



Media Ethics and Professional Standards in Broadcasting in the Digital Era

Florence Nuhu

Department of Mass Communication, Taraba State University, Jalingo

Corresponding email: nuhuflorence@gmail.com

Abstract

Broadcasting remains important for informing citizens, shaping public debate and supporting democratic accountability. Digital convergence, however, has changed how broadcast journalism is produced, distributed and assessed. This theoretical review examines how established ethical principles and professional standards are challenged by social media, misinformation, algorithmic distribution, live broadcasting and artificial intelligence (AI). It draws on a purposively selected body of scholarly publications, professional codes, regulatory instruments and institutional reports, analysed through qualitative document analysis and thematic synthesis. Five connected areas guide the discussion: accuracy, verification and trust; impartiality, framing and gatekeeping; editorial judgement in time-sensitive broadcasting; misinformation, algorithms and AI; and regulation, accountability and press freedom. The literature indicates broad agreement on accuracy, fairness, independence, public interest and harm minimisation, but less consistency in how these principles are applied across hybrid broadcast-digital environments. Social Responsibility Theory provides the principal interpretive framework, complemented by deontological, virtue-ethical and care-ethical perspectives. The review argues that the main contemporary difficulty is not the absence of ethical principles but the challenge of applying them consistently amid rapid circulation, automated systems and competing institutional pressures. It concludes that ethical broadcasting requires regularly reviewed professional codes, robust verification and correction procedures, transparent and proportionate accountability, meaningful human oversight of AI-assisted editorial processes, and safeguards for editorial independence and freedom of expression.

Keywords: broadcasting ethics, professional standards, digital media, misinformation, artificial intelligence,

Introduction

Broadcast journalism occupies a distinctive position in democratic communication because it combines wide public reach with the capacity to deliver information rapidly. Its ethical legitimacy therefore depends on accuracy, fairness, independence, accountability and respect for human dignity. The Nigeria Union of Journalists' Code of Ethics identifies truth, accuracy and fairness as central professional obligations (Nigeria Union of Journalists [NUJ], n.d.), while Ofcom's Broadcasting Code requires due accuracy and due impartiality in broadcast news (Ofcom, 2025). These standards reflect the broader normative view that press freedom carries responsibilities to citizens (Christians et al., 2009; Siebert et al., 1963).

The conditions under which these principles are applied have, however, changed substantially. Broadcast organisations increasingly operate across television, radio, websites, social-media accounts and streaming services, making news production and circulation a hybrid process. Social media has become embedded in journalistic sourcing, dissemination and audience engagement, but research also identifies dilemmas involving verification, privacy, attribution, professional boundaries and the credibility of user-generated material (Humayun & Ferrucci, 2022; Osun & Adeleye, 2025). The ethical problem is therefore not simply whether journalists



know established standards, but whether those standards can be applied consistently when information moves rapidly across interconnected platforms.

Artificial intelligence further complicates this environment. Studies indicate that AI is being integrated into information gathering, verification, writing, editing, personalisation and distribution, while raising questions about transparency, accountability, bias, privacy and human oversight (Dierickx et al., 2024; Gutiérrez-Caneda et al., 2024; Porlezza & Schapals, 2024). A systematic review of 127 studies also identifies changes in journalistic practices, newsroom roles and news narratives associated with AI adoption (Sonni et al., 2024). These developments mean that professional responsibility must address not only the journalist's final editorial decision but also the tools and automated processes that can shape published content.

The Nigerian context makes these developments particularly important. Broadcasting is regulated through the Nigeria Broadcasting Code, while professional expectations are also articulated by the NUJ and other industry institutions (National Broadcasting Commission [NBC], 2020; NUJ, n.d.). Research on Nigerian journalism identifies ethical concerns around verification, privacy, balance and transparency in social-media use (Osun & Adeleye, 2025). The coexistence of broadcast regulation and expanding digital circulation raises a practical question: how can professional accountability be strengthened without imposing vague or disproportionate constraints on legitimate journalism?

The literature indicates a relatively stable normative core of accuracy, fairness, independence, accountability and public interest, but it also shows that these values are increasingly mediated by social platforms, algorithms and AI. Paik (2025), for example, argues that algorithmic systems can introduce decontextualisation and redistribute editorial power between journalists and technological systems, while AI research highlights unresolved questions about transparency, bias and responsibility (Dierickx et al., 2024; Porlezza & Schapals, 2024). What remains insufficiently synthesised is how these pressures interact in the hybrid broadcast-digital environment rather than appearing as isolated ethical problems. This review therefore treats the contemporary problem as a gap between the normative clarity of professional principles and the operational complexity of applying them across live broadcasting, social-media circulation, algorithmic visibility and AI-assisted production.

Within this environment, the continuous news cycle and multi-platform distribution can create a tension between speed and verification. Information can be published or broadcast almost instantaneously and then recirculated by audiences before newsrooms have fully verified, contextualised or corrected it (Humayun & Ferrucci, 2022). This pressure is intensified when broadcasters compete with unverified user-generated content for attention. Recent evidence from Nigeria similarly associates digital journalism with misinformation, pressure to break news and weaknesses in professional practice, suggesting that the ethical problem is partly organisational as well as technological.

The same tension affects impartiality, framing and gatekeeping. Platform personalisation and algorithmic ranking may shape which stories receive visibility, while journalists retain responsibility for selection, contextualisation and presentation. Paik (2025) argues that algorithmic systems can produce decontextualisation and alter editorial power relations, implying that gatekeeping is increasingly distributed rather than exclusively human. AI-assisted production extends this problem because errors or biases may originate within automated systems even though



the media organisation remains responsible for the published output (Dierickx et al., 2024; Gutiérrez-Caneda et al., 2024).

Editorial decisions in time-sensitive broadcasting also require attention to the protection of individuals from avoidable harm. During breaking news, disasters, conflicts, elections or sensitive interviews, decisions about verification, privacy, dignity and context may need to be made quickly. Professional codes remain essential, but their application depends on sound judgement and practical newsroom procedures. This issue is relevant to the review because digital platforms can recirculate broadcast material rapidly, making errors or harmful disclosures difficult to contain once published (Humayun & Ferrucci, 2022; Ofcom, 2025).

Regulation and enforcement present a related challenge. The existence of detailed codes does not automatically produce consistent ethical practice because regulatory systems differ in how they balance oversight, professional accountability and press freedom. In Nigeria, the interaction between professional standards, regulatory discretion and editorial independence makes proportionality and transparency especially important (NBC, 2020). This theoretical review therefore examines the core ethical principles governing broadcasting in the digital era, synthesises literature on verification, impartiality, gatekeeping, time-sensitive broadcasting, misinformation, social media, algorithms and AI, considers selected regulatory frameworks, and interprets these issues through Social Responsibility Theory and complementary ethical perspectives.

Methodology

This theoretical review used qualitative document analysis to synthesise scholarly arguments, professional codes, regulatory provisions and institutional reports rather than collect primary survey or interview data. Document analysis is suitable for examining patterns and meanings across documentary sources (Bowen, 2009). A purposive corpus of 24 documents was selected, comprising peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, professional and regulatory documents, and institutional reports. The main publication window was 2019–2026, with seminal works retained where necessary to explain the theoretical foundations of media ethics. Sources were included when they addressed journalism, broadcasting, ethics, regulation, accountability or relevant digital-news practices; contained substantive ethical or professional discussion; and were published by identifiable scholarly, professional, regulatory or institutional sources. Promotional, duplicated or insufficiently identifiable material was excluded.

Targeted searches of scholarly indexes, publisher websites and institutional sources used combinations of terms such as ‘media ethics’, ‘broadcasting ethics’, ‘social media and journalism’, ‘misinformation’, ‘algorithmic journalism’, ‘artificial intelligence and journalism’, ‘Nigeria Broadcasting Code’ and ‘press freedom’. Reference lists of relevant publications were also checked to identify foundational works and authoritative standards. Analysis proceeded through screening, extraction of ethics-related passages, thematic coding and cross-source synthesis. Provisional codes covered accuracy and verification, impartiality, framing and gatekeeping, harm and privacy, misinformation, social media, algorithms, AI, regulation, accountability, independence and public interest. These codes were synthesised into five themes: accuracy, verification and trust; impartiality, framing and gatekeeping; editorial judgement in time-sensitive broadcasting; misinformation, algorithms and AI; and regulation, accountability and press freedom.

Trustworthiness was supported by comparing scholarly arguments with professional codes and regulatory texts where appropriate. The review is limited by its purposive rather than



exhaustive corpus and the interpretive nature of thematic analysis; it should therefore be read as a critical theoretical review, not as a systematic review claiming exhaustive coverage.

Theoretical Framework: Social Responsibility Theory

Social Responsibility Theory constitutes the principal theoretical framework for this review. The theory emerged from the normative tradition of media theory and is based on the proposition that freedom of the press is accompanied by responsibilities to society. Siebert et al. (1963) associated this perspective with the expectation that media organisations should provide truthful, diverse and socially responsible communication while maintaining meaningful freedom from direct governmental control. Christians et al. (2009) subsequently expanded normative thinking about journalism by emphasising the monitorial, facilitative, radical and collaborative roles that journalism can perform in democratic societies.

The theory is particularly appropriate for this review because the central concern is the relationship among editorial freedom, public interest and accountability. Broadcasting possesses considerable capacity to influence public understanding because of its broad reach and immediacy. Consequently, broadcasters have responsibilities concerning accuracy, fairness, pluralism, harm minimisation and public trust. From this perspective, freedom of expression cannot be understood as freedom from all professional or social obligations; rather, responsible freedom requires broadcasters to exercise their independence in ways that serve legitimate public interests.

The theory also provides a useful basis for examining regulation. Social responsibility recognises that some form of accountability may be necessary where media practices have significant consequences for society. However, accountability should not automatically be equated with increased state control. Regulation that is vague, disproportionate or inconsistently enforced may undermine the same public-interest values it seeks to protect. The theoretical challenge is therefore to identify a balance between sufficient accountability and the editorial independence necessary for responsible journalism. Digital convergence makes this theoretical relationship more complex. Traditional broadcasting operated within relatively identifiable editorial structures, whereas contemporary broadcast content can move through websites, social-media platforms, streaming services, recommendation systems and AI-supported production environments. Content may also be clipped, reposted, altered or algorithmically prioritised after its initial broadcast. Social Responsibility Theory therefore needs to be applied across the entire information life cycle, from sourcing and verification to production, transmission, digital distribution, correction and audience engagement.

The theory consequently provides a framework for interpreting the central finding of this review: the fundamental values of broadcasting ethics remain relevant, but their application has become more difficult in a technologically interconnected environment. Social responsibility in the digital era requires broadcasters to remain accountable not only for editorial decisions but also for the systems and practices through which those decisions are translated into public communication.

Thematic Analysis and Discussion

Convergence Between Ethical Principles and Professional Standards

The review establishes substantial convergence between ethical theory and professional broadcasting standards. Accuracy, fairness, impartiality, accountability and public interest recur across the NUJ Code, Ofcom's Broadcasting Code and the normative literature (NUJ, n.d.; Ofcom, 2025). Contemporary research supports this continuity while showing that digital technologies



change the conditions under which the principles are applied. Humayun and Ferrucci (2022), for example, demonstrate that social media has become integrated into journalistic practice, creating both sourcing opportunities and ethical dilemmas. Osun and Adeleye (2025) likewise identify verification, privacy, unbalanced information and transparency as recurring ethical difficulties associated with social-media use among journalists. The agreement across these sources suggests that digitalisation has not displaced traditional ethical principles; rather, it has widened the range of situations in which they must be operationalised.

From the perspective of Social Responsibility Theory, this convergence confirms that editorial freedom and social obligation are interconnected. Broadcasting organisations exercise substantial influence over public communication and therefore have responsibilities to audiences beyond commercial or institutional interests. Accuracy, fairness and accountability are consequently not optional additions to professional freedom; they are conditions through which that freedom acquires social legitimacy. At the same time, the literature complicates any assumption that the existence of codes is sufficient. The Nigerian evidence on digital journalism points to persistent pressures associated with breaking news, misinformation and professional capacity, indicating that formal norms may coexist with organisational incentives that make compliance difficult. The important issue is therefore not whether ethical standards exist, but whether newsroom structures make their consistent application possible.

This distinction between formal responsibility and effective responsibility is central to the review. Professional codes establish expectations, but research on AI and algorithmic journalism indicates that responsibility is increasingly distributed across journalists, editors, platforms, data and automated systems (Paik, 2025; Dierickx et al., 2024; Porlezza & Schapals, 2024). There is consequently a gap between a traditional model in which an identifiable journalist is the principal gatekeeper and a hybrid model in which technological systems influence selection, ranking and transformation. Social Responsibility Theory remains relevant to both models, but its application must extend to the organisational and technological conditions through which editorial decisions reach the public.

The Persistent Gap Between Ethical Principles and Practice

The review identifies a persistent gap between formal ethical principles and their practical application. Codes may clearly establish expectations concerning accuracy, impartiality, privacy and harm minimisation, yet newsroom pressures, limited verification time, competitive attention markets and technological complexity can make consistent compliance difficult. Research on social-media journalism demonstrates that the speed and openness of digital platforms create verification and privacy dilemmas, while research on AI identifies additional concerns about transparency, bias and accountability (Humayun & Ferrucci, 2022; Gutiérrez-Caneda et al., 2024). The literature therefore supports a more critical interpretation: unethical outcomes cannot always be attributed to individual journalists alone because institutional routines and technological infrastructures shape the choices available to them.

This finding has an important theoretical implication. If Social Responsibility Theory concerns the responsible exercise of media freedom, responsibility must include the organisational conditions that make ethical practice possible. Training, editorial leadership, verification systems, correction procedures and institutional accountability are therefore mechanisms through which social responsibility is operationalised. This interpretation is consistent with research that treats AI ethics as a matter of newsroom governance rather than merely individual technical competence



(Porlezza & Schapals, 2024). The implication is that ethical codes should be assessed not only for the principles they state but also for the procedures, resources and accountability mechanisms that support implementation.

The complementary ethical perspectives reinforce this interpretation. Deontological ethics explains why professional duties remain important, but virtue ethics demonstrates why practitioners require sound judgement when rules do not provide an immediate answer. Care ethics further reminds broadcasters that editorial decisions have consequences for real people, particularly vulnerable individuals. The combined literature therefore suggests that ethical broadcasting requires both institutional safeguards and professional moral agency. This is a stronger position than either a purely rules-based approach or an assumption that individual goodwill can compensate for weak newsroom systems.

Editorial Judgement in Time-Sensitive Broadcasting

Time-sensitive broadcasting illustrates why ethical practice cannot rely on written rules alone. Breaking news, disasters, conflicts, elections and sensitive interviews may require rapid decisions about what can responsibly be transmitted, what needs further verification and what could cause avoidable harm. Professional standards on accuracy, privacy and dignity remain essential, but context-sensitive judgement is needed when circumstances cannot be fully anticipated. Social Responsibility Theory offers a public-interest orientation for such decisions, while deontological ethics foregrounds professional duties and virtue and care ethics draw attention to practical judgement and the consequences for affected people (Christians et al., 2009; Plaisance, 2014; Ward, 2019). These perspectives are interpretive lenses applied in this review, rather than claims that one source alone establishes a single prescribed response. Research on social media in journalism also documents the integration of platforms into newswork and the resulting challenges for sourcing and dissemination (Humayun & Ferrucci, 2022). The ethical priority is therefore not speed alone, but speed balanced with verification, context and harm minimisation.

Professional codes are more effective when supported by practical newsroom systems. Verification procedures, editorial escalation, appropriate delay arrangements and prompt correction processes can help practitioners apply ethical principles under pressure. Research on AI-assisted journalism similarly highlights the need for human oversight because automated systems may introduce errors, bias or misleading outputs (Dierickx et al., 2024; Gutiérrez-Caneda et al., 2024). Ethical preparedness should therefore be treated as part of newsroom practice and governance, not merely as an individual virtue.

Algorithms and AI Extend the Meaning of Gatekeeping

The review further demonstrates that digital technology has transformed the traditional understanding of gatekeeping. Journalists and editors continue to exercise editorial judgement, but algorithms and AI-supported systems increasingly participate in the selection, ranking, transformation and distribution of information. Paik (2025) shows that algorithmic systems can produce decontextualisation and alter editorial power relations, while Dierickx et al. (2024) emphasise the importance of data quality for accuracy, fairness and transparency in AI-driven journalism. The evidence therefore supports a shift from a purely human gatekeeping model toward a more distributed process in which technological systems can influence what becomes visible to audiences.



Recent AI scholarship further complicates this development. Gutiérrez-Caneda et al. (2024) identify transparency, privacy, bias, hallucination and responsibility as major newsroom concerns, while Porlezza and Schapals (2024) argue that AI ethics in journalism requires attention to accountability and the institutional conditions surrounding AI adoption. These findings converge on the need for identifiable human responsibility even when technological systems contribute to production. At the same time, they reveal a tension: increasing automation can improve speed and capacity, but opacity can make it harder to explain why particular content was generated, selected or prioritised.

This development expands the application of Social Responsibility Theory. If media organisations are socially responsible for the information they provide to the public, that responsibility cannot end when content leaves the newsroom. Organisations must also consider the technological systems through which their content is distributed and made visible. The implication is not that journalists should be held responsible for every platform decision, but that organisations should understand material dependencies on automated systems and establish governance arrangements for their use.

The complementary ethical perspectives provide further insight. Deontological ethics requires identifiable responsibility for editorial decisions; virtue ethics emphasises professional judgement in determining when automated outputs should be accepted, rejected or checked; and care ethics highlights the potential human consequences of biased, misleading or decontextualised automated outputs. This layered interpretation is consistent with the literature's emphasis on transparency and human oversight. It also exposes a gap in conventional professional standards: rules written for human editorial decisions may not adequately specify how journalists should interrogate automated systems or document their use.

The theoretical implication is therefore significant: responsible gatekeeping in the digital era involves not only deciding what to publish, but also understanding how technological systems influence what audiences encounter. The literature suggests that ethical gatekeeping increasingly requires data awareness, algorithmic literacy, disclosure and human review. This extends rather than abandons the gatekeeping concept by recognising that editorial power is now shared across human and technological actors.

Misinformation and the Transformation of Verification

The findings show that misinformation has intensified the traditional ethical obligation of verification. Social media allows information to circulate rapidly before professional newsrooms have established its accuracy, while user-generated material may appear authoritative despite limited provenance. Research specifically reviewing verification of social-media content emphasises the need for robust techniques because platforms can facilitate false reports, rumours and manipulated material. Nigerian research similarly identifies misinformation and the pressure to break news as prominent ethical challenges in digital journalism. These studies converge on the view that verification is not an optional quality-control step but a central professional responsibility in digitally accelerated news environments.

From a Social Responsibility perspective, verification represents a fundamental responsibility to audiences because inaccurate information can undermine public trust and informed participation in democratic communication. However, the literature also indicates that correction is not a simple solution. When false claims are repeated prominently in the process of debunking them, their visibility may increase; consequently, responsible verification requires



careful choices about attribution, prominence and context. The challenge is therefore to correct misinformation without reproducing its communicative advantages.

The implication is that responsible broadcasting requires verification before amplification wherever practicable, alongside clear attribution, corroboration and transparent correction. This extends the traditional conception of journalistic accuracy from a concern with factual correctness to a concern with the full process through which information acquires credibility and public visibility. The literature consequently supports a verification culture in which speed is balanced against evidential confidence and uncertainty is communicated rather than concealed.

Regulation, Press Freedom and Ethical Accountability

The analysis indicates that regulation has a legitimate role in protecting audiences and maintaining professional standards, but regulatory power must itself be subject to ethical accountability. Clear rules, transparent procedures, proportionate sanctions and opportunities for review are important because vague or inconsistently applied provisions may create uncertainty for journalists and media organisations. The Nigerian Broadcasting Code provides a formal regulatory framework, while professional codes provide additional standards for journalistic conduct (NBC, 2020; NUJ, n.d.). The existence of both forms of governance suggests that ethical accountability is best understood as a combination of external oversight and internal professional responsibility rather than as a choice between regulation and self-regulation.

Social Responsibility Theory helps explain this tension. The theory supports accountability where media practices affect the public interest, but it also recognises the importance of meaningful editorial freedom. Regulation that becomes a mechanism for suppressing legitimate criticism would conflict with the broader normative purpose of responsible media. Conversely, weak accountability can permit practices that undermine accuracy, dignity and public trust. The ethical task is therefore to distinguish legitimate public-interest regulation from interventions that unnecessarily constrain journalistic independence.

The Nigerian context illustrates this tension particularly clearly because professional standards and regulatory enforcement operate within a politically sensitive environment. The review therefore supports a model in which regulatory intervention is guided by clear standards, transparent procedures and proportionality, while media organisations retain responsibility for developing internal mechanisms that make ethical compliance practical. This position also reflects the broader literature's recognition that ethical challenges in digital journalism arise from the interaction of professional pressures, technology and institutional arrangements rather than from isolated individual misconduct.

Deontological ethics contributes the principle that regulatory institutions should operate according to fair and transparent procedures. Virtue ethics draws attention to institutional integrity and responsible exercise of regulatory power, while care ethics highlights the consequences that regulatory decisions may have for journalists, audiences and affected communities. These perspectives broaden the analysis by showing that ethical accountability applies not only to broadcasters but also to institutions exercising authority over broadcasting. The broader implication is that regulation and professional self-regulation should not necessarily be treated as competing alternatives. Transparent regulatory oversight, professional accountability and editorial independence can operate as complementary mechanisms when appropriately designed. The critical issue is whether each mechanism contributes to predictable, proportionate and publicly



defensible standards. Where regulatory rules are clear and professional organisations maintain credible internal accountability, the two systems can reinforce rather than undermine one another.

The literature supports the continued relevance of Social Responsibility Theory while indicating that it must be interpreted in a hybrid media environment. The principle that media freedom carries responsibilities to society remains applicable, but social media, algorithms and AI introduce additional actors and processes into the production and circulation of news, making responsibility more distributed and more difficult to trace (Paik, 2025; Porlezza & Schapals, 2024). The reviewed scholarship suggests that ethical responsibility should be considered across sourcing, verification, production, transmission, platform distribution, algorithmic visibility, audience engagement and correction. This broader view is particularly important for AI because automated systems may influence content without replacing the responsibility of the media organisation that deploys them. Dierickx et al. (2024) emphasise data quality and trustworthy system design, while Gutiérrez-Caneda et al. (2024) discuss transparency and human supervision as responses to AI-related ethical risks. The complementary ethical perspectives further demonstrate that responsible broadcasting cannot be reduced to compliance with written rules. Deontological ethics establishes duties, virtue ethics highlights professional character and practical judgement, and care ethics emphasises vulnerability and human consequences. Their convergence with Social Responsibility Theory is significant because the contemporary ethical problem is simultaneously institutional, technological and interpersonal. The literature therefore supports an integrated model in which ethical codes establish boundaries, professional judgement resolves contextual uncertainty, organisational systems support implementation, and accountability mechanisms address failures.

The central theoretical conclusion is therefore that ethical broadcasting in the digital era is best understood as accountable judgement exercised within a public-interest framework. Professional codes remain necessary, but their effectiveness depends on ethical newsroom cultures, institutional capacity, technological awareness and safeguards for editorial independence. The critical contribution of the reviewed literature is to show that digital transformation has not made traditional ethics irrelevant; instead, it has exposed the need to extend established principles to the technological infrastructures and organisational practices through which contemporary broadcasting now operates.

Conclusion and Implications

This review demonstrates that the fundamental principles of broadcasting ethics have not become obsolete in the digital era. The review identified five interconnected ethical pressures confronting broadcasting in this environment. First, accelerated news cycles increase the tension between speed and verification. Second, social-media circulation and algorithmic distribution complicate impartiality, framing and gatekeeping by introducing additional actors into the process through which information becomes visible to audiences. Third, live broadcasting creates situations in which decisions concerning accuracy, privacy, dignity and potential harm must frequently be made under considerable time pressure. Fourth, misinformation and artificial intelligence challenge established approaches to verification, transparency and editorial accountability. Fifth, regulatory institutions must balance public-interest protection and professional accountability with editorial independence and freedom of expression.

The theoretical implication of these findings is that Social Responsibility Theory remains relevant but requires interpretation within the contemporary hybrid media environment. Its emphasis on public interest, accountability and responsible freedom provides a useful basis for



evaluating both professional practice and regulatory intervention. However, the findings also demonstrate that responsible broadcasting cannot be reduced to compliance with formal rules. Deontological ethics clarifies professional duties, virtue ethics highlights character and practical judgement, while care ethics draws attention to vulnerability and the human consequences of editorial decisions. Together, these perspectives support an understanding of broadcasting ethics as accountable judgement exercised within a public-interest framework.

The practical implication is that professional standards must be supported by institutional capacity. Ethical codes require periodic review as technologies and professional practices evolve, but revision alone is insufficient. Broadcasters also require effective verification procedures, appropriate protocols for high-risk live coverage, transparent correction mechanisms, continuous professional development and clearly identifiable human responsibility for AI-assisted editorial processes. Regulatory frameworks likewise require clarity, proportionality and transparent enforcement if accountability is to be strengthened without unnecessarily restricting legitimate journalism.

The review further reveals important areas for future research. Empirical studies are needed to examine how Nigerian broadcast newsrooms operationalise ethical standards relating to AI; how audiences interpret AI-assisted broadcast content; how algorithmic distribution influences perceptions of impartiality and credibility; and how regulatory interventions affect newsroom behaviour. Comparative research across African broadcasting systems could also determine whether the ethical tensions identified in this review are primarily national or reflect a broader transformation in digital broadcasting.

Ultimately, the ethical challenge facing broadcasting in the digital era is not the absence of professional values but the difficulty of sustaining those values across increasingly complex technological and institutional environments. The future of ethical broadcasting will therefore depend on the capacity of media organisations, journalists, regulators and professional bodies to adapt established principles to new forms of production and distribution while preserving public trust, editorial independence and accountability.

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AI Use Disclosure:

Generative AI was used to assist with language editing, restructuring and checking bibliographic details during revision. The author remains responsible for the arguments, source selection, interpretation and final accuracy of the manuscript.