such as code of ethics and in-house social media policies. Written rules are indeed put in place to govern human behavior but they remain coercive in nature and may not be very useful in yielding positive results among industry players. Not unless the creators of the rules have the ability to enforce them, to assume that in all information contexts journalists will adhere to written rules defeats the purpose of logical reasoning and may very well slow the progress towards reducing errors in news reports. Moreover, even if the creators harness actors' adherence to stipulated rules, faulty reports may still be disseminated in mainstream media reports. It is still a question of whether or not the creators of the rules acknowledge individuals have to be eager to engage in the task of evaluating accuracy in news. Therefore, they are bound to take varying approaches when presented with information. But because the rules are abstractly scripted to negate individual differences while treating everyone with the same principles, enforcing them may be an exercise in futility.

For instance, an individuals' concept of a tasks' low controllability predisposes them to see their capability to fact-check and achieve accuracy as low, and therefore even if attempts are made to force them into adhering to written rules of authenticating information, the individuals' efforts may keep diminishing. Media Council Act (2013) in Kenya may instruct outcome by stipulating journalists must write fair, accurate and unbiased stories, but they such rules are not persuasive enough to change the actions

of individuals who are predisposed by their aversion to processing news. For instance, Obuya & Ong'ondo (2019) report that journalists are usually cautious of legal constraints when performing their roles implying performance of their role(s) is influenced by psychological factors; they will be more willing to perform their roles because they want to avert law suits and not because they are coerced into so doing. The literature reviewed raises the question of the extent at which journalist perceive they are acting responsibly by performing their normative role of informing the public of what is happening around them in a truthful, accurate, fair, objective, relevant, and comprehensive way. Could there be internal or external obstacles that hinder journalist from verifying news?

2.3.1.1 Journalistic biases

Entman (2010) categorizes media bias into three including distortion, content, and decision-making bias. Distortion bias takes place when journalists distort or falsify reality. Content bias refers to a situation where journalists disseminate news that favor one side rather than providing equal treatment to both sides in a story. Decision-making bias takes place when there are cognitive factors that motivate journalists to produce biased content. In previous scholarship (Entman, 2010; McCombs and Ghanem, 2001) framing, agenda-setting, and priming in news have been studied to recognize patterns of media bias. For instance, Boudana (2016) categorizes bias as statement bias to imply when journalists express themselves in a way that favors one side of a story and coverage bias to imply a situation when journalists fail to give the same weight to both sides' points of view.

In Kenya, Oriare, Okello-Orlale, and Ugangu (2010) observed that the public demands a media that respects and operates under the principles of public interest and impartially. Nonetheless, (Nyanjom, 2012; Mwita, 2021) found that after the disputed

2007 elections, concerns were raised over media's production and dissemination of content that incites news consumers, self-censorship and biased reporting. Biases and partisanship in Kenyan media are reflected in ownership structures, management, and editorial decisions (Ugangu, Herrick and Harwood, 2017). The case is not different in Nigeria where Oso (2012) traces the origin from pre-independence era when the country was preparing for her first general elections in 1959 and finds that the relationship between media ownership and political affiliation has been evident in Nigerian newspapers. Politicians use the media to advance their interests and enhance their publicity.

Under an ideal situation of following normative practices, it is expected that the media balances competing interests and gives attention and susceptibilities of different audiences. Publicly declaring and disclosing of media's private or sectarian interests is viewed as one of the best practices for a non-biased media (Oriare, Okello-Orlale, and Ugangu, 2010). According to Media Innovation Centre (2021), impartiality is judged by comprehensiveness, story structure, and the linking of different parts of a story logically. In the study commissioned in Tanzania, Media Innovation Centre (2021) found that most stories in print media had lone or no sources and had weaknesses in the way journalists gave the right to reply to accused people in the stories. Similarly, African Media Barometer (2019) report reveals lack of fairness in most Tanzania's news reports and analyses, poor representation of the views of sources, and bias against certain political and social groups. The report further highlights that most news reports and analyses tend to follow the dominant state-led.

Theorists Paul and Elder (2019) have argued that it is indeed difficult for the media to stay clear of biases because there is a lot of content competing to get through media gates and access the limited media space (McKain, 2005; Shoemaker, 2006).

Shoemaker (2006) has further argued that the conflict arises in the news selection criteria which makes it difficult for the media to disseminate non-biased reports. Boudana, (2016) however notes that there is limited information on conceptualization of and measurement of media bias and so this research attempts to examine the gate keeping process that can take place through statement and content bias in news thus affecting its accuracy.

2.3.1.2 Media funding models

In a recent report that analyzed the democratic erosion and the assault on press freedom in 16 global countries, Musgrave (2021) noted that when the media's independence is infringed, the society loses an independent watchdog, space for civic action is increasingly restricted, and autocratic governments gain the freedom to control the public debate and set its own agenda. Global studies have shown that in the case of Africa, media outlets largely rely on the archaic model of funding from states and advertising corporates and this gives an upper hand to governments in Africa to use advertising revenue as a covert instrument to suppress press freedom. Ad funding absolutely undermines editorial independence because media outlets feel obliged to compromise ethical, critical, and public interest journalism in favor of their financiers needs (Bachmann, Hunziker, and Ruedy, 2019).

For Foster (2017), new challenges emanate from the structure of news distribution and audience behavior, along with changes in how advertising media is bought, sold, and distributed. The contemporary order is that news consumers have shifted to digital and mobile spaces resulting in a pull of traditional media's targeted corporates' advertising revenue to internet giants such as Google, Facebook, Baidu, Yahoo, and Microsoft. These tech giants scoop the largest revenue from adverts, and take away the economic incentive that motivates traditional media outlets to perform their

normative societal function (Schiffrin, 2018). The study therefore looks at how the commercial value of the media hinders journalists from adequately discharging their responsibilities.

2.3.1.3 Legal issues

Legislative instruments may equally be used in to exert editorial pressures on journalists and the media. Sections of the constitution of Kenya such as libel and defamation laws may be applied as a punitive measure to sue journalists and media establishments appearing to be critical and in turn this muzzles a free because the violation of laws deepens journalists' inability to present media narratives within a structural framework that gives them meaning as their duties demand. Journalists in Kenya are limited by Section 102 (1) of Kenya Information and Communication Amendment [KICA] Act 2013 which brought about the establishment of a Tribunal known as the Communications and Multimedia Appeals that is constitutional mandated under section 102A(I) to hear complaints from a person aggrieved by: any publication by or conduct of a journalist or media enterprise. Upon hearing the complaints, section 102E (1) of KICA Act 2013 authorizes the tribunal members to pass judgments such as ordering the offending party to publish an apology and correction, return, repair, or replace any equipment or material confiscated or destroyed, or issue a public reprimand of the journalist or media enterprise involved.

The legislative measures remain coercive in nature owing to the harsh penalties spelt on journalists perceived to be offenders of vaguely defined laws. Section 102E (1)(f) gives powers to the tribunal members to impose hefty fines of not more than Ksh.20Million [USD 169707.25] on any media enterprise and up to Ksh. 500,000 [USD 4242.68] on any journalist adjudged to have violated the Act. The tribunal can also under subsection(1)(h) recommend the deregistration of a journalist found guilty

of subverting the laws. Journalists and Media outlets in Kenya may hence impose deliberate censorship in a bid to avoid harsh penalties should they be found on the wrong side of ambiguously defined state laws.

Conroy-Krutz (2020) argues that coercive legislations put in place to combat hate speech and disinformation are attempts to control information that is hostile to those in authority. There are African states that have made progressive reforms in terms of reforming draconian legislations. In 2018, Gambia's Supreme Court upheld provisions of defamation laws that criminalize statements likely to promote hatred among "different classes" and sedition relating to the country's president and judicial processes but at the same time declared defamation laws that criminalize the spread of false news online as unconstitutional. This move has been viewed by Reporters Sans Frontieres (2019) as progressive towards press freedom in Gambia contrary to president Yahyah Jammeh's era when spreading false news online could attract a penalty of up to 15 years in jail and a fine of D3 million (approximately USD 55463.11) under the 2013 amendments to the country's ICT Act. The study therefore examines whether journalists are protected from legal frameworks and how news quality may suffer in the absence of protective measures.

2.3.2 Competencies on news verification

The mainstream media according to Nordenstreng (2009) is confronted with challenges of disinformation, fake news, political micro-targeting and a loss of trust and this has left educators with a perception that journalism students should be best placed to acquire knowledge and skills in fact-checking, media and data literacy, knowledge about media ethics and accountability. Yet studies (Tylor, 2015; Vergeer, 2018) have shown that even with a higher level of media literacy, journalists are still unable to verify and disseminate accurate information and so they end up sharing

imprecise reports with the public. The findings of Iyer (2015) further indicate that basic journalistic education may not be enough for journalists to acquire all the competencies needed in performing their professional roles.

In line with the findings from previous scholarship, there is considerable debate over why journalists fail to positively associate their journalistic practices with the knowledge acquired from journalism training. For instance, Spillman (2017) is of the view that in the training of journalists, efforts should be geared towards imparting knowledge that can practically be applied to acquire a skillset. Indeed, there is some evidence of resistance to "theory" from UK journalism educators. Greenberg (2007) conducted a survey among journalism educators in the UK and 12 of the 17 respondents noted that theoretical work is based on ignorance or misconception of journalism realities making it harmful to journalist trainees since it confuses and demoralizes them. For Spillman (2017), the focus should be on innovative teaching methods such as hybrid learning, immersive learning, experiential learning and community-oriented learning.

Berger and Woodfall (2012) and Wolfe (2014) examined how journalism training institutions can measure up to industrial expectations of a trained journalist by working with industry experts on online educational platforms. Berger and Woodfall (2012) and Wolfe (2014) found that although the training institutions can benefit from this type of collaboration with the industry through digitized education platforms, the uptake of this type of training is quite slow. Berger and Foote (2017) reiterate that journalism training institutions can no longer operate in isolation if they are to sharpen the general knowledge of trained journalists and enable them to apply the knowledge practically in the industry.

Scholars (Goodman and Steyn, 2017; Nowak; 2019) have however argued against training for the needs of the media industry because the media companies demand for journalists has significantly reduced. At the same time, (Goodman and Steyn, 2017; Nowak; 2019) note that it is impractical to impart all round knowledge in a technological field since technological trends and digital platforms are vast and dynamic. Whereas it is true that it is nearly impossible to offer training on all technological components since technology keeps changing and requires innovative methods of adapting to changes frequently, it is still important for individual journalists to acquire knowledge that they can translate into necessary skillsets for fact-checking news content.

In national journalism education discourse in countries like Tanzania (e.g Mfumbusa, 2010) and Kenya (e.g Amukuzi, 2018), majority of journalism trainees are considered unskilled and incompetent by editors and the professional journalistic industry. Research that was conducted across ten African countries by Skjerdal and Ngugi (2007) reveals that what hampers journalism training in Africa is the lack of qualified instructors, books and modern equipment. Skjerdal and Ngugi (2007) also found that expatriate teaching takes place in most African journalism schools in form of on-site or online teaching and this deepens internationalization of the teaching models. Both Skjerdal and Ngugi (2007) and Banda et al. (2007) argue the problem lies in the western-centric journalism curriculum that prevents trained journalists from assimilating their knowledge creation process to real life experiences in industrial practice within the African settings.

Mano (2009) carried out a survey in selected Sub-Saharan institutions of higher learning including University of Nsukka in Nigeria and Makerere University in Uganda and found that the teaching programs in journalism institutions rely heavily

on Western philosophies and the curricula is based of global north curricula. Mano (2009) also observed that the African training institutions use reading material written by Western authors and relate more to Western contexts and lived experiences.

In South Africa, De Beer et al. (2017) found that journalism education is still grounded on Anglo-American roots and the training offered in journalism institutions is not at par with industrial expectations. Scholars (Obijiofor and Hanusch, 2011; Ezumah, 2019) have indeed raised concerns over the use of journalism models and textbooks from western countries for instruction in African journalism education institutions. The general argument is that these learning and reading content is produced by western authors who write about western case studies which are not in touch with experiences in the global South. The implication therefore is that trained journalists set out to practice journalism in actual industrial settings have a higher likelihood of deficiencies in specialized knowledge needed in sourcing facts, interpreting the facts, and making sense of the world so that they can present accessible information for the public.

Hence the central argument has been that in order to prepare journalists for professional settings, the training curriculum has to be De-Westernized, decolonized, domesticated or Africanized; implying in general terms that the curricula has to be revamped and made more African in order to mirror the African culture (Motsaathebe, 2011).

Namwaya (1999) further decries the deficiency in skillsets among journalism trainees in the global South and attributes this inadequacy to a lack of exposure to practical work in training sessions and insufficient training equipment like computers in journalism schools. The bone of contention however, has always been on how to

strike the right balance between theoretical and practical work that journalists should be exposed to (Hermann, 2017). In his study, Finberg (2013) found that journalists and journalism educators consider journalism a reflective practice that needs knowledge but a distinct way in which the practice and knowledge will be given a fair share of attention in journalism schools is yet to be identified.

2.3.2.1 Competencies in evaluating sources

The idea of how to go about making certain that the information shared with the public is truthful begins with the skill of evaluating sources to include in news reports. Source selection criterion has widely been discussed in discourse about journalism sourcing practices. For example, Van der Meer et al. (2017) analyzed the sources reporters use to cover political crises and state that journalists are gatekeepers who hold the power to select the sources they include in news stories based on source credibility, amount of knowledge a source has and trustworthiness of a source.

In his survey, Albaek (2011) found that journalists mainly used knowledgeable sources for background and analysis because they were considered experts in subject matters. Broersma et al. (2013) on the other hand found that journalists are more likely to select and include in news sources that they can easily reach, those that are eager to talk with the journalists, and those that can provide timely information owing to the speedy nature of the news cycle. More empirical work on journalists' sourcing practices indicate that journalists are predisposed to seek information from sources they have established a relationship with over time (Manning, 2012). This criterion for source selection according to Veil (2012) is critical because a good relationship between the sources and journalists results in sources acceptance to talk to journalists and in a timely manner.

The other criteria used in evaluating sources to use in news reports is the categorization given to news sources by journalists. For example, the types of sources preferred by journalists are those that are independent as opposed to self-interested sources. Multiple sources are also preferred in comparison to using a single source in news. Sources that provide verifiable information are most likely to be included in news in comparison to sources that merely assert. Research has also shown that journalists privilege authoritative sources than those that lack authoritative background. The other type of sources that are preferred are named sources than anonymous (Dimitrova and Stromback, 2009; Reich, 2009; Carlson, 2010).

From the foregoing, Head et al. (2018) have argued that the role of instructors in journalism training institutions is to underscore how to assess sources of information which is a skill that many students often pay no attention to. The present study therefore examines whether journalists have a background pedagogy on assessing the credibility of sources or they use heuristics based on normative news selection criteria discussed in the literature. It further goes on to examine how the criteria of news selection used can either lead to factual or inaccurate reporting in news

2.3.2.2 Competencies in critical assessment of information

The goal of finding out whether information is truthful also entails the knowledge and skills of being critical of information and evidence (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). Nonetheless, across varying academic fields and disciplines, college teachers have documented that many vocational training students today do not read enough and do not know how to critically read (Ihara and Del Principe, 2018; Johnson 2019). Yet there is a lack of consensus, particularly in the discipline of journalism, as to who can perform the duty of instructing journalism trainees on the knowledge and skills of critically analyzing information (Johnston and Webber, 2003).

This knowledge and skills of critically assessing information has for long been conceptualized as media and news literacy skills. It is about knowledge of personal and social processes by which news is produced, distributed, and consumed, and skills needed in thinking critically in the context of decision making (Inayatillah, 2018; UNESCO, 2019; Vraga et al., 2021). According to UNESCO (2019), media and information literacy skills is made up of five areas related to the fundamental journalistic 5Ws and 1H: What, who, when, where, why, and how. The areas are: access, analysis and comprehension, critical evaluation, use, creation and engagement.

Vraga et al. (2021) says that context refers to the skill of understanding the role that institutions can play in influencing news content, and the economic as well as legal constraints encountered in news production. Creation refers to the skills necessary in understanding news selection based on the criteria used to determine the newsworthiness of news. Content refers to the skill necessary in understanding criteria of news values and differentiating between advertising, news writing and writing an opinion about news, as well as skills necessary in evaluating news credibility. Circulation is the skill necessary in understanding varieties of actors in a social system that influence the circulation of news. For instance, a journalist is expected to understand that information appearing in social feeds and search engines are usually personalized and so caution must be taken not to judge such information as credible at face value but to critically analyze it and determine its accuracy. Consumption is the skill necessary in understanding that news attention, exposure and evaluation can be influenced by individual biases and predispositions and thus journalists should be able to evaluate how their individual biases and predispositions may influence their evaluation of news veracity.

On this backdrop, news literacy has been viewed as important in the training of students (Rafste, 2002; Liampatcharat, 2005; King-O'Brien, 2021; UNESCO, 2011). For instance, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2011) recently published a curriculum for Media and Information Literacy. (UNESCO) (2011) underscores the importance of educators to integrate media and information literacy in their instruction. It highlights pedagogical methods, curricula and resources necessary in this respect.

In Ireland, Courtney (2017) conducted a study in six higher education institutions offering Bachelors of Arts in Journalism, Broadcasting and Media Studies to examine the extent to which information literacy is being taught and observed that journalism students, may require to have some form of information literacy incorporated into their syllabus so as to increase their awareness of fake news stories, creating a narrative of being objective and become reliable news creators. The question that lingers however is whether practicing journalists in Uasin Gishu county have developed the skills necessary in assessing news to know if information they come across is true or false and that is the primary focus of this study.

2.3.3 Pressure in journalists decision to verify news

The level of control journalists have over their own work within media organizations has been conceptualized under the theme of journalistic workplace autonomy defined as the extent to which journalists are free to decide on: the stories they cover or edit, the selection of story angles, sources, and narrative frames along with the extent to which journalists can take part and influence decisions that affect their work beyond operative procedures of reporting and editing (Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). In line with this, limits of professional autonomy emanate from various sources operating at three levels of influence which are the individual journalist, the organization, and the

society (Reese, 2001; Weaver et al., 2007; Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). At the individual level influences are concerned with characteristics of the individual communicator (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014) who in this case are journalists. The individual characteristics are then conceptualized to include journalistic education and personal vs professional background, personal attitudes, values and beliefs or experiences such as political attitudes or religious beliefs, professional orientations and role conception of individual journalists (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The society level of influence is concerned with power centers in society and the environment that the media operates (Reese 2001). In essence it may concern the governments of the day and how they exert influence on the media and its role performance as well as how these kinds of influences shape trust in media. The organizational level of influence refers to policies, unwritten rules, and economic imperatives within news media that may have an impact on how news is presented (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013).

In existing literature, the autonomy of journalists is constantly determined by external influences on news work such as political and state control (Picard & Van Weezel, 2008), legislation, and regulations (Ferre, 2009), and commercial pressures (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Preston and Metykova, 2009; McManus, 2009). The growing competition among news organizations and side-lining of journalists in decision making equally affects journalists autonomy in their work (Glasser & Gunther, 2005).

Hanitzsch et al. (2010) conducted a survey of 1,700 journalists from seventeen countries around the world to find out journalists perceived influences on their autonomy and found coercive forces that affect journalists autonomy can be conceptualized in six dimensions. The first dimension is the political influences which

include pressures emanating from the state and political actors through acts of censorship and press bans. Hanitzsch et al. (2010) found the second dimension of influences to be economic which include profit margin goals of the media, relationship with advertising agencies and reliance on advertising revenue, market pressures and audience research. The third dimension of influences is organizational influences that include factors such as media ownership and decision-making structures within the editorial hierarchy that exert force through interference or intimidation. The fourth dimension of influences as discussed by Hanitzsch et al. (2010) is procedural influences including news routines, deadlines and editorial resources assigned to journalists. Professional influences were identified as the fifth dimension of journalistic influences and it encompasses professional conventions, newsroom editorial policies and media laws and regulations. Hanitzsch et al. (2010) identified reference groups influence as the sixth dimension of influences on journalistic work and is conceived to include influence from competitors, colleagues in other media organizations, audiences, friends and family.

A survey across eighteen countries conducted by Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011) identified a more simplified category of influence on journalists work to encompass news deadlines, my colleagues in my news organization, supervisor and higher editors, feedback from audience, ownership of media organization, profit expectations, and advertisers.

In the African context, there is indeed evidence that journalistic practices are influenced by a broad range of individual, organizational and social-context factors. In Nigeria, Ciboh (2017) found that state agencies use monetary incentives, intimidation, and violence to limit journalists autonomy. Additionally, Adesoji and Alimi (2012) observed that the media in Nigeria is privately or politically owned and

the owners exercise influence over the content produced to reflect their personal financial or political ambitions and interests.

In Tanzania, Powell (2017) found the media's professional autonomy is limited by government intimidation and regulations, economic uncertainties, and skill deficiencies. The case is not different in Rwanda where Frere (2009) reports of intimidation, arrests, seizure of publications, denial of advertising revenues as methods that have been used by the state to limit the autonomy of the press. The aforementioned factors that curtain journalists freedom have an impact on news authenticity because they limit journalists ability to fact find and objectively inform the public.

However, the influences of management teams on journalistic work has been understudied in the literature regarding internal constraints on journalistic autonomy (Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013; Ornebring et al., 2016). This happens at a time when both Fedler (2002) and Clarke (2010) have theorized that the variance in the work and goals of journalists and editors negatively impacts journalists' ability to perform their professional roles. In this research therefore, attention is focused on how decision-making structures within the editorial hierarchy limits journalists perceived professional autonomy and impacts on the accuracy of news reports.

2.3.3.1 Time-pressure in news production

News construction entails searching for appropriate news sources, gathering information, reflecting on the information gathered, and digging deeper into information gathered. With the advancement in technology that has resulted in the introduction of new information outlets on the internet, journalists often find themselves constrained by time-pressures to engage in traditional news construction

practices that are time-consuming. For instance, Muindi (2018) conducted a study on how journalists at the *Daily Nation* newspaper in Kenya use Twitter in their day-to-day practice at the newsroom and observed that journalists have increased the speed at which they share news so that they can stay relevant on the news market that has been altered by technological advancements that are today reshaping journalistic routines.

Technological advancements have also given rise to a 24/7 news cycle in which journalists are constantly competing with each other to see who can "break the news" first yet this results in information that has been processed with lesser thought and discernment (Lewis and Cushion, 2009). The speed demands of the fast-paced publication cycles have further intensified the work of journalists in the digital environment in that they are expected to write faster and publish more (Cohen, 2019). This happens at a time when there are raising concerns over speed-driven journalism and its likelihood to affect journalists professional norms, routines and output hence undermine the accuracy and standards of journalism (Reinardy, 2010). For instance, in the northeast United States, Adornato (2014) found that journalists working in local television struggle to find the balance between the speed-driven nature of modern news with the need for reliability and rigorous search of information prior to dissemination of news. Correspondingly, Alejandro (2010) reports that journalists acknowledge speed demands has forced them to abandon traditional practices of fact checking, contacting sources and following up on leads.

Time pressures among journalists can also be pinned on journalists workload. For example, in Brazil, Fernandes and Jorge (2017) found that time pressures among journalists can be attributed to multi-tasking. Fernandes and Jorge (2017) observed that a single journalist can be tasked with selecting facts and suggesting stories,

organizing reports, checking facts, writing and rewriting journalistic texts, taking photographs, editing and publishing among other tasks which were initially performed by multiple professionals in the media industry. As a result, journalists are likely to be incapable to engage in lengthy activities such as scouting for facts and this makes them vulnerable to erroneous reporting.

In addition to this, empirical studies have shown that time pressures do not only affect the practices of journalists but extend to editorial teams and result in deceitful content being published on mainstream media platforms. A case in point is Reinardy's (2010) study conducted in the US which revealed that some editors are well-disposed to compromise news quality for immediacy. Editors are in the rush to publish the content they perceive to be trending in social media platforms with the assumption that the content interests the public yet this content may not necessarily be factual (Adornato, 2016).

Further, the challenge with time pressures on news construction is that it limits professional excellence by making journalists to be more liable to using ready-made textual information, such as public relations and press releases in their stories with less source diversity, less cross-checking and more of leaked content as evident in the study conducted by Reich and Godler (2014) in Israel.

On this backdrop, scholars have argued against speed driven journalism and advocated for slow journalism conceptualized as non-competitive form of journalism that places more emphasis on context than speed, in-depth reporting, takes time to research, focuses on storytelling, values accuracy and quality, does not try to be the first to report, and avoids celebrities, and sensationalism (Le Masurier, 2015; Neveu, 2016; Rauch, 2018). Slow journalism requires following ethical ideals such as

journalists allowing the voice of the underrepresented and marginalized groups to be heard in the media (Palau-Sampio, 2019). Others have suggested that slow journalism practices require journalists to refrain from polarizing the society (Drok & Hermans, 2015), sensational reporting, competition, the rush to publish scoops, and profit-seeking activities (Berkey-Gerard, 2009). Slow journalism further entails balance in news reporting in the sense that all parties in a story are awarded time to engage with topics (Rauch, 2018). By so doing, journalists will be performing their role of creating an understanding around complex information that is important to the general public (Craig, 2016). Gess (2012) further states that slow journalism is advantageous since it results in information that is thoroughly researched, of high quality, ethical, and one that does not cause harm to the society. Therefore, through interviews with journalists, the researcher sought to examine the journalistic practices of journalists in Uasin Gishu county and understand the extent at which the journalists conform to the ideals of slow journalism that have been championed to be rooted in achieving accuracy in news reporting.

2.3.3.2 Journalists work conditions

Globally, journalists work under extremely difficult circumstances such as risks from state and non-state actors, meager pay, professional insecurity occasioned by lack of contracts, political ownership of the news media, as well as declining systems of self-control and self-regulation among others that are believed to have an impact on their work output. Media actors are constantly subjected to violence worldwide and these patterns of violence can be categorized into exclusionary, inclusionary and noise according to Nerone (1994). Whereas exclusionary violence is aimed at preventing media attention from certain events, inclusionary violence is aimed at forcing media attention toward specific issues and noise has no clear purpose (Nerone, 1994).

Wanyande (1996) and Kalyango and Eckler (2010) further reiterate that the Global South, state-owned and independent media organizations have endured censorship, threats, intimidation, detainment, beatings, arrests, direct political control and other types of government interference for a long period of time. Journalists are often subjected to threats when covering matters concerning corruption, illegal activities and actors such as drug-traffickers, death squads, guerrilla movements, and police violence (Waisbord, 2019).

Research has additionally shown that journalists in Africa are not sufficiently compensated for their efforts and are therefore attracted to other professions leaving news rooms with less qualified professionals (Atton and Mabweazara, 2011; Behrman et al., 2012). The implication of this is that the novice journalists retained in newsrooms may not be well qualified to engage in the risky task of fact-finding. For example, Lukulunga (2012) conducted a study in Congo and reported that journalists are under-paid and this limits their ability to be ethical in their work.

The downsizing of journalists in newsrooms also comes with the challenge of potential stories not being covered or superficially covered (Waisbord, 2019). For instance, Ireri's (2015) survey of Kenyan journalists job satisfaction, income satisfaction, and predictors of job satisfaction revealed that less than 4 in 10 journalists are satisfied with their monthly income because 16.6% earn less than US$375 (currently Kenya Shillings 55,800) per month and slightly below a quarter (22.4%) earn between US$375 and US$625 (currently Kenya Shillings 93,000). There are also income disparities in Kenyan newsrooms in that top earners go home with US$4,375 (currently Kenya Shillings 651,000) per month while low earners take home US$375(currently Kenya Shillings 55,800). Ireri (2015) argues that the level of job satisfaction might influence journalists attitudes and behaviors in news production

and notes that it leads journalists to taking bribes from news sources in exchange of favorable coverage. The poor pay also gives rise to corrupt practices or less commitment to the profession of journalism, lowers journalists morale and productivity. This resonates with findings in Nigeria showing journalists and editors engage in brown envelope journalism by accepting money in exchange of publishing positive stories or killing negative stories (Nkwocha 2004).

Mabweazara (2010) views low wages of journalists from a varying perspective and argues that the most potential forces of influence on journalistic work that are attached to the individual level of analysis emerge from the changing trends in newsrooms where lower wages and insecure labor contracts negatively influence journalists perceived professional autonomy. Hayes and Silke (2019) says that low journalistic wages can be viewed as financial threats in the profession of journalism that result in insecure work conditions. In this context, it has been argued that financial harm largely affects journalists working on freelance basis since they usually lack the media industry's support in terms of on-the-job training geared towards better reporting practices and methods of implementing safety precautions for physical and financial safety (Brambila 2018). There is therefore a high probability that job instability results in psychological consequences in that journalists may not have the urge to perform their rigorous journalistic tasks such as fact finding.

Overall, the literature suggests journalists are constrained by the underfunded media establishments, hostility to critical news content, anti-press verbal and physical attacks, and their work conditions. The present study examines whether jounalists in Uasin Gishu County are facing similar pattern of forces, how these forces exert influence on journalists work and the implication that this may have on verification of news accuracy.

2.3.3.3 News consumers preferences

The preferences, needs, and expectations of news consumers are usually central to decision making in news rooms and hence the introduction of roles such as public editor, ombudsman, engagement editors, social media editors, and analytics editors across media companies. It is believed the afore-mentioned editors along with journalists obtain data from traditional forms of feedback such as letters to the editor and new audience feedback forms from social media comments, audience engagement figures (clicks, time spent, number of comments, shares, likes etc.), and Web analytics to guide news production practices in part (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018). Judging from the feedback that news desks obtain, there have been raising concerns over the public's perceived diminishing trustworthiness in journalists and journalism practice. The public is often confronted with thoughts of how truthful news reports are. Questions that linger are whether news headlines are authentic, whether anonymous sources cited in news stories are credible, whether the newspapers were paid to run a story, as well as whether journalists and editors are honest.

Countries that have recorded a lower public trust in news attribute this perception to curtailed journalists autonomy. For example, it was reported that the public's trust in journalists and news organizations in South Korea trust was at a paltry 17%, and the trust in news in US and Greece was at (33%) and (20%) respectively and this is attributed to perceived hostility as well as impeded journalists freedom (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2016). Other factors that have led to the lack of trust in news for example in Turkey are the public perception that the state has clamped down opposition newspapers and in Hungary, the public perceives the media is not free from state, political, and commercial interference. In such a scenario, only a small number of newspapers and television outlets can openly criticize the

government as was observed in Turkey and in Japan where respected TV news presenters with a reputation for asking tough questions have stepped down or not had contracts renewed after allegations of political pressure from the conservative government. The case is not different in France where trust in news has been affected by a perception that media tycoons who have links with high profile politicians interfere directly with editorial matters. In Italy, the public have lower trust in journalists because most-popular Italian journalists tend to clearly express their political positions within their analysis or during their participation, as guests in talk shows. In Spain the mistrust in news is as a result of journalists ideological bias, partiality, and loaded language used in news. Trust levels in news are also impacted by the rise of sponsored content in news and the tendency of journalists to systematically plagiarize content as was observed in Norway. Public trust in news is also affected by media ownership structures. For example, the public in Czech Republic have reportedly low trust in news, news organizations and journalists because local billionaires that own the press exert undue influence due to their personal political interests (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2016).

Empirical Studies in Africa have similarly shown a declining public trust in the media. For example, in Tanzania and Zambia the public perceive the media as propagandist (Gondwe 2018; Mfumbusa 2010). In Kenya, the media has been termed as *Githeri Media* as an illustration of a press that publicizes shallow reports, engages in skewed representation of political matters, sophistry, along with tabloidization which negatively affects its credibility and trust across the Kenyan public (Media Council of Kenya, 2018; Ageyo,2022).

The term trustworthiness has therefore been defined as the absence of persuasive intents as well as the honesty of the communicator and is additionally conceptualized

as a subfactor of credibility (Engelke et al., 2019). Its main dimensions are accuracy and impartiality in news reports. If news consumers are to trust news, the news has to be coherent, consistent, and accurate as well as thoroughly researched and checked. Trust in news can as well be put test through measures such as perceived press autonomy, objectivity in news reports, and diversity in news.

For example, in the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2016) survey of more than 50,000 people across 26 countries on news consumption, countries like Portugal have a reportedly high (60%) public trust in news because of a strong tradition of press freedom guaranteed under the country's constitution. Similarly, Finland reported a higher (65%) trust in news that has been enhanced by neutrality in news reporting. The mainstream media in Finland is also not politically partisan. In Germany, 50% of the respondents said they trust news and that diversity in news coverage shapes German's trust in news (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2016).

Moreover, previous studies hint that journalists can provide the public with the reason to trust news and news media by fact-checking, basing news reporting on transparently researched facts, and improving the quality of news through inclusion of facts such as independent statistics, visualizations, as well as reliable sources in news reports (Newman and Fletcher, 2017).

From the foregoing, the present study seeks to find out the required ethical standards of accuracy that can enhance trust in news as set in the news consumer's minds in Uasin Gishu county and how journalists working in media houses within the county fall short of the required ethical standards as evaluated by news consumers.

2.4 Summary

The researcher reviewed previous studies on journalists and news verification as summarized in the table below.

Table 2.1: Summary of literature review

Journalists' perceptions on news verification
➢ News verification is influenced by several factors.
Education in journalistic role concepts
➢ Research is needed to understand the efficacy of journalists' current strategies of news sourcing and information evaluation skills
➢ **Pressures prominent in journalists' decision to verify news accounts**
➢ limited information is known about how perceived recipient preferences guides the approach journalist will take in basing their news verification decisions
Rationale for the study based on reviewed literature
➢ Understanding whether journalists perceive news verification as important and reasons behind their (de)value as well as challenges in verification role performance can elicit salient beliefs that underlie journalists' intentions to take part in verifying news.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

A research methodology refers to systematic procedures that have been used in the identification, selection, processing, and analyzing of information about a topic under study so as to ascertain the results that address the research aims, objectives and research questions are valid and reliable. The research methodology is relevant in allowing the reader to evaluate that correct procedures were applied to find answers to the research questions and the analysis and interpretation of the data were accurate. The chapter explains the research approach and design used for the study as it discusses what type of data was collected, who the key informants within the population of interest are, how data was generated and analyzed, along with illustrating best practices that were used to increase trustworthiness in the study.

3.2 Research Approach

A study can utilize a qualitative, quantitative or mixed research approach. Depending on the approach selected for use, the data gathered will be in form of numbers, descriptions, or both. For qualitative approach, the objective of the research is usually to explore a problem that exists with no clear solutions. Data that takes the form of written or spoken words and textual content is collected and analyzed. The data may also include a detailed description of a researcher's observations regarding informants' body language or visual elements present in the locale of study.

A quantitative approach on the other hand is used in measuring the relationship between two variables or testing the significance of a set of hypotheses. Unlike the qualitative approach, the research questions are confirmatory and the objective of the research is usually to attest a specific prediction from one variable to another. Concise

numerical data from a large sample of research participants is usually gathered, tested, measured and analyzed using statistical analysis and comparisons to provide predictions and/or causal explanations. The approach generally seeks to quantify data and generalize results from a sample of a target population (Macdonald et al., 2008).

A mixed research approach combines the qualitative and quantitative approaches. It can have some aspect of correlational research where it strives to discover or establish the existence of a relationship or interdependence between two or more aspects of a phenomena. It can also have some aspect of explanatory research where it attempts to clarify why and how there is a relationship between two or more aspects of a phenomena. It could additionally combine some aspect of descriptive research where it attempts to systematically describe a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme, or provide information about living condition of a particular community, or describe attitudes towards a particular issue. The data is in this case both numerical and non-numerical. It thus provides multiple findings about a single phenomenon using various elements of quantitative and qualitative approaches in one research.

The present study was not seeking to prove or disapprove a hypothesis or causal relationship of some sort as it would be in the case of quantitative approach. It thus adopted the qualitative approach because the research aim and questions are exploratory in nature; limited information is known about journalist's perceptions on verification of news accounts accuracy for selected print media publications. It was not necessary to obtain concise, data-driven research results and statistical responses in the present study because the research questions required an understanding of subjective perceptions of the research participants. The phenomenon under study is indeed related to some aspect of human experience (subjective experiences and idiosyncratic ideas) that could only be expressed well in in-depth information. The

qualitative approach tends to be more appropriate in eliciting this essential rich and holistic insight on the problem under inquiry which Tracy (2013) describes as "thick description" of information. The qualitative approach thus makes a strong case for the study which required details in the information used so as to reach logical conclusions.

3.3 Research Design

Qualitative research approaches utilize varying research designs ranging from action research, semiotics, grounded research, hermeneutics case study, ethnography, discourse analysis, and narrative (Schwandt, 2001; Jackson, Drummond, & Camara, 2007; Denzin, 2008; Creswell, 2014). The behavioral problem under study is related to some aspect of real-life settings and the researcher wanted to obtain a more naturalistic understanding of the phenomena under study. For this reason, the case study research design was appropriate for use in this study. Additionally, case study research design is more suitable for the explanatory questions of 'how', 'what' and 'why' such as: How can news verification be improved in-order to increase news consumers trust over news reports accuracy?

There are various types of case studies like single instrumental, multiple, holistic, and embedded case study (Creswell, 2007; 2013). The questions raised in the study demanded the disclosure of in-depth and holistic insights therefore the present study adopted multiple-case study in which analysis across four similar cases was conducted to provide an in-depth and better answer to the research questions that were not likely to have been obtained from a single case study. This increased reliability of the study. According to Stake (2005), in a multiple case study cases are grouped and viewed as one unit referred to as the quintain so that similarities and differences about the cases can be compared to allow for a comprehensive exploration of research

questions, create a better understanding of the quintain, and achieve better theory development.

The existing literature already suggests that the problem (inaccuracy in media reports) under investigation in the present study is as a result of journalistic sloppy standards. I therefore had to pick representative cases who were journalists. The units of analysis were four leading National newspaper publishers with regional offices in the local area. These are: NMG publishing *Daily Nation*, SG Plc publishing *the Standard*, Media Max limited publishing *People Daily*, and Radio Africa Group publishing the *Star newspaper*.

3.4 Population of the Study

The target population were journalists, editors, news readers, and news subjects based in Uasin Gishu County. The journalists were targeted because they are the ones involved in the journalistic practice of verifying accuracy in news. Editors were targeted because they are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that every news item submitted by the journalists meets editorial policies and they are the ones that give consent to publication. Hence, they could in this case share their thoughts as to why there are raising concerns over news accuracy when at the backdrop, they are tasked to supervise journalists' work. News subject and critical readers were included in this study to identify perceived errors that are in the news articles, explain why they are concerned about news reports accuracy, and share their thoughts on how news reports accuracy could be made better to their satisfaction and maintain their loyalty.

The researcher selected a local area, Uasin-Gishu County, which has one state broadcaster, one news agency run by the government, and several other privately owned print and broadcast media outlets. In 2012, governance, political power,

resources, and delivery of services in Kenya were decentralized from National Government to 47 constitutionally mandated County governments. The County Government Act in 2010 Kenya's constitution (COK) envisioned mandates of a devolved system of government would be implemented effectively through communication and media outlets would serve the duty of creating awareness on matters devolution and governance, promoting citizens understanding for purposes of national cohesion, undertaking advocacy on core development issues such as agriculture, education, health, security, economics, sustainable environment among others. It hence gave impetus to establishment of devolved media outlets in counties such as Uasin-Gishu, Kisumu, Mombasa, and Nakuru among others and this justified the selection of Uasin Gishu as a local area to base the study on.

The purpose of the study was to understand beliefs about verification of news reports' accuracy for the print media and so the researcher had to strictly talk to practicing print journalists. The researcher used Kenya's Media Council (MCK) online database to identify journalists by searching the words Uasin-Gishu, and Eldoret separately because Eldoret town is the physical address of these regional outlets. The search revealed 51 registered journalists within the region but these estimates do not count those registered under media trainers, students, information officers, communication officers, and free-lance categories. 26 out of the 51 journalists work for broadcast media but the researcher limited the criteria to print journalists composed of 9 reporters working on full time basis in media houses. Table 3.1 shows the composition of the target population in the study.

It was not feasible to provide the scope of the target population used in determining the sample size of news subjects because the total population size of news subjects in Uasin Gishu county is completely unknown. The counting of units which in this case

refers to the number of news subjects in the population is not also possible because the numbers keep varying by geographic location where a journalist is gathering a news story. Therefore, the population is considered infinite. It was thus not possible to include all possible members in table 3.1 below. It thus follows that snowball sampling technique was used since the total population of news subjects in Uasin Gishu County was unknown and infinite as it would be discussed in subsequent sections.

Media houses have a database of their registered pool of subscribers that could assist in finding listed subscribers that are critical readers. Nonetheless, the media houses are bounded by internal guidelines on data protection, Article 31(c) and 9d) of the Kenyan 2010 Constitution that guarantees privacy of citizens as a fundamental right and Data Protection Act of 2019. The news organizations collect a limited amount of user's data solely for purposes of providing readers with personalized content based on individual preferences and identifying areas that require improvement. For this reason, journalists could not share details about the actual numbers and contact of their critical readers to an outside source. Snowball sampling was similarly used for this particular group to identify possible respondents capable of taking part in the study as will be discussed in preceding sections. Just two names were singled out across all media organizations as the top critical readers who had given journalists consent to share their contact information with the researcher.

Table 3.1: Composition of the target population in the study

Media Houses	Target population				Total population
	Daily Nation	The Standard	People Daily	The Star	
Editors (Bureau chiefs)	1	1	-	1	3
Print journalists working on full time basis	2	2	2	3	9
News subjects	Unknown and infinite population size	Unknown and infinite population size	Unknown and infinite population size	Unknown and infinite population size	Unknown and infinite population size
Critical readers	Infinite population size	Infinite population size	Infinite population size	Infinite population size	Infinite population size

3.5 Sampling Procedure

Sampling refers to the selection of a group of research participants from an entire larger group (Stake, 2005; Creswell, 2014). The data is then collected from the specific selected group because it is impractical to collect data from every individual in an entire population. There are two types of sampling procedures: probability and non-probability. In probability sampling the selection of research participants is random. The researcher sets out a complete sampling frame of all eligible individuals from the sample. In this selection parameter, all members have an equal chance to be chosen for the sample and the findings from the study can be generalized to the entire population.

In non-probability sampling the selection of a subset of the population is not random, there is no sampling frame of eligible individuals to begin with thus some individuals have no chance of being selected. The present study is exploratory and the purpose was to understand beliefs about news verification for print media. Therefore, the

researcher had to use the non-probability sampling technique since it allows selection of research participants based on specific set criteria. In this case the study demanded the strict selection of journalists who write for print media.

3.5.1 Sample Size

The researcher adopted a theoretical sampling upon obtaining the research permit (License 958368) from National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation. In understanding the concept of news verification in the practice of local journalism, journalist that consisted of multiple variables of potential importance such as age, gender, and levels of education were targeted. The conversation begun initially with one journalist and by the time the sixth journalist was reached, the researcher had achieved theoretical saturation since no new insights was coming forth from the responses. Whereas four journalists sampled had a working experience of five years and above, two reported a working experience of three years and all journalist that responded to the interviews were between 27 to 37 years of age.

The data obtained from journalists and analyzed informed the next category of sample to talk to: editors. *Uasin-Gishu* County is represented by three bureau chiefs who sit in office as news editors. The three cover the entire North Rift region. The researcher talked to two bureau chiefs who reported to have a working experience of above ten years in the media industry. The third bureau chief was not available for questioning at the time the study was being conducted and was therefore excluded from the study by default.

The third category of research participants was news subject and news readers. These are hard-to-reach groups that are better sampled using the snowball technique. Journalists included in the present study referred the researcher to news subjects that

they frequently source their information from. From this category of respondents, the researcher was able to get views on how journalists source information so that it would later be compared with journalists' views on how they ascertain accuracy of information sought from sources. Five news subjects were sampled.

The journalists sampled in the present study also referred the researcher to two critical readers from their pool of subscribers to daily newspaper editions. All the journalists sampled singled out the two as critical in placing the focus of my research on to gain a better understanding of how news verification can be improved to their satisfaction and enhance their trust over news media. A total of fifteen key informants took part in the study and the researcher stuck to the small number of participants to facilitate acquisition of manageable data and attain a case that is rich enough.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection refers to the systematic process of gathering information from selected sample sets to obtain answers to the research problem. Data can be categorized into qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data elicits information about descriptions, opinions and is analyzed through interpretations and categorizations, while quantitative elicits information in form of numbers and is analyzed through statistical methods (Rosenthal, 2018). The collection techniques for data may be through telephone surveys, mail-in comment cards, or questionnaires distributed to research participants among other techniques but the method of data collection adopted by the researcher depends largely on the purpose of the study and the research questions (Yin, 2014).

The purpose of the present study was not to test a hypothesis or gain large-scale statistical insights but to attain first-hand information on journalists' perceptions

through their experiences as well as gain detailed insights into the phenomena under study hence the data had to be qualitative. The researcher used triangulation as a data generation technique where multiple sources of data are used. In triangulation, a researcher substantiates data from varying data sets hence inhibiting biases that may arise from relying on just one data source (e.g. participant interview information) in interpreting the information. As such, it enhances the internal validity of a study (i.e., the extent to which the method is appropriate to answer the research question (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995; Mason, 2017). The qualitative data collection instruments used are discussed in subsequent sections.

3.6.1 Interviews

The researcher used qualitative interviews to collect data from journalists and editors. Qualitative interviewing has been defined by Taylor et al. (2016) as, "face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words" (p.102). The purpose of the research demanded first-hand information from a predetermined sample of individuals and therefore the researcher had to ask journalists and editors questions through interviews.

Even though the information demanded in the study would as well be obtained in a group setting through focus group discussions among journalists and editors as an alternative instrument used in collecting qualitative data, it was impractical to have all journalists and editors together discussing the phenomena under study. Additionally, the participants are adults who are usually careful when sharing information and it is often difficult to stimulate rich group conversations across professional groups such as journalists and their supervisors. Media practitioners also work under busy

schedules and that way focus group discussions as a qualitative tool that requires lengthy periods for generating data won't be appropriate on their part.

The researcher also wanted to acquire information from news subjects and news recipients on why are they are concerned about news reports accuracy, and document their beliefs on how news reports accuracy could be made better to their satisfaction so as to enhance their trust over news media. Interviews were ideal in this case too because the data collected was rich, in-depth, and was used to generate themes and develop theories. Further, interviews enabled the researcher to provide the respondents with an opportunity to think about the questions thereafter express more thoughtful and complex reasoning from their view of the world and in the process the researcher could get behind the immediate level of response by probing how they came to a particular view.

3.6.2 Documentary Review

According to Bowen (2009), in analysis of documentary material a researcher finds, selects, appraises, and synthesizes data contained in documents. The analytic procedure permits a researcher to critically examine existing organizational information relevant to the topic under study and interpret it within the broader context of information obtained from interviews so as to better understand the phenomena under study. Documentary review was ideal in documenting the experiences of journalists who have engaged in written reflection through published newspaper articles. The analysis of this textual content was also used to contextualize findings from interviews data.

The researcher wanted to understand how journalist's writing of newspaper articles reflect or contrast with their broader discourses of how they practice news

verification. The researcher also wanted to examine the perceived successful news verification practices in the newspaper articles. It is important to note that the information in documents already exists in organizational records. In this case, newspaper content exists in public records thus no form of researchers' influence was possible in acquiring the data.

3.7 Reflections on the Research Process

From the onset, the researcher knew that the research process would be intricate and would require undivided attention but had the earnestness to engage in it, and high hopes of completing within a period of not more than five months. But as it turned out, it took nine months to compile the report. Bearing in mind that this research is qualitative, implying that it is inherently iterative; the researcher had to spend quality time with respondents so as to obtain necessary information that could provide answers to the research questions. In truth, this was not always possible due to the fact that journalists have very busy schedules; they are always on the move trying to find new information and to ensure they have published it within the restricted timelines. Many are the times when they would reschedule the researcher's appointments. Nonetheless, they were willing to accord some time out of their busy schedule.

The research was conducted among journalists, editors, news subjects and critical readers who reside within the boundaries of Uasin Gishu County because these were the respondents that were more accessible to the researcher at the time of study. The researcher indeed enjoyed the field work because of the research respondents who were eager to participate in the research and this made it easier for the collection of in-depth information. However, due to the sensitivity of the topic, some respondents appeared to be economical with the kind of information they gave out. Even so, the

researcher submits that the data gathered as presented in Chapter four was enough for drawing conclusions.

The qualitative approach according to Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) emphasizes on natural settings, relative meanings, multiple interpretations, details and flexibility in studying a phenomenon at a given time. The interviews took place at journalist's respective work premises as from 7pm (EAT) on Sundays, a time when they reported to be less busy with gathering news and most of them had submitted their day's story for publication.

The data collection instrument included an ice breaking question set to obtain information about participants' general demographics (education levels, age, and working experience for journalists and editors). References to the study's scope are based on the interview guide appended on this document as appendix 1-3. Each interview session lasted approximately one hour, thirty minutes translating to twelve pages of the data transcribed per interview.

The researcher also selected to evaluate newspaper content that were published by *Daily Nation, The Standard, People Daily,* and *The star* on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday in the months of January, February, April, June, July, November, and December 2020. Only articles with views related to the research questions were set aside for review. A total of six articles distributed as follows: two articles in the *Daily Nation*, two the *Standard*, one in the *People Daily*, and one in the *Star* met the inclusion criteria. The subject under review was unsatisfactory journalistic routines in fact-checking of published news articles and this data was meant to be triangulated with information from interviews.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are critical in ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. To ascertain validity of the present research, the researcher included diverse sampling groups in the plan. Since the goal was to obtain information on news verification for print media, the sample was divided into four groups of respondents to reduce biases. The sample included journalists tasked with the responsibility of verifying news reports, editors whose role is to oversee journalists' responsibility, news recipients who often judge the trustworthiness of news accuracy, and news subjects from whom journalists source their news reports. Therefore, biasness that would have otherwise arise from using a single category of respondents was reduced.

Validity of the research instruments was established by conducting a literature review to ensure that all the items that are essential were included in the data collection instruments and undesirable items eliminated. The interview guide was evaluated by the researcher's supervisors who are experts in the same field of research that the researcher was conducting. The purpose of their review was to make certain that the items in the instrument were relevant, reasonable, unambiguous and clear thus guaranteeing the validity and reliability of the guide.

Further, the data collected for the research was from two sources including interviews and document analysis. The analysis was therefore a product of data from different angles which reinforced correctness and accuracy of the research. Academic supervisors were additionally instrumental in validating the collected data to ensure that it was genuine and that the researchers' reality did not overshadow that of the participants. The researcher also offered research participants an opportunity to validate their responses by presenting them copies of the transcribed interviews. Moreover, the researcher tested the initial results with the research participants and

they were able to countercheck and concur the findings portrayed their perspectives accurately.

Reliability in the study was established in a way that all interviews were transcribed and the data recorded in a table highlighting the overall assessment of the data collection process. Any updates of the results were keyed-in when new data was obtained. The study further used comprehensive data because information obtained from interviews was combined with that in documents. All the necessary and sufficient level of detail about the phenomenon under study was included in the study. The context and findings were richly described to a point that other researchers can transfer them to other contexts. The researcher also adhered to theoretical triangulation which involved analyzing other related research works in the same field which has earlier been presented under the review of related literature section to support the results analyzed in this study.

3.9 Data Analysis Strategies

The researcher conducted thematic analysis of the data from transcribed interviews and content from news articles. As explained by Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011), in thematic analysis, a researcher transcribes, collates, edits, codes, and reports the data in a systematic manner that makes it sensible and accessible to the reader and researcher for purposes of interpretation and discussion. The researcher first listened to the recorded audio interviews and typed the information in a Microsoft Word (MS) document. The data in newspaper articles did not require transcription because it was in written form. The researcher then re-read the transcripts and edited the content to get rid of regurgitated and/or vague participants' statements.

Having internalized the data, the researcher went through to the open coding phase where the transcribed data from interviews and newspaper articles was first coded based on information conveyed that was deemed relevant for the study. Then the researcher moved to axial coding where similar codes were grouped into five major categories. Each major category represented the phenomenon under study and was based on the following questions: journalist's thoughts on news verification; favorably or unfavorably outcomes of verifying news items; issues that would impede or enable news verification; how journalists perceive their skill sets; their thoughts on individuals who would approve or disapprove of them verifying news. While making reference to the research questions and previous literature, the researcher moved to selective coding where the major categories were divided into several sub-categories that reflected distinct themes emerging from the data. The document prepared was then reviewed and the information reported in the data presentation section.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained appropriate consents from National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation and was granted a research permit (License 958368) before beginning the research process. The researcher contacted the participants at the beginning of the study and their participation was on voluntary basis; they were free to opt in or out of the study at any point just as respect to autonomy demands in research ethical issues (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). The researcher also adhered to the demands of informed consent where participants were briefed about the study's purpose, benefits, risks, and funding so that they would either reconfirm their commitment or withdraw their participation in the research without being penalized.

Hammersley & Traianou (2012) further states that a researcher should ensure participants are not at risk of harm by participating in a study. The information sought

in the present study was about cases of inaccuracies in news media reports. This is a sensitive topic because journalists are bound by the journalistic code of ethics to disseminate accurate content at all times. Sharing such information could potentially subject them to work sanctions on the charge of professional malpractices. Therefore, to ensure journalists were protected, the information obtained was treated with confidentiality and codes such as J1-J6 were used to identify journalist and guarantee their anonymity as well as prevent their information from being linked back to other data in future research. The researcher further took the responsibility of finding out the participants cultural, religious, and gender differences to learn how to approach them and ensure their differences are respected. Leading questions during data collection were avoided so as to get clear data and the data was analyzed from multiple observations. In communicating the results, the researcher accurately represented the results and made certain that the study is free of plagiarism by running it through the X-plagiarism checker software. A low plagiarism of 6% similarity was detected.

3.11 Summary

In this chapter I have stated that the study adopted a qualitative approach that emphasizes on meanings that are not rigorously measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency but in terms of quality. The study created an in-depth understanding of a case as an integrated whole in what is referred to as multiple -case study. Emerging similarities and differences in cross-case comparisons was done for journalists working in the four leading media organizations with regional offices in Uasin-Gishu County. The data was collected using two qualitative data collection instruments which are interviews and documentary review to allow approaching the research problem from different angles and attain a holistic picture of the phenomena

under study. Whereas the interviews were to elicit information on perceptions, documentary review of published news articles was conducted to examine the nature of the content that journalists produce and interpret it alongside interview data. The data was analyzed thematically.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to elicit most common beliefs associated with the journalistic practice of verifying news through face-to-face interviews with editors, journalists, news subjects, and critical readers in Uasin Gishu County so as to recommend suitable interventions for the problem of inaccuracy in news media reports. In this chapter, the data gathered is presented, analyzed in relation to the related empirical studies previously conducted, and interpreted within the theoretical frameworks of the study. The respondents are coded as J1 to J6, for journalists, E1 to E2 for editors, NS1 to NS5 for news subjects and CR1 to CR2 for critical readers.

4.2 Response Rate

A response rate refers to the ratio of the number of participants in a study to the number of participants who were asked to participate and a high response rate is critical in preventing nonresponse bias while enhancing the validity of the data analysis. The level overall level of participation in the interviews was 66% and distributed as per table 4.1 per each media house. Critical readers and news subjects are excluded in table 4.1 because the total population is considered infinite and unknown which complicates the task of computing the response rate.

Table 4.1: Response rate

Media Houses	Target Population Nation media group publishing *Daily Nation*	Response Rate	Target Population The Standard Group PLC publishing *The Standard*	Response Rate	Target Population Mediamax Network publishing *People Daily*	Response Rate	Target Population Radio Africa Group publishing *The Star*	Response Rate	Total response rate
Editors (Bureau chiefs)	1	1(100%)	1	1(100%)			1	-	2 (66%)
Print journalists working on full time basis	2	2(100%)	2	1(50%)	2	1(50%)	3	2(66%)	6 (66%)

4.3 Journalists Perceptions on verification of news accounts in selected print media publications

Respondents were asked to share their thoughts towards verification of news accuracy. The interviews assessed challenges affecting journalists' operations with regards to verifying news and elicited views on facilitating situations that can potentially reduce concerns hindering performance of the role.

4.3.1 Personal commitment to verification of news accounts in selected print media publications

The respondents indicated that a depreciated personal commitment is a major source of frustration for journalists and were of the view that if their interests were cultivated through better pay, it would be easy for them to learn better strategies of verifying news. The respondents said the wages they earn do not match their efforts and this makes them feel it is not worth spending efforts verifying news accuracy prior to publication. To them, a good pay remains an incentive to work hard and can boost the morale of journalists to commit to journalistic ethics while attaining better work output. They also mentioned that most of the journalists earning meager salaries are employed on contract terms of service and their goal is to earn a days' salary so the need to publish content outweighs the need to spend more time and effort verifying the accuracy of information. Additionally, the low wages journalists get give them an impression that newspaper entities have set the stage for them to be subdued by influences from sources, allowing them to conceal the truth in information.

Similarly, editors talked of how the perceived need for better pay coincides with journalists' desire to verify news prior to publication. To them, a journalist needs to first perceive the role as meaningful in order to have the zeal to take part in it. They said that unionization of journalists would see their interests such as low wages

addressed in a sustainable manner and felt that an adjustment of their pay to reflect the heavy task would be a move in the positive direction. With better wages, malpractices such as brown envelope journalism would be eradicated because journalists would adopt a decent work ethic. Better wages would similarly instill in journalists the attitude of perseverance in pursuit for information even in the midst of perceived difficulty because of a belief that their pay is adjusted to reflect performance. The respondents' views on journalists' lack of personal motivation to be pro-checkers are expressed in the selected sentiments below:

When you love your work, you will go ask the right question and get the right information. There is a passion that drives you to do stories. Issue of passion then comes to those employers, on what grounds are you employing me? Is it because I have a god-father within your company or is it because you see I have the ability to deliver? (J6).

You know pay in the industry has become another key issue. Our sources take advantage of this to lure journalists into brown envelope so that you either misreport the story or you water down the facts in the story to protect personal interests (J5).

There are milestones which should have been achieved in terms of payment of journalists in this country. You expect a journalist to be earning 5,000 and do all this bulk of work, the people they meet, the threats they go through vis-à-vis what they earn at the end of the month. In some cases, they would push people against unionizing because off course it is not in the interest of media owners to have people who have unionized because there is the power which the union will wield vis-à-vis the media in terms of remuneration. But you see as a journalist you find you are in the same office with someone who is earning one hundred thousand and the person who is earning ten thousand is even doing more work because there is no one to equalize that (E1).

People enter into the newsroom and they can be swayed with money, gifts. When someone is given money, he can be swayed to embellish the facts. Now you have some instances where maybe someone stole 100million, you reduce it to 50million (E2).

You see checking facts is not easy. If for instance you are told money was stolen in Kimwarer, it sounds like a catchy headline but that is the point where as a journalist you have to go and dig deeper and get the evidence, was it really stolen? That is something which is lacking in newsrooms. That practice of getting to the bottom of everything. Laziness is a big deal where people just want to do the bare minimum (NS2).

Journalism is just like any other career, you can be a teacher for ten years and you can't even explain things, someone can practice journalism even for two years and elucidate his points. You can have a journalist who has

worked for ten years and really struggles to write yet someone who has been in journalism for two years is really a writer. Journalism in essence, the reason why they say is a calling is that no one really pays you to wake up to come in the office and go question the governor about some money which was stolen. There are things you can do on that time; you can go do some public relations story (CR1).

This finding may generally indicate poor working conditions for the journalists where poor remuneration prevents them from seeing the value of inputting more effort in their duties and consequently, they disengage from their responsibilities of vetting news. Hamptons (2005) for instance says the journalistic profession, requires "long hours of extremely varied work for very low wages". The keenness of media owners to cut on operation costs and maximize profits has prevented them from considering an upward adjustment in the cost of labor for the workforce and this might be the reason as to why journalists are not fully committed to the complex news verification role. The findings are consistent with other findings on low pay that has forced journalists into accepting bribes in most African countries, which often results in unbalanced news coverage (Ndangam, 2009; Skjerdal, 2018; McIntyre and Cohen, 2021).

In the TPB, behavior is highly determined by individual's self-efficacy which refers to the belief in an individual's capacity to actually change a behavior. In the context of the TPB, feedback is explained as one of the factors impacting individual's self-efficacy in that when there is positive external or internal feedback, it raises the likelihood of one achieving a goal. To build journalists' self-efficacy to (in)validate the accuracy of news reports would therefore require a good pay that matches journalists' efforts while acting as positive feedback.

4.3.2 Accessibility to valuable information in verification of news accounts for selected print media publications

Journalists also emphasized that accessibility to valuable information is marked by open access to information and the lack of it complicates their effort to scan valuable evidence on every assignment. Some stated that to access valuable information, there is need for the critical transport service at the inception of news gathering because this will enable them to churn out first-hand information from sources. Nonetheless, news organizations have an ineffective way of organizing internal means of transport so journalists opt to consider just available alternatives of evidence.

Another section of journalists pointed out that reticence in sources takes the form of external organization imperatives that restrict disclosure of information and sources communicating in dialects which limit journalists' comprehension of information. The respondents said that a key aspect in getting the drift of a speech is to possess the potential of assimilating all through in the course of a conversation taking place but when sources communicate in languages understood only by them, it increases journalists' dependence on translators. In such a case, it's difficult for a journalist to judge whether the interpreted information is genuine because the meaning of a speech may as well be lost in the midst of translation. In the editors' view, there is need for a movement that will challenge the adherence of the rights to information access as provided for in the 2010 Kenya constitution. The respondents described their views on journalists' inaccessibility to valuable information in the following statements:

> *A story is needed in Nairobi but they don't really care how you are supposed to get to wherever you're going to get that story. So, you call someone to give you their story and re-write it* (J2).

> *You might be doing a story on a big project; the county government gave a contractor a certain amount, but maybe they flouted the procurement process. When you go seeking the documents, they deny you access to prevent you from covering that story. And sometimes when political*

leaders are in a public function and they want to talk about something sensitive, they say it in their Kalenjin dialect so that some of us won't understand (J1).

Even though as a country we have a new constitution, the institutions and the people are still the same ones who were there before. So, they have not really aligned to the fact that we have access to information act in the constitution which is supposed to help journalists and anyone to access information anywhere in the public institutions. But right now, if you are to write to any public institution even let's say Uasin Gishu County, you can't access that information. Even the information which they have in the website, they will still tell you it is confidential (E1).

We always try to facilitate our journalists. But I can't sit down and say it's done 100% maybe we could be around 60-70% because there are instances where the guys who are in the region suffer because they don't have a car to take them to functions. You will find them following politicians. I don't like the thing where journalists get lifts from politicians because that will basically kill the issue of accuracy (E2).

I would say it is the people on the grounds who know the truth and therefore their information counts a heavy deal. Journalists should ensure they reach remote villages to gather their evidence and not just believe in information sourced from nearby locations. When these writers want to write a story, they are not supposed to sit and be told a story from someone else; they are supposed to be at the scene where the event is taking place (CR2).

I have seen in other media houses, maybe a journalist has to write a story in a far distance from their location and maybe the source that is taking them to write that story has an interest. if journalists use his/her vehicle, definitely will they write a negative story against that person? Lack of empowerment highly drives journalists into being compromised (NS5).

According to TPB if individuals have previously succeeded in engaging in a behavior, then their self-efficacy remains high but, in this study, it was evident that journalist's self-efficacy is lowered by their inaccessibility to information needed in verifying news accounts accuracy. Correspondingly, in Uganda, McIntyre and Cohen (2021) observed extra-media forces including government restrictions and ideological factors that restrict journalists access to information are key constraints to journalistic work. When access to valuable information is restricted, journalists believe they don't influence their own behavior of verifying news accounts. In as much as they may want to verify news, they have an external locus of control because they are faced with the limitation of inaccessibility to valuable information.

Inaccessibility to valuable information highlights the extensively unlisted failure of media enterprises to provide necessary resources for evidence scouting. Most likely, media owners have not focused much on transportation as a utility necessary in journalists' role of scouting for concrete evidence in news reports. The finding may also reflect inability of media stake-holders to fight for the rights of access to information and this provides suitable ground for news sources to stifle information which complicates the fact-finding mission of journalists.

4.3.3 Colleagues perception of accuracy in verification of news accounts in selected print media publications

Some responses gave an impression that journalists assume their colleagues' perception of reality is the actual representation of facts. And so they often share news scripts with their coworkers because it is perceived as an easier method of obtaining reliable information. This gives the impression that journalists perceive the content their colleagues have disseminated is correct and therefore needs no further checking. The clauses below illustrate how journalists perceive the work carried out by colleagues is out rightly factual and needs no further checking but at the same time editors and news recipients are against the practice:

> *There are some looming evictions from a forest called Chepkitalis in Mt. Elgon; one of the five water towers in the Country. The Sabaot and Ogek have been pushing against their eviction stating the area is their ancestral home. So recently I conducted an exclusive interview with one of their leaders who informed me of their change of stand and collective decision to move out of the forest upon Government allocation of an alternative piece of land. I prepared and sent my story to a colleague who works for a competitor newspaper in Bungoma and asked him to make an effort to edit it by writing it in his own words. But we ended up having similar articles in the paper; only the photos differed* (J1).

> *Sharing stories is not being professional; you are quoting people you never talked to. It means you are transferring errors from another writer to yourself. If you use somebody's story it might be difficult even to position quotes* (E2).

> *A colleague may give you half-baked information thinking you will scoop them or you will write a better story than them. Then you write your story from half-baked information and you misreport things. Or if it is a bite of someone who has given him a quote, he will give you a quote but not a quote that has a story. He retains the quotes that have a good story* (E1)

> *Why can't journalists just use their own sources instead of borrowing information from their colleagues?* (CR1).

> *If you are not so close to some people, they will give you superficial information; they won't give you the depth of that story* (NS4).

A review of newspapers also reinforces the finding that journalists are guided by the bandwagon heuristic in the sense that they interpret information sourced from peers as accurate. When Deputy President William Ruto missed the launching of National Integrated Identity Management System (NIIMS) in Kakamega, two papers carried stories that were similar in wordings. The lead stories were titled: "Puzzle as Ruto skips key State function" (*Daily Nation, 2019*) and "Puzzle as Ruto skips Huduma Namba launch" (*People Daily, 2019*). *Daily Nation* (2019) reported that a last-minute communication of the DP's absence to the public who had turned up for the exercise dampened the mood at the high-profile function at *Kambi ya Mwanza* in *Malava* Constituency. *People Daily* (2019) on the other hand told readers a last-minute communication of the DP's absence to members of the public who had turned up for the listing dampened the mood at the function. These two articles demonstrate lack of originality which is coherent with the idea that journalists lend each other stories and publish un-checked content from peers.

Journalists fail to independently confirm and verify information individually before reporting because they believe it is normal or acceptable to perceive their colleagues' version of reality as factual. Past habitual behaviors manifest as a subconscious influence on non-verification behavior. Journalists are motivated to comply with reporting and fact-gathering conducted by other news outlets because sharing of

scripts is a behavior that has become habitual. In as much as they may be sharing factual inaccuracies in the process, their habit sidesteps their intentions. They do not set out to deceive the public from the onset but the possible explanation is that the relationship between their past behavior of sharing scripts and future behavior of copying scripts with factual inaccuracies increases the more the behavior becomes habitual. Stocking & Gross (1989) note that when journalist make reference to information that peers perceive as factual, they are likely to change their own judgment so as to conform to what their peers have.

For accountability and responsibility in the media to be enshrined, it is important for editors to instill the practice of transparency among journalists in that if they are unable to verify what their colleagues are reporting, but they believe the news is important and needs to be reported, they are obligated to inform the news consumers that the news reports are yet to be independently confirmed. For example, Masullo et al. (2022) conducted experiments to test the practical steps that news organizations can take to lessen the public's perceived low credibility of news organizations in the US. Masullo et al. (2022) observe that news consumers' perceptions of news outlet credibility can be enhanced through increased journalistic transparency - explaining to news consumers how news is produced. The researchers report that adding a transparency box beside a news story that explains how and why journalists did the story can increase credibility in small ways in some cases with known news brands. Important to note however is that the transparency box must be *very prominent* to have any effect.

4.4 Journalists' Perceptions about Their Competency on Verification of News Accounts for Selected Print Media Publications

The study examined journalists' beliefs based on the knowledge they receive in formative years of training, knowledge needed to verify news accuracy, competencies they possess and those they lack with regards to verifying news accuracy.

4.4.1 Perceptions on existing competencies

The responses suggest that journalists' training in formative years of schooling has not realized adequate gains in guiding them towards the direction of their current practice. There was a general feeling that education makes a journalist competent, but only up to a certain point because of a mismatch between what a journalist aspires education will instill in him or her as a career professional and the real industrial practice upon completion of school.

The findings suggest that the module used in training journalists in Kenya is not practice-based and so journalists do not know what day-to-day working entails. Additionally, journalists felt that their existing knowledge has only empowered them to be general reporters rather than experts in specific fields. To them, a discrete scholarship attuned to particular professional fields such as national, political, business, sports, legal, science and environment, education, health, and entertainment can enhance individuals' familiarity with terminologies and contextual information in these fields and ease their role of verifying news accuracy. The responses from news recipients further suggest real variation in the accuracy with which different media outlets report news. This has important implications for the functioning of an informed citizenry. The public may be differentially informed about what is happening around them, and thus base their political or social decisions on different understandings of what is (or is not) taking place around them. The respondents'

expressions on inability of existing competencies to increase journalists understanding of news verification along with specialized training as a utility in the targeted behavior are illustrated below:

In school, it is a patchwork of knowledge that you are given. They don't get to the nitty-gritties of what real journalism is out there. With the information it is very hard to compete effectively in the first-paced environment we meet out there. I wish there was a way during our training especially in colleges; you can be given hands-on training (J6).

Cases where it needs some expertise like environment, health, education, the organization needs to offer some training so that it becomes easy for journalists to approach certain topics (J3).

Leaders within the Kenya union of journalists should organize workshops from time to time to remind the journalists of the importance of having a good conduct and ways of checking news stories for accuracy. For example, here in Uasin Gishu the journalist should come together after every six months; humans need to be reminded, they easily forget. You might have learnt something but you forget (CR1).

Journalism training institutions should just produce someone who can be all round. Who can sit down and say today actually I feel like doing a feature story for Radio, or doing something for online, or doing something for newspaper. But that seems not to be the case (NS4).

There is no effective connection between us who are in the industries and people who are training. Most intervention that should happen is trying to get the good linkage between the industry and the training institution. Like nowadays, I get a lot of Diploma journalism students. You want to send that person to go and report about court matters, will s/he notice what is happening in court? How will you want to sit them down and say: this is the auditor generals' report, go through it and give me a very good special report? It is not like graduates are any better; when they come here, they don't survive. Our education system produces people who are very good in doing the ABCD's and cramming and writing something, not someone who can sit down and develop something and give a very good analysis (E1).

In other countries like the European countries, you go for specialization. If I'm writing for business, I'm just a business writer and I will not go to political writing unless the two get intertwined. the element of specialization is not so much in Kenyan media houses across the board. You will find the workload is very much because assume now when I sit on this desk, I will get political stories, crime stories, business stories, sports stories. You become an all-rounder. Because you have to sub all these stories, at least you have a know-how in each and every field and it doesn't mean that you have specialized in that field but now could it be under an ideal situation, there should be somebody who is writing for this column and we have the writers of that column (E2).

In the present study, journalists' knowledge and skill is examined as a personal characteristic to understand how it influences news selection processes. Journalists in this study felt that although basic and journalistic education is necessary in making someone confident in their ability to efficiently process information, the knowledge it imparts is not adequate for one to be able to practice within the full scope of practice of journalism and meet professional standards. Correspondingly, Vergeer (2018) observed that education given to journalists offers very limited knowledge on how they can check accuracy in information and this is one of the possible explanations as to why the educated display non-verification behavior. In the African context, the findings of (Gessesse, 2020) further indicate that basic journalistic education may not be enough for journalists to acquire all the competencies needed in performing their professional roles. Njuguna (2020) concludes that the content taught, the manner in which it is taught and the overall training environment can explain differences in journalists' perceived levels of ability to translate taught skills to the real industrial practice.

Maniou et al. (2020) are of the view that in the training of journalists, efforts should be geared towards imparting knowledge that can practically be applied to acquire a skillset. They make a case for journalism training institutions to take up innovative teaching methods and education models while calling for the need for national/international collaborations of journalism schools, community media projects, internships, guest lecture projects, and blended learning techniques so as to align the students with industrial competency demands.

The debate on who is to take up the burden of imparting journalists with necessary knowledge that can be transferred into industry relevant skills is however inconclusive. Scholars (Minke 2009; Weibull 2009) have previously argued for a

vocation-oriented approach to learning journalism noting that the academic programs in universities are more of theory and the standards of journalism will improve if journalism students are trained on the job in media organizations because journalism itself is a vocation that cannot be learnt in a classroom setting.

If the burden of equipping industry relevant skills were to be left solely on academics, it might not yield exceptional results (Skjerdal and Ngugi (2007). Skjerdal and Ngugi (2007) observed that journalism educators in Africa are trained in other disciplines such as language studies and Information Communication Technology. This complicates the knowledge transfer process because it remains a complex task for an educator to transfer the journalistic knowledge and skills that they do not possess in the first place. Skjerdal and Ngugi (2007) also point out that journalism training institutions in South-East Africa have fewer qualified educators because of capital flight. The most qualified trainers seek employment elsewhere in the West in search of better wages.

Perhaps what is needed in this state of affairs then is not for journalism training institutions to rely on the transfer of news verification knowledge and skills from educators that are strictly trained in journalism *per se*, but for journalists to individually take the burden of redefining the ways in which they access and receive on-the-job training for them to efficiently check accuracy in news reports. This bearing in mind that the debate on whether to recruit journalism faculty from the academia or from industrial professionals is not conclusively resolved (Folkerts, 2014). Stark (2019) has for instance noted the critical importance of journalists adopting the use of the internet and online platforms to have access to global resources such as colleagues from other news organizations and institutional trainers

from global countries to enable the exchange of knowledge through peer-to-peer training.

Even so, in the era of technological changes and complex challenges such as deceptive news sources, misinformation, disinformation, fake news, political micro-targeting and a loss of trust in the media occasioned by inaccurate reportage, knowledge and skills tailored to fact-finding in news writing becomes more central to discussions on refining journalism education and practice. For instance, Iyer (2015) is of the view that in addition to basic journalistic knowledge, journalist must be curious and interested in a wide range of subjects and be capable of handling specialized areas. In domains such as medical, health, environmental, and legal among others Lublinski et al. (2014) have acknowledged the need for specialized journalists with the ability to appropriately diffuse information that will be of beneficial to the society. What this means is that journalists who can be considered experts in specialized fields are more likely to verify and achieve accuracy in news.

The specialized training geared towards specific domains is what results in a term in journalism that Magin and Maurer (2019) have referred to as *beat reporting* in news rooms. Magin and Maurer (2019) define beat reporting as thematic specialization and routines which differentiates general assignment reporters from specialized (beat) reporters covering a specific area (beat), location and specific subject matters. A beat reporter is considered an expert in the beat they cover and have adequate knowledge of where and how to obtain the information they require. As such they are able to gather exclusive and trustworthy news because they have a network of credible news sources (Magin and Maurer, 2019).

However, the complexity of acquiring specialized knowledge and skills cannot be under stated. Specialized knowledge for example targeted in instructing journalists how to retrieve facts in specialized domains can be so narrow that it requires more time than the four to three years spent in a journalism training institutions. It might as well be costly to achieve such time-demanding training as compared to the current cost of a journalism training program in institutions of higher learning. For example, a one-year certificate course in tertiary institutions would cost an approximate Kenya shilling 97,000 and a three-year Diploma program costs approximately Kenya shilling 96,000 per academic year. A four-year Bachelor's Degree program in Journalism or Media studies in universities would cost approximately Kenya shilling 28,500 per academic year for government-sponsored students. Perhaps this is where the challenge stems in. The tuition fees that students pay in institutions of higher learning may not be adequate to provide specialized journalism training for longer periods than the currently specified. As such, there are observed gaps regarding the teaching of specialized topics for beat reporting in journalism education.

According to gatekeeping theory, information that gets to the public is controlled through the filtering process which involves withholding, selecting or transforming messages transmitted from a sender of information to a receiver. Forces govern the channels through which information moves from one channel to the other to be released to the public. These forces are often the gate-keepers who select facts to be released to the public. The forces may be psychological forces causing conflict that creates resistance to movement through the channels.

The mismatch in taught journalism and industrial anticipated skills in retrieving facts as well as the lack of specialized training creates a psychological force; it makes journalists feel incapacitated to vet news. This feeling of inability causes a conflict

that creates resistance of movement for accurate information through the media channels to the public. In the current scenario, an appropriate intervention is for media lead work force to offer on-the-job training for the practicing journalists. Even though media houses appear to be financially constrained to take up this role, a viable way is to perhaps reduce the salaries of management staff and contract senior journalists to offer services of mentoring junior reporters on specialized beats.

Alternatively, it is essential for Media training institutions to design appropriate response model for raised concerns. It would work for the interest of both parties in the media industry if training institutions create an enabling framework that can see the reduction of the training outcome mismatch. In such a structure, there would be mutual involvement of all actors; institutional trainers, editors in media houses, and journalism students. Employers will not only be able to guide academics on the skills required in the industry, but will also collaborate with institutional trainers in the overhaul of the training curriculum and chaperoning of students on internship.

4.4.2 Competencies needed to verify news accuracy

The respondents mentioned in order to effectively verify news accuracy, it would be critical for journalists to possess general information seeking skills including the ability to "foster relationships with news subjects", "empathize with sources", and "recognize witness account of events can be deceptive". The journalists perceived they possess the ability to foster relationships and empathize with sources. This to them is an important quality when seeking evidence. They also perceive they have the ability to recognize witness account of events can be deceptive. For this reason, respondents underscored the importance of assessing the credibility of a source before deciding over the accuracy of their information. They mentioned to achieve this; journalists are supposed to triangulate their sources of information and accord a fair

right of reply to all persons mentioned in a story. Similarly, editors mentioned that practices such as triangulation of news sources increases the odds of identifying deceitful sources. These views are illustrated in the clauses below.

> *You may require obtaining information from a very rigid system like that of the police service but how do you handle that? You always make sure you establish a rapport and that even before you go talk to the authorized sources, you have talked to other people already and they have given you information. But then, also when you are dealing with issues that have to do with emotions, people are grieving; you have to soften your questions* (J1).

> *If there are cases for instance people are dying of hunger or they don't have water, carrying around water with you and sharing with them will always make them open up and talk to you in a friendlier way. So you make yourself part of the problem, you empathize with the situation rather than just coming and asking them questions because you want a story; they might never cooperate* (J6).

> *When a human rights activist tells me that someone has been killed; I just don't go and write that story because I have been working with him/ her. I try also to visit the home of the person killed and talk to the family to get to know the circumstances that led to death. I also talk to those related to the alleged murderer to get their view* (J3).

> *If you went and interviewed someone who is not credible, he will give you information that is misleading. Your source has to be credible to give you accurate information (E1).*

> *Just like a coin has two sides, if one side is missing, then that is not a legal tender. So, once you get the balance in a story, definitely you are going to get the credibility* (CR1).

> *As a journalist, say there is a complaint that so and so is ruining the reputation of Islamic religion through certain acts, why can't you do a follow up with me so that I can defend myself and for you to write the story that portrays two sides? When you just come and write it without my side of the story it becomes problematic* (NS3).

In previous scholarship Meer et al. (2017) underscore that the critical component of seeking information involves evaluating the credibility of news sources and that journalists are most likely to include credible and trustworthy knowledgeable experts in news. The findings further revealed intrinsic probing skills that journalists perceived as important in verifying news. The journalists, editors, and critical readers mentioned that it is important for journalists to have the skill of challenging witness claims demonstrated by intensive grilling, triangulation of information from sources

and the right of reply accorded to all parties to a story. Researching skills were equally mentioned as important in becoming well-apprised of contemporary and relevant information. Journalists felt that the most important part of verifying accuracy in news is consultation with news subjects and it is the phase where one ought to read so as to widen the thinking scope. According to the respondents, these research skills are invaluable in the context of writing quality and concrete articles yet missing among journalists.

The findings suggest that perhaps because journalists have been exposed to western-centric models of learning (Banda et al., 2007; Mano (2009) they have not been prepared to be researchers within the African context. Researching ideas about what constitutes in-depth evaluation of information in the media are probably developed within the context of global north media systems. Students hence find translating their knowledge creation process into real life experiences in industrial practice within the African settings to be a complex affair. Moyo (2020) has in this case championed the adoption of a teaching curriculum that is anti-capitalistic, anti-imperial, and post-cartesian which will provide room for journalism trainees to think through the lens of their African culture, history, language, epistemologies, and social experiences.

Further the journalists reasoned the skill to delink oneself from the story as a necessary measure of news accuracy. News consumers noted that they expect journalists to delink themselves from stories by ensuring the information they relay is consistent, explicit about the byline as well as the source. To them, anonymity of sources is a form of biased libel which if left unattended will perpetually leave them dissatisfied with journalists' final report. The excerpts below capture some of the sentiments.

An accomplished writer will tell you that reading, reading and reading helps to own a journalist in his profession. Because when you read, you get new information, when you read you are researching, you are gaining more knowledge which will impact positively into your journalistic work (J4).

There are occasions when perhaps you are interviewing the CEO of MTRH and then he is a credible person when it comes to giving you information about that particular facility but he can just decide not to give you accurate information. So, it is always important not to rely on one person. Get a number of voices in your story so that even when someone is reading your story, you let them make their conclusions (J5).

You can never be a good writer unless you read. So, you rely on research that was done three years ago. Things have changed with time, so someone comes out and gives a very different thing from what you are reporting, or out of the laziness you have not gone out to research what latest information or research is saying about a particular subject. So, you go use numbers that have been there all along when there have been recent developments about that particular issue (J2).

As a journalist you need to read more. Because when you want to do an interview with a governor, minister or a member of parliament or even when you are called for a press conference, you must have researched so that when you ask questions you interrogate the answers because it is always good to ask 'why'. This will make sources feel cornered and they will tell you the truth (NS3).

 A journalist is entitled to really probe someone especially when they feel that someone is not being truthful (E2).

The journalist has to try and get many accounts as possible. Especially in instances even where there are two or three people giving different accounts. In such cases, your story should indicate that person X said he was at the scene but when I talked to person Y, he said this and that (E1).

You'll find that when a journalist writes a story, s/he will tend to favor one side of a political divide depending on their values, beliefs and perceptions. Or they extensively report political News on certain regions forgetting to highlight human interest stories in that particular area (CR1).

As a journalist, you don't become an activist in your own story; you report what you have seen. Yours is to quote the information you got on the ground and report it as you found it for as long as you are being factual, you are not playing advocacy for the Government, neither are you playing advocacy for the people you found on the ground. The journalists are trying yes, but you find that particularly in political News articles, the politicians want to push their agendas (CR2).

A point in time a journalist wrote that I am an exploiter who gets handouts to be a backer who speaks on behalf of Muslims showing support for Hon. Ruto, but instead I use the money for my own benefit. This is not true. What makes a journalist to write that? He must have been given money and informed to write the article in such a deceptive manner. I went to a lawyer with an intention to file a court case, but later decided to withdraw the

case because the story had no name of the author; it had just been indicated at the bottom: "reporter". Neither was there a name that a certain Sheikh had said that information. If there was a name or the source of information, I would have a standing point (NS2)

The newspapers content however suggests that formal education and media literacy has not imparted in journalists the skills to research in-depth information or challenge witness claims so as to diagnose misinformation from sources judging from the lone-voice stories and the lack of right to reply to both parties of a story in selected news articles. In the wake of the 14 Riverside Drive terror attack, The *Daily Nation* (2019) wrote that Mr. *Kabir Dhanji*, a Kenyan-born photojournalist, who had worked for some of the biggest international media houses, had decided to sell the terror attack pictures for as much as Sh50,000 per photo through Getty Images. The paper also claimed *Kabir Dhanji* wanted to be credited for the photos being auctioned through Getty images yet Dhanji was not granted a fair right of reply in all the allegations. As it turned out, the story was not factual and *Daily Nation* later apologized for the error.

In the *Star* newspaper (2019) an article under the headline, "Avoid red meat, go back to traditional foods" suggests that the writer simply states a claim made by a single source, Health Cabinet Secretary Sicily Kariuki advising Kenyans to shun eating red meat altogether and go back to eating traditional foods to help fight the high burden of non-communicable diseases in the country. The story can first be judged as a lone voice story since the only source in the story is Health Cabinet Secretary Sicily Kariuki with no variant views. Granted there may not be other attendants in a press conference, but if the write included study findings, then it would have been an elaborate story with wide-ranging positions on the topic under discussion. That kind of information would help the reader conclude the claims are factual (not). Further, the writer does not challenge whether or not there is statistical evidence to back up the sources' claims.

Ideally, the *Star* newspaper (2019) article is a regurgitation of statements stated from a news source without telling the reader whether or not the information is truthful. It

neither gives rigorous details nor go beyond the Cabinet Secretary claims. In this case, the writer acts as a conveyor belt sharing opinions from a source to the public.

The data suggests that journalists cite political elites more frequently than the general public in news reports. Gate keeping process which takes place through selection of sources is biased towards elite sources because journalists assume elite sources build credibility in a news story. The categorization of sources to include in news narrow the range of sources that journalists cite. A major challenge of this categorization is that it is a thoughtless and uncritical way of classifying sources. In their quantitative study on journalists cross-verification strategies, Godler & Reich (2017) found that information obtained from government sources, some public relations sources, and frequently contacted sources was met with lower levels of cross-verification from journalists.

News literacy skills demands that journalists become proficient in consumption skills that will help them asses their biases and predispositions in selecting essential information. Yet from the data journalists lack this critical skill and it limits accuracy in news reports. Journalists are guided by their biases and predispositions to make reference to elite sources while excluding the voices of the general public in news story demonstrably because they assume elite sources are authority sources and are outrightly credible. The referencing of elite political sources is therefore a deliberate attempt by the journalists to decide the extent at which information is important and factual based on the sources in a story yet the implication that this has is that authority sources are not always trustworthy and relying on their information without proper vetting can make journalists susceptible to erroneous reporting.

The gatekeeping process goes beyond decisions that determine which matters make the news agenda to also include news judgments influencing content as well, including the sources journalists choose to cite. It is indeed widely documented that in many instances, news reports reflect the frames of elites (Entman, 2004; Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2006).

Reliance on powerful sources also goes hand in hand with lack of criticism in news stories since established journalist-source relationships may as well compel journalists into injecting personal opinions in news, skewing perceptions, lessening the diversity of ideals, and reinforcing prejudices. A review of news articles also indicates that formal education and media literacy has not imparted in journalists the skill of delinking themselves from news stories. The *Standard* (2019) splashed its front page with a headline: "The men in President's power room". The story went on to report that sources within the presidency said the executive order elevating Internal Security Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i to a super minister was a culmination of a turn-around strategy engineered by about 10 men and women who had taken charge of the legacy dream. The piece appears to have been editorialized because the writer does not reveal the source of the information disseminated. The journalist injected personal opinions in news which might not necessarily be factual.

The editorializing of news is an indication that journalists do not have the knowledge and skills to critically engage with news because critical analysis of information demands conscious and thoughtful interrogation of information so that meaning can be interpreted. News literacy skills demands journalists to become skilled at content skills that will enable them differentiate between news and news analysis. This pattern of editorializing stories can well be considered as a form of gate-keeping in which journalists manipulate and transform the messages that gets past their gates.

Editorialized pieces are strategic communications aimed at relaying specific facts to the public. It is a pattern where journalists tend to shape the publics' opinion with their personal opinions which may not be necessarily factual. A survey conducted in Australia on perspective of 1619 Australian news consumers reveals that journalists can positively affect credibility by reducing bias and journalists opinions in news stories, declaring all conflicts of interest in news stories, and increasing the amount of in-depth reporting (Fisher et al., 2021).

The goal of finding out whether information is truthful entails the knowledge and skills of being critical of information and evidence (Tully et al., 2020). From the findings it is evident that journalists in Uasin Gishu County need to learn more about how to apply news vetting skills in their practice. It could be that they were not taught about news literacy in journalism institutions. Comparably, Derakhshan and Singh (2011) analyzed 48 journal articles that examined issues related to integration of information literacy into the curriculum and found out that however essential information literacy instruction is, it is yet to be a high-priority component of many higher education programs resulting in university graduates that are "ill-equipped" with information skills. Similarly, a study that investigated the types, drivers and effects of misinformation spread in sub-Saharan Africa revealed that media literacy is barely taught across six African countries namely Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda as of June 2020 and this makes students susceptible to false and misleading claims (Cunliffe-Jones et al., 2021).

It could as well be the case where news literacy was taught at the time journalists were being trained in institutions of higher learning but the teaching of news literacy is very likely to have remained constant even at a time when technology has changed. For example, today journalists are not only relying on traditional methods of

acquiring information such as site visits, phone calls and press releases among others but they also obtain news from social media platforms.

A journalist can easily get triggered to make a follow up on information that has merely been updated on individuals' social media platforms and publish it on mainstream media platforms without prior cross-checking. For example, on 19th January, 2018, a social networking user (Mildred Owiso) wrote a Facebook blog accusing Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH) health workers and morticians of sexually assaulting new mothers admitted at the facility's maternity ward. Mildreds' published blog-post "*Buyer beware Kenya*" and the public's reactions that followed was circulated on virtually all the mainstream media platforms. Yet critics, among them the *Daily Nation* public editor Peter Mwaura (2018) perceive that Mildred was merely reporting an unsubstantiated story she had collected from sources. Mwaura (2018) opines that the information was a rumor that held no truth in it because no victim came up to report the matter. The *Daily Nation's* public editor writes:

> The confusion created by the 138 words on Facebook could have been avoided if the mainstream media had assumed its traditional role of verification instead of merely echoing what Mildred had published in social media and reactions that followed. The media had a full day since the 138 words were posted to verify the story, or question it, and publish a more reliable story as early as Saturday. That did not happen.

The above sentiments indicate that whereas journalists rely on information provided by news sources even on new technological platforms, this kind of information cannot be taken at face value because it is likely to greatly compromises the credibility of a journalist and ultimately lower the standard of journalism. Journalists thus require new models of training that will equip them with news literacy skills compatible with critical analysis of information sourced from both traditional and contemporary sources of information such as the internet and social media platforms.

4.5 Perceived Pressures Prominent in Journalists' Decision to Verify News Accounts For Selected Print Media Publications

In this question the researcher was interested in finding out the pressures that journalists are subjected to and how these pressures inform their news verification decisions. Therefore, the corresponding interview questions were directed to journalists, editors, selected critical readers, and human news subjects.

4.5.1 Security concerns as a source of pressure

The mantra journalists seem to all carry is: "no story is worth your life". This fear of a negative consequence undermines their confidence to verify news. They felt that pursuing certain lines of evidence was not a worthy course because this may subject them to harm or put their sources in harm's way. It was evident that defamation laws set by the country's rule of law are further used to force journalists into concealing certain facts in stories. The general feeling was that in as much as media owners may be willing to make circumstances for fact-finding favorable by way of reassuring journalists' safety and guaranteeing longer job tenures, they are bounded by commercial interests.

Journalists expressed that sources such as those affiliated with the government are a major revenue sources for any media house because they provide advertising revenue but they often tend to muzzle a free press. For instance, they threaten to ban advertising in media houses whenever they perceive government activities have been painted in the negative light on mainstream media. The imperative of the media enterprises on the other hand is to seek profits above any other interest and so they are averse to any action that could shrink revenues by obscuring any form of negative publicity directed towards their business partners and victimizing journalists who

pursue information that is against these sources. The undesirable safety concerns of journalists and their sources are stated in the selected examples below:

> *There is a very thin line between being too bold and jobless. If you become too bold chances that you will become jobless the next minute are very high. Remember we are not Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), we are in business. We run this industry on money, we need adverts. So, if something bad happens about these corporate companies and these are the clients who give media houses money in form of advertisements, you will obviously backtrack, you don't want to publish information that will drive them away, put them in bad light and off course tarnish the reputation of that corporate. So, I would say we are equally held captive by our own profit motives. The interference has always been there forcing most of the mainstream media houses to do what they call self-censorship* (J6).

> *Intimidation or fear of victimization from either the government or even the people a journalist is reporting about will force them to backtrack for the sake of their lives and even for their families (E2)*

> *It can be very consequential if a reporter writes something that borders defamation or slander in a newsroom then a newsroom is taken to court. While the editor might just cross-check to see the reporting is right, a journalist has the primary obligation to make sure that whatever they are reporting is factual (CR2).*

> *The whole of Kenya those people who own accurate information are at risk. Look at what they have done to those who own investigative information. You saw what happened to Mugo Wairimu? (NS3).*

> *A responsible journalist usually puts aside certain information to safeguard certain communities and at times they are forced to do away with certain facts in a story when their lives are at risk* (NS5).

In as much as the Social Responsibility Theory (SRT) of the press asserts media should be willing to meet its responsibility and remain free of government control, the media's willingness to meet its responsibility and remain free is not absolute. Evidence from past studies has shown that the media cannot constructively create authentic news content without attracting security risks. For example, a recent study conducted in Zimbabwe by Ndlovu & Sibanda (2021) revealed that journalists are exposed to state surveillance, arbitrary arrests and detentions when performing their duties and this type of state interference is usually aimed at either preventing media attention from certain events or forcing media attention toward specific issues. Closer

home in Uganda, press freedom has been on the decline since 2015 and this is due to factors such as threats to reporters who are in certain occasions beaten, abducted or arrested by security officers without sufficient cause (Reporters Without Borders, 2020). Studies within the African context have shown that security concerns manifest further in form of financial harm where cases of unemployment, loss of income or position, and reputation or, economically unstable work conditions have hampered the work of journalists (Matthews and Onyemaobi, 2020).

The SRT advocates that a responsible media should be self-regulating but within the framework of the law. The study finds the state uses guidelines to intrude on press freedom. Laws such as those guiding against defamation are prone to be abused by state and non-state actors to prohibit certain facts from being published. Therefore, editors and journalists are constantly apprehensive of defamation rules when selecting facts to include in a story.

Further, journalists acknowledge that it is their responsibility to present news consumers with accurate information yet the media's economic value exercises control over the news produced. As Muindi (2018) reminds us, "Kenyan journalists are deeply wedded to the Western journalism model whose political-economy structures have profits at the bottom line". While it is important for media stakeholders to guarantee the safety of journalists in pursuit of truthful information, they have left journalists less protected from harm because the media is monetized and its utmost goal is to maximize profits. As a result, journalists shy away from disseminating information that would potentially portray certain sources in the negative light however factual the information may be. Further evidence in Ethiopia (Gessesse, 2020; Freedom House, 2021) suggests that government pressure on journalists, as well as legal and economic constraints affects journalists autonomy.

McIntyre and Cohen (2021) have on the other hand observed that there might be laws in place to protect free speech, but oftentimes media houses in the global south have a deficiency of resources to effectively fight for their legal rights. Further, McIntyre and Cohen (2021) argue that if news outlets struggle to maintain advertising revenue and sufficient circulation numbers, they may lack technological resources necessary to report certain stories.

There is hence need for the different parties including Editorial management teams in media houses, Media Council of Kenya, the Kenya Union of Journalists, Kenya Editors' Guild, and the Association of Media Women in Kenya to pool resources, deliberate and come up with effective strategies that will enhance the security of sources and journalists. This will also go a long way in instilling enough bravery in sources to share sensitive information. There is also need for media houses to protect journalists' interests by guaranteeing them longer job tenures that will inculcate in them the need to pursue evidence even in the phase of difficulties.

4.5.2 Editorial processes as a source of pressure

From the responses, there seems to be a perceived denial of opportunities for free choice and perceived discouragement towards news verification. There was an indication that journalists believe editors do not approve of them verifying news accuracy. Journalists mentioned that the story angle they have in mind might at times differ from what editors want and therefore in as much as editors may perform their role of selecting newsworthy stories or ensuring the articles fit allotted space, there is a quest as to whether such measures, do indeed subscribe to editorial guidelines or the self-interests of editors and media owners where conversely some vital information is omitted in a story.

When editors disregard the newsworthiness of a story, journalists lose the urge to conduct deeper research in subsequent tasks because of an assumption that maybe the stories won't feature in the paper anyway. Moreover, when stories are truncated by editors, it is perceived by the journalists that editors partially perform the role of selecting evidence and as such the journalists lack the opportunity to exercise free will in verifying news accuracy which makes them presume editors are not in support of them vetting stories. These views on denied opportunities for free choice and perceived discouragement coming from editors are expressed in the following examples.

> *You can write your story on the ground, when the story reaches Nairobi; they try to change the angle of the story to suit the style of the newspaper without asking the writer of the story. So, at the end of it the story will be distorted* (J3).

> *There are also threats from within, like an editor could be having an interest in a story and s/he asks you to do away with a story* (J2).

> *Editors may act as proxies of media owners. They may select or deny the publication of stories based on orders given by the private owners of media houses. I don't have a problem with the manner in which brief opinions (what I could call editorial pieces) are relayed but I do have an issue with certain lengthy news articles in which I have seen exaggerated content. They are after sales. You know exaggerated information sells the paper but at times the content falls short of accuracy (CR1).*

> *Even though journalism is a calling, there are people who got to the newsroom but they do not really have the practice at heart. It is not really to them that the information they give or what they do is to the interest of the public or the readers; some editors work for different masters* (NS1).

> *Media personalities have consulted me so many times. They tend to love political items; that is what sells other than human interest stories such as agriculture. At times stories might come out differently from the way we give them. For instance, there are no separate cells for inmate detainees at the police station. Women, children, and the general public are all mixed and you know some men are hard core criminals who can rape women. We raised the issue at the high court in Eldoret that we should construct three different cells; one for inmates from prison, another one for children's and a separate one for women. It was a good story but it was given just two paragraphs. It was a big story but the editor had to reduce it because they need more space for politics. They will bring one, two three, then the rest of the items they just discard (NS1).*

> *Commercial interest of a media house could be a stumbling block. Let's assume Nation has partnered with Safaricom to do some promotion. So we could be driving on a common interest. If I get a story that is negative against Safaricom, there will be conflict of interest. Am I to protect the commercial interest of the Newspaper or the public interest right to information? In fact, that is what is emerging in the common type of journalism currently across the board; commercial interests of media houses* (E2).

As it appears, editors go to an extent of exaggerating facts in news stories. The *Standard* (2020) story titled, Raila is the presidents' "new Mr Fix It"; illustrates how even headlines are exaggerated to capture the eyes of readers yet the facts given in the articles might not necessarily be aligned to the exaggerated titles. From the findings, journalists face the pressure from editorial management teams who dictate the form of evidence journalists should pursue to accompany a news story and the stories they should avoid pursuing. They also interfere with the manner in which stories are covered and this makes journalists feel they have no control over the evidence they need to incorporate in news reports to ascertain news accuracy and that the selection of facts is the editors' prerogative.

An important concern in the field of journalism has been that editorial supervisors interfere with the autonomy of Kenyan journalists during the news selection process (Ireri, 2017). The author details how in deciding what to include in news, only four in 10 Kenyan journalists enjoy "some freedom", 15.5 per cent enjoy "almost complete freedom," and 31.7 per cent enjoy "a great deal of freedom". The theorist argues journalists' freedom is important because it is closely related to the news journalists decide to "cover or ignore".

The media institution is monetized in that the enterprises commercial interests supersede any other interest. Consequently, editors are forced to impose restrictions on journalist's content by engaging in malpractices such as omission of inconvenient facts or dissemination of abridged version of facts. In what Henderson and Cremedas

(2017) call "market-driven news production affects", the authors observe that journalists work for the interest of major commercial entities at the expense of their viewer's needs.

The problem with editors curtailing journalism can as well be conceived as a structural one arising from a lack of a specific editorial code of conduct in Kenya. Masaviru (2015) has for example argued that although the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya has 25 codes of ethics relevant to the Kenyan media, it is not segmented and the codes are not targeted to specific groups in charge of digital content, visual, audio, and editors among others. Therefore, the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya is not so effective in entrenching ethical and professional journalism in Kenya. Masaviru (2015) further notes that there are statements in the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya that give the editor whopping powers to decide what is to be published. According to Masaviru (2015), statements such as "If the request to correct inaccuracies in a story is in form of a letter, the editor has the discretion to publish it in full or in its abridged and edited version… (code 5) … should be an effective reply to the allegations (code 5)" leaves the opportunity to reply at the mercy of the editor which can be misused.

4.5.3 News cycle as a source of pressure

Despite the stated importance of verifying news, there was a general view that the process of verifying news accuracy is time-consuming and the need to get content published outweighs the need to spend more time and effort verifying the accuracy of information. The journalists believe news consumers demand content that is shared at a faster speed (as soon as an occurrence takes place) and so it is presumed they do not endorse journalists engaging in the lengthy news production process. As a result, a

journalist can skip verifying news assuming that irregularities would go unnoticed for as long as news is disseminated immediately a story unfolds.

Editors on the other hand thought that journalists often fail to verify news effectively because they handle multiple assignments at a time, an indication that they do not manage time efficiently hence heightening the perception that the immediacy of the news cycle has to be met with irregularities in news content. News consumers are also cognizant of the fact that news gathering and verification is an extensive process but they believe it should be accorded all the attention it deserves including identification of authority sources, prior accumulation of knowledge through reading, and site visits that can allow journalists to obtain contextual information. The selected excerpts below describe the speedy news cycle demands that forces journalists not to counter-check news accuracy as well as the preferences of the news consumers with regards to news verification.

> *I can assure you the editors in Nairobi don't understand this region. An editor will call you from Nairobi and ask you to go to a distant location and capture pictures to accompany a story. It is now around 7PM and by around 9-10 the newspaper will have gone for printing. If you try explaining the long-distance s/he will perceive you are not serious with your story, kill the story, and pick on what is near* (J1).

> *At times there are time limits that may make you submit copies and do stories in a hurry. If it is in the evening and it is a newspaper story, you will be under pressure to submit it faster and you may submit stories that contain some errors* (J2).

> *Journalists' regulations do not allow them to disseminate content that is not truthful; they have to abide by that in as much as they desire to publish multiple stories. When a person tells you they are the Chairman of the Council of Imams, you are supposed to ask for their contact numbers, call the National chairman to confirm whether or not your source is the Chairman in Uasin Gishu County and if he denies knowing him you let go of the story* (NS1).

> *If a journalist is to break his story, and is to work on a story, he should be guided by some ethics just the way doctors are guided by ethics. Some just break from the norm. News is not about just breaking a story; news should be factual. If you are a gossip or rumor journalist is when you can just spill your story in an effort to break news* (CR2).

As you chase as many stories, definitely you will make mistakes. If you are supposed to do two stories, you should do two stories (E2).

Times have changed in the media industry in the sense that mainstream media no longer holds the monopoly of disseminating new information; there are several sources of information where news consumers can obtain content. Therefore, journalists have to compete to retain their news consumers and possibly acquire new ones through engaging in modern day knowledge society practices such as checking content after publication. For instance, Campbell (1997) points out news construction methods "precludes the reporter from spending an elaborate amount of time evaluating the best possible sources of information, formulating a complex search strategy and then, having retrieved a wealth of information, scrutinizing this for the facts to back up their argument" (p. 60).

Nyabuga and Booker (2013) note that news dissemination has undergone changes in that news subjects demand speedy news dissemination. Journalists in this study were at the same time reluctant to take part in news verification because they similarly perceived news verification as a labor-intensiveness process. The perception was that the demand to submit news stories and compete with the fast pace at which information is shared on online spaces denies journalists the time to engage in the lengthy process of verifying news. The likelier scenario, then, is that a journalist would forgo the practice of checking all necessary evidence to back information. Similarly, in Lesotho Mncina, et. al. (2023) found that mainstream journalists face fierce competition from citizen journalists, resulting in poor-quality stories.

Additionally, a study conducted in Spain, Penafiel, Zabalondo, and Aiestaran (2020) found that on the contrary, Spanish magazines that practice *slow journalism* are

committed to pursuing quality, intellectual, and in-depth journalism and the stories produced are factual, researched rigorously, as well as dedicated to the exploration of carefully chosen subjects and protagonists. In the US, Romero-Rodriguez, Tejedor, and Castillo-Abdul (2022) observed that news organizations that practice *slow journalism* tend to select news sources that have the ability to contribute to a more in-depth analysis of issues, and therefore intellectuals, academics, artists, are likely to be included in news stories. Such practices enhance news accuracy.

The data in the present study further indicates that journalist's perceptions of news consumer's widely acceptance of fast-paced journalism that goes hand in hand with the publication of non-verified news are based on illusory beliefs. Contrary to what journalists believe, the public always expect to be intelligently informed about all account of events in a context which gives them meaning yet in a truthful and comprehensive way. News consumers expect journalists to use established news verification practices such as providing satisfactory details about the sources used in news reports, attributing stories, and ensuring their content is balanced and unembellished. The results of the present study are strikingly similar to previous studies which hint that journalists can provide the public with the reason to trust news and news media by fact-checking, basing news reporting on transparently researched facts, and improving the quality of news through inclusion of facts such as independent statistics, visualizations, as well as the use of reliable sources in news reports (Henke et al., 2020; Loosen, Reimer, & Holig, 2020; Masullo et al., 2022).

The beliefs of news consumers have significant implications for strategies targeted to rectify journalist's misperceptions about news consumer's expectations and preferences. In the gatekeeping theory, the audience is referred to as a social-institutional influence that affects news selection (Shoemaker and Vos 2009). In line

with this, journalists' lack of knowledge on news consumers' precise needs may make it difficult for them to understand and respond to the behaviors such as comprehensive fact-checking in news that are indeed approved. Earlier studies (de Sola Pool and Shulman 1959; Gans 1979) have also shown that the way in which journalists imagined their audience affected how they did their work.

4.6 Chapter Summary

The data presented in this chapter reveals that inaccessibility to valuable information and poor working conditions among journalists may have contributed to their inability to efficiently verify news accuracy. An over-reliance on the bandwagon mentality also plunges journalists into decisional errors when interpreting the accuracy of information. The data on journalists competencies reveal publication desks lack trained journalists in news and media literacy and this hinders journalists from critically engaging with the news sources and content they come across hence diminishing the accuracy of their reporting. Further, the data reveals that security concerns arising from sources threats and speedy news cycle demands are a major source of frustration for journalists. The other phenomenon that has a far-reaching impact on news standards is the sourcing patterns and selection of news which is ideologically supervised by the editors. In certain instances, frames in which meaning of the story is contained are deliberately omitted. The data lastly reveals that the requirement for accuracy is also connected to a need for news organizations to have a set of values that the news consumer identifies with. These values are objectivity, independence, comprehensiveness, balance, non-exaggeration of editorial content, and attribution of news sources.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, summary of findings is discussed, conclusion drawn, and suitable recommendations for the research problem are proposed. Further, avenues for further research on the topic under study are suggested. The study was based on the following research questions: How do journalists perceive the journalistic practice of verifying news accounts for selected print media publications? What are journalists' perceptions about their current extents of knowledge and skills on verification of news accounts for selected print media publications? What are the perceived pressures prominent in the journalists' decision to verify news accounts for selected print media publications?

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study asked journalists' perceptions on verification of news accounts for selected print media publications. It is specifically centered on key areas drawn from propositions of TPB, gate keeping theory, and SRT. This section is a summary of the findings.

5.2.1 Journalists' perspectives on verification of news accounts for selected print media publications

From journalists' perspectives, the study finds that behaviors are not always planned as explained in the TPB. It is unorthodox for journalists to plan or intend to skip the verification of accuracy in news accounts prior to publication of news reports but there are subconscious influences that prevent them from verifying news. In as much as journalists may want to verify news, non-verification behavior is not under their volitional control. They receive low wages in comparison to the effort required in vetting news accounts and this lowers their commitment towards the ethical practice

of verifying news. They are further limited by a lack of access to valuable information that can enable them (in)validate news stories. The findings further suggest journalists past habitual behaviors of obtaining news scripts from their workmates limits their actual news verification practices. They assume they share professional interests with their colleagues hence all practicing colleagues are committed to truth telling and have therefore conducted checking procedures prior to sharing news content. This assumption that information provided by colleagues has already been interpreted accurately and therefore needs no for further inquiry makes them susceptible to committing decisional errors over accuracy in information.

5.2.2 Perspectives on competencies and skills on verification of news accounts for selected print media publications

This second research question was centered on exploring how individual journalists' traits such as their knowledge and skills contribute to the news selection process and creation of media messages. The findings suggest that something is amiss in the content taught in journalism, the methods of teaching, and the training environment as earlier observed by Njuguna (2020). The content taught in journalism is not specialized and this complicates the task of understanding and invalidating information in specific domains resulting in inaccurate reportage. The methods of instruction in training institutions have not imparted journalists with the skill of evaluating information and evidence. Practice-based training is not emphasized enough in institutions of higher learning and this leaves journalists with below standard skills for critical assessment of news sources, information, and evidence.

 It may as well be the case that journalism trainees are subjected to a systematic and possibly constant curriculum over a sustained period of time in their training environment which has not exposed them to realities in the industry. For example,

Berger and Woodfall (2012) and Wolfe (2014) advocate for collaboration between the media industry and journalism institutions to ensure that the skills journalists develop are suitable for the changing times in the media industry.

To achieve any gains in journalists role of seeking factual information in news reportage, there is need for the introduction or modification of news literacy curriculums in journalism training institutions that will provide students the skills necessary in cross-checking news stories prior to publications. For instance, in a lesson, journalist should be taught the relevance of asking mandatory questions such as: who came up with the information at hand? How did they come up with it? Why did they come up with the information? When did they come up with the information? What is missing in the information? Where can I get the missing information? For Tully et al. (2021) a news literate individual should understand both the content and contexts of news production and consumption. Additionally, news media literacy knowledge and skills should be conceptualized across five domains: context, creation, content, circulation, and consumption (Tully et al., 2021).

According to King-O'Brien (2021) it is then critical for educators to ensure students read news so that they get exposed to viewpoints that spark controversy as a process of learning critical assessment of information. Such experience would ensure that in their time at training institutions, journalism students have developed the ability to engage with information, evaluate it and determine its truthfulness as a learning outcome of a particular course dedicated to developing news literacy skills. This would guarantee that journalism trainees are prepared to become critical of information in their actual news writing in future professional settings.

5.2.3 Pressures prominent in verification of news accounts for selected print media publications

The study finds varying circumstances that force journalists to engage in ethical violations of their social responsibility to provide the public with truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning. The media may want to portray itself as the public service good and therefore journalists attempt to remain truthful in their reporting yet pressure from groups within the society exert influence on the media. The groups include those in authority such as the state and political actors, media funders, and editorial supervisors. The state implicitly censors the media through regulatory rules such as defamation laws which is often abused to stifle journalists' freedom and prevent factual information from reaching the public. The state and media funders on the other hand monitor and punish the media that attempt to act responsibly by providing truthful and comprehensive information. Any diversion from the interests of the state or media funders results in withdrawal of advertising revenue in the media or job instability for the journalists. As for editorial supervisors, their terms of employment contract are subject to media owners and therefore this forces editors to serve the interests of media owners. They are prone to denying journalists their autonomy in news selection and in this case, facts can get concealed in news content. The study also finds that the speedy news cycle forces journalists to verify news stories after publication hence intensifying errors in news reports. Lastly, the study finds that journalists do not have a strong professional culture that values objectivity, independence, comprehensiveness, attribution of sources, balance, as well as non-exaggeration in news and this impacts news consumer's perceived accuracy of news reports.

5.3 Conclusion

Despite the importance of news verification, cases of inaccuracies on main stream media platforms are still reported and so the purpose for which this study was conducted was to explore journalists' beliefs about news verification. The study concludes that journalists have a low self-efficacy and an external locus of control that poses hinderances when tasked with verifying news.

Within journalists' social context, media organization have failed to adequately compensate journalists' efforts and this subconsciously lessens journalist's commitment to scout for facts. Further, the failure of media organizations to champion for journalists rights to information access unintentionally paralyzes the effort of scouting for facts. The study further finds that journalists routine practice of sharing news scripts, inadequate news and media literacy skills, and lack of specialized journalism training hinders journalists from conducting a deeper search that may reveal deceitful from truthful content. Additionally, security concerns, editor's news selection practices, and fast-paced news cycles creates an unfavorable environment for journalists to work in.

When examined in the context of the Theory of Planned Behavior, the most prominent themes that emerged as issues that require intervention include the perceived low self-efficacy and external locus of control. When examined in the context of the Gate keeping theory, the most prominent themes that emerged as issues that require intervention are the low efficacy in news evaluation skills. When examined in the context of the Social Responsibility Theory the most prominent themes that emerged as issues that require intervention are perceived negative consequences of verifying the accuracy in news accounts prior to publication.

5.4 Recommendation

Informed by the present scenario, going forward the lines of action proposed in this section can informing policy and would be worth reading and using by individuals in the academic realm of journalism, journalism practitioners, and policy makers. Based on the conclusions drawn, policy intervention strategies should focus on improving journalists' skills and creating a positive attitude towards journalists partaking in news verification. Behavioral interventions for journalists should target their self-efficacy and internal locus of control. The recommendations are further discussed in the section that follows.

5.4.1 Policy on access to information

There is need for development of implementing regulations for the Access to Information Act 2016. The civil society such as Katiba Institute, ARTICLE 19, and Transparency International Kenya in partnership with Commission on Administrative Justice should scale up its efforts in organizing sensitization training forums for public officers at the county levels on their roles in promoting the adherence of access to information policy in Kenya. Legislators should put in place legislation to protect whistleblowers from legal, administrative, employment-related sanctions, reputational and/or physical harm. Human resource managers in media houses should consider creating a salary revision policy that guides the modification of all primary salary components of the journalists' pay structure.

5.4.2 Media campaigns to create positive attitudes and challenge old norms

Observed and learnt norms such as the habitual behavior of sharing news scripts among journalists which makes them susceptible to decisional errors can be changed through media campaigns aimed at challenging old norms. Media lead-workforce could consider coming up with campaigns that create positive thoughts about the

importance of verifying news obtained from journalists' peers. This can be in form of postings on the internet (bulletin board or website) that promote news verification as critical at all times even when information is obtained from, and assumed verified by other media outlets.

5.4.3 Stakeholders support

Media stakeholders can increase their defense for protection of journalists and their news subjects from harm through mass media campaigns that advocate for safety of journalists and ways of combatting impunity attacks against journalists in pursuant of information. This can make legal professionals including judiciary departments, public commissions, public defenders, electoral courts, human rights activists, and legal services personnel within the judicial system to rise up in defense of the legal frameworks on information access. Stakeholders in the media industry could constantly commission studies on news consumers' perceptions so that journalist can discover areas that need their improvement and be able to align their practices with the actual news consumers' expectations.

5.4.4 Continuous upskilling, reskilling and training of journalists

Media industry lead workforce should consider working with academics in training institutions and develop video trainings and conferences that showcase new innovative practices associated with news verification. Editors can take the time to compare journalists' capabilities so that journalists motivate each other to boost their work performance.

5.4.5 Communication among journalists and stakeholders

Stakeholders can organize workshops on social persuasion where journalists encourage each other of the need for bravery to scout for facts in information prior to

publication. Stakeholders could as well organize quarterly meetings where employers talk to journalists and re-assure them of longer job tenures. Editors can further organize seminars where all journalists are sensitized about the negative attributes of publishing peers' information without counter-checking and exchange productive ideas of cautioning each other of the quality of content they share.

5.5 Thesis

This research was prompted by a growing concern over inaccurate news reports disseminated in the mainstream media platforms. The theoretical implication of this study is that i.) it extends the predictive power of TPB by illustrating that certain behaviors are not volitional, they take place as a result of subconscious influences and ii.) it confirms the gate-keeping levels of media as: individual journalists' traits and news values that are used in determining newsworthiness.

The gap in the TPB is that it conceives all behaviors as lineal yet in the behavior of verifying news accuracy, journalists may have the right set of behavioral, normative and control beliefs to strengthen their intention to verify accuracy in news accounts but this is not enough to guarantee they will take part in it. There are additional subconscious influences that could prevent journalists from verifying the accuracy of news accounts. This study therefore raises question of whether there are additional subconscious influences that can make journalists to act in unplanned ways (skip verifying news accounts). To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could use the gate-keeping theory to address other dynamics of journalistic news verification behavior.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

An important limitation of this study is that it used a smaller sample that cannot be representative of the behavioral characteristic of all journalists in Kenya. Although the study found the gate keeping theory to be suitable in understanding news selection decisions, the researcher supposes that news rooms have distinctive systems and therefore future studies can test the replication of this study's findings using different research populations of interest. Further, in as much as the idea of gate-keeping may affect the public's right to know because it is in this process that facts get concealed, in today's society the media is not the only channel through which information can be released. New media is one other source where the public can get information and users of new media are the new gate-keepers. Future research should look into how the public's right to know gets affected on the internet? How does new media such as social media amplify the gate keeping process? The researcher advances the view that virtual echo chambers of like-minded users may be created online through opaque social media algorithms that amplify disinformation while disguising factual information.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Journalists Interview Guide

Ice breaking question

Tell me about yourself?

Questions

1. What comes to mind when you think about the news verification?

Probes

   i.   What do you believe are positive aspects of implementing the process?

  ii.   What do you believe are the negative aspects of implementing the process?

 iii.   What else comes to mind when you think of journalists implementing the news verification

2. What was your experience in verifying a witness oral account?

Probes

   i.   What were some of the difficulties encountered while implementing the news verification?

  ii.   How is the knowledge input of individual members in a group setting?

 iii.   How would you rate the teaching given to you about information verification process in your formative years of study at your respective training schools?

 iv.   Would having a well-grounded understanding of the legal and ethical dimensions of the practice of journalism make a difference in the manner in which you make decisions over news?

  v.   If you were in a position, please describe the changes, if any, would you make regarding the news verification?

3. Explain your thoughts about any people you believe would approve or disapprove of your intentions to implement the news verification

Probes

   i.   Does it matter to you whether people editors care about news verification?

  ii.   Does it matter to you whether news consumers care about news verification?

 iii.   Does it matter to you whether your colleagues care about news verification?

Appendix 2: News Editors Interview Guide

1. What do you see as the challenges arising in the process of implementing the news verification?

Probes

i. Would you comment on the dissatisfying aspect of journalists' income, work overload, protocols to be observed before decision making over information?

ii. Do you have any comments on the facilitation that you've given the journalists to enable them successfully accomplish the task of news verification and how else you feel execution of the process can be enhanced?

Appendix 3: News Subjects Interview Guide

1. What would you say can lead to instances of poor journalism?

Probes

    i.   How would you tell the reporters cross-check what their sources are saying?

    ii. Do you think there are any considerations that determine the suitability of a source to a journalist?

    iii. What would you say has in that sense eroded many long held journalistic principles of accuracy?

2. In your view, what are the consequence of making a wrong piece of information public

Probes

    i.   How best can such instances be mitigated in your view?

    ii. What would you like to see evident in news reports for you to trust the information?

Appendix 4: Critical Readers Interview Guide

1. What would you say are your general expectations from the news articles you read on newspapers?

Probes

    i.   Do you care about its veracity? Could you cite your reason?

    ii.   Do you trust the information you read?

    iii.   Is the information given complete and accurate in your view?

Appendix 5: Themes

1. Personal motivation

2. Inaccessibility to valuable information,

3. Routine behaviors

4. Lack of needed skills

5. Prominence criteria of news

6. State and political actors' pressures

7. Editorial supervisors' pressures

8. Immediacy of news cycle

Appendix 6: Plagiarism report

Plagiarism Checker X Originality Report

Similarity Found: 6%

Date: Tuesday, February 21, 2023
Statistics: 1740 words Plagiarized / 27719 Total words
Remarks: Low Plagiarism Detected - Your Document needs Optional Improvement.

JOURNALISTIC PROCESS OF VERIFICATION OF EYE-WITNESS ORAL NEWS ACCOUNTS FOR THE PRINT MEDIA: A STUDY OF JOURNALISTS IN UASIN GISHU COUNTY BY JOSEPHINE MIRIAM WANANGWE SHRD/PGJ/06/16 A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLISHING, JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM MOI UNIVERSITY NOVEMBER, 2021

Appendix 7: Moi University Research permit

MOI UNIVERSITY
ISO 9001-2008 Certified Institution
SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

P.O Box 3900
Eldoret, Kenya

Fax: 053 – 43153/43047
Tel: 053 – 43103 Direct line
053– 43620 Ext: 2460

REF: MU/SIS/CMM/PGS/1

6ᵗʰ November, 2019

The executive Secretary,
Kenya National Council of Science and Technology,
P.O. Box 30623,
NAIROBI.

Dear Sir,

RE: JOSEPHINE M. WANANGWE – SHRD/PGJ/06/16

The above named is a Masters (MSc.) student in the Department of Communication Studies, School of Information Sciences, Moi University.

Ms. Wanangwe is intending to carry out research work entitled "Journalistic Process of Verification of Eye-witness oral News accounts for the print media: A Study of Journalists in Uasin Gishu County".

We are kindly requesting you to issue her with a research permit to enable her proceed with her research.

Yours faithfully,

Abraham K. Mulwo, PhD.
Head, Department of Communication Studies
Cell Phone - +254-713201327; E-mail: Abraham.mulwo@gmail.com

Appendix 8: NACOSTI Research permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 958368

Date of Issue: 18/November/2019

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Ms.. JOSEPHINE WANANGWE of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research in Uasin-Gishu on the topic: JOURNALISTIC PROCESS OF VERIFICATION OF EYE-WITNESS ORAL NEWS ACCOUNTS FOR THE PRINT MEDIA: A STUDY OF JOURNALISTS IN UASIN-GISHU COUNTY for the period ending : 18/November/2020.

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