



## GRATIFICATION SYNDROME AND NEWS OBJECTIVITY AMONG JOURNALISTS IN BAYELSA STATE

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### Abstract

The impact of gratification syndrome is that there is a shift in journalism from being a “Fourth estate of the realm” to a publicity seeking outlet available to the highest bidder; integrity, objectivity and balance is weakened as a result and news is commercialized. The study examined gratification syndrome and news objectivity among journalists in Bayelsa State. The paper was hinged on the social responsibility theory. The study adopted the survey research design. The census principle was used as the sampling technique, using questionnaire as the instrument for data collection from the population of 120 journalists in Bayelsa State. Result indicated that the extent to which journalists in Bayelsa State accept gratification from news sources is low at 40%. The journalists perceive the acceptance of gratification as a bad practice that can affect news objectivity at an average mean of 3.5. The study also revealed that gratification syndrome has a negative influence on news objectivity at an average mean of 3.5. The study further showed that harsh economy condition; poor remuneration; lack of journalistic ethical precepts are the factors responsible for accepting gratification by journalists in Bayelsa State at an average mean of 3.6. The study concluded that gratification is a corrupt practice and an unprofessional conduct that alters the true reflection of professional journalism embedded in ethicality. The study recommended that journalists should observe the tenets of social responsibility theory as a foundation for their journalistic practice and adequate enforcement of journalistic ethics among journalists should be embraced.

**Keywords:** Journalism, gratification syndrome, news, news objectivity.

### Introduction

The journalistic profession does not lag behind much in the practice of setting acceptable standards known as codes of conduct, but strict adherence to such codes of conduct by the practitioners is another issue entirely. It is no longer news that the culture of gratification has become an albatross for the 21st century Nigerian journalist (Sanni, 2009). It has been criticized by scholars in the field of mass communication who describe it as a form of inducing writers and editors with financial gratification to influence their writings in favour of the givers. This is why Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe (2010) aver that journalist owes its credibility to the public since they are seen as the “voice” and “ear” of the people. But when the journalist performs his/her duties in the interest of a select few for personal gains, it is regarded as irresponsible and thus, the credibility of the profession becomes doubtful.

One ethical challenge which poses a threat to the image of the journalism profession and ability of practitioners to perform their duties objectively is the issue of gratification (Nwabueze, 2010). The tenet of journalism that has got to do with truth, fairness, accuracy, balance and objectivity are fast becoming fantasies in Nigeria and thanks to the cankerworm called gratification “brown envelope” or freebies (Okoro & Onuoha, 2013). The implication of this can be that journalists in doing their job might not be objective in the discharge of their duties based on professional demands (Nkwam-Uwaoma, Etumnu & Okoro, 2020).

According to Matt (2022), the idea of journalistic objectivity was promoted by Walter Lippman, one of the most influential American media types of the 20th century, who called for reporters to use the scientific method to test information in order to give readers the truth, not a reporter’s version of the truth. Lippman’s call was a departure from the sensational yellow journalism of a prior generation, and objectivity was certainly the higher professional

standard. Objectivity is the core principle of journalism practice which means detaching oneself from the information by maintaining a high level of fairness and balance in giving an accurate account of happenings (Blueprint Newspaper, 2023). Fahy (2017) opine that objectivity is a broad term, but has been commonly interpreted to mean the reporting of news in an impartial and unbiased way by finding and verifying facts, reporting facts accurately, separating facts from values, and giving two sides of an issue equal attention to make news reports balanced.

Asogwa and Asemah (2012) submit that objectivity should be the reporter's core aim and major pillar upon which to base journalism practice knowing that a reporter's primary duty is to observe events and not to advocate. Wokemezie (2020) was of the view that objective reporting hinges on ethicality and is determined by such ingredients as balanced reportage of contending sides, fairness, truth, accuracy, etc. Objectivity in journalism presuppose that journalists report events that occur in the society in a fair, balanced and neutral manner, covering all sides of events or news stories truthfully and without bias or inducement. It thrives on factual, unbiased, accurate and verifiable information. The journalist as a member of the society is expected to maintain some ethical codes of conduct as he discharges his duty or responsibility of informing the members of the public objectively and accurately (Ekeanyanwu & Obianigwe, 2010).

However, it is against this backdrop that the study sought to examine gratification syndrome as a threat to objectivity among journalists in Bayelsa State. This is so because numerous studies have been carried out previously by other scholars in this regard in other States, there seems to be none done in Bayelsa State. Hence, the gap the study wants to close.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Following the ethical codes of journalism practice that centres on reward and gratification, it is not expected of journalists to indulge in any form or act of gratification. The reason is because, journalists who engage in it may likely dance to the tune of the provider of such gift at the detriment of professionalism. This brings to the fore, the argument of Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe (2012) that monetary gift could pressurize a journalist into doing what the giver wants and this makes the journalist unable to be objective in his reporting of events and issues involving the people who give such gifts. By implication, news might be written to favour selected few at the detriment of the public who ideally are entitled to objective report of an event. The fact that who pays the piper dictates the tune goes a long way to say that journalist objectivity as the case may be might be under serious threat.

The practice of journalism is founded on ethical principles of truth and objectivity; however, these ethical principles may come under serious threat in the face of gratification syndrome because journalists who receive gratification may want to please the giver at the expense of the guiding ethical principle which alters the cornerstone of professional journalism.

### **Objective of the Study**

The main objective of the paper is to assess the gratification syndrome as a threat to objectivity among journalists in Bayelsa State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the extent journalists in Bayelsa State accept gratification from their news sources.
2. Evaluate the perception of the journalist on the issue of gratification syndrome and news objectivity.
3. Ascertain the influence of gratification syndrome on news objectivity among the journalists.
4. Ascertain the factors responsible for accepting gratification by journalists in Bayelsa State.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will be of great benefit to the professional body (media organisation and media practitioners/journalists) as it will help them to realize and understand how the public view the content of news. It will help them to take into consideration on how best to carry out their expected social responsibility role to society in order to create confidence in news content. The findings of this study will also help professional bodies in journalism to see how gratification syndrome is affecting the profession, hence, be able to devise a means in curtailing it.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **An Overview of News**

News is the written, audio, or visual reconstruction of an event, happening or an incident. News are actions, movements, new developments, surprises, sudden reversals, ups and downs of fate, facts and follies of mankind that are out of the ordinary (Hasan, 2013). News are the accounts of what are happening around us, be it current events, new initiatives, ongoing projects or issues. Sources of news therefore abound everywhere. Anyanwu (2019) assert that news is said to mean any event that is timely reported or what is new to someone. No doubt, an event must occur or billed to occur for it to serve as prelude to news. The bulk of news reports consist of hard news. This type of news, as observed by Dominick (2013), typically embodies the journalistic values of timeliness, proximity, prominence, and consequence. It also consists of the basic facts of who, what, when, where, and how of an event, presented in an inverted pyramid format (Popoola, 2011). On the simplicity nature of news, news should be simple and free from all forms of ambiguity. News language should be very understandable even by those by low level education. Simplicity therefore requires that news item should be packaged in a manner it can be understood on first exposure. News must confirm to the concept of “KISS” (keep it simple and short).

### **News Objectivity in journalism**

Objectivity is a strategic ritual that defends a journalist from lawsuits of covering undisclosed information for his newspaper readers. According to Dansbach and Klett (2000), objectivity is a key value in newspaper journalism as it sets a standard that makes the ideal of objectivity acceptable to all who practice journalism. In his notion, Lipman (2000), objectivity in journalism reflects strong beliefs and a deep understanding of the philosophy of contemporary journalism. In the context of the above assertion, objectivity, or rather objective reporting was established in such a way that it withdraws the reporter’s opinion or the editorialized kind of writing from the much-needed presentation of facts. Dansbach and Klette (2000) averred that Journalists regard objectivity, accuracy, balance and fairness, as well as giving two sides of the story, as characteristics of objective news reporting.

Anim, (2006) as cited in Akpan and Onyebuchi, (2012) holds that the concept of objectivity in the business of news gathering has become rather contentious among communication scholars. This is because of the view by some media scholars which Akpan and Onyebuchi (2012) subscribe to, that the very idea of story selection from among the very many events that occur in a day is fraught with subjectivity. They said—we cannot deny that some stories in the mass media lack objectivity. On the other hand, Ekwueme (2009) argued that:

The penchant for the Nigerian mass media especially the news magazines to eulogize and chant the praise songs of some non-performing governors to the chagrin of the masses. In some very shameless cases, these magazines devote their centre-spread on the advertorials and supplements of these rogue governors displaying phantom projects in which countless millions are allegedly spent. If, in fact, such supplements and advertorials reflect truly the height of development in the country, we would not be suffering from the infrastructural problems that are today our collective lot.

### **Effects of Gratification Journalism Practice**

The effect of this form of journalism is that there is a shift in journalism from being a “Fourth estate of the realm” to a publicity seeking outlet available to the highest bidder; integrity, objectivity and balance is weakened as a result and news is commercialized. It also creates an avenue for publicity seeking journalists to write commentaries that is intended to address personalities and not sensitive issues. Hence the Nigerian media is weakened and inefficient and cannot function independently of politicians and businessmen (Ekeanyanwu&Obianigwe, 2012).

According to Sanni (2009), gratification is the greatest albatross and the most virulent log militating against good governance and national development in Nigeria. Gratification is indeed a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria society. It is a monster that all sundry blame for the economic woe facing the country. This is because bribery and corruption is seen as one of the major impediments of the economic development of the nation. It is perhaps, the only reason why nothing seems to be working. Ukozor (2015) maintains that the ethics should give the journalist a standard by which he can judge action right or wrong, good or bad, responsible journalist today needs

to know their limitation so as not to abuse the power of the media. In corroborating this view, Okunna (2003) describe ethical journalist as a “Bastion of democracy”.

Regrettably, communication in Nigeria is mainly influenced by economic extremism on one hand and government pressure on the other hand, in developing nation like Nigeria, poverty debases human dignity and causes the scale of honour and trust for money through gratification to influence news as opposed to editors of sense of news judgment (Nwabueze, 2010).

### **Empirical Review**

Aderogba (2013) conducted a study entitled “Nigerian media and corrupt practices: The need for paradigm shift” established that regardless of the efforts being made by various stakeholders in the media industry, it was discovered that the media was largely corrupt. Even though over 64 % of those sampled believed that acceptance of any form of gratifications was unethical, over 75 % of the journalists engage in corrupt practices with impunity. More than half of the 18 media outfits covered by the study are indifferent to certain identified corrupt practices in their organizations.

Onyebadi and Alajmi (2014) in their study entitled “Gift solicitation and acceptance in journalism practice: An assessment of Kuwaiti journalists’ perspective” indicated that a breach of this ethical recommendation. Reasons for this include lack of media ethics education and training among journalists and the absence of ethical guidance by media owners. In addition, for a number of Kuwaiti reporters, journalism is a part-time job. The act of receiving and sometimes asking for gratification appears to be ingrained in the practice of journalism in Kuwait. This is attested to by findings in their study which surveyed journalists in the country. It would appear that this problem is the product of a combination of factors that include the inadequacy of media ethics training for reporters, hiring part-time or untrained reporters by media houses and the nonchalant attitude of the owners of media houses toward laying down ethical guidelines for their staff and disciplining reporters who accept such gifts.

Dirbaba (2010) in “The growing influence of bribery in Ethiopian journalism” revealed that bribery, including gifts of plots of land as well as money, is widespread among journalists in Ethiopia and is spreading to supervisors and assignment editors, including those in the upper leadership. Murtala (2018) in his study “Ethical implications of collecting brown envelope by Nigerian journalists” revealed that brown envelope collection in Nigeria is always on the increase and has since found a permanent place to stay. The paper also revealed that brown envelope collection is militating against objectivity, balance and fairness, accuracy, and credible reporting, which necessitates condemnations from various scholars. The dominant reason for accepting brown envelope by many journalists in Nigeria has to do with poor salary.

Okoro and Chinwebo-Onuoha (2013) in “Journalists’ perception of brown envelope syndrome and its implications for journalism practice in Nigeria” noted that this ignoble practice influences journalism practice negatively as some important issues are downplayed while unimportant ones are exaggerated in a bid to satisfy the givers of these brown envelopes. Nwabueze (2010) carried out an investigation entitled “Brown envelope and the need for ethical re-orientation: Perceptions of Nigerian journalists”. It was discovered that the basic reason behind the continued existence of brown envelopes in the profession is the orientation of journalists. Most of the journalists see nothing wrong with the acceptance of brown envelopes.

In another study by Nkwam-Uwaoma, et al. (2020) entitled “Influence of gratification on the performance of journalists in Imo state Nigeria”, it was revealed that demanding and receiving of gratification affect journalists’ performance. Acceptance of gratification has the propensity to influence the sense of news judgment on journalists as well as affect the profession negatively to a large extent. Apuke (2016) in “The Nigerian journalists’ knowledge and perceptions of brown envelope syndrome on journalism practice: A study of journalists in Jalingo metropolis” revealed that sourcing and reporting of news stories are the common journalism practice that brown envelope is more manifest. The study also revealed that brown envelope affects the social responsibility as well as objectivity and balance in journalism practice/reporting.

Arowolo (2013) in his study entitled “Negative effect of brown envelope in the practice of journalism in Nigeria: A case of Vanguard Newspaper” showed that a lot of factors have contributed to brown envelope also known locally as ‘egunje’ by journalists in Nigeria. Such factors include level of education of journalists; meagre salaries received by journalists; and the view that it is appreciation and/or transportation from news sources. The study also found that brown envelope takes various forms such as money, car, clothing and in some cases scholarships.

However, Obayi (2022) in his paper “Rethinking balance and fairness as journalistic ethical precepts: A survey of journalists in Southeast, Nigeria” revealed that the extent to which they apply balance and fairness in their news report is very low. Result further revealed that at an average mean of 3.7 (N=271), the respondents agreed that balance and fairness should still remain the watchdog of journalists during news reporting. However, this present study identified a missing gap on the influence of the acceptance of gratification by journalists on news objectivity carried out in Bayelsa State. Therefore, the researchers through this present study, want to fill the gap through the scope of the study in order not to repeat works done previously by other scholars because gratification influence on news objectivity has always been a study of concern.

### **Theoretical framework**

The study was anchored on the social responsibility theory was propounded by Theodore Peterson, Fred’s. Siebert and Wilbur Schramm in 1963. This theory was born out of problems occasioned by its antecedent. According to Okunna and Omenugha (2012), the fundamental doctrine of this theory is that the press should be free to perform the functions which the libertarian theory granted it freedom to perform, but that this freedom should be exercised with responsibility. If the media fails to meet their responsibilities to society, the social responsibility theory holds that the government should encourage the media to comply by way of controlling them. Moemeka (1991), Anyanwu, Awaeze and Etumnu (2022) expounded that the social responsibility theory places due emphasis on the moral and social responsibilities of persons who, and institution which, operate the mass media. Thus, it suffices to say that the theory bothers on journalistic ethics and its introduction heralded professional journalistic associations who have self-formulated codes of ethics and official journalistic standard designed to encourage responsible behaviour by their members.

Ojobor (2002) cited in Obayi and Onyebuchi (2021) summarised the principles of the social responsibility theory thus:

- i. The media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to the society
- ii. Through professional standards of truth, accuracy objectivity and balance, these obligations can be met
- iii. That media should regulate itself within the framework of law and established institutions to be able to carry out its responsibilities
- iv. That whatever might lead to crime, violence, civil disorder or offence to minority groups should be avoided by the media
- v. The media should reflect its society’s plurality, giving access to various points of view and grant all the right to reply
- vi. Based on the principles (a) the society has the right to expect high standards of performance from the media. Interventions can only be justified to secure public good
- vii. Accountability of media professionals should be to the society employers and the market.

The relevance of this theory to the study under investigation is hinged on the fact that it emphasizes the need for the media practitioners to be ethical in the discharge of their duties. Journalists under all circumstances, ought to accept and fulfil certain obligations to society which the media owe the society at large. These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high standards of information, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance.

### **Methodology**

The study employed the survey research design. Ohaja (2015), Obayi aver that survey is a study of the characteristics of a sample through questioning, which enables a researcher to make generalisations concerning his population of interest. This method was chosen in order to facilitate the production of an accurate and identifiable picture of the chosen population to be sampled. Hence, survey is considered ideal for the study because it was used to elicit the opinions of the respondents on the topic under investigation. Population for this study consists of 120 registered and practising journalists. According to NUJ factsheet, the number of registered journalists in Bayelsa State is 120. Therefore, the population of this study was 120 journalists in Bayelsa State. The census principle was adopted where the researcher sampled all the elements in the population. Obayi, Anorue, Onyebuchi, Umeokeke and Etumnu.(2020) used this method in their study that has to do with small number of journalists. Damico (2016) observes that when a population is small and well defined, the whole population can be studied. Hence, since the population of the study is small, the entire population was adopted as the sample size. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was drafted in a closed-ended format containing 14 items. Questions like yes” “no” “can’t say; and Likert scale questions such as “very high” “high” “moderate” “low” “strongly agree”, agree, “disagree”

and “strongly disagree” were framed. The four-point Likert scale was utilised in this study. The simple percentages and mean analysis were used to analyse the data.

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

Data collected from the field through questionnaire as an instrument was presented in tables using numbers and mean analysis. The researcher distributed 120 copies of the questionnaire. The total number of instruments distributed were retrieved and found valid. This means that the return response rate was 100%.

**To what extent do journalists in Bayelsa State accept gratification from their news sources?**

**Table 1: Respondents’ response to I subscribe to the acceptance of gratification from news sources as a result of the working environment**

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	120	100
No	0	0
Can’t say	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, (2023)*

The analysis reveals that 100% of the respondents agreed that they accept gratification from news sources as a result of the working environment. This result shows that journalists in Bayelsa State accept gratification from their news sources.

**Table 2: Respondents’ response on the extent they accept gratification from news sources**

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	15	13
High	23	19
Moderate	34	28
Low	48	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, (2023)*

The analysis reveals that 40% of the respondents said the extent to which they accept gratification from news sources is low. This implies that the extent journalists in Bayelsa State accept gratification from their news sources is low.

**Table 3: Responses on the perception of the journalist in Bayelsa State on the issue of gratification syndrome and news objectivity**

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Gratification can alter news objectivity and balance	62	48	4	6	<b>3.4</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
Gratification can distort the truth in news report	70	46	3	1	<b>3.5</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
It makes the content of the news story questionable	47	69	4	0	<b>3.4</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
It gives room for doubt over professional integrity of journalism	75	45	-	-	<b>3.6</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
<b>Average Mean</b>					<b>3.5</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

*Source: Field survey, 2023*

*Decision rule: Given that the benchmark of a 4-point Likert scale for decision is 2.5, it means that if the calculated mean is 2.5-4.0, then the item in question is accepted. However, if the calculated mean is 1-2.4, then the item in question is rejected.*

From the analysis of data, result revealed that at an average mean of 3.5 (N=120): gratification can alter news objectivity and balance; gratification can distort the truth in news report; it makes the content of the news story questionable; and it gives room for doubt over professional integrity of journalism.

**Table 4: Responses of the respondents on the influence of gratification syndrome on news objectivity among the journalists**

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Objectivity in news suffers in the light of gratification	56	48	11	5	3.3	Accepted
Truth becomes a scarce commodity as a result of gratification	43	60	7	10	3.1	Accepted
The reporters' personal interest would be on the expected money/gift from then news source	33	55	20	12	2.9	Accepted
Professionalism and code of ethics in journalism dies as a result of gratification	63	52	4	1	3.5	Accepted
<b>Average Mean</b>					<b>3.2</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

*Source: Field survey, (2023)*

*Decision rule: Given that the benchmark of a 4-point Likert scale for decision is 2.5, it means that if the calculated mean is 2.5-4.0, then the item in question is accepted. However, if the calculated mean is 1-2.4, then the item in question is rejected.*

The analysis of data on the influence of gratification syndrome on news objectivity among the journalists revealed that at an average mean of 3.2 (N=120): objectivity in news suffers in the light of gratification; truth becomes a scarce commodity as a result of gratification; the reporters' personal interest would be on the expected money/gift from then news source; and professionalism and code of ethics in journalism dies as a result of gratification.

**Table 5: Responses of the respondents on the factors responsible for accepting gratification by journalists in Bayelsa State**

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Harsh and unfriendly economy condition	50	70	0	0	3.4	Accepted
Poor remuneration	91	29	0	0	3.8	Accepted
Lack of adequate training and retraining of journalists	57	60	3	0	3.5	Accepted
Lack of journalistic ethical precepts	63	52	4	1	3.5	Accepted
<b>Average Mean</b>					<b>3.6</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

*Source: Field survey, (2023)*

*Decision rule: Given that the benchmark of a 4-point Likert scale for decision is 2.5, it means that if the calculated mean is 2.5-4.0, then the item in question is accepted. However, if the calculated mean is 1-2.4, then the item in question is rejected.*

From the analysis of data, result revealed that at an average mean of 3.6 (N=120), the factors responsible for accepting gratification by journalists in Bayelsa State include: harsh and unfriendly economy condition; poor remuneration; lack of adequate training and retraining of journalists; and lack of journalistic ethical precepts.

### Discussion of Findings

Result of the findings on the extent journalists in Bayelsa State accept gratification from their news sources indicated that all the journalists admitted to accepting gratification from news sources as a result of the working environment, but the extent to which they accept gratification from news sources is low at 40%. This finding is in consonance with the result of Aderogba (2013) which found out that the media was largely corrupt as over 75 % of the journalists engage in corrupt practices with impunity. Onyebadi and Alajmi (2014) showed that the act of receiving and sometimes asking for gratification appears to be ingrained in the practice of journalism in Kuwait which was attested to by the journalists in Kuwait to accepting gratification. Dirbaba (2010) further corroborated with this finding which established that bribery, including gifts of plots of land as well as money, is widespread among journalists in Ethiopia and is spreading to supervisors and assignment editors, including those in the upper leadership. Murtala (2018) further

found out that brown envelope collection in Nigeria is always on the increase and has since found a permanent place to stay.

Findings on the perception of the journalist in Bayelsa State on the issue of gratification syndrome and news objectivity revealed that an average mean of 3.5 (N=120): gratification can alter news objectivity and balance; gratification can distort the truth in news report; it makes the content of the news story questionable; and it gives room for doubt over professional integrity of journalism. This shows that the journalists perceive the acceptance of gratification among journalists as a bad practice that can affect news objectivity and jeopardize the integrity of professional journalism. This result is in tandem with that of Aderogba (2013) which revealed that 64 % of those sampled believed that acceptance of any form of gratifications was unethical. In another supporting result, Okoro and Chinweobo-Onuoha (2013) shared a similar view which noted that the ignoble practice of gratification influences journalism practice negatively as some important issues are downplayed while unimportant ones are exaggerated in a bid to satisfy the givers of these brown envelopes. In a contrary result, Nwabueze (2010) revealed that most of the journalists see nothing wrong with the acceptance of brown envelopes. This findings underscores the social responsibility theory whose tenet emphasizes the press being socially responsible to society while maintaining the ethical precept of balance, fairness and objectivity in reporting. The further entail that a journalist that upholds this theory in high esteem and values the tenets of the profession with dignity would not fancy the act of gratification syndrome because the interest of the media audience and the society supersedes his/her own personal interest bringing to the fore that he/she has a responsibility of doing what is right.

Result of the analysis on the influence of gratification syndrome on news objectivity among journalists in Bayelsa State revealed that at an average mean of 3.2 (N=120): objectivity in news suffers in the light of gratification; truth becomes a scarce commodity as a result of gratification; the reporters' personal interest would be on the expected money/gift from then news source; and professionalism and code of ethics in journalism dies as a result of gratification. This means that gratification syndrome has a negative influence on news objectivity as objectivity suffers in the light of gratification, truth becomes a scarce commodity, and professionalism and code of ethics in journalism dies. This findings is in agreement with the result of Nkwam-Uwaoma et. al. (2020) which found out that demanding and receiving of gratification affect journalists' performance. Acceptance of gratification has the propensity to influence the sense of news judgment on journalists as well as affect the profession negatively to a large extent. Also, corroborating with this result, Apuke (2016) revealed that brown envelope affects the social responsibility as well as objectivity and balance in journalism practice/reporting. Murtala (2018) aligned with the previous findings which revealed that brown envelope collection is militating against objectivity, balance and fairness, accuracy, and credible reporting, which necessitates condemnations from various scholars.

Result revealed that at an average mean of 3.6 (N=120), the factors responsible for accepting gratification by journalists in Bayelsa State include: harsh and unfriendly economy condition; poor remuneration; lack of adequate training and retraining of journalists; and lack of journalistic ethical precepts. This result supports the findings of Murtala (2018) which established that the dominant reason for accepting brown envelope by many journalists in Nigeria has to do with poor salary. Onyebadi and Alajmi (2014) he averred that, it would appear that this problem is the product of a combination of factors that include the inadequacy of media ethics training for reporters, hiring part-time or untrained reporters by media houses and the nonchalant attitude of the owners of media houses toward laying down ethical guidelines for their staff and disciplining reporters who accept such gifts. Arowolo (2013) similarly found out that a lot of factors have contributed to brown envelope also known locally as 'egunje' by journalists in Nigeria. Such factors include level of education of journalists; meagre salaries received by journalists; and the view that it is appreciation and/or transportation from news sources.

## **Conclusion**

The impact of gratification syndrome is that there is a shift in journalism from being a "Fourth estate of the realm" to a publicity seeking outlet available to the highest bidder; integrity, objectivity and balance is weakened as a result and news is commercialized. Having found out that acceptance of gratification by journalists negatively influences news objectivity, fairness, balance, accuracy and truth as the journalist involved in the practice may not narrate his/her report in details of what the society needs to know as a result of being gratified, thereby hiding some salient truths from the media audience. The study concludes that gratification is a corrupt practice and an unprofessional conduct that alters the true reflection of professional and credible journalism embedded in ethicality.



## Recommendations

The following recommendations were put forward on the strength of the findings of the study:

1. Given that the extent to which journalists in Bayelsa State accept gratification from news sources is low, the study recommends that journalists should observe the tenets of social responsibility theory as a foundation for their journalistic practice and adequate enforcement of journalistic ethics among journalists should be embraced.
2. Since the journalists perceive the acceptance of gratification among journalists as a bad practice that can affect news objectivity and jeopardize the integrity of professional journalism, the study recommends the discouragement and discontinuation of the act among journalists in order to keep to journalistic prestige and integrity.
3. Having found out that gratification syndrome has a negative influence on news objectivity as objectivity suffers in the light of gratification, truth becomes a scarce commodity, and professionalism and code of ethics in journalism dies, adequate training and retraining of journalists so as to help cushion the practice to the barest for an effective and efficient operation and committed service to the society is recommended.
4. Given that harsh and unfriendly economy condition; poor remuneration; lack of adequate training and retraining of journalists; and lack of journalistic ethical precepts are the factors responsible for accepting gratification by journalists in Bayelsa State, the paper recommends that journalists should be well remunerated.

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