



**THE INTERFACE BETWEEN JOURNALISTIC PROFESSIONAL STANDARD AND
PRACTICE AMONG SELECTED FM STATIONS IN ACCRA**

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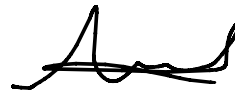
ABSTRACT

This study investigated the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice at FM stations in Accra, Ghana, focusing on Oman FM, Radio Gold, and Uniiq FM. Amidst Ghana's democratic growth since 1992, media freedom has thrived, yet recent concerns about press independence have emerged due to political and commercial pressures. Using qualitative methods, including interviews and content analysis, this research explored the best practices, challenges, and the impact of political affiliations on media content. The literature review delved into professional standards, ethical guidelines, and the role of regulatory bodies, integrating McQuail's media accountability theory and Grunig's Excellence Theory. It highlighted ongoing challenges such as economic constraints, media ownership influences, and the tension between journalistic ideals and practical constraints. The findings revealed that despite efforts to uphold ethical standards and professional identity, journalists at these FM stations face significant hurdles like tight deadlines, limited resources, and external pressures. Audience feedback shaped reporting practices but also presented with its challenges. The study contributed valuable insights into media reform and journalistic ethics in Ghana, emphasizing the need for supportive structures to bridge the gap between journalism ideals and practical realities.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertation laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication, UniMAC-IJ.

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18/10/2024

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Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my family especially, my mother Mrs. Augustina Owusuah Adokoh, My son Kwadwo Ohene Sarpong, and my brother Lawyer Sampson Owusu Adokoh, and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout this journey. Their belief in me has been a constant source of motivation and inspiration.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
DECLARATION	iii
CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR	v
Dedication	v
Acknowledgment	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	4
1.3 Objectives of the study	6
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 The significance of the study	7
1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study	7
1.7 Definition of key terms	8
1.8 Organisation of the Study	9
1.9 Chapter Summary	9
CHAPTER TWO	10

LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 Overview.....	10
2.2 Conceptual framework.....	10
2.2.1 Conceptual Framework: interface between journalistic profession and practice	11
2.2.2 Relationships	12
2.2.3 Traditional Media	13
2.2.4 History and Development of the Media in Ghana.....	14
2.2.5 Media Regulatory Bodies in Ghana	16
2.2.6 The practice of journalistic profession standards in Ghana.....	17
2.2.7 Ethical Issues and Challenges Faced by Journalists in Ghana	19
2.2.8 Media Liberalisation in Ghana: A Review of Press Freedom Based on Chapter 12 of the Ghana Constitution	19
2.2.9 Social Medias influence on Journalism and Future Trends in Ghana	20
2.2.10 Audience Engagement.....	22
2.3 Theoretical Review	26
2.3.1 Excellence Theory	26
2.3.2 Agenda-Setting Theory	27
2.4 Empirical Framework	28

2.5. Chapter Summary	32
CHAPTER THREE	33
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	33
3.1 Introduction	33
3.2 Research Design	33
3.3 Population of the Study	33
3.4 Sampling	34
3.5 Data Collection	34
3.6 Data Collection Methods.....	35
3.6.1 Interviews	35
3.6.2 Content Analysis	35
3.7 Methods of Data Analysis	35
CHAPTER FOUR.....	36
ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS	36
4.1 Introduction	36
4.2 Best practice of journalistic profession standards in Ghana.....	36
4.2.1 Professional Identity:.....	36
4.2.2 Training and Skills Development:.....	39

4.2.3 Ethical Considerations:.....	42
4.2.4 Editorial Independence:	45
4.3 The state journalistic practice in discharge their profession.....	48
4.3.1 Professional Standards vs. Practical Journalism	48
4.4 The challenges faced by journalists in their practice of profession.....	51
4.4.1 Challenges in Reporting	51
4.4.2 Strategies for Overcoming Challenges:.....	54
4.4.6 Audience Engagement.....	56
4.4.7 Role of FM Stations in Ghana’s Media Landscape.....	58
4.5 Future Trends.....	61
4.6 Discussion of Results	63
4.6.1 Best practice of journalistic profession standards in Ghana	64
4.6.2 The state journalistic practice in discharge their profession.....	66
4.6.3 The challenges faced by journalists in their practice of profession.....	67
4.7 Conclusion.....	69
4.8 Chapter Summary:.....	69
CHAPTER FIVE	71
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	71

5.1 Introduction	71
5.2 SUMMARY	71
5.3 CONCLUSIONS	72
5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS	73
5.5 Chapter Summary:.....	74
REFERENCES	76
INTERVIEW GUIDE	79

List of Tables

Table 1: Conceptual Framework: Interface between journalistic profession and practice 11

Table 2: Key Findings from the Analysis of Journalistic Profession and Practice..... 65

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Since the democratization of Ghana in 1992, in which the presidential and parliamentary elections ended military dictatorship and established a democratic government, the country is 'held up as one of Africa's star democratizers' (Gyimah-Boadi, 2015). A free, independent media is one of the central pillars of democracy, and constitutes the basis upon which the press is often referred to as the Fourth Estate of the realm (Adanlawo and Rugbeer, 2021; Curran, 2011). The evolution of media freedom and independence in Ghana since its democratization illustrates this assertion. The promulgation of the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana, the main institution on which Ghana's democracy revolves, promotes media freedom and autonomy. This has engendered media plurality and incrementally formed the basis of the broad participation of the masses in the country's body politic. The creation function of media free and that of the media feeds the curiosity of the audience by the material content, so in a way, it can be seen as a product of continuing efforts that are related to the verbal exchange in society. Its success is judged by the acceptability and credibility of the information conveyed, its success primarily relies on the experience of its generator, the journalist. Even though the journalist does the reporting, the big question is "What is the role of the Media in society?" The job of the journalist is of paramount importance because he is the person primarily identified with collecting, recording, analyzing and disseminating information about the ever-changing links in social, economic, political system to the increasingly complex society that has the right to be informed

about all these changes. In addition to this system, news not only affects the determination of the journalist's role but also shapes it. The practice (of journalism) developed characteristics which help describe the role it plays in the society. Notably, the research reveals a predominance of government-aligned narratives in news coverage, with limited critical reporting. Davis (2013) highlights the evolving relationship between journalism and public relations, noting that the increasing reliance on public relations content can undermine journalistic autonomy and the credibility of news media. Furthermore, Lewis, Williams, and Franklin (2008) argue that the blurring of boundaries between journalism and public relations can lead to conflicts of interest and ethical dilemmas, underscoring the necessity for clear ethical guidelines and professional boundaries to ensure the integrity of journalistic practice. These contemporary studies affirm that while collaboration between journalism and public relations is inevitable, maintaining a critical distance and adherence to ethical standards remains crucial for preserving the trust and credibility of the journalistic profession. The study underscores ethical concerns regarding the portrayal of news from a government-centric perspective, resonating with literature on journalism ethics by Ward (2009) and Kovach & Rosenstiel (2007)

Examination of journalistic roles beyond the traditional Western framework that primarily focuses on journalism's contribution to democracy and citizenship by Thomas Hanitzsch. The authors argue that existing journalism scholarship often overlooks the complexities of non-democratic and non-Western contexts, as well as forms of journalism beyond political news. Drawing on the framework of discursive institutionalism, they conceptualize journalistic roles as discursive constructions shaped by journalism's identity and societal positioning. These roles are not static but subject to discursive (re)creation, (re)interpretation, appropriation, and contestation. The study identifies 18 roles in the domain of

political life and delineates three areas—consumption, identity, and emotion—where journalists play significant roles in everyday life. By offering a nuanced understanding of journalistic roles, the study contributes to broadening the discourse on journalism's societal functions. Scholars such as Hallin & Mancini (2004) and Hanitzsch (2011) have highlighted the need for a more comprehensive approach to studying journalism beyond democracy, emphasizing the importance of contextualizing journalistic practices within diverse socio-political landscapes. The framework of discursive institutionalism provides a valuable lens for analyzing the dynamic nature of journalistic roles, aligning with theoretical perspectives on media institutions by scholars like Lowrey & Gade, (2013).

This article contributes to the literature on media freedom and democracy in Ghana by exploring this relatively under-investigated aspect of the Ghanaian media. It argues that the emerging threats to press freedom, some of which involve the use of the coercive powers of state, is a signal example of democratic backsliding in the country. There is a sense in which recent developments in the Ghanaian media landscape seem to run counter to Ghana's much-celebrated media freedom and its mutually reinforcing positive effect on the country's reputation as a poster child for successful democratization in Africa. As we will demonstrate below, there have been attacks on media freedom, with journalists threatened with death, physically assaulted, arrested with unwarranted brute force, and in some cases, have been killed. Similarly, some media outlets have been closed and their licences suspended (Citinewsroom.com, 2022; Nyarko and Akpojivi, 2017). These incidents have raised concerns about the erosion of freedom and independence of the media in Ghana. This paper explores the dynamics in journalism practice in Accra, Ghana's capital city. Efforts of the World Press Freedom Committee (2003) to encourage regulatory bodies of mass media worldwide to make

the goal easier include urging governments where restrictive mass media policies exist to even reconsider the burden placed on the press is too heavy. This study aims to contribute positively to alleviating any other impediments to press freedom by investigating how journalists and other media practitioners at selected FM stations in Accra remain professionals in fulfilling their democratic duty in a liberal environment. It explores the extent to which profit-making concerns, ownership influence, advertiser influence, politicians' influence, and sensationalism, among other factors, influence journalistic representations and democratic role conception in Ghana.

This study offers an exhaustive examination of existing scholarship on the interface between journalistic profession standard and practice among selected FM stations in Accra. It encompasses theoretical frameworks such as socialization theories, specifically role theory and identification theory, elucidating how journalists adapt within their organizational contexts. In addition, the chapter delves into empirical literature spanning various disciplines, exploring modern journalism's landscape and the pursuit of professionalism. Moreover, the findings highlight the need for media reform efforts to promote journalistic principles and uphold public trust, echoing recommendations from scholars like McChesney & Nichols (2010) and Allan (2005). Overall, the study offers fresh insights into the multifaceted roles of journalism in both political and everyday life, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and contextually sensitive approach to understanding journalistic practices.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The interface between journalistic professional standard and practice among selected FM stations in Accra presents both social and scholarly challenges within Ghana's evolving media landscape. Socially, the emergence of a vibrant talk radio landscape has democratized political

discourse, allowing diverse voices to participate in public discussions facilitated by new media technologies. This shift marks a significant departure from past exclusivity in national discourse, highlighting the democratization of information dissemination. However, within this dynamic environment, the role of FM radio remains pivotal despite concerns about its potential obsolescence in the face of new media technologies. Scholars such as Tetey (2011) emphasize the resilience of radio in the digital age, attributing its continued relevance to convergence with social networking applications and enhanced audience engagement. There are also notable inconsistencies in how ethical guidelines are applied across different FM stations in Accra. These inconsistencies can erode public trust in the media and lead to varying levels of journalistic quality. Investigating these variations will help identify the factors contributing to such disparities and recommend standardization of ethical practices (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). Additionally, the Regulatory frameworks are also designed to uphold professional standards in journalism, but their enforcement and sufficiency are often questionable. This research will assess the effectiveness of these regulations in ensuring ethical practices among journalists and identify areas for reform to better support journalistic integrity (McQuail, 2010). Moreover, Journalists frequently encounter pressure from commercial interests and political affiliations, which can compromise their independence and objectivity. These external influences can lead to biased or censored content, undermining the credibility of the media. This study aims to explore the extent of such pressures and their impact on journalistic integrity (Schudson, 2003). Nevertheless, there remains a gap in scholarly literature regarding the specific intersection of journalistic profession and practice within Accra's FM radio stations, particularly concerning the integration of social media into journalists' daily routines. This research aims to bridge this gap by investigating how journalists within selected FM stations navigate their profession amidst the

evolving media landscape, technological advancements, and audience participation facilitated by social media. By establishing a new scholarly presence, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of the complexities inherent in journalistic practice within Accra's FM radio sector, thus contributing to ongoing discussions on media convergence and its implications for democratic discourse in Ghana.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The objective of the study seeks:

- 1 To discuss the best practice of journalistic professional standards in Ghana. (Using the GJA code of ethics)
- 2 To investigate the state of journalistic practice in the discharge of their profession.
- 3 To investigate some of the challenges faced by journalists in their practice of profession.

1.3 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following questions to achieve the objectives of the study:

- 1 What are the best practices of journalistic profession standards in Ghana as defined by the code of ethics?
- 2 To what extent do journalists in Ghana adhere to the best practices and standards of their profession as defined by the code of ethics?
- 3 What challenges do journalists in Ghana face in adhering to their professional standards and practices?

1.4 The significance of the study

The significance of studying the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice among selected FM stations in Accra lies in its critical implications for democratic societies and the credibility of the media. As journalism evolves in the digital age, understanding the challenges and dynamics affecting journalistic professionalism becomes increasingly important. This research can provide insights into maintaining journalistic integrity amidst technological advancements, economic pressures, and political influences, thereby contributing to the preservation of a free and responsible press. Schudson (2009), professionalism in journalism not only ensures the dissemination of accurate and reliable information but also fosters public trust in the media, which is fundamental for a well-functioning democracy. By examining the factors shaping journalistic professionalism and proposing strategies to enhance it, this study can offer valuable guidance for journalists, media organizations, policymakers, and educators in navigating the complexities of the modern media landscape while upholding ethical standards and promoting public accountability.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of study on “The interface between journalistic professional standard and practice among selected FM stations in Accra”, focusing on Oman FM representing the -NPP stance, Radio gold for-NDC, and Uniiq FM as a neutral station.

The research will be limited to broadcast media and not print or social media, and the focus is three FM station using qualitative research methods such as interviews, content analysis to explore the challenges, trends, and dynamics within journalistic practice across these stations. It will examine how political affiliations influence editorial decisions, content production, and the overall media landscape within Accra. Furthermore, the findings may not be generalizable to all

FM stations in Accra or other media contexts beyond the selected stations. Despite these limitations, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the complex relationship between journalistic profession and practice within Accra's FM radio sector.

1.6 Definition of key terms

Journalistic Profession: The journalistic profession involves the systematic practice of reporting, writing, editing, photographing, or broadcasting news, and it is grounded in principles of accuracy, fairness, and public accountability. It emphasizes the commitment to truth and the ethical responsibility of informing the public (Deuze, 2019).

Journalistic Practice: Journalistic practice refers to the real-world application of journalistic principles and skills, including newsgathering, fact-checking, writing, editing, and publishing. It encompasses the day-to-day activities and challenges that journalists face in the field (Waisbord, 2018).

Ethical Standards: Ethical standards in journalism are the codes and guidelines that govern the conduct of journalists to ensure responsible, accurate, and fair reporting. These standards help maintain the integrity and trustworthiness of the media (Ward, 2018).

Regulatory frameworks refer to the set of rules, laws, and guidelines established by governments and regulatory bodies to oversee media operations and ensure that they adhere to ethical and professional standards. These frameworks are crucial for maintaining media accountability and public trust (Napoli, 2019).

Professional Development: Professional development in journalism involves continuous education and training to enhance journalists' skills and knowledge. It includes workshops, seminars, courses, and other learning opportunities that help journalists stay updated with industry standards and practices (Mensing, 2017).

FM Stations: FM stations are radio broadcasting services that use frequency modulation technology to transmit audio content, including news, music, and talk shows. These stations are a crucial medium for information dissemination, especially in urban areas (Starkey, 2017).

1.7 Organisation of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter looks at the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance, and Organisation of the study. Chapter two reviews literature related to modern journalism practice. The chapter further reviews fundamental theories of journalism practice, Chapter three (3) describes the methods used in collecting data. Chapter four (4) contains the findings of the study. Chapter five (5) covers the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

1.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter sets the stage for the study of the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice among selected FM stations in Accra. It explores the dynamics in journalist practice in Accra. The research problems and objectives are clearly stated aiming to investigate journalist perceptions and their impact on society. Additionally, the chapter outlines the research scope and limitations, defining the parameters within which the study will be conducted.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

The chapter contains a review of what others have written about the topic. It provides a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to investigating the interface between the journalistic profession and practice among selected FM stations in Accra. Some of the related topics reviewed include the theoretical and empirical literature, The Conceptual review of journalistic profession and practice in Ghana, Traditional Media: History and Development, Media Regulatory Bodies in Ghana, and the practice of journalistic profession standards in Ghana. (Using the code of ethics), challenges faced by journalists in their practice of profession and other

2.1 Conceptual framework

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), a conceptual framework explains the relationship among independent and dependent variables. They also state that a conceptual framework explains the possible connection between variables and answers the why questions. It serves to elucidate the potential relationships between the variables involved and address the underlying reasons or mechanisms driving these relationships. The conceptual framework for the interface between the journalistic profession and practice among selected FM stations in Accra is structured around the relationship between the independent variable (journalistic profession) and the dependent variable (journalistic practice). The independent variable encompasses professional standards, ethical guidelines, training, and the influence of regulatory bodies like the

National Media Commission (NMC) and professional organizations such as the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA). The dependent variable includes the actual practices observed in FM stations, such as adherence to ethical standards, quality of news reporting, and the influence of economic constraints and media ownership on journalistic output. This framework is informed by McQuail's (2010) theories of media accountability and professionalism, which provide a basis for assessing how professional ideals are translated into practice within the dynamic media environment of Accra. By analyzing these variables, the study aims to elucidate the factors that impact the quality and integrity of journalism in Ghana's liberalized media landscape, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities for maintaining professional standards.

Table 1: 2.2.1 Conceptual Framework: the interface between journalistic profession and practice

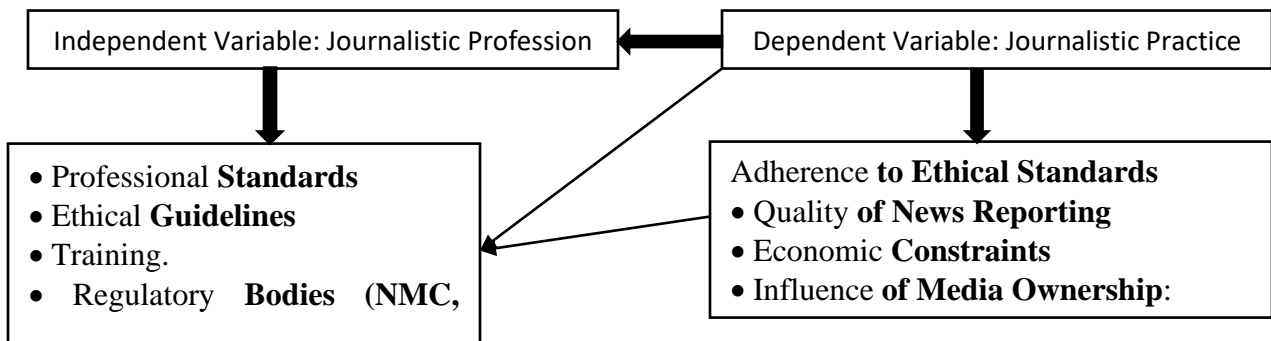


Fig. 1 The researcher's construct

The diagram illustrates the intricate dynamics between the journalistic profession and journalistic practice, emphasizing how the foundational elements of journalism significantly influence the execution of reporting. At the core of the journalistic profession are key components such as professional standards, ethical guidelines, comprehensive training, and the

oversight of regulatory bodies like the National Media Commission (NMC). These elements collectively establish a framework that guides journalists in their duties, promoting accountability and integrity in their work. Adherence to these professional standards and ethical guidelines is crucial for maintaining the credibility of the news, directly impacting the quality of reporting. Furthermore, the rigorous training that journalists undergo equips them with essential skills to navigate the complexities of their roles effectively. However, journalistic practice is not only shaped by these internal factors; it is also influenced by external challenges such as economic constraints that may hinder the ability to produce high-quality content and the overarching influence of media ownership, which can compromise editorial independence and objectivity. Together, these dynamics highlight the delicate balance journalists must maintain between adhering to ethical standards and confronting the practical realities of the media landscape.

2.2.2 Relationships

The independent variable (Journalistic Profession) influences the dependent variable (Journalistic Practice) through various components:

Professional standards, ethical guidelines, training, and regulatory bodies shape how journalists conduct their work.

These elements directly affect adherence to ethical standards, the quality of news reporting and how economic constraints and media ownership influence journalistic practices.

2.2.3 Traditional Media

Traditional media refers to the established means of communication and expression that existed before the advent of the internet and digital technologies. It encompasses a variety of platforms, including print media (newspapers, books, and magazines) and broadcast media (television and radio), Baran and Davis (2015). These forms of media have been fundamental in shaping public opinion, disseminating information, and providing entertainment over the years.

Traditional media in Ghana, a cornerstone of the country's communication landscape, encompasses both print and broadcast media. Print media is a vital component, consisting of newspapers, books, and magazines. Newspapers like Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times have long been instrumental in delivering comprehensive news coverage and analysis, serving as essential sources of information for the public. Books, authored by notable Ghanaian writers such as Ayi Kwei Armah and Ama Ata Aidoo, contribute significantly to the country's literary and educational domains, offering a blend of fiction and non-fiction that reflects Ghana's rich cultural heritage. Magazines cater to various interests, from business and finance to lifestyle and fashion, providing in-depth articles and features tailored to specific audiences.

In addition to print, broadcast media plays a critical role in Ghana's traditional media landscape. Television broadcasting, which began with the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), includes major stations like GTV and TV3. These stations provide a diverse range of programming, including news, entertainment, and educational content, leveraging the visual and auditory appeal of television to engage viewers effectively. Radio remains one of the most accessible and influential forms of media in Ghana, reaching both urban and rural populations. Stations such as Joy FM and Oman FM broadcast news, talk shows, and music, offering a

platform for public discourse and community engagement. Radio's widespread reach and immediacy make it a crucial medium for real-time information dissemination and public interaction. Despite the rapid growth of digital media, traditional media in Ghana continues to play an indispensable role in shaping public opinion, informing the populace, and preserving cultural narratives.

2.2.4 History and Development of the Media in Ghana

The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) was established by law in 1968 with a triple mandate as a State Broadcaster, Public Service Broadcaster, and a Commercial Broadcaster in Ghana, established under an act by the British colonial government in 1935, the Gold Coast first operated a Broadcasting outlet called radio ZOY. This was the code name of a relay station the BBC operated. It was in the time of Governor General Sir Hodson. It later became the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation after Dr Kwame Nkrumah changed the name Gold Coast to Ghana, upon political independence in 1957. The broadcasting service, originally known as Station ZOY, was introduced on 31 July 1935 by the colonial Governor, Sir Arnold Hodson.

Back in 1965, Dr Kwame Nkrumah inaugurated the television division for black and white screens. Both radio and television became the main components of GBC's electronic outlets for information dissemination. In 1996, the Supreme Court settled a key debate in Ghana when its ruling committed the state broadcaster to the equal opportunities doctrine in broadcasting. Thus, the corporation is obliged to be fair and grant equal publicity to all political parties in Ghana. It expanded in time to meet ever-increasing expectations, because of the growth in the human population. As a result, the station now operates seven television channels and thirty-three radio frequencies, which broadcast in twenty-five languages.

During 1990s, media liberalization under Act 449 of 1993 led to the proliferation of private FM stations, transforming the radio landscape. Private stations like Joy FM and Oman FM emerged, offering diverse content and perspectives, thus enhancing media pluralism and freedom. Today, radio remains a dominant medium in Ghana, with numerous FM stations catering to various audiences. The diversity in radio programming has fostered a more informed and engaged public. Agyekum (2019) emphasizes the importance of radio in promoting democratic discourse and providing a platform for marginalized voices. Traditional media in Ghana has a rich and diverse history that reflects the evolution of communication practices from pre-colonial oral traditions to modern media forms. The origins of Ghanaian media can be traced back to pre-colonial times when oral storytelling, drumming, and griots were pivotal in transmitting history, cultural values, and communal news within communities (Awedoba, 2015). These traditional forms of media were instrumental in shaping societal norms and preserving local heritage. The advent of print media began in 1935 with the establishment of The Daily Graphic, Ghana's first modern newspaper, which marked a shift towards formalized journalism under British colonial rule (Gyamfi, 2002). This period saw the introduction of structured news reporting and the establishment of a foundation for future media practices. Post-independence, Ghana experienced significant developments in its media landscape, beginning with the establishment of the GBC in 1954, which introduced radio and television broadcasting as key mediums for public communication and national development (Doku, 2005). The 1990s brought about a transformative era with the liberalization of the media sector under Act 449 of 1993, which allowed for the establishment of private media outlets and fostered a more pluralistic media environment (Dornu, 2018). This era saw a significant expansion of media diversity, including the rise of private radio and television stations that challenged the state's monopoly on

information and contributed to a more democratic media landscape. Today, traditional media in Ghana continues to evolve alongside digital media, with radio, television, and print media still playing crucial roles in public information and discourse. The ongoing integration of digital technologies has reshaped media practices, introducing new opportunities and challenges for media professionals (Agyekum, 2019). Understanding this historical trajectory is essential for exploring the contemporary interface between the journalistic profession and practice in Ghana, as it provides insight into how past developments shape current media practices and professional standards.

2.2.5 Media Regulatory Bodies in Ghana

History and Development

Media regulatory bodies in Ghana have been essential in overseeing and guiding the operations of the country's media industry, ensuring adherence to ethical standards, promoting media pluralism, and safeguarding freedom of expression. The history of media regulation in Ghana traces back to the colonial era, when British authorities imposed strict controls on press freedom to maintain colonial dominance and manage dissent (Gyamfi, 2002). Following independence in 1957, Ghana sought to develop a more inclusive and democratic media environment. One of the earliest efforts to formalize media regulation was the establishment of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) in 1949. Although it began as a professional body advocating journalists' rights and ethical standards, it did not have formal regulatory powers (GJA, n.d.). It was not until the 1990s that Ghana created formal regulatory bodies with statutory authority to address the expanding media landscape and ensure effective governance.

The National Media Commission (NMC) was established in 1993 under the National Media Commission Act, 1993 (Act 449), and became the primary statutory body responsible for promoting media freedom, ensuring adherence to ethical standards, and adjudicating media-related complaints (NMC, n.d.).

The following year, in 1996, the National Communications Authority (NCA) was also founded through the National Communications Authority Act, 1996 (Act 524), as part of a broader initiative to modernize Ghana's telecommunications and broadcasting sectors. The NCA was established to efficiently manage the radio spectrum, regulate the broadcasting industry, and promote fair competition among media and telecommunications operators (NCA, n.d.). Its core functions include allocating radio frequencies, overseeing broadcasting and telecommunications technical aspects, ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, and adapting to new technological advancements (Kwarteng, 2020; Agyekum, 2019). In recent years, the NCA has focused on regulating online content, managing digital broadcasting expansion, and addressing challenges in a converged media environment (Agyekum, 2019). Together, the GJA, NMC, and NCA reflect the evolution of media regulation in Ghana from the restrictive colonial period to a more open and pluralistic media environment, addressing both traditional media and emerging digital platforms (Gyamfi, 2002; Dornu, 2018).

2.2.6 The practice of journalistic profession standards in Ghana

In Ghana, the Code of Ethics rigorously guides the practice of journalistic professional standards for Ghanaian Journalists, which establishes essential principles for ethical journalism. The Code emphasizes several key standards designed to uphold professionalism and integrity in the media sector. For instance, it mandates that journalists “shall seek truth and report it,”

requiring reporters to “verify the accuracy of information from reliable sources before publishing” (GJA, 2019). This principle ensures that journalists are committed to providing the public with accurate and verified information. Additionally, the Code stresses the importance of “acting independently,” where journalists are advised to “avoid conflicts of interest and refrain from accepting bribes or gifts that might influence their reporting” (GJA, 2019). This guideline aims to protect the integrity of journalism from external pressures and maintain public trust. The Code also highlights the necessity of “respecting privacy,” urging journalists to “respect individuals' rights and dignity, and avoid intruding into their private lives without a valid public interest” (GJA, 2019). This standard serves to balance the public's right to know with the individual's right to privacy, and also Journalists should avoid discrimination: Journalists should avoid making negative or derogatory remarks about a person's ethnicity, religion, gender, or any physical or mental condition, moreover Reward and gratification are also one of the key ethics we should also be considered: (i) Journalists must not seek or receive bribes, favors, or gifts to withhold or publish information. (ii) Charging for the publication of news undermines the integrity of news as an impartial, accurate, and unbiased report of events. Despite these clear ethical guidelines, the implementation of these standards faces challenges in Ghana, including political pressures, resource constraints, and the proliferation of misinformation (Gyamfi, 2020). The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), through ongoing training and advocacy, strives to uphold these ethical standards, promoting a culture of responsible journalism that supports democratic values and public accountability (Agyekum, 2019). By adhering to these principles, Ghanaian journalists contribute to a media environment that values accuracy, fairness, and independence, essential for a healthy democratic society (Gyamfi, 2020).

2.2.7 Ethical Issues and Challenges Faced by Journalists in Ghana

Journalists in Ghana encounter a range of ethical issues that significantly impact their professional practice and the integrity of their work. One major challenge is maintaining journalistic integrity in an environment where corruption and bribery are prevalent. Journalists may face pressure from various stakeholders to alter their reports or accept bribes in exchange for favorable coverage, which undermines the credibility of the media (Agyeman-Duah, 2015). Additionally, sensationalism in reporting can compromise ethical standards, as media outlets sometimes prioritize dramatic headlines over accurate and balanced news coverage (Baffour-Awuah, 2020). Another ethical dilemma involves the balance between public interest and privacy, where journalists must navigate the fine line between uncovering information that serves the public good and respecting individuals' rights to privacy (Mebude, 2018). Moreover, the lack of formal training in ethical journalism practices exacerbates these issues, leaving many journalists ill-equipped to handle complex ethical decisions (Adams, 2019). These ethical challenges are compounded by pressure from media owners who may have their own biases and agendas, which can influence editorial decisions and potentially lead to conflicts of interest (Agyeman-Duah, 2015).

2.2.8 Media Liberalisation in Ghana: A Review of Press Freedom Based on Chapter 12 of the Ghana Constitution

Media liberalisation in Ghana represents a critical phase in the country's democratic development, marked by a significant shift from state-controlled media to a more open and diverse media landscape. Central to this transformation is Chapter 12 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which enshrines principles of press freedom and media regulation. This constitutional framework, including Acts 162, 163, and 164, has played a pivotal role in shaping the current

media environment in Ghana. Chapter 12 of the 1992 Constitution explicitly protects press freedom, outlining the rights and responsibilities of the media in a democratic society. Act 162, the National Media Commission Act, established the National Media Commission (NMC) to ensure that the media operates in the public interest. This Act mandates the NMC to promote a free, independent, and pluralistic media environment, which is crucial for democratic governance and transparency (Constitution of Ghana, 1992). Act 163, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Act, provides for the establishment and functioning of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) as a public service broadcaster. While GBC was historically a government-controlled entity, Act 163 emphasizes its role in offering unbiased, informative content to serve the public's interest (Constitution of Ghana, 1992). This Act aims to balance state interests with the need for an independent media service. Act 164, the Broadcasting Act, regulates the broadcasting sector by setting up a framework for the licensing and operation of private radio and television stations. This Act marked a significant shift towards media liberalisation by allowing private entities to operate alongside state media, thereby fostering a more competitive and diverse media landscape (Constitution of Ghana, 1992).

Press freedom in Ghana, as enshrined in these Acts, has been instrumental in advancing democratic practices and fostering a robust public discourse. The constitutional provisions and subsequent legislative measures have facilitated a media environment where diverse voices can be heard, and government accountability can be effectively pursued (Gyan, 2017).

However, while Chapter 12 and these Acts lay a strong foundation for press freedom, challenges remain. Issues such as governmental interference, inadequate resources for media houses, and occasional legislative ambiguities can undermine the spirit of media liberalisation (Agyeman-Duah, 2015). Despite these challenges, the framework established by the Constitution has largely

supported the growth of a vibrant media sector in Ghana, reflecting the ongoing evolution of press freedom in the country.

2.2.9 Social Media's Influence on Journalism and Future Trends in Ghana

Social media has profoundly transformed the landscape of journalism in Ghana, reshaping the interface between journalistic professional standards and everyday practice. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have emerged as critical channels for news dissemination, enabling journalists to reach broader audiences while facilitating real-time interaction and feedback. As noted by Hermida (2010), this shift toward social media not only democratizes the flow of information but also introduces challenges regarding the maintenance of professional standards such as accuracy, objectivity, and accountability. The immediacy of social media can pressure journalists to prioritize speed over thoroughness, potentially compromising the rigorous fact-checking processes that underpin ethical reporting (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). In Ghana, this trend is particularly evident in the context of political reporting, where sensationalism often triumphs over substantive journalism, as seen during election periods when audience engagement metrics can distort editorial decisions (Asante, 2018).

Looking ahead, the future of journalism in Ghana will be significantly shaped by the evolving role of social media. One anticipated trend is the increasing reliance on audience-generated content, where citizens act as both consumers and producers of news. Waisbord (2013) suggests that this convergence of professional and citizen journalism may blur the lines of accountability, complicating journalists' ability to uphold traditional standards. This phenomenon is especially relevant in Ghana, where media consumers actively engage in discussions and disseminate information through social media platforms. As noted by Baba et al. (2021), the rise of citizen

journalism in Ghana challenges journalists to maintain credibility while navigating the rapid pace of information flow and the prevalence of misinformation.

Additionally, the role of algorithms and data analytics in shaping content on social media will continue to influence journalistic practices. McQuail (2010) emphasizes the importance of understanding audience behavior and preferences, which are increasingly driven by algorithmic recommendations. In the Ghanaian context, this reliance on data can enhance audience engagement but may also lead to the prioritization of content that garners attention over that which is factually significant or ethically sound. Consequently, journalists will need to strike a delicate balance between engaging their audience and adhering to professional standards, ensuring that their work remains aligned with the principles of ethical journalism.

Furthermore, the integration of multimedia storytelling techniques such as video and live streaming through social media platforms is expected to become a defining feature of future journalism in Ghana. This shift not only caters to the evolving preferences of audiences for more dynamic content but also poses challenges related to authenticity and verification. As digital technologies continue to advance, journalists in Ghana must adapt their skill sets to effectively utilize these tools while maintaining high standards of accuracy and objectivity in their reporting (Dzisah, 2016).

2.2.10 Audience engagement

Audience engagement has become an integral component in the evolving relationship between journalistic professional standards and everyday practice, shaping how journalists interact with their audiences while adhering to ethical frameworks. In contemporary media environments, audience feedback serves as a vital tool for ensuring relevance and public accountability,

enabling journalists to align content with audience preferences and societal needs. However, this engagement introduces a delicate tension between professional journalistic standards such as objectivity, accuracy, and impartiality, and the growing pressures to meet audience demands, often influenced by sensationalism, commercial interests, or political bias. Scholarly research demonstrates that media organizations, particularly in competitive or commercially driven markets, are increasingly adopting audience-centric content production models, which sometimes compromise the rigor of professional journalistic practices. For instance, Bagdikian (2004) underscores how audience engagement can push news outlets to prioritize stories that attract more attention, leading to deviations from ethical reporting norms, such as sensationalism or dilution of hard news coverage.

A crucial aspect of audience engagement is its role in shaping editorial decisions and content strategies. McQuail (2010) highlights how media professionals are increasingly aware of their audience's power, using metrics like ratings, shares, and feedback loops to inform reporting practices. While this responsiveness keeps journalism relevant in a fragmented media landscape, where competition for audience attention is fierce, journalists must balance reflecting public concerns with maintaining journalistic integrity. Scholars like Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) argue that while audience engagement can enhance journalism's participatory nature, it risks compromising journalistic values if audience preferences overshadow editorial independence. This risk is particularly pronounced in digital environments, where social media and online feedback can drive journalists to prioritize stories that are “clickable” rather than those of high public importance or ethical significance (Hermida, 2010).

Moreover, audience engagement complicates the role of gatekeeping in journalism, where traditional information hierarchies are disrupted by user-generated content and the immediacy of

social media feedback (Waisbord, 2013). Journalists must now navigate the blurred boundaries between professional and citizen journalism, making it essential for them to uphold high standards of fact-checking and verification amidst increasing pressure to publish breaking news first. Deuze (2005) emphasizes the need for ongoing professional training and ethical adherence in an era where digital engagement blurs the lines between credible news and misinformation. Audience-driven content can challenge journalists to reinforce their commitment to ethical journalism, ensuring they act as responsible mediators of fact and truth.

In regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Ghana, audience engagement through platforms like radio plays a crucial role in connecting media practitioners with their communities. Dzisah (2016) highlights that radio remains the dominant medium for public discourse in Ghana, where audience feedback directly influences programming and content. While this engagement fosters inclusivity and responsiveness, it also presents challenges to maintaining professional journalistic standards, particularly when audience demands conflict with ethical reporting. For example, audience-driven pressure to align news with popular sentiment or political affiliations challenges journalists' ability to remain neutral and objective. Baba et al. (2021) explore this dilemma, noting that the pressures of both media ownership and audience preferences can lead to editorial biases, compromising journalistic independence and credibility.

In Ghana, audience engagement plays a critical role in shaping the relationship between journalistic professional standards and practice, reflecting public interaction's growing influence on media content. Ghana's media landscape, dominated by radio and digital platforms, has seen audience feedback, preferences, and participation shape news coverage and editorial decisions. Fosu (2017) notes that radio remains the most accessible and influential medium in Ghana, fostering a deep connection between journalists and their audience, who provide feedback

through call-ins, social media, and other interactive platforms. This interaction ensures journalists align content with public needs. However, it can complicate maintaining journalistic standards such as objectivity, accuracy, and independence, as journalists may prioritize stories that resonate with popular sentiment rather than ethical standards.

The rise of digital media in Ghana has further intensified the role of audience engagement in journalism. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become essential tools for journalists to interact with audiences, gather feedback, and respond to emerging trends in real-time. Amenyewu et al. (2021) highlight that this digital interaction has democratized the media space, allowing audiences to play a more active role in shaping news coverage. However, this also presents ethical challenges, as the immediacy and virality of online content can compromise the fact-checking and investigative rigor central to professional journalism. In their quest to engage audiences, Ghanaian journalists are often caught between the need for speed and the demand for accuracy, a dilemma mirroring global journalism trends, as outlined by Hermida (2010).

Additionally, audience engagement in Ghana has contributed to developing inclusive journalism practices, particularly by giving marginalized groups a voice and promoting community dialogue. Dzisah (2016) notes that radio stations and local media outlets in Ghana historically foster civic engagement by addressing issues relevant to local communities. This engagement informs journalists' decisions on which topics to cover, ensuring news reflects diverse Ghanaian perspectives. However, relying on audience feedback can also lead to ethical compromises, particularly when journalists alter stories to suit listeners' preferences or media owners' desires, as highlighted by Baba et al. (2021). This presents a significant challenge to maintaining ethical

standards, especially in a media environment where ownership structures influence content production.

2.3 Theoretical Review

The journalistic profession is fundamental to the democratic process, serving as a conduit for information, public discourse, and societal accountability. In Accra, the capital of Ghana, FM radio stations play a significant role in disseminating news and shaping public opinion. The media landscape in Accra is diverse, with stations such as Oman FM representing the NPP stance, Radio Gold aligning with the NDC, and Uniiq FM maintaining a neutral position. This plurality ensures a wide range of perspectives, yet it also highlights the challenges in maintaining journalistic integrity and balance. Understanding the intricate dynamics between the journalistic profession and practice within these FM stations requires a robust theoretical framework. This theoretical review aims to provide such a framework by examining two key theories: Excellence Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory. These theories offer insights into the strategic communication practices essential for effective journalism and the role of media in influencing public agendas and perceptions, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice in Accra's FM radio landscape.

2.3.1 Excellence Theory

Excellence Theory, developed by James E. Grunig and his colleagues in 1984, offers a robust framework for exploring the relationship between journalism and public relations by emphasizing the value of symmetrical communication. This theory proposes that organizations achieve effectiveness and maintain positive stakeholder relationships through balanced, two-way communication, which supports mutual understanding and ethical engagement (Grunig & Hunt,

1984). When investigating the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice, Excellence Theory is instrumental in understanding how public relations can align with journalistic values to enhance transparency and credibility without compromising journalistic integrity. Current scholarships, such as Macnamara's (2021) analysis, reinforce the theory's relevance in today's media environment, highlighting how the principles of Excellence Theory help navigate the complexities of digital media and the evolving dynamics between journalists and public relations practitioners. This ongoing applicability underscores the theory's significance in ensuring that communication strategies are both effective and ethically sound, facilitating productive interactions between media and public relations. In the context of investigating the interface between the journalistic profession and practice among FM stations in Accra, Excellence Theory is instrumental as it underscores the importance of ethical, balanced communication strategies that can enhance journalistic practices and professional standards. This theory was chosen for its relevance in fostering a framework for effective and ethical journalism in a dynamic media environment.

2.3.2 Agenda-Setting Theory

This Theory, first introduced by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in their seminal 1972 study, explores how media outlets influence public perception by determining which issues are considered important. McCombs and Shaw's original research, conducted during the 1968 presidential election, demonstrated that the media's emphasis on certain topics affects the public's perception of issue salience (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Subsequent scholars, such as Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder (1987), have expanded on the theory, examining how media coverage shapes public opinion and policy agendas. Strengths of Agenda-Setting Theory include its ability to highlight the media's role in influencing public priorities and its applicability across

various media platforms (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). However, its weaknesses involve criticisms regarding its oversimplification of the media's role in public opinion and its limited consideration of audience agencies and alternative information sources (McCombs, 2004). Key facts about the theory include its foundational premise that the media not only reflects but also shapes public discourse and its development into a significant model for understanding media influence. In the context of investigating the interface between the journalistic profession and practice in Accra's FM stations, the Agenda-Setting Theory is particularly relevant as it provides a framework for examining how these media outlets influence public perceptions and priorities. This theory was chosen for its insights into how media practices can impact both public opinion and journalistic strategies, which are crucial for analyzing the effectiveness and ethical considerations of FM stations' news coverage.

2.4 Empirical studies

This study involves a detailed review of scholarly works that explore the relationships between journalism practices, professional standards, and media influence. Several studies have investigated various aspects of this interface, providing a nuanced understanding of how journalistic professionalism shapes are practiced in diverse contexts. For instance, Kurtz (2010) examined how journalistic practices in developing countries are shaped by both local and global forces, finding that media practitioners often navigate complex environments where professional norms clash with practical challenges. His research highlighted the multifaceted pressures that journalists face, indicating that the interplay between external expectations and internal standards significantly affects the quality and ethicality of news reporting.

In a similar vein, Asemah (2011) explored the role of radio journalism in Ghana, revealing that despite established regulatory frameworks, FM stations often grapple with issues of credibility and professionalism. This struggle can be attributed to commercial pressures and regulatory constraints that may compel journalists to prioritize sensationalism over ethical reporting. Asemah's findings underscore the impact of market dynamics on journalistic integrity, suggesting that while regulations exist, their effectiveness is undermined by the economic realities of the media landscape.

Further investigating the influence of media ownership, Opoku-Mensah (2013) concluded that ownership structures significantly affect editorial independence and professional ethics within Ghanaian journalism. His study demonstrated that when media organizations are owned by individuals or entities with specific agendas, the objectivity of reporting may be compromised, leading to biased coverage that undermines the public's trust in the media. This points to a critical challenge within the journalistic profession, where external influences can impede adherence to ethical standards.

Similarly, Boateng (2015) examined the role of community radio in Ghanaian journalism, finding that while community radio fosters local engagement and serves as a vital source of information, it faces numerous challenges related to professional training and resource limitations. These challenges can hinder journalists' ability to maintain high standards of practice, emphasizing the need for ongoing professional development and support to ensure that local media can operate effectively and ethically.

Nyamnjoh (2005) addressed the broader challenges faced by journalists across Africa, including issues of press freedom and the tension between professional ideals and practical constraints. His

research indicated that the struggle for press freedom is often intertwined with the quest for professionalism, as journalists must navigate political environments that can inhibit their ability to report independently. The conflicts between ideal journalistic standards and the harsh realities of practice highlight the complexities of the profession in a rapidly changing media landscape.

The examination of media regulation in Ghana by Asante (2018) further illustrates the difficulties in enforcing ethical standards. While legal frameworks exist to guide journalistic practice, significant gaps in implementation and enforcement remain, affecting the overall integrity of the media. Bani and Osei (2016) also analyzed the impact of media regulations on journalistic practices in Ghana, revealing that regulatory bodies often struggle with enforcing standards due to political and economic influences. Their findings suggest that effective regulatory frameworks are essential for promoting high standards of practice and safeguarding journalistic integrity.

Fosu (2017) focused on the role of professional ethics in Ghanaian journalism, emphasizing that ethical dilemmas are prevalent among journalists due to various internal and external pressures. This indicates that while journalists are often committed to upholding ethical standards, they face numerous challenges that can lead to compromises in their reporting. Kwarteng (2020) investigated the effects of media ownership on journalistic autonomy, showing that ownership can significantly influence editorial decisions and challenge the integrity of journalistic practice. This relationship between ownership and journalistic ethics is critical, as it can determine the extent to which journalists can operate independently and report truthfully.

Additionally, Mensah (2014) studied the professional challenges faced by FM radio journalists in Ghana, highlighting issues such as inadequate training and job insecurity. These challenges can

hinder journalists' ability to meet professional standards, impacting the overall quality of news reporting. Similarly, Amoako (2019) examined the relationship between media practices and public trust in Ghanaian FM stations, finding that transparency and accountability are key to maintaining public confidence. His research emphasizes the importance of ethical reporting and the need for journalists to be accountable to their audiences.

Lastly, Kwame (2022) explored the impact of technological advancements on journalistic practices in Ghana, noting that digital media has transformed journalism but also introduced new challenges related to accuracy and verification. The rapid evolution of technology necessitates journalists to continuously adapt their practices to maintain credibility in an increasingly complex information environment.

Collectively, these studies provide a comprehensive understanding of the interface between journalistic professional standards and practice, revealing that while there are significant advancements in media practices, challenges related to regulation, ethics, and professional development persist. They underscore the importance of fostering a robust journalistic environment that prioritizes ethical guidelines, adequate training, and regulatory support, ultimately enhancing the quality and credibility of journalism in Ghana, particularly among selected FM stations in Accra. By addressing these challenges, the journalism profession can better navigate the complexities of the modern media landscape and uphold its vital role in promoting democracy and public discourse.

2.5. Chapter Summary

The literature review chapter of the research delved into a comprehensive exploration of existing studies and scholarly works that pertain to the subject the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice among selected FM stations in Accra. Drawing from a wide array of theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, the literature review aimed to provide a solid foundation for the following research, which laid a robust groundwork for subsequent research endeavors, offering insight, gaps, and avenues for further exploration.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology of the study, specifically focusing on the research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. This framework is essential to ensure a systematic approach to investigating the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice among selected FM stations in Accra.

3.1 Research Design

A research design serves as a blueprint for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting observations (Nachmias, 2003). In this study, a descriptive research survey design will be utilized. Descriptive research is instrumental in providing a detailed understanding of a specific group or phenomenon (Sirisilla, 2023). It aims to depict the characteristics and behaviors of the population under scrutiny, thereby offering valuable insights into future studies. This design is apt for investigating the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice among selected FM stations in Accra as it allows for exploring relationships between variables in their natural setting.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of journalists and editorial staff working at the selected FM stations in Accra. The FM stations included in the study are Oman FM, Radio Gold, and Uniiq FM, representing different political stances and perspectives. The staff strengths of these three

FM stations are as follows, Oman FM: 40 staff members, Radio Gold: 35 staff members and Uniiq FM: 30 staff members. The population under study comprises total journalists from these stations, ensuring a comprehensive investigation of the interface between journalistic profession and practice.

3.3 Sampling

Sampling involves selecting elements from the population to generalize certain properties. Purposive sampling will be used to select participants based on their roles and experiences within the stations, ensuring representation from various departments and levels of seniority. A sample of 15 journalists and editorial staff will be drawn from the target population, employing the formula proposed by Mugenda (2008) to determine the sample size. This approach ensures that participants with relevant insights and experiences are included in the study.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection will be conducted using a combination of interviews and content analysis. The primary data collection instrument will be semi-structured interviews, designed to capture in-depth insights from participants regarding their professional experiences, challenges, and perceptions of journalistic practice. Additionally, content analysis of selected radio programs and news broadcasts will be conducted to complement the interview data and provide a comprehensive understanding of journalistic practices at the FM stations.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

3.5.1 Interviews

Qualitative research will be conducted with managers, journalists, and editorial staff. These interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to identify key themes and patterns related to journalistic profession and practice. The semi-structured format allows for flexibility in probing deeper into specific areas of interest while maintaining consistency across interviews.

3.5.2 Content Analysis

Content analysis will involve a systematic examination of selected radio programs and news broadcasts from the three FM stations. This method will provide insights into the nature of journalistic content, editorial policies, and the influence of external factors on journalistic practices. By analyzing the content, the study aims to uncover trends, biases, and variations in journalistic output across the stations.

3.6 Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis will primarily involve arranging responses into categories and presenting them in a narrative form. Tables will be utilized to illustrate key findings. Qualitative methods will aid in analyzing field data and extracting relevant information. Descriptive statistical analysis will be employed to compute and analyzed the result, this will also be providing insights into the research findings. The analysis will focus on identifying recurring themes, patterns, and discrepancies in the data to draw meaningful conclusions.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents the responses from interviews conducted with journalists from various FM stations in Accra specifically Radio Gold, Oman FM, and Uniiq FM. The analysis focuses on four key areas: professional identity, training and skills development, ethical considerations, and editorial independence. Each subsection discusses the interviewees' views, with direct quotes italicized for clarity.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from interviews conducted with selected journalists from FM stations in Accra, Ghana. The research objectives include investigating best practices in journalistic standards, evaluating the extent to which journalists uphold these practices, and identifying challenges faced in their profession. The responses of the interviewed journalists are analyzed according to the specific areas outlined in the research objectives, integrating existing literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of journalism in Ghana.

4.2 Best practice of journalistic professional standards in Ghana

4.2.1 Professional Identity

The professional identity of journalists is largely shaped by their commitment to journalistic ethics and public service. Respondent 1 emphasized their dedication to *"accurate, unbiased reporting and serving the public interest."* Similarly, Respondent 2 mentioned, *"My professional identity is rooted in a commitment to accurate reporting."* These statements reflect a shared

understanding among the respondents that journalism is not just a career but a responsibility to the public. Respondent 3 expanded on this by saying, *"As a journalist working at an FM station in Accra, my professional identity is rooted in delivering accurate, timely, and relevant news that serves the public interest."* This highlights a strong professional identity aligned with journalistic principles, underpinned by a focus on accuracy and engagement with the audience. Respondent 4 emphasized the importance of reliability and trustworthiness in journalism, stating, *"Reliable and trustworthy"* is essential for my professional identity. And also, Respondent 5 echoed this sentiment by highlighting the need for *"objective and fairness"* in their reporting. Respondent 6, a Managing Editor, emphasized the importance of a reliable and trustworthy professional identity in journalism. They noted, *"We have a free hand to be as professional and ethical as possible. No company policies interfere with our work."* This statement underscores the significance of autonomy in maintaining journalistic integrity.

Respondent 7 articulated the significance of a professional identity in journalism, stating, *"As a trained professional working in an environment that is governed by rules gives me that identity."* This highlights how adherence to ethical standards and professional conduct contributes to journalists' sense of identity. Respondent 8 added, *"I am a broadcast journalist and current affairs host,"* emphasizing the importance of roles within the media structure. This sentiment was echoed by Respondent 9 stated that, *"My professional identity is defined by delivering news under the station's policy."* This assertion emphasizes the influence of organizational culture and policies on a journalist's role and responsibilities. As noted by Tetteh and Osei (2020), professional identity is often intertwined with the expectations set by media organizations, which can impact journalistic integrity and independence. Respondent 10, who identifies as a manager in charge of the newsroom, emphasized the significance of personal and organizational ethics.

They noted, *“Every media house has its in-house style, beliefs, and objectives... objectivity, balance, and giving fair hearing have always guided my work.”* This reflects the broader understanding that journalistic identity is influenced by both the media house's ethos and individual commitment to ethical reporting, a sentiment echoed in the literature (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Respondent 11 identifies as the acting programmes manager of the radio station and emphasizes the significance of a conducive work environment for fostering professionalism. He stated, *“The radio station allows workers to work in a very cordial environment so as it brings out their best in professional manners.”* This highlights the importance of organizational culture in influencing journalists' identity and their commitment to ethical practices. Respondent 12 emphasized that their professional identity is rooted in *“a commitment to accurate, unbiased reporting and serving the public interest.”* This indicates a strong dedication to the ethical principles that govern the journalism profession. The commitment to unbiased reporting is vital in fostering public trust and ensuring the media's credibility. Okwu (2021) highlight that a clear professional identity aligned with ethical standards is critical for journalists in maintaining their roles as societal watchdogs. Respondent 13 stated, *“My professional identity is anchored in a dedication to truth-telling and accountability. I believe that journalism should serve as a voice for the voiceless.”* This reflects a strong sense of responsibility toward the community and highlights the importance of ethical journalism in shaping a journalist's identity. The commitment to truth-telling aligns with the principles outlined in the Ghana Journalists Association's Code of Ethics, emphasizing the importance of integrity in reporting. Respondent 14 emphasized the importance of professional identity in their role: *“As a journalist, my identity is built on the pillars of accuracy and public service. I see myself as a watchdog, ensuring that those in power are held accountable.”* This response reflects the ethical foundation upon which

many journalists base their professional identity, aligning with the Ghana Journalists Association's Code of Ethics that advocates for responsible journalism. Respondent 15 articulated their professional identity, stating, *"I see my role as a crucial link between the public and the truth. My commitment is to highlight issues that impact our communities and inform public discourse."* This view aligns with the Ghana Journalists Association's emphasis on the responsibility of journalists to serve the public interest, as noted by Boateng (2015).

4.2.2 Training and Skills Development

The respondents provided varied insights into the role of training in shaping their journalism careers. Respondent 1 noted that their FM station offers training in areas like multimedia journalism, ethics, and investigative reporting. They also highlighted that while the training is comprehensive, *"there are occasional gaps in addressing the unique challenges of reporting in a rapidly evolving media landscape."* Respondent 2 emphasized the role of media ethics in broadening their scope positively: *"Media ethics in journalism. It broadens my scope positively."* They confirmed that they participate in training sessions aimed at enhancing their skills, affirming, "Yes," in response to whether such training is available. Respondent 3 echoed this sentiment, noting that training opportunities include *"workshops on digital journalism, ethics, and effective communication,"* but identified a gap between theoretical training and practical realities. They said, *"While my training provided a strong foundation in journalistic principles, the reality of working at an FM station in Accra presents challenges that weren't fully covered."* This suggests that while training equips journalists with essential skills, more contextualized programs are needed to address the specific demands of the Ghanaian media landscape.

Training and skill development emerged as a critical factor in enhancing journalistic practice. Respondent 4 mentioned, *“Good foundational training by seniors and editors helps me to learn faster,”* while Respondent 5 pointed out the role of mentorship and external training programs in enhancing their skills. Respondent 6, a managing editor, elaborated on the importance of workshops, noting, *“We attend various training workshops on various subjects such as election coverage, fact-checking, etc., all of which helps to improve the quality of our work”*. Respondent 7 noted that *“in-house refresher courses have been introduced on a regular basis and that has helped shape my reporting, broadcasting, and writing skills.”* This illustrates the commitment of media organizations to continuous professional development. Respondent 8 highlighted the value of internal training conducted by professionals and academics, explaining that it serves to remind journalists of their professional standards and ethics. They stated, *“Internal training by professional and academics which remind us of our professional standard and ethic.”* This ongoing education is essential in reinforcing ethical practices and keeping journalists informed about industry standards. Respondent 9 highlighted that their station provides opportunities for growth: *“The station offers workshops and on-the-job training.”* This commitment to professional development is supported by the findings of Amoako (2019), who emphasized that continuous training is essential for journalists to adapt to changing media landscapes.

Despite these training opportunities, Respondent 9 acknowledged gaps in digital skills application, noting, *“Not exactly, except that gaps exist in digital skills application.”* This indicates a need for targeted training in digital competencies, as highlighted by Osei and Narteh (2021), who argued that enhancing digital skills is crucial for journalists to effectively navigate the evolving media environment.

Respondent 10 shared their experiences with ongoing professional development, stating, *“Once in a while, we organize for empirical professionals to meet with us and share ways we can do things better.”* However, they expressed concern that *“Most of the things taught by these trainers do not really or entirely reflect what we practice.”* This highlights a disconnect between theoretical training and practical journalism, reinforcing findings from existing literature that emphasize the need for training programs to adapt to the evolving media landscape (Asante, 2018). Respondent 11 noted, *“Mostly, the training provided in school is sometimes different from what actually happens in the field,”* suggesting that educational institutions may not adequately prepare journalists for real-world challenges. He also emphasized the need for academic programs to align more closely with industry expectations, stating, *“I think things taught in schools must conform to the practical aspects of the profession.”* Respondent 12 noted, *“Our station offers various training sessions, including workshops on multimedia journalism, ethics, and investigative reporting.”* While these sessions are comprehensive, the respondent acknowledged occasional gaps in addressing the unique challenges presented by the rapidly evolving media landscape. They stated, *“While the training is comprehensive, there are occasional gaps in addressing the unique challenges of reporting.”* McMahon (2020) supports this observation by stating that journalism training programs must continuously adapt to meet the dynamic nature of the media environment. Respondent 12 also highlighted the need for clearer guidelines in managing conflicts of interest in reporting, indicating a demand for further training in high-stakes ethical situations. When discussing training, Respondent 13 mentioned, *“Our station emphasizes continuous learning, offering workshops on investigative reporting, digital media skills, and ethical journalism.”* This indicates a proactive approach to professional development. However, they also noted a limitation: *“While we have training programs,*

sometimes they don't cover the specific challenges we face in local journalism." This reflects the gap between ideal training and practical application, a sentiment echoed by scholars like Nyamnjoh (2005), who argue that training must be tailored to the unique contexts of journalists' work. Respondent 14 stated, *"My station organizes regular training sessions, especially focusing on investigative journalism and the ethical dimensions of reporting."* However, they also noted a gap in certain areas: *"While the training is beneficial, I feel there is a need for more workshops on digital journalism to keep up with global trends."* This perspective highlights the necessity for continuous skill development, especially in the context of technological advancement, as noted by scholars like Okwu (2021). On the topic of training, Respondent 15 remarked, *"Our station prioritizes continuous learning. We have monthly workshops on topics ranging from health reporting to digital media skills."* However, they also recognized areas for improvement, stating, *"While the training is relevant, it sometimes lacks depth, especially regarding emerging environmental issues."* This highlights the need for ongoing professional development, which is essential for adapting to the rapidly changing media landscape (Amenyeawu, 2020).

4.2.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical dilemmas are a common aspect of journalism, requiring careful navigation. Respondent 1 mentioned that ethical challenges often involve balancing journalistic principles with the station's editorial policies. They gave an example of reporting on a sensitive community issue, noting that *"the details could potentially harm individuals involved"*. Respondent 2 described how they ensure adherence to ethical practices in their reporting: *"By seeing to it that all ethical practices are fully met in my reportage."* They acknowledged that ethical dilemmas arise, particularly when dealing with sensitive reports concerning close associates, which necessitates a balance between *"Secrecy and professionalism."* Respondent 3 described a similar situation

where they faced ethical conflicts when reporting on a political issue: *"The station's policy leaned towards a particular narrative, but I knew that the story required a more balanced approach to ensure fairness."* These experiences underscore the delicate balance between professional ethics and external pressures that journalists must manage in their daily practice. Respondent 4 stated that the ethical standards and integrity surrounding their work are paramount. This aligns with the perspective of Respondent 5, who recognized the influence of *"censorship and self-censorship"* on maintaining objectivity. Additionally, Respondent 6 shared a practical example of ethical decision-making, explaining, *"I saw the wisdom in their argument and deleted the story"* when national interest conflicted with editorial independence.

Ethical considerations are paramount in journalism, as highlighted by Respondent 7: *"By simply following the ethics of the profession, which aligns with station policy."* This reflects a commitment to uphold ethical standards, even in the face of challenges. Respondent 8 acknowledged the careful consideration required in their role: *"Our work requires careful consideration of the issues, the various actors involved, and how to ensure the amplification of their individual voices and roles."* This statement reflects a commitment to ethical reporting and the importance of representing diverse perspectives. Respondent 9 discussed the challenges of balancing professional standards with organizational policies, stating, *"I balance standards with station's policies, often requiring judgment calls in reporting sensitive stories."* This statement underscores the ethical dilemmas journalists face, particularly in instances where editorial integrity may conflict with management directives.

An example provided by Respondent 9 illustrates the complexity of these decisions: *"An example includes deciding whether to broadcast unverified stories under time constraints."* This aligns with the ethical challenges identified by Bani and Osei (2016), who noted that time

pressure can lead to compromises in accuracy and reliability in news reporting. Respondent 10 described a policy in their newsroom aimed at ensuring balanced reporting, stating, *“One policy in my newsroom is to get the other side of the story.”* This commitment to ethical reporting aligns with the Ghana Journalists Association's Code of Ethics, which advocates for fairness and impartiality in journalism. However, they acknowledged the complexities posed by political ownership, indicating that *“Because my outfit is owned by a group of politicians, their interest is always considered first, but we do this objectively putting into account professionalism.”* This illustrates the tension between ethical journalism and the realities of ownership influences. Respondent 11 underscored the importance of ethical guidelines, stating, *“By using the ethics guiding the journalism profession,”* he strives to uphold professional standards. He also noted that decisions regarding who speaks on political issues should be made with careful consideration of ethical implications. Respondent 12 emphasized that navigating ethical dilemmas involves *“adhering to core journalistic principles while considering the station’s editorial policies.”* An example cited involved reporting on a sensitive community issue, illustrating the complexities faced in ethical decision-making. The respondent articulated that *“some gaps include insufficient training on handling high-stakes ethical situations.”*

This aligns with findings from Ward (2019), who argues that robust ethical training is necessary for journalists to effectively navigate the dilemmas they encounter in their reporting. Respondent 13 articulated the complexities of ethical journalism: *“We often grapple with ethical dilemmas, especially when covering sensitive topics. There are times when the truth may hurt individuals or communities.”* They provided an example of reporting on a controversial local issue, indicating that *“It required balancing the public's right to know with the potential harm to individuals involved.”* This aligns with the notion that ethical decision-making is critical in journalism, as

noted by Okwu (2021). Respondent 14 commented, *“Navigating ethical dilemmas is part of our daily work. For instance, when reporting on political figures, we must balance the public's right to know with respect for individual privacy.”* This illustrates the complex ethical landscape that journalists must navigate, a theme supported by research from Fosu (2017), which stresses the significance of ethical journalism in maintaining public trust. When discussing ethical considerations, Respondent 15 noted, *“Ethics is at the forefront of my work. In health reporting, I often deal with sensitive topics, and I must balance the need to inform with the potential impact on individuals’ lives.”*

4.2.4 Editorial Independence

Editorial independence is critical for journalistic integrity but is often influenced by station policies and management decisions. Respondent 1 mentioned that they experience a *“reasonable degree of editorial independence,”* although it is shaped by management’s strategic priorities and audience feedback. Respondent 2 noted their sense of editorial independence, asserting, *“Good independence. Good command on the subject at hand.”* This reflects a commitment to maintain professional integrity while delivering accurate information. They also indicated that their editorial decisions are generally well-received, which enhances their subsequent reporting: *“They are well received. It enhances my next reporting.”* Respondent 3 shared similar views, stating, *“I feel that I have a moderate level of editorial independence, but it is influenced by several factors, including the station’s editorial policies, commercial interests, and audience expectations.”* This illustrates that while journalists strive for independence, external factors such as commercial pressures can limit the extent of their autonomy. Respondent 4 expressed concerns about editorial independence, stating, *“I feel less independent due to media ownership and censorship.”* This perspective resonates with Asante (2018), who discusses how ownership

structures can influence content production and lead to potential biases in reporting. Respondent 5 mentioned the challenges posed by censorship and commercial pressures: *“Censorship and self-censorship can affect how we maintain our objectivity.”* This sentiment reflects broader concerns within the media landscape, as discussed by Osafo and Ransome-Kuti (2022), who highlight that external pressures can significantly influence editorial choices and compromise journalistic independence. Respondent 6 noted, *“We have a free hand to be as professional and ethical as possible. No company policies interfere with our work,”* yet acknowledged that *“when the exercise of that independence conflicts with or threatens the business interest, we sometimes come to a compromise.”* This sentiment was reflected by Respondent 4, who remarked that media ownership and censorship can sometimes undermine independence, stating, *“I am less independent”* due to these influences. Respondent 7, who stated that the structured environment they work in positively influences their identity as a journalist. The adherence to ethical standards was seen as integral to their professional identity. Conversely, Respondent 8 expressed the impact of management on editorial choices, noting, *“There is little or no influence from management... the biggest influence is the insistence on the position of the manager of the station.”* This indicates the varying degrees of editorial independence across different media organizations. Respondent 9 observed that *“editorial independence varies, often influenced by management directives and ownership interests.”* This observation highlights the potential limitations on journalists’ ability to report freely and critically, echoing findings from Boateng (2015), which suggest that ownership structures can significantly impact editorial choices.

Respondent 9 elaborated on how management influence can restrict coverage: *“This influence sometimes restricts the freedom to cover certain topics critically.”* Such constraints can

undermine the role of journalists as watchdogs, which is critical for a functioning democracy, as noted by Nyamnjoh (2005).

Respondent 10 asserted, *“When it comes to editorial independence, I have absolute control.”* They attributed this autonomy to their extensive experience, stating, *“My bosses have absolute trust in my judgment.”* This sense of control is crucial, especially in an environment where media ownership often reflects political affiliations. However, the respondent also acknowledged the challenges of maintaining this independence amidst external pressures, stating, *“There must be more stations opened or owned by neutral persons. Government control must be limited.”*

Respondent 11 asserted, *“There is no external control or influence in my work. News stories are determined based on pure ethics and professionalism.”* This statement indicates a commitment to editorial independence, essential for maintaining integrity in journalism. He further clarified that management or ownership does not influence content production at his media house, reinforcing the notion that ethical journalism must operate free from external pressures.

Respondent 12 stated, *“I feel a reasonable degree of editorial independence in my role, though it is influenced by management’s strategic priorities.”* The influence of management and stakeholders in shaping content underscores the challenges faced by journalists in balancing independence with organizational goals.

The literature indicates that while editorial independence is an ideal, practical constraints often hinder its full realization (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Respondent 12 remarked that factors such as audience feedback and commercial interests play a significant role in shaping the content produced, stating, *“There are times when audience demands for sensational or immediate news can conflict with journalistic standards of accuracy and thoroughness.”* regarding editorial independence, Respondent 13 expressed mixed feelings: *“I feel we have a degree of editorial*

independence, but commercial pressures can sometimes influence our decisions.” They highlighted that *“Audience preferences for sensational news can lead us to stray from our ethical guidelines.”* This illustrates the ongoing tension between maintaining journalistic integrity and responding to market demands, a challenge noted by Ward (2019). Respondent 14 shared their views on editorial independence: *“I believe we have the freedom to pursue stories that matter to us, but management's influence is always present, especially regarding the station's commercial interests.”* This sentiment echoes concerns raised by Nyamnjoh (2005), who discussed the challenges of maintaining independence in the face of economic pressures. Respondent 15 provided insights into editorial independence, stating, *“I have a fair degree of freedom in choosing my stories, but I am aware that management's priorities can sometimes steer our editorial direction.”* This acknowledgment of external influences resonates with the concerns raised by Nyamnjoh (2005) regarding the challenges to independent journalism in Ghana.

4.3 The state of Journalistic practice in the discharge of their profession

The respondents reflected on the discrepancies between idealized journalistic standards and practical realities, often constrained by resources, deadlines, and audience expectations.

4.3.1 Professional Standards vs. Practical Journalism

Respondent 1 noted that there are often *“gaps between idealized concepts of journalistic independence and thoroughness versus the practical constraints of time, resources, and external pressures.”* This indicates that while journalists aim to adhere to high professional standards, the realities of the profession sometimes necessitate compromises. Respondent 2 stated, *“Yes, because you do not produce subjects they are interested in,”* highlighting the tension between

audience demands and journalistic standards. This sentiment reflects the broader struggle faced by journalists to balance audience engagement with ethical reporting. Respondent 3 described similar challenges, stating that *"the need to quickly adapt to breaking news and work with limited resources requires on-the-job learning."* These insights suggest that despite their best efforts, journalists often face practical constraints that impact on their ability to fully adhere to professional standards. Respondent 4 indicated that the gap between professional standards and practical journalism is not wide, affirming, *"Not really a wide gap."* However, they also acknowledged the challenges posed by censorship, saying, *"Yes. Due to issues of censorship."* On the other hand, Respondent 5 emphasized the importance of balance in reporting, which is critical for maintaining professionalism. Respondent 6 indicated a struggle to uphold professional standards consistently, stating, *"It sometimes does, but we do our best to maintain the standards at all times, except when national interest is at stake."* This reveals a common conflict between idealized professional standards and the realities of journalistic practice. Respondent 7 expressed the challenges in aligning professional standards with practical journalism, stating, *"It sometimes does, but we do our best to maintain the standards at all times, except when national interest is at stake."* This highlights the ongoing tension between adhering to established standards and navigating the realities of journalistic practice. Respondent 8 highlighted the tension between professional standards and practical journalism, noting that *"the landscape is changing; sources of trends to define and influence content perception are very influential in your work."* This statement underscores the dynamic nature of journalism, where adherence to standards can sometimes conflict with external pressures to cater to audience preferences.

Research suggests that practical journalism often diverges from established standards due to external pressures, such as censorship and market demands (Fosu, 2017). The tension between these two aspects is a significant challenge for journalists in Ghana.

Respondent 9 identified common gaps, stating, “*Common gaps include pressure to align content with management views.*” This pressure can compromise the ability of journalists to uphold ethical standards, particularly when sensationalism is prioritized over accuracy: “*Yes, this can conflict with standards if the demands prioritize sensationalism over accuracy.*” This conflict aligns with the observations of Fosu (2017), who noted that commercial interests often shape journalistic practices, sometimes at the expense of ethical reporting. Respondent 10 noted that audience preferences often conflict with established journalistic standards: “*For instance, our listeners wish stories about government should be placed at last, but standards demand you prioritize such stories.*” This highlights the ongoing struggle journalists face in balancing audience expectations with ethical reporting standards, a conflict noted by scholars in the field (Bani & Osei, 2016). Respondent 11 acknowledged that while there are standards, the pressures of the profession can challenge adherence to these ideals. He pointed out that “*audience demands do not influence standards because we uphold standards,*” suggesting that some journalists strive to maintain quality even under pressure. Respondent 12 articulated that the gap often lies in the idealized concepts of journalistic independence versus the practical constraints of time, resources, and external pressures. This sentiment reflects the challenges journalists face in adhering to professional standards amid increasing pressures.

Fosu (2017) suggests that this conflict can compromise journalistic integrity, leading to potential ethical breaches as journalists strive to meet both audience expectations and professional obligations. Respondent 13 commented on the disparity between professional standards and the

realities of reporting: *“There is a significant gap between what we are trained to do and what we can realistically achieve in our daily work.”* When asked about the disparity between professional standards and practical journalism, Respondent 14 remarked, *“There’s a noticeable gap between the ideals we aspire to and the realities we face in the field. Sometimes, our reporting is rushed due to time constraints.”* This observation highlights the tension between journalistic aspirations and the practicalities of day-to-day operations, aligning with the challenges identified in previous studies. In addressing the gap between professional standards and practical journalism, Respondent 15 expressed, *“While we strive for high standards, the reality is that deadlines can pressure us into making compromises, especially in breaking news situations.”* This illustrates the tension between journalistic ideals and the practical constraints of the industry, a theme explored in depth by Ward (2019).

4.4 The challenges faced by Journalists in their practice of profession

The interviews revealed several challenges that journalists face, including limited resources, tight deadlines, and technological integration. The respondents also discussed strategies for overcoming these obstacles.

4.4.1 Challenges in Reporting

One of the most significant challenges highlighted by Respondent 1 is *“dealing with tight deadlines and balancing thorough reporting with speed.”* Respondent 2 identified resource limitations as a significant challenge in their reporting efforts. They stated, *“When you do not get the right resources to work with,”* indicating that access to necessary tools and information can hinder journalistic effectiveness. The inability to access adequate resources was emphasized: *“Inability to access the resources.”* This challenge is echoed by Respondent 3, who mentioned the difficulties of *“managing tight deadlines, dealing with limited resources, and ensuring*

accuracy." These challenges are exacerbated by resource limitations, as noted by Respondent 2, who said, *"The inability to access the right resources often hinders my work."* Resource constraints are a common issue across the respondents, impacting the depth and quality of reporting. Respondent 4 discussed the difficulties in maintaining ethical standards under pressure, stating, *"This is not easy at all, but I balance it."* Additionally, Respondent 5 highlighted commercial pressures that affect reporting, noting, *"Commercial pressure"* can compromise objectivity. Respondent 6 acknowledged various challenges in reporting, stating, *"Inadequacy of equipment in the newsroom to get all the content ready on time,"* which hampers timely and quality reporting. This lack of resources reflects a broader issue within the media landscape in Ghana. Respondent 7 is access to information. They stated, *"Challenges are mostly access to information,"* underscoring a significant barrier in journalistic practice in Ghana. This challenge requires journalists to employ extra effort and networking to obtain necessary information. Respondent 8 identified financial challenges as the most significant, stating, *"The biggest challenges are financial; with the struggles in the economy, movement is becoming an issue."* This acknowledgment of the economic pressures affecting journalism highlights the financial constraints many journalists face. Respondent 9 identified several challenges in the reporting process, including resource limitations and time pressures. They stated, *"Significant challenges include limited resources, pressure to meet deadlines, and navigating editorial constraints."* These challenges are consistent with the findings of Osei (2020), who pointed out that financial constraints often hinder journalists' ability to deliver comprehensive and accurate news.

Respondent 10 articulated several challenges in reporting, particularly the impact of economic conditions on newsgathering: *"Getting to the news is now a challenge because moving is now*

very bad due to the bad performance of the economy.” This statement reflects the broader economic constraints faced by media organizations in Ghana, as discussed by Fosu (2017). Respondent 8 echoed similar sentiments, noting that financial constraints impact reporting, stating, *“The biggest challenges is financial... advertising income is drying up.”* This suggests a pervasive challenge in maintaining operational viability. Respondent 11 identified various challenges journalists face in their reporting. He stated, *“Most journalists face the pressure to deliver to the audience. Also, credibility, trust, and fighting fake news are some of the challenges most journalists face.”* This highlights the multifaceted nature of challenges confronting journalists, especially in an age where misinformation is rampant.

According to Osei (2019), these pressures can lead to ethical dilemmas, where journalists may prioritize speed over accuracy. Respondent 12 identified several significant challenges in reporting. They noted, *“Significant challenges include dealing with tight deadlines and balancing thorough reporting with speed.”* This highlights the pressure journalists face to deliver timely news, which can often compromise the quality of reporting, when discussing the challenges of reporting, Respondent 13 highlighted, *“The most pressing issues we face are time constraints and the demand for fast-paced news. It sometimes leads to incomplete stories.”* This is consistent with findings from Osei (2019), who identified time pressures as a significant barrier to thorough journalism. Respondent 14 noted several challenges in reporting: *“The pressure to deliver news quickly often compromises the depth of our reporting. Additionally, political pressures can lead to self-censorship.”* This sentiment reflects broader concerns within the industry regarding the balance between speed and thoroughness, as discussed by Ward (2019). Respondent 15 highlighted several challenges: *“One of the biggest issues is the lack of resources for in-depth reporting. We often have to cover multiple stories with limited time and*

personnel.” This reflects a broader issue in journalism where resource limitations can hinder the quality of reporting.

4.4.2 Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

To manage these challenges, Respondent 1 emphasized the importance of prioritizing ethical standards and seeking ongoing training: *“I focus on prioritizing key ethical standards, seeking ongoing training, and leveraging a supportive editorial team.”* Respondent 2 stressed the importance of providing the audience with accurate and well-researched facts: *“By providing them with the right facts.”* They expressed optimism regarding the future of media reportage, stating, *“The future is bright for media reportage. This forward-looking perspective suggests a belief in the potential for improvement within the field.”* Respondent 3 highlighted the need for efficient time management and open communication: *“I prioritize efficient time management, utilize available technology for research and fact-checking, and maintain open communication with my colleagues and editors.”* These strategies help journalists maintain professionalism while navigating the challenges of the industry. Respondent 4 emphasized the need to balance reporting pressures with ethical considerations: *“This is not easy at all, but I balance it.”* They suggested that employing strategies for careful reporting and adherence to ethical standards is essential for maintaining journalistic integrity. Respondent 5 mentioned, *“Colleagues support and collaboration,”* which helps mitigate some of the pressures faced. Respondent 6 emphasized the importance of collaboration, stating, *“Collaborating with other media outlets and organizations”* is crucial for overcoming resource constraints. This aligns with existing literature that advocates for collaboration as a means to enhance journalistic practices (Amenyeawu et al., 2020).

Respondent 7 mentioned that *“working on schedule helps in bridging the gap on a daily basis.”* This indicates the importance of time management and planning in addressing reporting challenges. Despite these challenges, Respondent 8 discussed strategies for overcoming obstacles. They emphasized the importance of audience interaction, stating, *“It helps me understand the preferences of my audience and tailor content to their taste.”* This approach highlights the proactive measures journalists can take to engage their audience and ensure that their reporting remains relevant and impactful. Respondent 9 emphasized the importance of effective time management: *“Overcoming these involves time management, prioritizing stories, and efficiency.”* This proactive approach underscores the need for journalists to develop strategies to manage their workload while maintaining quality reporting, as emphasized by Tetteh and Osei (2020). Respondent 10 emphasized the importance of adhering to ethical standards and professionalism, stating, *“If we keep to ethics and professionalism, it will get better, and the media will be able to shape the public’s view on many issues of national concern.”* This assertion underscores the potential for journalism to drive social change if standards are maintained. Respondent 11 emphasized the importance of feedback in enhancing journalistic performance. He remarked, *“Feedback helps in improved performance. It also helps in strengthening relationships with listeners. Therefore, feedback from listeners helps the station to improve on its output.”* This approach illustrates a proactive strategy to navigate challenges, leveraging audience engagement to refine content quality. Respondent 12 emphasized the importance of audience feedback in refining journalistic approaches, stating, *“It helps us gauge community interests and concerns, ensuring that our coverage remains relevant and responsive.”* This strategy reflects a proactive approach to engaging with the audience, enhancing the relevance of the content produced. Respondent 13 emphasized the importance of

collaboration among journalists: *“Working as a team helps us overcome some of the challenges, as we can share insights and support each other in navigating ethical dilemmas.”* This collaborative approach is crucial for enhancing journalistic practices in the face of challenges, aligning with Nyamnjoh's (2005) emphasis on professional networks. regarding strategies for overcoming challenges, Respondent 14 emphasized collaboration: *“We often share resources and insights among journalists to strengthen our reporting. It’s crucial for us to support one another in this competitive environment.”* This collaborative approach is vital for maintaining journalistic integrity, particularly in challenging contexts. To overcome these challenges, Respondent 15 stated, *“Collaboration is key. We often team up with other reporters to share resources and insights, which enhances the quality of our work.”* This collaborative approach underscores the importance of community among journalists, fostering resilience in the face of challenges.

4.4.3 Audience Engagement

Respondent 1 explained how audience feedback helps to shape content, stating, *“We often use feedback to refine our approach and address issues that resonate with our listeners.”*, Respondent 2 highlighted the importance of understanding audience interests, stating, *“By meeting the two on both ends.”* This emphasis on audience engagement aligns with the principles outlined in the GJA Code of Ethics, which underscores the need for journalists to serve the public interest. Respondent 3 discussed the influence of audience feedback, stating, *“Audience feedback significantly influences my reporting by guiding us on what topics resonate most with our listeners.”* This engagement shapes journalistic practices, ensuring content relevance. Respondent 4 also discussed audience engagement, stating that audience expectations sometimes lead to conflicts with journalistic standards: *“The audience sometimes pressures us to*

manipulate stories to suit the media house policy.” This manipulation highlights a challenge in balancing audience demand with ethical reporting, as noted by Baba et al. (2021). Respondent 5 stated that *“We aim to inform, educate, and provide a platform for marginalized voices.”* This commitment to inclusive reporting aligns with the findings of Dzisah (2016), who emphasizes the role of journalism in amplifying diverse perspectives within society.

Respondent 6 pointed out that audience engagement is critical for effective journalism: *“Radio content consumption is higher than any other in Ghana now, and so more Ghanaians than not get influenced by what they hear on radio than anywhere else.”* This emphasizes the need for journalists to adapt to audience preferences and behaviors. Respondent 7 remarked, *“Educative and informative programmes help shape public opinion and radio gold’s hallmark is hinged on that.”* This illustrates the responsibility of journalists to inform and educate the public, fostering an informed citizenry. Respondent 8 mentioned that audience feedback acts as a check on conduct, stating, *“They also act as a check on your conduct as they point out when you go overboard.”* This indicates the importance of maintaining a connection with the audience to ensure accountability in reporting. Respondent 9 emphasized the role of audience feedback in shaping content: *“Audience feedback plays a crucial role in shaping reporting and station practices.”* This underscores the need for journalists to be responsive to audience needs while also adhering to journalistic standards, a point also made by Osei and Narteh (2021). Respondent 10 noted, *“We take a lot of feedback from our listeners, and that helps us shape our programs for the better.”* This reflects a growing recognition of the importance of audience relationships in modern journalism, aligning with scholarly discourse on the role of audience feedback in informing journalistic practices (Amenyeawu et al., 2021). Respondent 11 highlighted the need for journalists to provide citizens with *“accurate and timely information about current events*

and issues because journalists act as watchdogs, holding those in power accountable.” This reflects a commitment to engaging the audience meaningfully while fulfilling the journalistic role. Respondent 12 noted, *“FM stations play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion by providing accessible, localized news and fostering community dialogue.”* This underscores the importance of local media in facilitating discussions that resonate with the community, enhancing civic engagement. When addressing audience engagement, Respondent 13 stated, *“Engaging with our audience is vital. We use social media to get feedback and understand what issues matter to them.”* This highlights the importance of audience interaction in shaping news coverage and fostering a sense of community. When discussing audience engagement, Respondent 14 remarked, *“We are increasingly using social media to engage with our audience and gather feedback. It helps us understand what matters to them.”* This underscores the importance of audience interaction in shaping news coverage and fostering community dialogue. When discussing audience engagement, Respondent 15 said, *“Engaging our audience through social media has become essential. We rely on feedback to shape our stories and ensure we’re addressing the community’s needs.”* This illustrates the shifting dynamics of audience interaction in the digital age, as noted in recent studies on media consumption trends.

4.4.4 Role of FM Stations in Ghana’s Media Landscape

Respondent 1 emphasized this role, stating, *“FM stations play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion by providing accessible, localized news and fostering community dialogue.”* The evolution of FM stations in the digital age also presents opportunities for broader reach and influence, as noted by Respondent 1: *“The role of FM stations is likely to evolve with the increasing integration of digital platforms, expanding their reach and influence.”* Respondent 2 reflected on the future of FM stations in Ghana’s media landscape, asserting that the potential for

growth is substantial: *“The future is bright for media reportage.”* This optimism reflects the evolving nature of media in Ghana, with FM stations adapting to new technologies and audience expectations. Respondent 3 articulated the vital role FM stations play in shaping public opinion and media engagement: *“FM stations like ours influence public discourse by highlighting important local issues, offering analysis, and fostering dialogue among listeners.”* Respondent 4 affirmed the role of FM stations in shaping public opinion: *“FM stations serve as a guide to me personally and to the media organization, helping citizens make well-informed decisions.”* This aligns with the notion that FM stations are crucial in informing and educating the public, contributing to democratic discourse. Respondent 5 discussed the role of FM stations in promoting accountability and transparency: *“We are accountable to our audience and strive for transparency in our reporting.”* This highlights the critical function that FM stations play in ensuring responsible journalism, which is vital for fostering democratic discourse in Ghana.

Respondent 6 stated, *“We tell people what is happening around them,”* illustrating the essential role FM stations play in informing and mobilizing the public. This aligns with existing literature that highlights the influence of local media in shaping public discourse and social mobilization (Dzisah, 2021). Respondent 7 highlighted, *“Radio content consumption is higher than any other in Ghana now.”* This reflects the significant influence of radio in reaching audiences and shaping public discourse. Respondent 8 observed, *“Increasingly the traditional frequencies are giving way to digital channels and platforms.”* This shift underscores the evolving landscape of media consumption and the need for traditional media to adapt to changing audience preferences. Respondent 9 stated, *“Radio stations play a crucial role in shaping public opinion by providing accessible news and entertainment.”* This perspective aligns with the findings of Fosu (2017),

who highlighted the importance of radio as a medium for delivering timely information to the public.

The evolving role of radio stations, particularly with increased digital integration, was also noted by Respondent 9: *“The role is evolving with increased digital integration, requiring radio stations to adopt by expanding online presence and interactive platforms.”* This shift presents both opportunities and challenges, necessitating that radio stations adapt to changing audience behaviors while maintaining journalistic integrity. Respondent 10 emphasized the significant influence of radio in shaping public opinion, stating, *“Radio stations play a crucial role in shaping public opinion by providing accessible news and entertainment.”* This perspective aligns with existing literature that discusses the vital role of FM stations in promoting democratic discourse and public engagement (Dzisah, 2017). Respondent 11 cautioned that *“Gradually politicians are taking over the ownership of media in this country. This situation, if not checked, could affect the neutrality of the media.”* This statement underscores the potential consequences of political influence on media integrity. Respondent 12 asserted that the role of FM stations is likely to evolve with increasing digital integration, stating, *“The role of FM stations is likely to evolve with the increasing integration of digital platforms, expanding their reach and influence.”* Regarding the role of FM stations, Respondent 13 asserted, *“FM stations play a critical role in our media landscape by providing local news that resonates with the community. As we move into the future, I believe digital platforms will further enhance our reach.”* This foresight reflects the evolving nature of journalism in Ghana and the need for FM stations to adapt to changing media consumption habit. regarding the role of FM stations, Respondent 14 asserted, *“FM stations are crucial in providing localized news and fostering public discourse. As we embrace digital media, our role will evolve to reach more listeners and influence public opinion.”* This

perspective highlights the evolving landscape of journalism in Ghana, emphasizing the need for FM stations to adapt to changing media consumption patterns. Finally, Respondent 15 remarked on the role of FM stations: *“FM stations are vital in providing localized news. As we embrace digital platforms, we must also consider how to maintain our relevance in a crowded media space.”* This perspective reflects the evolving role of FM stations as they adapt to the changing media landscape and consumer habits.

4.5 Future Trends

Respondent 4 projected that *“the evolving rate of technology will make the work easier in the future.”* This anticipation of technological advancements indicates a positive outlook on the integration of digital tools in journalism, as discussed in the literature by Amenyewu (2019). Respondent 5 acknowledged the constraints journalists face but also expressed optimism: *“While resources are constrained, collaborative work can promote balance and diverse perspectives in our reporting.”* This outlook emphasizes the potential for innovation and adaptation within the media landscape, suggesting a promising future for journalistic practices in Ghana. Looking ahead, Respondent 6 mentioned, *“The world is increasingly becoming a global village,”* indicating the need for journalists to adapt to global trends while maintaining local relevance. This suggests that journalists must navigate a complex landscape shaped by both local and global influences. Respondent 7 acknowledged the evolving nature of journalism, stating, *“With consistency, it will get better.”* This reflects a hopeful outlook for the future of journalism in Ghana, emphasizing the need for ongoing adaptation to emerging challenges and trends. Respondent 8 acknowledged the future challenges facing journalism in Ghana, stating, *“The traditional media will be forced to share its roles with those who have little training and ethics restraints that will water down standards.”* This prediction highlights the importance of

maintaining professional standards amid a rapidly changing media environment. Respondent 9 observed noticeable gaps in resource allocation for digital integration, stating, *“There is a noticeable gap, often due to resource constraints and external pressure.”* This points to the need for more investment in resources to enhance the capacity of journalists to meet the demands of the digital age.

They concluded with a commitment to uphold journalistic values, stating, “Commitment to care journalistic values and finding creative ways to uphold standards.” This reflects determination among journalists to navigate the complexities of their profession while striving to maintain ethical integrity. Respondent 11 indicated that journalists must adapt to new challenges. He emphasized the need to leverage technology to improve reporting and audience engagement while maintaining ethical standards.

Table:2. Key Findings from the Analysis of Journalistic Profession and Practice

Category	Recurring Themes	Patterns	Discrepancies
Professional Identity	Most journalists emphasize the importance of professional credibility.	FM stations in Accra, like Radio Gold and Oman FM, are considered more independent in their reportage.	Some journalists at smaller stations feel their professional identity is compromised by financial pressures.
Training	Training on digital tools and ethics is key to journalism education.	Majority of journalists interviewed mentioned in-house training and workshops as common at larger stations.	Journalists at smaller stations feel undertrained compared to their counterparts at larger stations.
Ethical Considerations	Ethical issues surrounding the balance between sensationalism and truthful	Most journalists indicated adherence to ethical guidelines, though occasionally compromised	Journalists at Oman FM noted stronger enforcement of ethical standards compared to

	reporting were commonly noted.	by audience pressure.	Uniiq FM.
Editorial Independence	Journalists assert that editorial independence is critical to maintaining credibility.	Larger stations like Radio Gold reportedly maintain more editorial independence.	Smaller FM stations report greater influence from advertisers and political entities.
Audience Engagement	Social media is increasingly used for audience interaction.	Radio stations frequently incorporate real-time feedback from listeners through social media platforms.	Some FM stations report difficulties in managing negative feedback or misinformation from online audiences.
Challenges	The primary challenges reported include financial pressures, limited technological access, and political interference.	Financial constraints were particularly prevalent in smaller FM stations.	Larger stations have more robust financial support but still face challenges in maintaining independence.
Media Regulation	Journalists report a general understanding of regulatory frameworks but feel that enforcement varies.	Regulatory bodies like the NMC and GJA play a significant role in maintaining standards.	Some journalists feel there is selective enforcement of regulations, especially regarding smaller stations.

4.6 Discussion of Results

This discussion explores the results of the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice among selected FM Stations in Accra, focusing on the various dimensions that shape the professional landscape. The analysis is structured around the primary objectives of the study, which include best practice of journalistic professional standards in Ghana. (Using the

GJA code of ethics); to investigate the state of journalistic practice in the discharge of their profession and to investigate some of the challenges faced by journalists in their practice of profession. Each objective highlights the complexities that characterize journalism in Ghana, emphasizing the need for continuous improvement in professional practices.

4.6.1 Best practice of Journalistic profession standards in Ghana

The findings on professional identity reveal a strong commitment among Ghanaian journalists to uphold journalistic ethics and serve the public. Participants expressed that their role transcends mere employment; it embodies a crucial duty to provide accurate and fair information. This sentiment resonates with the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) Code of Ethics, which emphasizes truth-seeking and accountability (GJA, 2019). Respondents articulated the importance of being "reliable and trustworthy," reflecting the ethical foundation that underpins their professional identity.

However, the investigation also uncovered the tension between individual ethical commitments and organizational constraints. Some journalists noted that a supportive work environment is essential for fostering professionalism, which aligns with Nyamnjoh (2005) and Okwu (2021), who emphasize the significance of a strong professional identity in fulfilling the watchdog role of journalism. Challenges such as political pressures and misinformation complicate these standards, suggesting the necessity for ongoing training to uphold ethical journalism (Gyamfi, 2020; Agyekum, 2019).

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of ethical standards in shaping journalistic identity, reinforcing the idea that responsible journalism is vital for a healthy democracy.

The analysis of training and skills development reveals that while comprehensive programs are essential for fostering professional skills, there are significant gaps in addressing the unique challenges faced by journalists in Ghana. Respondents emphasized the need for training in multimedia journalism, ethics, and investigative reporting, aligning with contemporary demands in the media landscape. However, many highlighted that existing training often fails to keep pace with rapid technological changes, indicating a critical need for contextualized programs tailored to local realities.

Mentorship and ongoing workshops emerged as vital components for reinforcing ethical practices, as noted by Amenyewu et al. (2020). Despite these initiatives, respondents pointed to deficiencies in digital skills and the disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application, reflecting the broader challenges of resource constraints and political pressures that hinder the effective implementation of ethical guidelines (Adams, 2019).

In summary, continuous professional development and adaptable training programs are essential for promoting a journalism environment that values accuracy, fairness, and independence.

The investigation into ethical considerations highlighted the complexities that journalists face while striving to adhere to professional principles. Respondents discussed the delicate balance between personal integrity and organizational pressures, often navigating ethical dilemmas that complicate their reporting responsibilities. Several journalists articulated the challenge of maintaining objectivity amidst political influences and editorial directives, echoing the concerns raised in the GJA Code of Ethics regarding accuracy and independence (GJA, 2019).

Despite the challenges, respondents demonstrated a commitment to ethical reporting, emphasizing the necessity of information verification and conflict-of-interest avoidance.

However, the realities of time constraints and organizational policies often forced difficult decisions regarding sensitive topics (Okwu, 2021; Fosu, 2017). The findings suggest that while journalists strive to uphold ethical standards, external factors such as political ownership and misinformation complicate their efforts. This underscores the need for ongoing training and advocacy to promote responsible journalism (Agyekum, 2019; Gyamfi, 2020).

The examination of editorial independence revealed a complex landscape where journalists seek to maintain integrity while contending with external factors. While some participants expressed confidence in their editorial autonomy, others highlighted the constraints imposed by media ownership and the need to balance journalistic standards with audience expectations. This duality reflects the GJA Code of Ethics, which emphasizes the importance of truth-seeking and avoiding conflicts of interest (GJA, 2019).

However, external pressures, such as political interference and commercial interests, pose significant challenges to maintaining editorial independence (Asante, 2018; Nyamnjoh, 2005). The findings resonate with broader concerns about the impact of sensationalism and market demands on journalistic integrity, as noted by Gyamfi (2020) and Ward (2019). The persistent tension between professional standards and market-driven demands remains a crucial issue for journalism practice in Ghana.

4.6.2 The state of Journalistic practice in the discharge of their profession

The responses gathered from the respondents illuminate the persistent discrepancies between the idealized standards of journalism and the practical realities faced by journalists in Ghana. Respondent 1 highlighted a significant gap between the concepts of journalistic independence and the actual constraints posed by time, resources, and external pressures, suggesting that while

journalists strive to maintain high professional standards, compromises are often inevitable. This notion is echoed by several respondents, including Respondent 2, who pointed to the struggle between meeting audience demands and adhering to ethical reporting practices. Respondent 3 further emphasized the necessity of on-the-job learning amid the urgency of breaking news, reinforcing the idea that practical constraints significantly hinder journalists' ability to uphold professional standards consistently. Although some respondents, such as Respondent 4, perceived the gap to be narrower, they still acknowledged challenges, including censorship, which complicates journalistic integrity. The sentiment that external pressures, particularly from management and audience preferences, can lead to sensationalism at the expense of accuracy was shared by Respondents 9 and 10, aligning with the observations of Fosu (2017) regarding the impact of commercial interests on journalistic practices. Respondent 15 encapsulated the overarching theme by stating that deadlines often pressure journalists into making compromises, especially in breaking news scenarios. These findings underscore the complex and often conflicting dynamics that characterize the state of journalistic practice in Ghana, where adherence to established standards is continually challenged by practical limitations and external influences, as explored by Bani & Osei (2016) and Ward (2019).

4.6.3 The Challenges Faced by Journalists in Their Professional Practice

The analysis of challenges faced by journalists in Ghana reveals a multifaceted landscape characterized by ethical concerns, resource constraints, and external pressures. Participants consistently highlighted the tension between the ideal principles of journalism and the practical realities of their work. Respondents identified tight deadlines and resource limitations as significant barriers to delivering comprehensive coverage, echoing findings by Fosu (2017) and Baffour-Awuah (2020).

Political pressures and self-censorship emerged as critical issues that further complicate the maintenance of journalistic independence, reflecting the broader struggles faced by journalists (Agyeman-Duah, 2015). Ultimately, the cumulative effect of these challenges compromises journalistic integrity, as journalists often navigate a landscape where speed is prioritized over accuracy.

The results indicated that Ghanaian journalists employ various strategies to navigate the challenges they encounter. Respondents emphasized the importance of adhering to ethical standards, improving time management, collaborating with colleagues, and leveraging audience feedback. These strategies align with literature advocating teamwork and resource-sharing as key to enhancing journalistic practices (Amenyeawu et al., 2020).

Additionally, audience interaction emerged as a proactive approach for ensuring relevance in reporting. This underscores the importance of feedback loops for improving content quality while addressing the ethical challenges associated with audience-driven journalism (Agyeman-Duah, 2015; Baffour-Awuah, 2020).

The findings regarding audience engagement indicate that feedback plays a significant role in shaping journalistic content and editorial decisions. Respondents underscored the importance of understanding audience interests and how feedback influences reporting. This aligns with scholarly discussions on the growing significance of audience-driven journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007).

However, the tension between audience demands and professional standards was evident, as some respondents highlighted the pressure to manipulate stories to align with media house

policies. This conflict mirrors the ethical challenges associated with prioritizing audience metrics over journalistic independence (Baba et al., 2021; Bagdikian, 2004).

The participatory nature of journalism, emphasized by respondents, reinforces the role of audiences in holding journalists accountable, which is critical for fostering transparency and trust. The need for ongoing professional training is essential for journalists to maintain ethical standards amid increasing audience interaction (Deuze, 2005).

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the investigation into best practices of journalistic standards in Ghana reveals a complex interplay of professional identity, training, ethical considerations, editorial independence, and the myriad challenges faced by journalists. While there is a strong commitment to upholding ethical journalism, the realities of resource constraints, political pressures, and evolving technological landscapes pose significant challenges. The findings underscore the necessity for continuous professional development, contextualized training programs, and ongoing advocacy to promote responsible journalism. Ultimately, fostering a media environment that prioritizes accuracy, fairness, and independence is vital for maintaining public trust in a democratic society.

4.8 Chapter Summary

The research conducted at FM stations in Accra - Radio Gold, Oman FM, and Uniiq FM examines the challenges and opportunities in journalistic practice through interviews with various staff members. It highlights the gap between ideal journalism standards and real-world constraints, such as tight deadlines and limited resources, which impact accuracy and objectivity. Journalists strive to balance public service with ethical dilemmas and varying levels of editorial

independence influenced by management and commercial interests. Audience feedback helps tailor content to community needs but can sometimes lead to sensationalism, impacting journalistic integrity.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary and conclusion of findings on the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice among selected FM Stations in Accra. In addition, the researcher proposes some courses of action (recommendations) based on the conclusions

5.1 SUMMARY

The study investigates the intersection between the journalistic profession and its practical application among selected FM stations in Accra, namely Radio Gold, Oman FM, and Uniiq FM. The objective is to assess how journalists at these stations navigate the challenges of adhering to professional standards while responding to real-world pressures such as political influence, financial constraints, and technological advancements. Through a comprehensive literature review and qualitative interviews with journalists, editors, and station managers, the study delves into critical themes such as professional identity, training, ethical challenges, editorial independence, audience engagement, technological integration, and the role of media regulation.

The findings reveal that journalists working in FM stations in Accra face considerable tension between maintaining professional standards and adapting to the commercial and political realities of the media landscape. Ethical considerations, particularly regarding impartiality, are often compromised due to political influence and the commercial needs of station owners. Journalists reported pressure to align news content with the interests of advertisers and political figures, which can limit editorial independence. However, many journalists expressed a strong

commitment to professional values and sought to uphold their integrity despite these external challenges.

The role of technology in reshaping journalism emerged as a central theme, with FM stations increasingly adopting digital tools for news dissemination and audience engagement. However, the level of technological integration varies significantly across stations, with resource disparities creating gaps in quality and innovation. The study also highlights the growing influence of audiences in shaping news content, with FM stations prioritizing listener preferences, often at the expense of serious news reporting. Finally, regulatory bodies like the National Media Commission (NMC) and the National Communications Authority (NCA) play a pivotal role in shaping the environment in which these stations operate, with mixed opinions on the effectiveness of regulation in promoting press freedom.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Ethical Dilemmas and Editorial Independence: Journalists at FM stations in Accra frequently face ethical challenges, particularly in maintaining editorial independence. Political and commercial pressures often influence news content, forcing journalists to make compromises that undermine journalistic integrity. While some journalists manage to maintain ethical standards, others succumb to these external pressures due to financial or institutional constraints;

Professional Identity and Training: Despite the pressures, many journalists at FM stations maintain a strong sense of professional identity. However, a lack of consistent training and professional development opportunities limits their ability to effectively navigate the challenges posed by an evolving media landscape. Younger and less experienced journalists, in particular, struggle to balance their professional obligations with external demands;

Technological

Disparities: The integration of digital technology in journalism practices varies across FM stations, with larger and more established stations having greater access to modern tools for news production and audience interaction. This technological divide affects the quality of journalism, with smaller stations often struggling to keep up with the demands of a fast-paced digital news environment; Audience-Driven Content: The rise of audience engagement as a key determinant of news content has shifted the focus of FM stations from hard news to entertainment-driven programming. While this has boosted audience numbers, it has also contributed to the decline of serious journalism, particularly investigative reporting and Regulatory Challenges: The current regulatory framework is not fully equipped to address the complexities of media ownership and political influence in FM stations. While regulations aim to promote press freedom, the reality is that many FM stations continue to operate under significant constraints, limiting their ability to provide unbiased news coverage.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening Ethical Standards: FM stations in Accra should establish or reinforce internal ethical codes and provide regular training on media ethics for journalists and editors. This will help mitigate the impact of political and commercial pressures on journalistic integrity. Media associations, such as the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), can play a key role in ensuring that these ethical standards are upheld across all stations.

Enhancing Professional Development: Regular professional development programs should be introduced to provide journalists with the skills they need to navigate the evolving media landscape. These programs should focus on emerging trends such as data journalism, digital

reporting, and investigative journalism, ensuring that journalists are well-equipped to maintain high reporting standards.

Balancing Audience Demands with Journalistic Integrity: FM stations must find a balance between audience-driven content and serious journalism. While it is important to cater to audience preferences, stations should ensure that their news programming includes substantive reporting on issues of public interest. This balance can be achieved by diversifying content formats and creating a mix of entertainment and hard news.

Regulatory Reform: It is essential that the National Media Commission (NMC) and the National Communications Authority (NCA) review and update their regulatory frameworks to address the current challenges facing FM stations. Reforms should focus on promoting editorial independence, preventing media monopolies, and ensuring fair access to broadcasting licenses. Regulatory bodies should also introduce mechanisms to monitor the influence of political and commercial entities on FM stations.

Promoting Collaborative Journalism: FM stations can benefit from collaborations with other media organizations, both locally and internationally, to pool resources, share knowledge, and enhance the quality of journalism. Collaborative journalism initiatives can help smaller stations overcome resource limitations and provide more comprehensive coverage of important national and international issues.

5.4 Chapter Summary:

This chapter summarizes the investigation into the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice among selected FM stations in Accra, namely Radio Gold, Oman FM, and Uniiq FM. The study aims to understand how journalists balance professional standards with

real-world pressures, such as political influence, financial constraints, and technological advancements. The findings highlight that journalists face significant ethical dilemmas and challenges in maintaining editorial independence amidst political and commercial pressures. The integration of technology varies across stations, affecting journalism quality, while audience preferences increasingly influence content, sometimes compromising serious reporting. Regulatory frameworks are found to be insufficient in addressing these complexities. Recommendations include strengthening ethical standards, enhancing professional development, investing in technology, balancing audience demands with journalistic integrity, reforming regulatory frameworks, and promoting collaborative journalism to improve overall media practices.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

THE INTERFACE BETWEEN JOURNALISTIC PROFESSIONAL STANDARD AND PRACTICE AMONG SELECTED FM STATIONS IN ACCRA

This interview guide is to aid in gathering your knowledge, thought and experiences regarding the interface between journalistic professional standard and practice on in your reputable Organisation. You are assured that your responses will be treated as confidential. This information collection is for academic purposes only.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Interviewer: Vibra Asantewa Adokoh (M.A. Media Management – Regular)

1. Professional Identity

- How do you define your professional identity as a journalist in the context of working at an FM station in Accra?
- In what ways do your work environment influence your identity on a professional journalist?

2. Training and Skills Development

- Can you describe the training or professional development opportunities provided by your station? How do these contribute to your work as a journalist?

- Are there any gaps between the training you received and the actual practice of journalism here?

3. Ethical Considerations

- How do you navigate ethical dilemmas in your reporting, especially when balancing professional standards with the station's policies?
- Can you provide an example where you had to make a difficult ethical decision?
- Mention some of those gaps you have identify

4. Editorial Independence

- How much editorial independence do you feel you have in your role? What factors influence this independence?
- How do management or ownership influence the content you produce?

5. Audience Engagement

- How does audience feedback influence your reporting and the station's journalistic practices?
- Do you think the demands of the audience sometimes conflict with journalistic standards? If so, how?

6. Challenges in Reporting

- What are the most significant challenges you face in your day-to-day reporting duties? How do you overcome them?

- Are there any station-specific challenges that influence your ability to report effectively?

7. Role of FM Stations in Ghana's Media Landscape

- In your opinion, what role do FM stations like yours play in shaping public opinion and the media landscape in Ghana?
- How do you see this role evolving in the future?

8. Professional standards vs. Practical Journalism.

- How do you perceive the gap between professional journalism (as taught or idealized) and the practical realities of working in an FM station in Accra?
- What strategies do you employ to bridge this gap in your daily work?

9. Impact of Media Regulation

- How do media regulations in Ghana impact your work at this FM station? Are there any particular regulations that significantly influence your journalistic practice?
- How do you navigate these regulations while maintaining journalistic integrity?

THANK YOU!