

## Celebrity Culture and Journalism Practice in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Celebrity culture and journalism practice in Nigeria are closely intertwined, reflecting the growing influence of celebrities in shaping public opinion, culture, and media consumption. Nigerian celebrities are often products of the media, with platforms like social media, television, and magazines playing a central role in constructing their public identities. The media industry works to build and maintain celebrity brands, which in turn influences public perception and the celebrity's influence on society. The paper argues that celebrities in Nigeria have a strong presence on social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, which amplify their voices and increase their visibility. This has changed the traditional way celebrities are covered by the media, with social media now serving as an important news source and space for celebrities to control their narratives. In Nigeria, entertainment journalism is a significant aspect of mainstream media. A considerable portion of news, especially in tabloids and online media outlets, focuses on celebrity gossip, lifestyle, and controversies. The rise of entertainment reporting has shifted some media outlets from hard news to a more sensational and celebrity-focused approach. The paper concludes that celebrity culture in Nigeria is a major influence on journalism, with entertainment and celebrity news playing a pivotal role in the media landscape. However, this trend comes with ethical challenges, such as maintaining accuracy, respecting privacy, and balancing sensationalism with responsible reporting.*

### Keywords

Celebrity, Culture, Journalism, Nigeria and Practice



## I. Introduction

The relationship between journalism and celebrity culture has increasingly gained attention in recent academic discourse. Globally, media industries are intertwined with celebrity culture, as journalists and news outlets help create and sustain the public personas of celebrities (Wishhart-Usher, 2018). This has resulted in a transformation of journalism practices, where the line between soft and hard news has blurred, reducing the quality and depth of news coverage (Das 2022; Aliyu et al., 2023). In Europe and the United States, this phenomenon is often discussed in terms of the "tabloidization" of news. The term refers to the increasing focus on entertainment and celebrity-related content at the expense of public-interest journalism. This trend, argues Das (2022) reflects a broader cultural shift towards the "dumbing down" of media, where sensational celebrity stories frequently eclipse the coverage of pressing societal concerns.

In Europe and America, celebrity culture intertwines with journalism to construct public personas and influence socio-political narratives. This relationship reflects broader cultural and economic systems, where celebrity journalism serves as a tool for persona construction and public discourse (Usher, 2020; Aondover & Akin-Odukoya, 2024). The symbiotic relationship between journalism and culture underscores the importance of

examining cultural influences on journalism to better understand its global variations. For instance, the focus on celebrity culture, argue Popoola (2022) can lead to a skewed representation of societal issues, where more attention is given to celebrity-related news than to critical socio-economic issues. This can affect the quality and depth of journalism, as the media may prioritize sensationalism over substantive reporting. News media, therefore, plays a crucial role in shaping societal views by constructing and maintaining shared realities based on these public figures. As journalism evolves in response to these developments, new values have emerged, the phenomenon of tabloidization, where entertainment news is prioritized over hard news, is evident in various media contexts, such as Indian television and newspapers (Aondover et al., 2024).

The situation in Asia reflects both similar and distinct dynamics. The rise of social media has created a new class of micro-celebrities, particularly in Southeast Asia, who command significant media attention despite lacking traditional fame. As Mohamad in Aondover et al., (2022) point out, these figures have challenged the conventional hierarchies of fame and celebrity, forcing journalists to reorient their practices in response to changing media consumption patterns. The cultural context significantly shapes journalism practices in Muslim-majority countries. These differences are rooted in ideological and cultural forces that influence journalistic roles and editorial autonomy (Aondover et al., 2023).

In Africa, the manifestation of celebrity culture within journalism reflects a complex interplay between local and global influences, shaped by specific socio-political dynamics. The increasing emphasis on celebrity news in African journalism is partly driven by economic factors and the growing commercialization of media. Mabweazara (2018) argues that African news outlets, much like their global counterparts, are under pressure to produce content that maximizes profitability, often at the cost of socially relevant issues. In South Africa, for example, reality television has become a prominent vehicle for producing local celebrities, merging private and public identities in a way that mirrors global trends (Hile et al., 2023). The advent of such hybrid forms of entertainment raises ethical questions about the role of journalists in perpetuating celebrity-driven content, especially in light of the socio-political challenges that African societies face.

In Nigeria, the impact of celebrity culture on journalism is deeply entrenched, driven by both global trends and local conditions. Nigerian newspapers increasingly feature celebrity-related content, reflecting a shift in editorial priorities (Idris & Msughter, 2022). This mirrors global media practices, yet it also carries distinct local implications. Obateru (2017) highlights that the rise of celebrity-focused journalism in Nigeria is part of a broader commercial strategy aimed at capturing the attention of younger audiences. However, this trend raises concerns about the dilution of journalistic standards and the neglect of pressing social issues. Nigerian journalism, traditionally tasked with the role of informing the public and holding power to account, is now at risk of compromising its watchdog role in favor of entertainment-driven content. Uzuegbunam (2017) further asserts that the influence of celebrity culture on Nigerian youth is particularly concerning, as the media's focus on glamour and sensationalism shapes societal values and perceptions in profound ways.

As celebrity-focused news dominates headlines, journalists find themselves navigating a complex landscape where the pursuit of ratings and readership can conflict with the principles of journalistic integrity. This study aims to address these issues by examining the impact of celebrity culture on journalism standards in Nigeria (Kurfi et al., 2023).

Celebrity culture has emerged as a dominant force shaping global journalism, influencing news priorities and undermining the traditional role of the media as a critical

public service. This shift, described as the "tabloidization" of news, has led to a marked decline in the quality and substance of journalism, as sensationalism and entertainment-focused content increasingly take precedence over serious reporting thus distracting from more pressing societal concerns (Maikaba & Msughter, 2019). The blending of celebrity discourse with political journalism further complicates this landscape, raising concerns about the erosion of journalistic credibility and the blurring of boundaries between entertainment and critical news. Globally, scholars such as Menegucci (2022), through studies in Australia, highlights the detrimental effects of celebrity-driven narratives in perpetuating harmful social ideals. While this issue has been extensively studied in Europe and the U.S., where market-driven media models have prioritized entertainment over substance, there remains a notable gap in research on its manifestations in the African media landscape.

As Mabweazara (2018) argues, African media outlets, pressured by commercialization, increasingly mirror global trends by prioritizing content that drives profitability often at the expense of socially relevant and critical issues. Studies by Motseki and Oyedemi (2017) in South Africa reveal how celebrity-driven media perpetuates problematic beauty standards, affecting social perceptions and identities, particularly among youth. In Nigeria, the problem is particularly acute leading to the erosion of journalistic standards as news outlets focus on sensational and superficial portrayals of celebrities, especially women, thereby reinforcing harmful stereotypes (Msughter et al., 2022). Moreover, Nigerian celebrities have gained direct access to audiences via social media, bypassing traditional journalistic gatekeeping, which has exacerbated the commodification of news (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022).

## II. Review of Literature

### Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Celebrity Manufacture Theory. The Celebrity Manufacture Theory, as elaborated by Jonathan Matusitz and Demi Simi in their 2021 study, provides a critical framework for understanding the systematic, industrialized, and collaborative process of creating and maintaining celebrity status. Matusitz and Simi in Msughter et al., (2023) emphasize that celebrity culture is not a spontaneous or organic phenomenon, but rather a product of deliberate and orchestrated efforts by media producers, publicists, journalists, and other stakeholders in the entertainment industry. The term "manufacturing" is specifically used to highlight the structured and intricate nature of celebrity production, where celebrities are positioned as marketable products to be consumed by the public. The theory is rooted in the foundational work of Hortense Powdermaker, who in the 1940s, explored the industrial nature of Hollywood and its influence on celebrity culture. Powdermaker's anthropological approach laid the groundwork for later scholars, such as Matusitz and Simi in Msughter et al., (2023) who expanded on her ideas to frame the creation of celebrity as an industrialized process.

The core assumption of the Celebrity Manufacture Theory is that the creation of celebrity is a deliberate and calculated process involving various stakeholders. It moves beyond the traditional view of celebrity as an individual's personal achievement, situating it within a larger framework of industrial production. The theory proposes that celebrities are "manufactured" to fit specific media narratives, catering to consumer desires for both authenticity and relatability. Media producers, including journalists, play a crucial role in constructing this image, packaging it for mass consumption while fostering para-social relationships between the audience and the celebrity. Additionally, the theory assumes that media content creators are not passive conveyors of fame but are active agents in shaping and

sustaining the celebrity culture. The Celebrity Manufacture Theory has been widely supported in academic studies, particularly in the growing field of celebrity studies. Diaz (2020) applied this theory to ethnographic investigations of celebrity journalism, highlighting the complex, collaborative processes involved in creating celebrity personas.

Diaz, in her 2020 study on celebrity media production, underscores how journalists and media producers strategically craft celebrities to maintain public interest and relevance. Criticism of the Celebrity Manufacture Theory largely centers on its depiction of the media as overly deterministic and mechanized. Critics argue that the term "manufacturing" implies that celebrity creation is a rigid and formulaic process, neglecting the agency, creativity, and spontaneity of both journalists and celebrities themselves. For example, some critics point to older ethnographic studies, such as those by Herbert Gans and Gaye Tuchman in Yar'Adua et al., (2023), which suggest that journalists and media producers may play a more unconscious role in shaping social narratives, contrasting with the active agency. Additionally, the theory has been criticized for its limited engagement with informal sectors of the celebrity industry, such as paparazzi and independent social media influencers, who operate outside formal production channels but nonetheless play a critical role in celebrity culture.

In the context of Nigerian journalism, the Celebrity Manufacture Theory offers a robust framework for analyzing how celebrity culture influences journalistic practices. Nigeria's media landscape, like many others, is increasingly shaped by the presence of celebrities, and journalists often play a crucial role in cultivating and promoting celebrity personas. By applying this theory, this study can critically examine the mechanisms through which Nigerian journalists collaborate with media producers, publicists, and even celebrities themselves to construct narratives that resonate with the public. The theory's emphasis on the industrialized and collaborative nature of celebrity production is particularly relevant, as it allows the study to explore how Nigerian journalists navigate their roles as both creators of news and participants in the commodification of celebrity.

Given the comprehensive nature of the Celebrity Manufacture Theory, this study will adopt it as part of its theoretical framework. The theory's strength lies in its ability to explain the systemic and collaborative nature of celebrity culture, especially in a media-saturated environment where celebrity narratives significantly shape public discourse. The ethnographic approach suggested by Matusitz and Simi, which involves observing media production practices, can be effectively applied to investigate how Nigerian journalists engage in the celebrity production process. Furthermore, the theory's focus on the strategic creation of authenticity and relatability aligns well with the objectives of this study, which seeks to understand how celebrity culture influences journalistic norms and practices in Nigeria. While the Celebrity Manufacture Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding the intersection between journalism and celebrity culture, its critics raise valid concerns about oversimplification.

The industrial metaphor of "manufacturing" may indeed overlook the creative and individualistic elements of journalism, especially in contexts like Nigeria, where media professionals often operate under unique cultural and economic conditions. However, this criticism does not diminish the overall utility of the theory. Instead, it offers an opportunity to adapt and refine the theory for the Nigerian context, acknowledging the fluidity and complexity of celebrity creation in an industry marked by both formal and informal processes. The Celebrity Manufacture Theory provides a robust and applicable framework for this study on the influence of celebrity culture on journalism in Nigeria. By embracing the theory's insights while addressing its limitations, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of how Nigerian journalists both shape and are shaped by the dynamics of celebrity culture in their professional practices.

### III. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 The Nigerian Context: The Rise of Celebrity Journalism

The origins of celebrity journalism in Nigeria can be traced back to the early days of news production, when the media focused on reporting the activities of politicians, business leaders, and other notable figures deemed newsworthy. Over time, the Nigerian media became increasingly fixated on the personalities of actors, musicians, and other entertainment figures, leading to the emergence of celebrity journalism as a distinct genre. This research examines the early beginnings of this phenomenon, examining the role of pioneering figures such as May Ellen Ezekiel (MEE) Mofe-Damijo, who was instrumental in shaping the landscape of Nigerian celebrity journalism through her work with *Classique* magazine. Similar to trends in Britain and the US, soft-sell magazines in Nigeria reflected the genre's circuitous historical trajectory while also incorporating local features (Olatunji and Jimoh, 2014).

Although there were a few forerunner soft-sells before and immediately after Nigeria's political independence in 1960, the genre became particularly prominent in the 1980s, a phase of economic crisis and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), launched in 1986. The economic downturn had a profound effect on the media as it forced publishers to seek greater profits wherever possible. Human interest publications profited at the audience's expense as publishers sought to court and cater to ever-increasing popular demand for entertainment and diversion. One of the earliest magazines printed in Nigeria, *In Leisure Hour*, of the Christian Missionary Society (1917), backed by the ecumenical Niger Missionary Association and based in Ibadan, Lagos and Ondo, was a mainly religious publication that interspersed human interest stories along its pages. Other early precursors include *African Hope* (1919) and *Catholic Life* (1937). The secular character of the new soft-sell publications that began to emerge in the decades after independence could be seen as having an entertainment character. One pioneer in this area was Nigeria's *Daily Times*, which introduced the publication of the magazines *The Spear*, *Drum* and *Woman's World* in the 1960s and '70s (Msughter & Idris, 2023).

They were joined by other well-published newspapers such as *Trust*, *Sadness and Joy*, *Modern Woman* and *Poise* in the 1970s and '80s. A spin which catered to the human-interest audience and comic orientation that was emerging at the time. The 1980s saw the advent of some of the most influential soft-sell magazines: *Fun Times* (1984), *Prime People* (1986) and *Climax* (1988), the names of which ensured that readers could have a good time while learning about other people's lives. Promising to put 'five-star living within your reach,' these publications opened the floodgates to contemporary celebrity journalism in Nigeria. These magazines also featured entertainment and lifestyle, a departure from the previously imposed formats of commemorative programmes and welfare advertisements. *Nigeria Magazine's Hints*, *Today's Choice*, *Akapa's Top Magazine*, *Quality*, *Classique* and *Whispers* helped to popularise the soft-sell genre during the 1980s.

#### 3.2 Complex Interplay Between Celebrity Culture and Journalism Practice

The exploration of celebrity culture as an independent variable and journalism practice as a dependent variable reveals a complex and evolving interplay shaped by the dynamic forces of media, culture, and societal expectations (Msughter et al., 2022). This relationship has grown increasingly intricate with the rise of digital technologies and the globalization of both media and culture. Celebrity culture, which has evolved considerably over time, now extends far beyond the traditional realms of fame and notoriety, becoming a

dominant force in shaping public discourse. In turn, journalism practices have adapted, often shifting focus from hard news to the allure of celebrity-driven content. This discourse explores the definitions, attributes, characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of these two interrelated concepts, drawing upon a variety of academic perspectives to provide a richer, more nuanced understanding (Obasi & Msughter, 2023).

**Celebrity Culture:** refers to a social phenomenon where individuals achieve amplified public recognition through media exposure, and their lives and personas are continuously produced, consumed, and commodified. It represents the intersection of entertainment, journalism, and societal values, shaping aspirations, identity, and norms. In the Nigerian context, celebrity culture influences journalistic practices, often blurring the lines between news, entertainment, and sensationalism, while reflecting societal desires, anxieties, and contradictions. It functions as a cultural currency that defines who and what is celebrated, influencing public discourse, professional standards, and perceptions of success, morality, and authority. The concept of celebrity has deep historical roots, with scholars like Ahmed and Faiq (2022) drawing parallels between modern celebrities and religious figures such as saints, suggesting that contemporary celebrity culture functions as a form of "world religion."

This evolution is intricately linked to advancements in mass media, which have redefined the nature of fame and the processes of "celebrification" and "celebritization" (Ahmed & Faiq, 2022). While celebrification denotes fame resulting from specific accomplishments, celebritization refers to the systematic elevation of individuals to celebrity status through media and entertainment industries. These processes illustrate how fame has transitioned from being purely achievement-based to being constructed and amplified by strategic media exposure. The advent of reality television and cross-media platforms has further normalized celebrity culture, embedding it deeply within public discourse and reshaping societal perceptions of success and authority.

This changing nature of celebrity culture has also influenced societal norms and moral standards. As media audiences engage with celebrity narratives, these interactions can generate "moral panic" by challenging traditional values and ethical frameworks. The emphasis on media-driven renown and visibility has shifted public attention from conventional measures of accomplishment to more transient and superficial markers of success. This transformation underscores the fluidity of contemporary celebrity culture, where the boundaries between genuine achievement, media spectacle, and societal influence are increasingly blurred.

Celebrity culture has undergone significant transformations over the decades, driven by social, psychological, economic, and technological forces. This dynamic is particularly pronounced due to the intersection of globalization, local societal norms, and the proliferation of digital media. These factors shape how individuals acquire fame, the societal impact of celebrity worship, the role of media and technology, and the broader implications for identity, authority, and cultural values. Nigerian celebrity culture influences a wide array of social dimensions, including media representation, philanthropy, and evolving social norms, reflecting a unique hybridization of global and local cultural forces.

The acquisition of fame in contemporary society is a multifaceted process, determined by achievement, charisma, strategic marketing, and media amplification. Traditional pathways to fame, such as notable accomplishments in film, music, and sports, coexist with newer, more democratized routes facilitated by reality television and social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Cohen (2023) posits that fame is no longer solely the result of genuine achievements but can also be strategically constructed through marketing tactics akin to consumer branding. The concepts of "celebritization" and "celebrification," as articulated by Ahmed and Faiq (2022), further illuminate these mechanisms. Celebritization

refers to the systematic elevation of individuals to celebrity status by media industries, while celebrification denotes fame that stems from specific, often merit-based accomplishments. Together, these processes underscore that fame is frequently an orchestrated outcome of media, public relations, and individual efforts (Onyejelem & Aonover, 2024a).

In Nigeria, the acquisition of fame reflects both global trends and local idiosyncrasies. Nollywood actors, Afrobeats musicians, and social media influencers strategically leverage international platforms to amplify their reach. This is facilitated by marketing campaigns, social media algorithms, and reality television programs, which play pivotal roles in determining who achieves celebrity status (Driessens, 2024). Consequently, pathways to fame have become increasingly accessible, enabling even ordinary individuals to attain recognition through viral content and online visibility. This democratization of fame, however, also results in phenomena such as “micro-fame,” wherein individuals experience fleeting notoriety without sustained celebrity status.

Celebrity worship, defined as the intense admiration and devotion to celebrities, represents a pervasive facet of modern culture. Xia et al. (2021) contend that demographic factors such as age, gender, and social background significantly influence the degree and nature of celebrity worship. This phenomenon has tangible impacts on mental health, identity formation, and social behavior. Xia et al. (2021) illustrate that while some fans derive inspiration and motivation from their idols, others may develop obsessive tendencies that hinder personal development and social relationships. In the Nigerian context, celebrity worship profoundly affects youth identity and behavior. Entertainment figures often become role models whose fashion choices, lifestyles, and values are emulated by their fans. While this admiration can inspire ambition and creativity, it can also foster unrealistic expectations and consumerist attitudes. The intense focus on celebrities may divert attention from substantive social and political issues, thereby reinforcing superficial values.

The role of media and technology in shaping celebrity culture cannot be overstated. The advent of social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok has revolutionized how fame is constructed and maintained. Traditional gatekeepers of fame, such as television and print media, have been supplemented or replaced by these digital platforms. Ahmed and Faiq (2022) argue that social media enables the rapid dissemination of celebrity-related content, allowing celebrities to cultivate their brands and interact directly with their audiences. This direct interaction blurs the boundaries between public and private personas, making celebrities appear more relatable and accessible.

Technological advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) further reshape audience engagement with celebrity culture. Onyejelem & Aonover (2024a) note that AI enhances content verification and production efficiency, addressing challenges like misinformation and audience fragmentation. VR and AR offer immersive experiences that deepen fan engagement, creating the illusion of being part of a celebrity's world. However, these technologies also pose challenges related to authenticity, privacy, and the commodification of personal identities. In Nigeria, social media serves as a vital tool for creating and sustaining celebrity status. Musicians, actors, and influencers use platforms like Instagram and Twitter to engage with fans, promote their work, and shape public narratives. This democratization of fame allows grassroots movements and ordinary individuals to achieve visibility. Yet, the viral nature of social media content can also lead to ephemeral fame, underscoring the volatility of digital celebrity culture.

Globalization significantly influences Nigeria's celebrity culture, exposing local audiences to international trends and shaping how Nigerian celebrities construct their identities. Omenugha et al. in Onyejelem and Aonover (2024b) observe that Nigerian youth, due to increased media access, are particularly susceptible to global influences. This blending

of local and international elements creates a hybridized celebrity culture in which Nigerian stars navigate global standards while preserving local relevance. Nigerian celebrities such as Burna Boy, Wizkid, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have successfully positioned themselves as global icons, promoting Nigerian culture on international stages. However, the dominance of Western celebrity culture challenges cultural identity and autonomy, as young Nigerians may prioritize global trends over indigenous values. This negotiation between global and local forces is a defining feature of Nigeria's contemporary celebrity culture.

The media's portrayal of celebrities plays a critical role in shaping societal norms and values. In Nigeria, the representation of celebrities often normalizes specific lifestyles and behaviors. Oreoluwa et al., (2024) highlight the media's glamorization of the "Baby Mama Syndrome," which depicts single motherhood as desirable despite its societal challenges. This normalization can influence societal attitudes, particularly among young women who may view this lifestyle as aspirational. Similarly, female humorists in Nigeria have used social media platforms like Instagram to challenge traditional gender roles, thereby transforming the landscape of comedy (Amaefula, 2023). These examples demonstrate how media portrayals of celebrities can both reflect and reshape cultural norms.

Celebrity philanthropy is another dimension of celebrity culture with significant societal implications. Nigerian celebrities frequently engage in charitable activities, addressing issues such as poverty, education, and healthcare. Popoola (2022) argues that while these philanthropic gestures provide temporary relief, they often fail to address systemic problems. The publicization of these acts enhances the celebrities' public image but raises questions about authenticity and the depth of their commitment to social change. Celebrity philanthropy thus reflects a tension between genuine social impact and performative altruism. The media's amplification of these acts can perpetuate a superficial understanding of social issues, highlighting the need for a critical examination of celebrity-driven philanthropy (Owens-Ibie & Aondover, 2024).

The rise of celebrity culture also signifies a shift in societal sources of authority and validation. Furedi in Vitalis et al., (2024) notes that celebrities are increasingly replacing traditional authority figures such as religious leaders, educators, and politicians as arbiters of social values. In Nigeria, where public trust in traditional institutions is eroded by corruption and inefficiency, celebrities fill this void by offering alternative sources of guidance and inspiration. This democratization of authority allows diverse voices to shape public discourse. However, it also raises concerns about the depth and sustainability of celebrity-driven validation, as celebrities may lack the expertise to address complex social issues comprehensively.

The influence of media on Nigerian youth identity and aspirations is a central aspect of celebrity culture. Uzuegbunam in Vitalis et al., (2024) emphasized that exposure to celebrities through television, radio, and the internet significantly impacts young Nigerians' lifestyle choices and values. While successful Nigerian celebrities inspire youth to pursue creative careers and entrepreneurship, the glamorization of celebrity lifestyles can foster unrealistic expectations and consumerist behaviors. This dynamic underscores the dual role of celebrity culture as both a source of inspiration and a potential driver of social disengagement.

Ethical considerations in media-driven celebrity culture are also crucial. The relentless focus on celebrities can lead to privacy invasions, misinformation, and the exploitation of personal crises for entertainment. Yar'Adua et al., (2023) highlight how media-driven fame can compromise personal integrity and ethical standards. In Nigeria, where press freedom is often constrained, these challenges are particularly pronounced. The commercialization of celebrity culture can shift journalistic priorities toward sensationalism,

undermining the media's role as a public watchdog. Addressing these ethical challenges requires a commitment to media literacy and responsible journalism that balances public interest with ethical integrity.

Celebrity culture in Nigeria is a complex and evolving phenomenon shaped by local dynamics, globalization, and technological advancements. It influences societal norms, identity formation, and sources of authority, reflecting both opportunities and challenges. While celebrity culture offers pathways for inspiration, creativity, and social engagement, it also poses risks of superficiality, consumerism, and ethical compromises. A critical and balanced understanding of these dynamics is essential for navigating the impact of celebrity culture on contemporary Nigerian society (Yar'Adua et al., 2023).

**Journalism practice:** This refers to the professional standards, ethical considerations, and quality of news reporting in journalism. It will be measured by assessing content quality, diversity, and adherence to ethical standards in the selected newspapers. Journalism Practice is traditionally understood as the professional activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information to a target readership or audience. However, it has evolved significantly in recent years, driven by rapid technological advancements and shifting cultural landscapes. Contemporary journalism now operates at the nexus of media, culture, and society, a dynamic that reflects ongoing transformations in these domains. Recent scholarship builds on this perspective, emphasizing journalism's fluidity in response to digital disruption and changing audience expectations. For instance, Uth et al., in Cohen (2023) identify six theoretical frameworks that explain this evolving dynamic: the discursive, expectation-based, network-oriented, technological, parasocial, and strategic-organizational approaches.

These frameworks collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of how journalism can better engage audiences and adapt to their shifting expectations in the digital age. This evolution reflects a move away from one-way communication toward a more interactive and participatory relationship, necessitating a redefinition of journalistic roles and practices to remain relevant and effective. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) are further reshaping journalistic practices and audience interactions. As noted by Onyejelem and Aondover (2024b), AI enhances content verification and production efficiency, offering solutions to challenges like audience fragmentation and concerns over information credibility. These technologies not only facilitate richer, more immersive storytelling but also provide opportunities for greater audience engagement. However, these advancements do not come without challenges. Issues such as declining revenue and the ongoing struggle to maintain public trust continue to threaten journalism's viability.

Therefore, while technological innovations offer significant opportunities, journalism must navigate these changes thoughtfully to preserve its integrity and societal role. This dynamic highlights the interplay between traditional journalistic authority and participatory culture, where audiences not only consume news but also contribute to its creation. Moreover, cultural expressions within journalism are becoming more diverse and inclusive. As Aondover et al., (2023) note, contemporary journalism is adapting to reflect a broader spectrum of voices, perspectives, and identities, particularly through solutions journalism and constructive reporting. This approach enhances journalism's relevance by addressing societal challenges while maintaining professional integrity. The principles of journalism, such as serving the public interest, maintaining autonomy, and adhering to professional norms, are increasingly perceived to be eroding in the contemporary media landscape. This perceived erosion has sparked debates about whether journalism can still be considered a legitimate profession or if it has devolved into a "bullshit job," a phenomenon driven by the pressures of capitalism and digital transformation. The democratization of content creation, facilitated by

digital media, allows virtually anyone to publish information online. While this shift has broadened participation in the information sphere, it has also resulted in an influx of low-quality content that challenges the value and authority of professional journalism.

The advent of digital platforms has fundamentally revolutionized journalistic practices, making social media an indispensable component of news dissemination. This transformation has produced a new information ecosystem that diverges significantly from traditional journalism, necessitating a critical reevaluation of professional practices to fully harness the opportunities presented by digital media. In response to deficits caused by misinformation and diminishing independent funding, new platforms have emerged, many of which are non-profit organizations. These platforms prioritize investigative journalism and fact-checking, aiming to reinforce the media's role as a public watchdog and preserve journalistic integrity. Conflict reporting, in particular, poses distinct challenges for journalists. They often face physical risks, ethical dilemmas, and economic pressures that shape media narratives and exacerbate media polarization (Aondover et al., 2022).

In this evolving context, journalism is also shaped by the platformization of news, where social media platforms influence news dissemination and consumption. This has led to the blending of professional journalism with influencer culture and audience-driven trends, underscoring journalism's adaptability to contemporary cultural and technological shifts. Thus, modern journalism is a dynamic, culturally embedded practice that continuously redefines itself in response to societal changes, technological innovation, and evolving audience participation. Recent scholarship on ethical and quality journalism underscores the intricate interplay between ethical codes, media ownership structures, and the rapidly evolving digital landscape. These studies collectively highlight the imperative for journalists to uphold ethical standards while contending with the multifaceted challenges introduced by social, economic, and technological developments. Given the increasing prominence of celebrity culture within journalism, a nuanced understanding of journalism ethics — shaped by cultural and contextual constraints — becomes essential for maintaining professional integrity.

Ethical journalism, as recent studies suggest, is not universally applied but is deeply rooted in social and cultural contexts. In Nigeria, for instance, material and economic challenges significantly influence media access and representation, thereby complicating adherence to ethical standards. These constraints underscore the need to address local barriers to ethical journalism, particularly in a landscape where celebrity culture often shapes public discourse. Furthermore, the relationship between journalists and their sources remains dynamic and fraught with ethical dilemmas, particularly when economic incentives clash with journalistic idealism. Such tensions are exacerbated when celebrity figures become primary sources or subjects of news, further complicating the ethical boundaries within which journalists operate (Aondover et al., 2022).

A broader examination of trends in journalism ethics research over the past decade reveals a continued focus on news-making practices, journalism's social roles, and strategies for bolstering audience trust and credibility. These insights are particularly relevant to celebrity journalism, where maintaining credibility is challenging amidst sensationalism and infotainment pressures. Moreover, differences in research emphasis across various academic journals highlight the diversity of ethical challenges. While some studies emphasize the influence of digital technology on journalism, others focus on minority representation and core journalistic principles such as transparency. This diversity reflects the myriad ways in which celebrity culture can shape journalistic ethics, from the accuracy of celebrity news reporting to the responsible portrayal of marginalized groups (Msughter et al., 2023).

Media ownership further complicates ethical journalism, as ownership interests often conflict with journalistic autonomy. Journalists frequently find themselves navigating a precarious balance between the profit-driven motives of media proprietors and their ethical obligations to the public. This challenge is particularly pronounced in celebrity journalism, where media conglomerates may prioritize sensational content for commercial gain. Greater press freedom, as suggested by Patricia in Aondover et al., (2023) could empower journalists to fulfill their public responsibility without fear of reprisal, thereby promoting a more ethically sound practice. Nevertheless, ethical challenges remain pervasive, requiring journalists to consistently balance professional codes with the vested interests of various stakeholders.

The ethical complexities of journalism are also mirrored in research practices. In countries such as Australia, the decline of practice-based journalism research is attributed to difficulties in aligning professional journalism ethics with academic research standards. This misalignment deters practitioner-researchers from producing high-quality, practice-oriented research, thereby limiting critical inquiries into fields like celebrity journalism. As celebrity culture continues to influence journalistic norms and practices, addressing these ethical and contextual challenges becomes imperative for both media practitioners and scholars. The intersection of journalism ethics, media ownership, and digital transformation presents a dynamic and challenging terrain for contemporary journalism practice. These challenges are magnified, necessitating vigilant adherence to ethical standards and a deeper understanding of contextual factors that shape journalistic integrity in the Nigerian media industry where journalists and news outlets play a key role in creating and sustaining the public personas of celebrities, thereby contributing to a shift in journalism practices and a blurring of the line between soft and hard news.

Thus, while celebrity culture and journalism practice are distinct concepts, their interdependence is evident in the ways they influence and shape each other. Celebrity culture, with its media-driven and public-facing nature, profoundly affects journalism by dictating what types of content are produced and consumed. In turn, journalism plays a critical role in both constructing and amplifying celebrity culture, as media outlets create and disseminate celebrity news that captivates public attention. This reciprocal relationship is especially pronounced in the digital age, where journalism and celebrity culture are increasingly entangled, with print journalists often relying on celebrity-driven stories to attract readership and increase engagement. The evolving nature of these concepts in the face of technological advancements, globalization, and changing societal values underscores the importance of understanding their intricate dynamics for navigating the future of media and journalism.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The significance of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of the influence of celebrity culture on journalism practices in Nigeria. By examining both the historical development of celebrity journalism and its ongoing impact on journalistic standards, this research provides critical insights into the evolving dynamics of the Nigerian media landscape. Through an extensive content analysis of Nigerian newspapers, magazines, and digital platforms, coupled with interviews with industry professionals, this study has shed light on how global trends in celebrity culture have converged with local practices to reshape the nature of journalism in the country. The analysis confirms that the historical trajectory of celebrity journalism in Nigeria follows a broader global trend while also reflecting unique local dynamics, such as audience preferences, technological advancements, and cultural values. The findings from this study underscore how the commodification of media content

and the prioritization of celebrity-driven narratives have altered the core values of journalism, leading to a shift away from investigative, socially relevant reporting toward entertainment-focused content that increasingly prioritizes sensationalism over substance. In this context, the study has also highlighted the ethical challenges that have emerged, especially regarding gender portrayals, the impact on public perceptions, and the way media outlets engage with their audiences. As celebrity journalism continues to dominate the media landscape, these concerns become more pronounced, raising critical questions about the future of journalistic integrity in Nigeria.

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