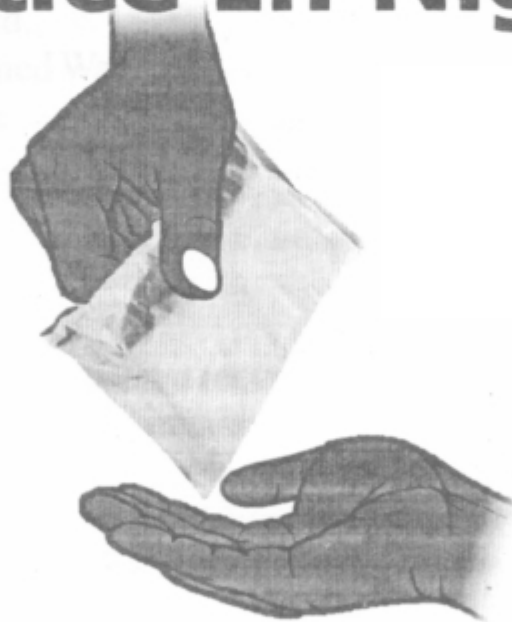


BROWN ENVELOPE

And

NEWS MEDIA Practice In Nigeria



Taye C. OBATERU, Ph.D

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of my late daughter, Fadeke Christiana Obateru. Your passing has created a vacuum that can never be filled.

Also to my loving wife, Dupe and children (Adewale, Ibukun and Adedotun), as well as to my parents and siblings.

Preface

This study responds to the call for more empirical work to understand the journalism profession in non-Western countries. It critiques the current state of journalism practice in Nigeria to determine how journalists are responding to the numerous professional challenges they face. Journalists in Nigeria appear caught between global phenomena in journalism, such as the impact of new technologies, and those of the environment in which they work, which, some evidence from current literature suggests, is impacting the profession negatively. The literature also shows that factors such as diversity of access to information made possible by technological development, declining audience for news, increasing market pressures impacting news decisions, the declining reputation of the profession, and loss of identity by the journalism profession, though not necessarily peculiar to Nigeria, constitute serious challenges to the news media.

With an absence of media conglomerates and a well-defined media system along the lines of those recognised in the developed world, journalism practice in Nigeria presents a case ripe for research. Some evidence in the literature suggests that the standard of journalism practice in Nigeria is deficient in a number of respects. However, little is known about how journalists in Nigeria do their work and the challenges they face, as well as their responses to those challenges. This book addresses this particular gap in knowledge.

Using the Field Theory and the Social Theory of Journalism, as framework to interrogate the research problem, the research employs Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods which allows the use of quantitative and qualitative methods, side-by-side, to gather data in respect of attaining its objectives. Quantitative data were generated through a questionnaire-based survey, while qualitative data were gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews.

The research finds that, and illustrates how, the operating environment they face, impacts journalists in their work. Challenges, such as poor or irregular salary, ownership influence, market and social forces were found to influence the way in which journalists perform. However, a key finding is that although journalists encounter similar challenges in the course of their duties, their response to them varies. Based on these findings, and drawing on explanatory insights from Field Theory and the Social Theory of Journalism, the study develops its own explanatory framework coined, *The Survival Struggle in Journalism Practice in Nigeria*. This

leads to the presentation of a series of recommendations, prominent among which is the argument that the institutional and regulatory framework of journalism needs immediate strengthening in order to secure an appropriate standard of professional journalism practice in Nigeria

This book has nine chapters devoted to different aspects of the research. Chapter One presents an overview of the entire work while the second chapter explores and critiques issues of journalism organization and practice. It provides a theoretical compass for this study evaluating the positions of various theories. It elaborates in particular on Field Theory and the Social Theory of Journalism, which are the two theories providing a conceptual platform for the study. It compares the two theories to other theories and argues that they are best suited for this research because they capture and illuminate issues germane to the research questions and objectives. Equally, the chapter examines thematically different aspects of journalism such as the concept of 'good' journalism, journalism and the changing media landscape, as well as developments in journalism practice in Africa.

Chapter Three presents a broad picture of Nigeria and how journalism evolved from pre-colonial period to the present. It gives a brief history of Nigeria, her geographical, political and economic development as background before focussing on how the print and broadcast media developed at various points of the country's history. Also, the chapter presents how journalism relates to political, social issues and conflicts, as well as, the existing regulatory framework for journalism in Nigeria.

Chapter Four presents the design for this research. It explicates and justifies the methodology adopted and how mixed methods research sits within the study. It highlights the research process, its sampling methods and data gathering instruments. It discusses how pragmatism, the worldview guiding the study, differs from other research paradigms. It contends that pragmatism benefits the study by supporting the combination of different research approaches. It also advances the advantages of combining quantitative and qualitative methods for the research, explaining how triangulating the data sets minimized the disadvantages inherent in using either of them alone.

Chapter Five provides the quantitative data findings generated from the survey aspect of the research. They are presented in tables containing responses of participants to each of the questions on the survey instrument. These are analysed in relation to the other survey variables, and the implications of this is explored. The

findings presented in this chapter constitute a major segment of the empirical grounding for this study.

In Chapter Six, the data derived from qualitative inquiry are presented. The responses of participants to the semi-structured interview questions deployed to elicit data are thematically presented and analysed. The chapter illustrates the frequently used words and phrases from all the responses received with a word tree derived from NVIVO software. Word Clouds for each of the themes which emerged from data are also presented. Quotations from the interviewees are also used to illustrate the thematic arguments arising from data.

Chapter Seven compares and contrasts the two data sets to answer the research questions of the study. It presents the findings derived from the data sets showing how they relate to one another in providing answers to the research questions. It argues that responses to the different variables interrogated by quantitative and qualitative methods correlate largely and are complementary in specified respects.

The implications of the findings of this study as evidenced from the data gathered are examined in Chapter Eight. It reviews the findings in relation to previous studies on professional journalism practice in Nigeria and broadens the analysis with reference to different national settings pointing out how it takes the evidence of previous work forward. The chapter presents an explanatory model, **The Survival Struggle in Professional Journalism Practice in Nigeria**, which illustrates how the contestation between professional challenges and ethics explains the current state of journalism practice in Nigeria. The framework could be further developed by other researchers in Nigeria to broaden an understanding of professional journalism practice in Nigeria. Scholars from other countries, especially those with similar characteristics to Nigeria could also test the relevance of the explanatory framework for adaptation to their environment through further research.

The final chapter reflects on the research process, presenting the three areas of complementary contribution to knowledge made in the research. These are: provision of new empirical evidence on the state of journalism practice in Nigeria from the perspective of the journalist, provision of an explanatory model of Nigerian journalism, and the provision of practical recommendations for addressing those findings of the research which relate to a need to put in place measures to secure effective professionalism practice in Nigeria.

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I am highly indebted to journalists in Nigeria who constituted the population for this research, for their participation. Their frankness and full cooperation with the author as 'one of them' reflected in the quality of data generated. I am highly indebted to my wife and children for bearing with me and for their encouragement and support throughout the research. I also appreciate my mum, my twin, Kennie and my other siblings, relations and friends for their various roles toward my success in this task.

Special gratitude also to Professor Hayward Mafuyai, the former Vice Chancellor of the University of Jos, Nigeria, who God used to provide me the opportunity to conduct this research. I also appreciate the encouragement of my academic mentors, Professors Augustine-Ufua Enahoro, John Illah, Victor Dugga and late Mr. D.D.Y. Garba in various ways. Same to Professor Victor Ayedu-Aluma and Dr. Sarah Lwahas. I am particularly grateful to Professor Dugga for suggesting the title of this book after a review.

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Foreword

For all the many decades of development in scholarly work in communications, it is concerning that comparatively very little attention has been paid to Nigeria, one of Africa's largest and most important media systems. This volume, by Taye Obateru, marks a very welcome contribution to our knowledge of one of the engines of Nigerian media: its system of journalism. Obateru's particular concern is explaining and characterising the role and position of the journalist as a media professional in Nigeria.

Through the provision of original empirical evidence and meticulous critical analysis, the volume provides a detailed account of two contrasting elements of the environment facing the Nigerian journalist: what Obateru describes as global factors – notably the emergence of new digital technologies – and, by contrast, the centrepiece concern of the volume, 'brown envelope' journalism. Taking a welcome journalist-centric approach, Obateru expertly characterises these challenges which, the book tells us, are very difficult to surmount.

As such, this volume provides the reader with a candid and vivid account of what Obateru concludes is nothing short of a survival struggle in journalism practice. It is only by understanding the detail of the experience of Nigerian journalists in the ways set out in this volume, that an appreciation of the need for change can be understood in this most vital aspect of Nigeria's media system. This volume provides an opportunity for readers to do this and is essential reading for all those – students, academics, media professionals and policy makers – with an interest in making Nigerian media a better system.

Seamus Simpson,
Professor of Media Policy,
University of Salford, UK.

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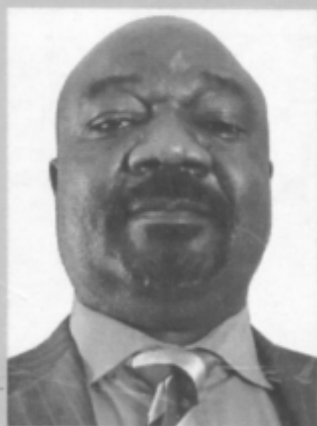
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ABOUT THE BOOK

This book is a research report on the state of professional journalism practice in Nigeria. It explores the socio-cultural dynamics impacting journalism practice and critiques the current state of journalism practice in Nigeria to determine how journalists are responding to the numerous professional challenges they face. It submits that journalists in Nigeria appear caught between global phenomena in journalism, such as the impact of new technologies, and those of the environment in which they work, which, some evidence from current literature suggests, is impacting the profession negatively. The book develops an explanatory model- *The Survival Struggle in Journalism Practice in Nigeria*- to explicate the issues influencing what has become popular as *Brown Envelope Journalism* in the country.

About the Author



Obateru is a Reader and a former Head, Department of Mass Communication, University of Jos, Nigeria. He attended the Nigerian Institute of Journalism, Lagos where he obtained a Diploma in Journalism and the University of Jos for his Bachelor's and Master's degrees. He obtained a second Master's degree in International Journalism from Edinburgh Napier University and a Ph.D from the University of Salford, Greater Manchester, in the United Kingdom. He practiced journalism for decades before joining academia. He has authored several articles and chapters in journals and books. He has also edited and co-edited a number of books.

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