

DIGITAL DIVIDE: SELF-PERCEPTION AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG JOURNALISTS WHO LACK INTERNET LITERACY IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract:

This study investigated the self-perception and coping strategies among journalists who lack Internet literacy in Anambra State. Situated within the framework of the technological determinism theory, the research was designed as a survey. A total of 47 journalists were purposively selected based on their lack of Internet literacy. A structured questionnaire was employed as the data collection tool. Findings indicated that the journalists in Anambra State who lack Internet literacy experience operational difficulties in gathering, writing, editing and filing their reports as a result of this. However, it was equally discovered that the majority of these journalists adopt certain survival strategies to circumvent these difficulties and these include dependence on Internet-literate colleagues; employment of services of cybercafé operators and handing over of their hardcopy reports to office for completion. The research further found that the journalists perceive their lack of Internet literacy as some form of deficiency particularly with reference to speed of operation, finesse and professional growth. However, it was discovered that the majority of the respondents are not taking the necessary steps to solve their Internet deficiency. The research concluded that this seeming inaction could be attributed to factors like economic handicap as a result of characteristically poor remuneration of the media practitioners and the fact that these journalists are somehow still finding ways to survive on the job. The study recommended, among others, that the curriculum of institutions where journalism and media studies are taught should include training on ICTs and how to apply them in the context of modern journalism.

Key words: Digital divide, Internet literacy, self-perception, coping strategies

INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the 21st century, no doubt, witnessed great changes in the media industry, these changes consequently brought new ways and innovations to this industry. It sure, affected the way news gatherers go about their business; editors were not left out in the change; media owners also became aware of the shifting paradigm from the old ways of running the media business to the new innovative and technologically propelled media management. What this new advancement means is that media practitioners became conscious of the changing world of the mass media; it became clear that organisations and individuals that would be left out in the shift would probably lose relevance in the media world and business. Deifell (2009, p.33) paints a clear picture of the above scenario thus:

The bottom line is that the change that hit the media soon changed the landscape, it brought about a situation where even the demographics changed dramatically, the willingness to hear the progressive media increased speedily, shifting demographics created both challenges and opportunities for content producers; different groups began using the media in different ways and everything experienced a glacier that needed a thaw to be corrected (p. 55).

One might wonder the reason for the change in the media world? Ndolo (2005) notes:

The notable change that was witnessed in the media world was precipitated by the renaissance in technology; the consequences of melding ICT with the media world resulted in the emergence of a new alternative communication paradigm – a tangible symbol of the people’s desire to appropriate a technology with which they feel increasingly identified. Thanks to the telephone (fixed or cellular) listeners and viewers moved from being passive to active participants in the political changes unfolding before them. Thus, testifying to the gradual evolution of Nigeria and its people toward Information and Communication Technology (p.123).

Again, the new world of digitization enabled single broadcast units to distribute high fidelity signals to mass audiences. In this instance, the messages uploaded onto various World Wide Web sites and servers became accessible to all who possess the proper technology to download and view them. Descriptively, what this meant was that digital broadcasting became facilitated through the use of the Internet and networked technologies that are powered through these means (Okon and Ihejirika, 2014, p. 39).

The truth at this point remains that journalists need the understanding of these new technologies to cope in their work and that those who lag behind in the use of the new technologies would of course, be challenged in the discharge of their duties. In this regard, the problem of how the latter (journalists without ICT knowledge) would survive becomes a growing concern. Against this backdrop, this paper sets out to investigate the self assessment and coping strategies among journalists who lack Internet literacy, with Anambra state as the focal context.



STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

While the importance and usefulness of the Internet to the journalist in the 21st century is no longer in doubt, some media practitioners (especially in Nigeria are yet to understand the operations of the Internet. Put in another way, some journalists are still technologically backward, as they are yet to embrace Internet literacy. They are still as Adekoya (2013) puts it, “caught in the analogue era” (p.55). This category of practitioners, apparently, would be faced by a plethora of challenges. To this end, one might wonder how these people cope in their profession. How do they manage to survive in the highly competitive media landscape of the current ICT-saturated world? Are they measuring up with the demands of today’s practice? All these become of concern in view of the imperative of the ICTs in modern day news reporting (Agba, 2001).

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research intended to understand the self-assessment and coping strategies among journalists who lack Internet literacy in Anambra state. Precisely, the following objectives were aimed at:

- i. Investigating the operational difficulties experienced by Anambra journalists who lack Internet literacy;
- ii. Determining what survival strategies that are adopted by journalists in Anambra State to circumvent the difficulties created by their lack of Internet literacy;
- iii. Investigating the extent journalists in Anambra State perceive their lack of Internet literacy as professional deficiency; and
- iv. Determining what efforts (if any) that is being made by these journalists to acquire Internet literacy.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the above objectives, these research questions were formulated to guide this study:

1. What operational difficulties are experienced by Anambra journalists who lack internet literacy?
2. What survival strategies are adopted by the journalists to circumvent the difficulties created by their lack of Internet literacy?
3. To what extent do these journalists perceive their lack of ICT as professional deficiency?
4. What efforts (if any) are being made by these practitioners to acquire Internet skills?

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Sociologists, media scholars and political scientists have since shown interest in the role played by the media in advancing the course of citizen participation in the social process. In media scholarship circle, the earliest tendency, following the triumph of liberal thinking from the 18th to 20th century, was that the media has become “an independent mouthpiece of the common people” (Duru, 2011, p.8). The media were assumed to be in a position of a watchdog that monitors the society, checking dictatorial tendencies and ensuring social justice generally. This quest gave birth to what has become popularly known as the “Fourth Estate of the Realm” – an attribution given to the media to reflect their perceived role as the institution that watches over the government; the fourth arm of the government (Nwosu, 1993, p.45). What this presupposes is that the role of the media in the socio-political realm of any society cannot be overemphasized. They have by this role become the voice of the voiceless and the hope of the common man (Ndolo, 2011, p. 22).

The media industry is a product of technological revolution that dates back to the invention of printing. The growth of this industry could also be traced to the advances in education, inequalities between different groups or classes within each society; which encouraged the search for media access by the deprived, and the cheapness of getting information with the application of the new flexible technology. Other factors that favoured the growth of the media included the industrial revolution which introduced the railway and the airplane, the financial support by advertising and the increases in the flow of up-to-date news transmitted by telegraph microwave and lately satellites (Ikpe and Ibekwe, 2006, p.62).

The growth of other forms of communication media developed from application of technology such as photography (1889), the telegraph (1840), the success of Marconi and Popoff in transmitting and independently receiving wireless messages and the teleprinter in 1930 (Rubin 1989, p.66). Telephone, radio, television and cinema also came into existence and together with the newspaper, launched a new era of what was referred to as mass communication and mass consumption of information (Ikpe and Ibekwe, 2006 p.63).

The history of the growth of the media industry is the history of the development of technologies and convergences (Ikpe and Ibekwe, 2006 p.63). Hence, the survival of the media career, therefore, is tied to the dynamism of the media worker. Today the innovation that is witnessed in the media industry, via the advancement of digital technology, has changed the landscape and brought about different ways of journalism practice. It changed rapidly the face of what the media industry looked like during the period of Guttenberg the founder of modern printing press and Reverend Henry Townsend who established the foremost printing press in Nigeria.

The question that becomes relevant at this point is: what are these new technologies all about- ICT, Internet, World Wide Web etc; and what relationship do they have with the proficiency and effectiveness of the journalist? It is not in doubt that the media offers employment to different cadres of professionals. These are men and women that



work hard to create knowledge, information, programmes and operate on machines that make up the media. These professionals, around the early sixties and late eighties, had run the media on what Okon and Ihejirika (2014) call “The analogue media” (p.155). Ikpe and Ibekwe (2006) add that:

The 21st century technological revolution had brought about transformation in the media landscape - where the traditional print media had been transformed to the modern digital ICTs; telephone changed to mobile phones and internet phones, fax machines taken over by e-mail, radio and television improved to projection TV, telephone to internet and intranet networks, news print to data base websites, plate makers to digital offset colour printers and a plethora of other ICT platforms. (p.144)

Against this backdrop, the above authors wonder how a media professional who is not literate in the present media landscape can explore the possibilities as provided by the new technologies and cope in the competitive environment. One of the strategic areas of this media innovation is the Internet – a platform that has proven to be of immense value to media practice. The Internet, according to Nkwocha (2004), is “A worldwide means of exchanging information and communication through series of interconnected computers” (p.146). Tagged information superhighway, the Internet contains a wide range of information from different individuals, organizations, government and institutions across the whole world. With the use of its search devices and services, one could look for any important information needed. Victor (2014) defines the Internet as “A global network, connecting millions of computers” (p.4). More than 190 countries are linked to the exchange of data, news and opinion on the Internet. According to the Internet Live Statistics, as at December, 2014, “There is, an estimated number of 3,037,608,300 Internet users worldwide.” What this indicates is that the number of Internet users all over the world represents nearly 40% of the whole world’s population. The largest number of Internet users by country is China followed by the United States and India (Victor, 2014, p.4). The Internet includes the World Wide Web, which enables one to access documents in richly formatted texts and pictures in different websites, through the medium of a computer. Nkwocha (2014) notes that, “It is instructive to say that the Internet is an invaluable asset to the 21st century journalist, as it has introduced new ways and improved media practice. Today, newspapers can be printed and published on the Internet (p.147).

To publish on the Internet the user must first and foremost have understanding of the workings of the technology. Regarding the way print media practitioners work, the Internet has made things easier. Gone are the days when media practitioners did the work of journalism without basic understanding of the Internet technology. Oshotshe Obong, former special adviser to Maryam Babangida, would rather put it this way:

Journalism practice in those days was a hand-on-vocation, of course with the aid of good reporters, notebook, midgets and the ball point pen. Today, the profession has gone beyond journalists being trained to write their stories on the move, inside taxis or buses, the slow process of news gathering then, made deadline a dreaded word in the newsroom, but today the game has changed and it is only people who would change with the game that will win in the game (Nkwocha, 2014).

One of the outstanding changes that came along with the technological innovation witnessed in the media is digitization. The new world of digitization, which particularly



was more pronounced in the broadcast media, enabled single broadcast units to distribute high fidelity signals to the mass audience (Okon and Ihejirika, p.39). In this instance, messages uploaded unto various World Wide Web (which is Internet enabled) and servers are accessible to all who possess the proper technology to download and view them. This type of digital broadcasting is facilitated through the use of Internet and networked technologies. Severin and Tankard (2000) underscore this point when they note that, “The advent of the Internet is undoubtedly the biggest game changer in the world of communication, since the invention of broadcasting” (p.33). Nwosu, (2009) wonders “how media houses can achieve the much spoken of migration without training and retraining of their workers on the mechanism of this technology that will facilitate the digital migration.”

Again, the concept of digital convergence has remained one other factor that has changed that media realm. Journalists that are not at home with the convergence technology would have difficulty coping (Ihejirika 2014, p.22). Digital convergence is the fusion and blending of several important diverse technologies, services and products from a range of industries, including telecommunication, entertainment, cable TV, broadcasting, publishing, video electronics and computers (Ihechu and Uche 2012, p.10). Viewed from Ihechu and Uche’s position a journalist or media organisation that underestimates the value of the Internet technology in the 21st century would, like Deifell (2009) argues, “experience great number of uncertainties that may put them away from business” (p.3). Agostin (1997) paints a better picture:

The Internet is creating big changes in the field of journalism. Creating a situation where the audience is fast abandoning the printed word, the world’s leading media houses are creating presence of them on the Internet and making imaginative efforts to transform the whole business of providing news and information (p.88).

Citing a case where a journalist’s proficiency, skill and ability in information and communication technologies helped in deciding a case, Agostin (1997) recounts the following experience:

Some years ago Tom Koch, a Canadian freelance reporter read in the new *York Times* of the death of a six-year-old child in New York in the course of a dental surgery under anesthetic. The judge in charge of the case ruled that the death was “accidental”. Medical sources estimated the risk as one in a thousand, but Koch who was researching in a similar case in Vancouver didn’t trust the statistics. He went online in order to consult scientific databank and the archives of North America’s principal dailies. He also subscribed to news groups and discussion groups via the Internet in order to enlist the assistance of specialist journalists. Over a period of 24 hours he discovered that the type of anesthetic being used was known to cause a respiratory problem among old people and children if not properly supervised; that the risk was a lot higher than one in a thousand and that the number of similar deaths had been reported elsewhere. The question that he was thus able to raise in his article forced the judge to revisit and revise his judgment. This became big victory for justice – and also for the newspaper, which sold large numbers of copies as a result of the investigation.

It would be enlightening at this point to mention that if the research which Koch carried out through the Internet was done the old and traditional way, it would have



been highly expensive and probably have taken long. Thanks to the Internet, the result was achieved in 24 hours and for an expenditure of \$50, says Agostin.

Furthermore, single source news is now a thing of the past. The Internet has made it possible for media professionals to mix and match at will between newspapers, radio, television, press agencies and archives. Silverberth (2001) summarises the argument when he reasons that:

Tomorrow's journalists will no longer be able to be simply journalist. They will have to at least have two different trades: the journalist specializing in information systems and the journalist specialising on the documentary system, the editing journalist, the visual journalist, the computer graphic journalist etc all boiling down to the fact that the media profession today, transcends the writing, reporting, anchoring and editing of news; it calls for specialization in both the art of the profession and technology, which has changed the rules of the profession" (p.14).

A large number of people think that education is only a process that one undergoes once in a lifetime. The practice of being in the media profession and not being in tune with technological advancements therein and learning related skills is a dilemma of different media professionals today (Ikpe and Ibekwe 2006, p.72). At the rate technology is changing, what we learnt in the past or in the present may become outdated in a matter of few years. Curtin (1998) argues that "Too many people won't give up until they see their industry die" (p.256). What Curtin is saying here is that no media organisation would want to hire journalists who only sit around without innovative ideas to move the system ahead. If journalists would make it in the media profession today, they must possess the required technological skills and proficiency to help their organisations grow. Prominent among these skills is the Internet literacy, but regrettably, one of the greatest challenges facing the journalist or other employees in the media industry in Nigeria is the need to possess a body of skills, especially those related to the use of the modern ICTs (Amachi, 2011. p.140.).

Many studies have concluded that the spread of computers and the increasingly problem-solving nature of many jobs may underlie the non-neutral nature of ICTs, which are said to have increased the demand for skills (Rees 1994, Senker and Senker 1990). This is so because, overall ICT-based new technologies tend to require lower levels of traditional skills and higher levels of abstract and synthetic reasoning abilities (Mansell and Wehn, 1998, p.243). The bottom line is that the media of today is technology-driven, and the understanding of this would be a plus for all media practitioners who would want to excel in their profession. In addition, the understanding of the Internet would be of great importance to media workers who can, through it, explore the world of limitless possibilities. However, some measures have been recommended towards confronting the problems related to lack of ICT skills among journalists. They include:

- **Training and Retraining of the Journalist**

Staff training, Ikpe and Ibekwe (2006) argue, "has become a major focus of human resource development in media organizations in Nigeria, mostly for new intakes and middle level management cadres" (p.56). Bessant (1994) underscores this

point when he writes that, “Successful adoption and implementation of ICTs require considerable learning on the part of the organisation, whilst some of this can be facilitated by the provision of traditional training.” From the top to the bottom, there is need for training and retraining of the staff through the concept of organisational learning. Curtin (1998) notes that “many firms in the industrialized countries have been successful in completing this cycle and firms are now giving priority to the need to build a learning capacity within the organisation” (p.9). The Nigerian media industry on the threshold of ICT application and utilization must enhance organizational training to save careers and businesses. Page | 9

- **Acquisition of the Internet and other ICTs**

When it comes to information, the Internet has it all. There is far more information on computers and other ICT platforms than one can possibly digest. The great thing about the Internet is that “you can use it to keep in touch with the changes in the field and group that make these changes happen.” The journalists have got the choice to download information about the equipment or print out pages for demonstration and information on how you can procure one. Udeze (2005), while assessing the situation of ICTs in Nigerian media organizations, opines that “most media houses in Nigeria, funny enough do not have ICT facilities” (p.99). The advantages of the Internet and computers are notable both in the technical and administrative levels of every media organisation. These facilities undoubtedly free up work space, facilitate information storage and dissemination and streamline filing (Agu, 2014, p.121).

- **Reading for Professionals Growth**

Newspapers, magazines and journals are a common way to learn about new areas in one’s field and keep up to date. They are published daily, weekly or monthly. Those aimed at people in particular fields are called trade papers. It makes professional sense that one should always subscribe to those publications that address the things that interest one. Be it local or international publication, it pays to subscribe, as it affords the opportunity to keep in touch with cutting edge development in one’s field. In Nigeria there are such informative journals like *Computer World Media Review*, *Info Tech* etc. Outside Nigeria there are such ones like *Journalism Quarterly*, *the Reporter*, and the host of other media journals (Ikpe and Ibekwe, 2006, p.78).

- **Career Pathing for Organisations**

Career pathing is the process of identifying for the employee where the areas for advancement are and how to get there (Goldhaber 1993, p.422). This can be seen as coping strategy for organizations and the employees (journalists) vis-à-vis the rapid pace of change in ICTs. To achieve career pathing, various techniques are suggested by Goldhaber (1993) as follows:

- Employers must provide adequate information necessary for emerging job specifications
- Employers also should share information with employees about how an organisation is run, what its objectives are and how helping to meet these objectives is tied to advancement.
- The organisation should know its objectives, its people, the kinds of skills needed to meet the objectives
- Information about the organisation's ICT output, structure and traditions can be combined with measures of performance and past effectiveness to identify the present condition of the organisation's advancement and change.
- Employers should provide information about education, experience and aspirations of employees to project the state of human resources.
- The employer should also examine the economic, social, political, technological and environmental conditions and trends confronting the organisation. By putting the required information together, the organisation can determine where it is, who its people are, where it should go and what it needs from its people in terms of ICT to get there.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical perspective of this study revolved around the technological determinism theory. The world of today has been entirely permeated by Information and Communication Technologies which now increasingly determine not only how humans communicate with each other but equally how they live their entire life (McCarthy, 2007, p.34). The technological determinism school of sociology believes humans are conditioned by technological advancements as they actualize their existence; that their decisions and actions are inevitably shaped by the nature and the extent of technological structures existing in the society at any point in time (Leonard, 2008, p.12). This view, to some extent, would appear to be valid given the increasing reliance of humans on technology in their everyday life. Such dependency implies that, to whatever extent, the modern man must be under the dictates of technology (McCarthy, 2007, p.34). While this school of thought has been challenged by some scholars, the truth, however, remains that, to a greater or lesser extent, human social life comes under the influence of technologies that he relies on.

Among the technologies that have been of particular influence in the world of today is the Internet which, according to Agba (2001, p.67), brings so much information empowerment to humans. The reason for this lies first in the fact that the audience is in greater control, selecting what he/she needs as against the traditional media where choice is limited.

Nonetheless, it has also been pointed out that media technologies have their limits in terms of the impact they have on both individuals and the society as a whole, positive or negative. Media technologies, in bringing their effects on humans, usually have to reckon with other social factors which could either enhance or limit such effect (Okoye, 2008; Baran, 2010, p.212). Among these factors is access. A human person



ought to first of all have access to a media technology before such technology could be of effect on him/her. Viewed from the core assumptions of the technological determinism theory, humans, (journalists included) are conditioned by technological advancements as they actualize their existence; that is, their decisions and actions are unavoidably shaped by the nature and extent of technological structures existing in their society at a point in time. The import of this submission vis-à-vis the phenomenon under study is that the Internet being one of such technological advancements that have changed the face of the mass media in recent times, would as it were, determine to a great extent the practice, nature and decisions of the journalists in their profession. Hence, individuals who fail to get informed and skilled on the present day prevailing technology might lose relevance in their organisation, so also, journalists who fail to become Internet literate in the present media dispensation.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the survey research method. The population of study encompassed all the registered journalists in Anambra state. According to the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Anambra State chapter, this population is 345 in number. We settled for census study. The census approach is a method where the researcher selects everybody in a given population. This approach is most appropriate in a situation where the population is significantly limited in size, such that selecting a sample from it becomes unnecessary (Adepoju, 2003; p.57). In view of our research goals, we purposively selected 47 respondents across the 14 chapels of the Anambra NUJ who lack Internet literacy. The instrument of data collection was the questionnaire. The questionnaire's validity and reliability were tested through a pilot study.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The data analysed in the demographic section of the questionnaire indicated that 55.3% (N=26) of our respondents are males, while 44.7% (N=21) of them are females. The data also showed that 19.1% (N=9) of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 22, 21.3%; (N=10) were between 22 and 28 years of age. Similarly, 21.3% (N=10) of them were between the ages of 29 and 34; 17.0% (N=8) were between 35-39 years, while 21.3% (N=10) were 40 and above. Furthermore, 42.6% (N=20) of the respondents were married, while 57.4% (N=27) were single. Analysis of the academic qualifications of the respondents showed that, 6.4% (3) had SSCE, 29.8% (14) of them possessed OND/NCE, 48.9% (N=23) had First Degree and HND, while 14.9% (N=7) had postgraduate qualifications.

Answering the Research Questions

Answers to the research questions were presented in tabular format and analysed.

Research Question One: What operational difficulties are experienced by Anambra State Journalists who lack Internet literacy?

Table 1: *Operational difficulties of journalists who lack Internet literacy*

	Difficulty in gathering reports	Difficulty in writing and editing reports	Difficulty in filing reports
Yes	70.2% N=33	70.2% N=33	78.7% N=37
No	29.8% N14	29.8% N14	21.3% N=10
TOTAL	100 N=47	100 N=47	100 N=47

Table 1 above showed that 70.2% of the respondents said they have difficulty in gathering their reports as a result of their poor Internet literacy, while 29.8% of them said otherwise. Again, 70.2% of the respondents indicated that they have difficulty writing and editing their reports, while only 29.8% of them said they don't. Similarly, 78.7% of them said they have difficulty in filing their reports, while only 21.3% said they don't. Based on the foregoing, the answer to our first research question is that journalists in Anambra state experience operational difficulties in gathering, writing, editing and filing their reports as a result of their lack of Internet literacy.

Research Question Two: What survival strategies are adopted by journalists in Anambra State to circumvent the difficulties created by their lack of Internet literacy?

Table 2: *Survival strategies adopted by journalists in Anambra State*

	Depending on Internet-literate colleagues	Employ services of professionals at cafes	Hand over hardcopy reports to the office for completion
Yes	34.0% N=16	57.4% N=27	72.3% N=34
No	66.0% N=31	42.6% N=20	27.7% N=13
TOTAL	100 N=47	100 N=47	100 N=47

Table 2 above indicates that 34.0% of the respondents depend on their Internet-literate colleagues to overcome the challenges posed by their lack of internet literacy, while 66.0% of them do not. Again, 57.4% employ professional services (cybercafés), while 42.6% don't. Also, while 72.3% hand over their hardcopy reports to the office for completion, 27.7% do not. The foregoing suggests that majority of the respondents adopt certain survival strategies in circumventing the difficulties created by their lack of Internet literacy. Such survival strategies: include dependence on Internet-literate colleagues; employment of the services of professionals at cybercafés and handing over of their hardcopy reports to the office for completion.

Research Question Three: To what extent do these journalists in Anambra state perceive their lack of Internet literacy as professional deficiency?

Table 3: *Extent Anambra Journalists Perceive Lack of internet literacy as Professional Deficiency*

	Slows down speed of operation	Hampers finesse in operation	Hampers professional growth
Yes	78.7% N=37	53.2% N=25	72.3% N=34
No	21.3% N=10	46.8% N=22	27.7% N=13
TOTAL	100 N=47	100 N=47	100 N=47

Table 3 shows that 78.7% of the respondents believe that lack of Internet literacy slows down their speed of operation, while 23.1% of them do not. Also, 53.2% believe it hampers finesse in their work, while 27.7% do not believe so. Lastly, 72.3% said that their lack of Internet literacy hampers their professional growth, while only 27.7% do not think so. A look at these data suggests that the journalists perceive their lack of ICT knowledge as some form of deficiency. This is with particular reference to speed of operation, finesse and professional growth.

Research Question Four: What efforts, (if any) are being made by journalists in Anambra State to acquire Internet skills?

Table 4: *Efforts by journalists in Anambra State to acquire Internet skill*

	Ever registered in any ICT training centre?	Subscribe to ICT professional journals?	Attend seminars and workshops on ICT skills?
Yes	42.6% N=20	14.9% N=7	34.8% N=16
No	57.4% N=27	85.1% N=40	66.0% N=31
TOTAL	100 N=47	100 N=47	100 N=47

Table 4 above shows that 42.6% of the respondents said they have ever registered in ICT centres, while 57.4% said they never. Again, only 14.9% of the respondents agreed that they have subscribed to ICT professional journals or other publications to help them improve on their ICT skills, while 85.1% of them indicated otherwise. Also, 34.8% of the respondents said that they attend seminars and workshops to help improve on their ICT skills; while 66.0% of them said they do not. The foregoing data suggest that the majority of the respondents are not taking the necessary steps to make up for their Internet deficiency.



CONCLUSION

Since the prevailing reality shows that the 21st century journalism is the technologically propelled and with the Internet now playing a focal role, journalists who are deficient in the use of this technology are likely to be professionally deficient. Stated differently, ICT deficiency will most likely translate to career deficiency. Hence, while describing the shift from the old journalism culture to the new ICT-driven journalism culture as a “thaw”, Deifell (2009) cautions that “Journalists and media practitioners who fail to cope with the thaw will consequently be out of business or career.” However, while the fact that these journalists see their lack of Internet literacy as a deficiency might offer some encouragement, the same might not be said about the finding that most of them are not making sufficient effort to change their status. Perhaps, this seeming inaction could be attributed to factors like economic handicap as a result of characteristically poor remuneration of media practitioners and the fact that these journalists are somehow still finding ways to survive on the job despite their Internet literacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing, it is recommended that media organizations enlighten their workers on the prime place of ICT skills in their profession by way of organizing ICT seminars, lectures and symposiums. In addition ICT skills (including Internet literacy) should form a compulsory part of the requirements for hiring journalists in media houses today, as this will motivate prospective journalists to go for these skills in preparation for their career. The government might have to lead by example here by pursuing a policy that will ensure that ICT literacy is an inevitable requirement for employment in any public media house. Furthermore, the curriculum of institutions where journalism and media studies are taught should henceforth be designed in a way that the new ICTs will be reflected. Thus, training on ICTs and how to apply them in modern journalism context should form part of the theoretical and practical knowledge imparted in these institutions. This will ensure that new generations of journalists to be produced come out of school already fully armed – ICTs-wise – for their career.

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