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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ANALYSIS OF JOURNALISM STANDARDS IN CITIZEN JOURNALISM CONTENT: A CASE OF TANZANIA BLOGS

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Abstract

Tanzania saw the emergence of online platforms in the 2000s, leading to the proliferation of online media initiatives. Unfortunately, many of these initiatives often disregarded journalistic principles and ethics and disseminated distorted news. To protect the public from inappropriate content, the Content Committee of the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA-CC) oversees and regulates electronic media through “The Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations, 2022.” However, scientific research in Tanzania has yet to fully explore the adherence of online media, mainly blogs, to the ethics and principles of journalism. This study, with its three specific objectives, presents a novel approach by investigating the news values of citizen journalism about professional journalism standards, assessing citizen journalism content against the professional journalism code of ethics, and examining the language used in citizen journalism about professional journalistic standards. This study employs content analysis of 10 blogs and incorporates interviews with five respondents to gather insights on the experience of using blogs. The study, which is of significant importance to the field of journalism, employed a purposive sampling method to select blog accounts pertinent to news, along with five respondents possessing experience in applying blogs within journalism practices. This study employed content analysis and interviews to obtain information on news values and ethics in journalism. The results indicate that all 10 blogs comply with the principles and ethics of journalism. In terms of language, the blogs employ a combination of Swahili and English, particularly in advertisements. The findings indicate that bloggers have pursued journalism education and engaged academic editors to ensure compliance with the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations, 2022. The study concluded that blogs do not violate the values and ethics of citizen journalism; instead, they serve as a significant new media platform. These factors are crucial in addressing the long-standing rural development deficit, which demands our attention. The study recommends that journalism schools enhance education on new media to equip more young individuals with skills for self-employment in the news sector, stimulate development, and promote online media. The study is significant to media practitioners and decision-makers because it indicates that Tanzania’s

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upholding of journalistic standards promotes community discourse and serves as a vital platform for fostering rural development. Thus, they effectively address the void created by mainstream media since the inception of media use in Tanzania.

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Introduction:-

Citizen journalism emerged in the late 1990s, as individuals in developed and developing nations accessed Internet connectivity. Scholars such as Wall (2015, pp. 797-813) and Aboub (2015) considered the phenomenon of networking as an overarching concept encompassing both blogs and institutional practices. In Jamaica, for example, the television station's program, 'I Watch Report,' allowed viewers to send messages about various events or activities. Viewers did so within their location, personal websites, or social networks like Facebook and Twitter. In Jamaica, national news networks regularly solicit views from listeners and incorporate those views into their programs. Some researchers continue to debate that citizen journalism did not exist before the age of the internet, thus justifying that the phenomenon grew within the age of the internet (Barnes, 2017). This approach has attracted scholars who have debated the subject matter. The debate is ongoing. Allan (2013) argued that citizen journalism originated during the tsunami that occurred in Southeast Asia in December 2000. When citizens started taking pictures and videos to practice journalism on the scene, ordinary citizens started engaging themselves in journalistic activities using digital technologies. These events have become the basis for the evidence of existing citizen journalism. Numerous studies have demonstrated that citizen journalism facilitates the rapid dissemination of transit information worldwide. Journalists share similar concerns regarding preserving the traditional values and standards of quality journalism despite the challenges posed by the internet. Newspaper publishers and other media managers worry about how they can fit into the changing landscape and still prosper, and concerned journalists wonder, as well, how the traditional values and standards of good journalism can survive in the turbulent world of the internet. Allan and Thorsen (2009) stated that citizen journalism emerged shortly after technological advancements, including the latest media technologies, social networks, media-sharing platforms, and the growing number of smartphone users seeking information through social media rather than traditional media outlets. Nkomo and Benjamin (2018) posited that citizen journalism encompasses the journalistic endeavours of non-professionals. Citizens report the issues they face. Citizen journalism has empowered individuals to express their concerns about issues that require attention. A professional journalist's distinct responsibilities of researching, writing, and reporting on news stories remain a cornerstone of the professional journalism industry. Journalists may be assigned to cover general news topics or specialise in politics, celebrity news, or sports, with each role contributing to the diversity and depth of the news coverage. Consequently, considering the ongoing evolution of the digital age, citizen journalism may be perceived by some as a challenge to professional and traditional journalism. In conclusion, although anyone can become a citizen journalist, the role of an experienced journalist remains distinct and invaluable. The rise of affordable equipment and online media distribution accessibility frequently defines citizen journalism. However, it's the role of social media has significantly changed the manner in which news is interacted with, making it more immediate, personal, and interactive.

Citizen Journalism and Objectivity

A contentious discussion regarding the objectivity of professional journalism is also seen in the realm of new media. Wien's 2006 study indicates that journalistic objectivity should be centred on principles like 'truth' and 'reality', with the latter being inseparable from the former. According to Alter (2019), the traditional view of journalism is described as the "professional objective model," in which journalists are expected to deliver unbiased, neutral facts. Mainstream journalism is characterised by certain professional norms that involve specific news gathering and construction techniques. A typical journalist for a significant publication strives for impartiality, maintains a detached stance concerning their subject, obtains facts from established sources, and presents the information in specific formats (Hindman 1998:177). Other scholars, like Meyers (2020), argue that journalism should be free from objectivity. Ruiz-Rico (2020) noted that contemporary journalism emerged during the 19th century and was founded on the principles of truth and reality. In contrast to Enlightenment, Romanticism focuses on individual perspectives and the self as genuine realities. The emergence of postmodernism has resulted in a crisis regarding objective facts and truth, thereby contributing to the suggestion of moral and epistemological relativism, which raises questions about the validity of journalism. The current situation requires both attention and comprehension and underscores the need for a more sophisticated understanding of journalism. Miller's research supports the observation of citizen journalists' roles in the publication space, including advocacy, interpretation, and representation. As Miller noted,

the mapping of citizen journalism requires a vital interpretation of information to make it usable (Prado, Paola, (2017). The significance of an interpretation, whether intended for advocacy or for a community, is reduced because citizen journalists frequently rely on information disseminated by mainstream media, except in cases like those identified by Bolette (2013). Tereszkievicz (2006) suggested that live blogs' reliance on quotes from other media sources can be seen as a beneficial approach, as it enables readers to gain a more complete understanding of an event and consider multiple viewpoints on that event. Studies conducted by Barnes (2012) revealed that many professionals tend to be sceptical of citizen journalists, particularly when they have vested interests in the issues they report. This leads to professionals stressing the significance of objectivity in traditional journalism, a benchmark that they believe citizen journalists fail to meet. It was contended that only professionally trained journalists could comprehend the ethical guidelines for reporting (Barnes, 2012). According to Ross (2011), the history of citizen journalism is the entire history of journalism in its entirety. Yagodin (2014: 46) discussed the ability of countries to transcend national borders, citing the example of "offshore bloggers" in relation to authoritarian countries and societies. He noted that because of the constraints of an authoritarian system and the limitations on freedom of speech, "offshore bloggers" reside outside their homeland while still engaging in its virtual public sphere.

Citizen Journalism Credibility and Reliability

In communication research, a communicator's credibility has been suggested to influence the processing of the communicated content and the change in audience attitudes and beliefs (Karlsen & Aalberg, (2021). The credibility and reliability of the channel/medium of communication influence the selective involvement of the audience with the medium. Johnson et al. (2010) used an online poll to investigate how politically engaged Internet users in the United States view blogs' legitimacy. This study focuses on how blog credibility is detested in terms of the reasons for visiting blogs. According to Banning and Sweetser (2007), blogs were seen as more reliable by real blog users than conventional news sources and even more so than any other online news source, including online cable TV news, online periodicals, and online radio news. Because they are familiar with blogs' goals and their writing style and do not adhere to conventional news standards like impartiality, balance, and fairness (Johnson et al., 2010), seasoned Internet users assessed blogs as more credible. Additionally, Internet users see blogs as trustworthy due to their independence from corporate-controlled, mainstream media and the ability to openly express their opinions and publish in-depth, opinionated messages. Citizens have the freedom to send and receive much of their personal information. Citizen journalists publish content that does not adhere to news values and ethical standards, such as accuracy, objectivity, reliability, and credibility. This has been a significant challenge in the field of journalism (Manyika et al, 2011). In Tanzania, little has been documented about citizen journalism content that promotes professional journalism. Therefore, this study is geared towards understanding citizen journalism content from a professional journalism perspective. The research was guided by the following questions.

1. Does citizen journalism content consider news values according to professional journalism standards?
2. Does citizen journalism's content obey the professional journalism code of ethics?
3. Do citizen journalists adhere to professional language in their media outlets?

Theoretical Framework

The study used three theories: Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) to analyse blog usage, Gatekeeping Theory to examine news selection through journalistic principles and media ethics, and signaling theory to assess news credibility.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

The theory was first introduced by Gay et al. in 2001. Gay et al. (2001) suggested that computer-mediated communication involves the use of networked computer systems to facilitate human interaction. Computer-mediated communication theory explains how information can be transmitted through various channels, such as email, video conferencing, audio/video conferencing, instant messaging, bulletin board systems, listservs, internet relay chat, websites, blogs, and multi-user environments. Global development partners can use CMC to collaborate and address pressing employment concerns with significant personal impact. This theory is particularly relevant to this investigation because ordinary citizens rely heavily on technology. Internet access is available to every citizen, and devices such as computers, mobile phones, and tablets have made interactivity easier.

Using this technology, people can share any content recorded in a scene. According to CMC theory, citizens exhibit a strong affinity for electronic devices capable of storing large amounts of information that individuals rely heavily on. Due to technological advancements, numerous individuals can create and disseminate stories, often accompanied by video content and captions, which can be rapidly published online. The electronic devices in the citizens'

possession prevented any manipulation of the incident recorded on the scene. A significant number of citizens are now engaging in journalistic activities, resulting in the concept of citizen journalism. The researcher's framework is based on CMC theory, which they consider pertinent to this research as it has enabled human interaction through technology to influence media across different settings, as facilitated by computer-mediated communication. The CMC theory is the foundation of citizen journalism because its reliance on the internet and electronic technology is fundamental, mirroring the same dependency observed in citizen journalism.

Gatekeeping Theory

Lewin's gatekeeping theory was first developed in 1947 and was later applied to newspaper newsrooms by White in 1950. This application exposed a sequence of decision-making junctures in which many news articles are obstructed at "gates," with only a limited number of them being released for publication. Various individual, organisational and extramedial factors affect decisions on the value of published news or photographs. In her book "Gatekeeping," published in 1991, Pamela Shoemaker introduced Gatekeeping Theory, which suggests that gatekeepers, including editors, decide which content is published or left unpublished, with these choices influenced by established journalistic standards and media regulations. The theory enabled the researcher to examine blogs and news articles to assess their conformity to journalistic standards because the theoretical concepts were relevant to the consequences of news choices.

Signaling Theory

The signal theory was used to complement the computer-mediated theory of CMC. The theory was developed by Donath *et al.* (1999). The theory states about online presentation and how it facilitates the deception of online content. This is because the internet has facilitated online interactions for users. The Internet allows everyone to publish the content they desire. The theory further demonstrated that an animal with powerful horns can be mighty and strong to support itself compared with an animal that does not have strong horns. The researcher defined an animal with a strong horn as a professional journalist with intensive and extensive training in journalism standards that adhere to media ethics. Since such a journalist has undergone intensive and substantial training, he/she can support himself/herself in the profession by publishing content that complies with journalism standards. Those with no strong horns are citizen journalists who are not trained and thus cannot support themselves in publishing their content because their content does not adhere to journalism standards. The researcher used this theory because it was relevant to the study. The study used citizen journalists with no training, and this correlation was correlated with animals with no big defensive horns from the theory. Therefore, the study adopted the theory in its description.

Theoretical Literature

Modern technology is the promoter and enabler of citizen journalism, suggesting that it was the key to opening the door to this journalistic renaissance. The emergence of the Internet has facilitated the growth of citizen journalists, posing a threat to professional journalists' status as the "kings of news." The Internet provides a forum for the free flow of information and allows citizens to use simple new media tools to become sources of information to an endless audience (Fernando & Sham, 2008). The Internet has shifted the balance of power between those controlling the means to publish and those who believe their content is essential, allowing ordinary citizens to publish content of their interests (Bowman & Willis, 2005). A unique and significant characteristic of the Internet is that it provides tools to influence new audiences and to quickly spread important information. Due to modern technology, individuals can access relatively inexpensive communication devices, such as computers, cell phones, video equipment, digital cameras, and editing software. As a result, everyday citizens have the tools they need to quickly and successfully share information, from everyday life experiences to breaking news events (Johnson 2008). Mutsvairo and Columbus (2012) argued that citizen journalism is a robust phenomenon in Africa. The rise of digitally networked technologies, such as the internet and mobile phone, is reshaping reporting across the continent. Allan (2013) noted that citizen journalism is currently normalised in our information systems. Society scene videos as well as images are found to be newsworthy to the citizen, as videos and images are easily captured, uploaded, and shared across social networking sites around the globe (Cohen et al, 2017). The Internet as a part and parcel of new media. The internet has largely supported the inversion of online media that has referenced citizen journalism. We cannot go astray or rebuke the fact that the emergence of the Internet has caused a significant transformation in the atmosphere of journalism (Pavlik, 2001). People and citizens at large have a great opportunity to disseminate and manipulate information the way they feel. Citizens can currently create personal home pages and share information with the universe. The view that citizen journalism has been found difficult to define is accurate since the concept has been labelled differently (Barnes, 2018).

Professional Journalism

Professional journalists believe that the public must be given different types of information. Information is based on ethical principles. Professional journalist integrity is a cornerstone of journalist credibility. According to Brown and Feng (2011), editors should check for accuracy by making sure that all information is reliable and free of errors, that headlines are accurate, and that promotional materials such as images, videos, and graphics are accurate. The flourishing of user-generated content and blogging has stimulated a debate about journalistic expertise and where it can be found in the professional framework of journalism. It is challenged, and the idea of professionalism is under siege. According to the Media Council of Tanzania (2005), journalists are professionals who operate as trustees of the public and who stand accountable for their activities, society and communities. Journalists have their own ideals and moralities. They expected that the media, as a social institution, would promote these ideals and morals. The code of ethics for journalists expresses the purpose of guiding professional journalists to serve society as required. Contemporary journalism has become more commercial than when professionalism was valued earlier.

Code of Media Ethics

Brown et al. (2005) emphasised that ethical values are the core value of any professional journalism because professional ethics is put into priority ethical journalists. An ethical journalist will always have the power to publish the story content that has been edited by the editor and abide by ethical standards. The proper news story should be filtered like water to obtain a clean one for consumption. Therefore, journalists must filter stories and content at large to give audiences proper products that adhere to ethical standards. Online content has not been widely filtered because anyone can create content on blogs and social platforms. Every citizen now has access to this technology. Journalism is founded on different new values and not on credibility alone (Wee et al., 2009). This is because professional journalists are held accountable for their work. They traditionally have the responsibility to use moral reasoning when creating stories, adhere to ethical standards, and share truth when reporting. Brown (2005) noted on accuracy that the work of professional journalists is only published after it goes through the checks and balances process, where ordinary citizen journalists receive no training and editorial advice and have no expertise to safeguard such accuracy. Professional journalists must rely on specific codes because they are trained professionally in collecting and processing news and information for mass media use and should observe and defend these codes. Professional journalists must adhere to these media codes of ethics: truth, accuracy, fairness, independence, moral integrity, and privacy; avoid harassment; and avoid publishing sexual photos and videos (Brown et al., 2005). Ward (2009) observed that the foundation of modern journalism ethics is truth and objectivity. Journalism textbooks and associations have cited truth and objectivity in journalism. These books illustrate that truth and objectivity are fundamental principles of emerging professionalism. Truth and objectivity have long roots in journalism. The core of objectivity requires reporters to provide straightforward, unbiased information without bias.

Publications of news and images produced by citizen journalism are not new phenomena that have hit newsrooms and spread at an excellent pace to audiences. However, technology has enabled anyone with electronic equipment to organise the story in a scene and upload it with images. Stories and images have always been vague because they lack news values such as objectivity, conciseness, and balance. They view prejudice as prejudice against professional journalists who manipulate news, images, and video footage to align with journalism standards (Stuart, 2017). The mode of publication has been significantly reverted from the Code of Ethics.

Language

Language is a crucial element of journalism. It is said that the absence of language is equal to the death of journalism; that is, without language journalism, it cannot exist. However, citizen journalism uses language to convey messages and information to audiences. The language used has spread information quickly and can be easily captured in people's minds. The research conducted revealed that the language is not appropriate for professional journalists. The citizen journalism language is manipulated with no facts or editions and sometimes employs useless words that introduce ambiguities. Citizen journalism is becoming a prominent feature of the journalistic landscape, as video footage, mobile camera snapshots, and mobile and digital camera snapshots are commonly posted online through blogs and personal websites. These ordinary citizens make unique contributions and challenge mainstream media coverage. Internet technology has ushered in this, allowing amateurs to participate (Boon and Sinclair, 2009).

King news alerted by citizens in their news organisations since citizens are likely to be the first eyewitnesses on the scene. Citizen journalists are often linked to breaking news about significant events, including firsthand accounts from citizens who record audio and video and capture images and videos using their mobile phones. The collected data can be shared online via blogs, personal websites, and social networking sites. The term "citizen journalism"

refers to grassroots, open-source, participatory, and hyperlocal journalism (Allan, 2013). News statements can rapidly reach 20 million viewers on social media platforms facilitated by user-driven environments that foster connections and mutual understanding (Lewis and Fabos, 2016). The mid-2000s witnessed a significant change in the association between media institutions and audiences, as citizen journalism became a global phenomenon (Allan & Thorsen 2009). On the other hand, citizen journalism has been criticised by professional journalists because citizen journalists have not been oriented towards the standards and practices of professional journalism. The use of a language citizen's journalist is questionable. They categorised citizen journalism as low quality and inadequate language (Ellison et al., 2007).

Empirical Literature

Fraumann and Colavizza (2022) found that a significant proportion of individuals worldwide use social media to consume news. The study found that 77% of Nigerian participants used social media for news, whereas only 23% of Japanese participants reported similar usage. The research revealed that most global social media users, despite their distrust, continue to engage with these networks daily, highlighting the pervasiveness of the issue. Watson's (2024) research on social media, trust, and consumption revealed a fascinating trend. Although most adults use social networks to stay informed about news and current events, a 2018 study found that social media is the least trusted news source globally. However, this trust level varies significantly by country. In Europe, less than 35% of adults consider social networks trustworthy. Yet, over 50% of adults in Portugal, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Croatia still rely on social media for news, sparking curiosity about the factors influencing this variation. This example demonstrates how WordPress users are contributing to the digital landscape. In January 2022 alone, they produced a staggering 70 million new blog posts and 77 million new comments monthly, with over 409 million individuals viewing over 20 billion WordPress pages monthly (WordPress, 2022). This represents significant content volume. News sites also play a vital role in science communication, frequently referencing research outputs in their reporting (NAS, 2017).

Towner and Munoz (2011) argued that professional journalists only face fierce competition from rival TV stations or newspapers. Currently, citizen journalism poses a significant threat to professional journalism. Journalists no longer have the exclusive right to authority and the ability to disseminate information to the masses. This is because members of the public can determine what news and information they will consume. Dare et al. (2011) further explained that newsmaking is no longer exclusive to professional journalists and public relation personnel. In the last decade, traditional journalism has seriously competed for relevance. The study conducted by Blaagaard in 2013 built upon the research of Schudson and Anderson (2009), examining the notion of journalistic objectivity within the context of technological advancements that support citizen journalism. The interviews investigated students' perceptions of the strain caused by the changing dynamic between professional journalism and the public, shaped by citizen journalism's influence or user-generated content. Additionally, this study investigates how students respond to this paradigmatic shift. The findings indicate that citizen journalism has changed and morphed but has remained vital to modern civil society. Citizen journalism allows everybody to be heard and plays an active societal role. Onyango (2013) argued that technology has made citizen journalism more accessible to people worldwide. Citizens can report on different issues faster and quicker than traditional media, regardless of journalists' ethical standards.

Online content has become a key part of social, economic, and cultural life in many societies. With today's technology, blogs, chat rooms, message boards, wikis, Facebook, Twitter, and mobile phones, citizens have found new life, as the average person can capture news and distribute content globally. The use of mobile phones provides a low-cost option for people to set up news content and publish online via social network platforms, such as blogs. Kokenge (2010) argued that in 2007, with its coverage of Myanmar's governmental crackdown on protesting Buddhist monks, the BBC put citizen journalism to brilliant use in the midst of that repressive regime's attempt at a comprehensive media blackout. The broadcast giant compiled thousands of photos, text messages, and blog entries that escaped the blackout via the Internet and incorporated these messages and images into its news reports. These images and messages come not from professional journalists but from citizens living and working in Myanmar. However, this fact remains debated, and a conclusion has not yet been reached. Kokenge (2010) asserted that citizen journalism exists to serve the public sphere as traditional newspapers decline and an increasing number of individuals shift their media consumption to the Internet. Media professionals will increasingly encounter this novel type of citizen-generated content.

Research Methods:-

The researcher employed a descriptive research design grounded in qualitative methodology, as Kothari and Garg (2023). This design facilitated the description of the phenomenon of citizen journalism following data collection. As noted by Berger (2020), a qualitative research methodology was used for its capacity to provide a lucid and direct depiction of experiences, perceptions, or occurrences using language extracted from the gathered data.

Lukaza Blog News—josephatlukaza.blogspot.com; Arusha Yetu News—yetuarusha.blogspot.com, Malunde blog News—malunde.com/2025/01/blog-post_945.html; Bukoba blog News - bukoba-wadau.com/ - well organised; Mwaipaya Blog News—abdallahmwaipaya.blogspot.com/; Kitoto News—kitoto.wordpress.com; Mroki Kidevu News—mrokim.blogspot.com; Mtaa News—mtaakwamtaa.co.tz—well organised. Harakati News - harakati360.blogspot.com, The habari-thehabari.com, malunde.com/2025/01/blog-post_945.html. Other blogs includes: Fumbukas—<https://fumbukasasa.blogspot.com/> Mpekuzi huru- <http://www.mpekuzihuru.com/>, Muungwana—<https://www.muungwana.co.tz/>, Ukarimu -<https://ukarimu-tz.blogspot.com/>, Udaku Special Blog-<https://www.udakuspecialy.com>

The study, which is based on independent citizen blogs, intentionally excludes blogs hosted by media houses and public and private institutions that employ professional media personnel. This rigorous approach ensures that the study's focus remains on the unique perspective of independent citizen bloggers. The researcher employed quota sampling to choose 15 independents within subgroups based on their specific areas of news interest.: current news, rural development news, religion news, youth news, sports news, tourist news, and mixed news. According to Kothari and Garg (2023), quota sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher selects participants based on predetermined qualities, assuring the representation of specified features by their frequency in the community. The study selected five respondents for the interviews. This sampling aligns with the recommendations of Creswell (1998), which are widely accepted in the field, suggesting that a range of 5 to 25 interviews is sufficient for a study focused on lived experiences. The research was conducted using purposive sampling, a method that allowed the researchers to maintain control over the selection process based on criteria aligned with the study's objectives (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). The researchers used this method to select news bloggers and TRCA officers as important informants, ensuring the study's results were both accurate and relevant (Kothari & Garg, 2023). The method enabled the researcher to examine the content of specific citizen journalist media blogs. Using purposive research sampling mitigates the inclusion of extraneous and irrelevant elements in the sample by chance while facilitating an in-depth examination of the chosen items (Patton et al., 2002).

The researcher used content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019) to scrutinise textual, audio, and video materials to determine whether the bloggers adhered to journalistic standards and ethical codes. The researcher used content analysis techniques, as shown by Lynne (2013) and Krippendorff (2019, 2022), to analyse news published on 15 blogs and assess whether the bloggers regarded news value and ethics. The researcher categorised the news into current news, religious, sports, rural development, youth, and tourism. This categorisation allowed the researcher to assess the reliability of the news sources used by bloggers and their adherence to pertinent themes. The researcher employed a unit of analysis, a systematic and objective tool, to evaluate and code the news according to accuracy, objectivity, credibility, and reliability criteria. The unit of analysis was employed to categorise news according to media ethics, mainly focusing on balance and fairness, minimising harm and avoiding stereotypes and misinformation. The researcher analysed audio, video, and all text content uploaded to the 15 blogs to discern patterns and conduct a thorough study (Webb, Lynne, 2013). The research included in-depth interviews to gather information from existing bloggers and TCRA officers about the news value and ethics of blogging, adding a robust and reliable data source. This strategy accurately evaluates the professional practices of bloggers in both emerging and traditional media.

Data Analysis

The research adhered to the comprehensive guidelines established by Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2024), which detail the essential thematic analysis procedures, including identifying key themes and patterns. By employing this robust approach, the researcher effectively illuminated the intricate relationships and trends emerging from the entire data collection process. This thorough examination of individuals' experiences, perspectives, emotions, and knowledge allows for a deeper understanding of the subject matter and identification of themes and patterns. This approach allows the researcher to elucidate patterns and correlations throughout the data collection process. The researchers examined individual experiences, views, feelings, and knowledge. The researcher synthesised and correlated the data with the research questions, demonstrating the analysis's substantial contribution to the aims. The

researcher conducted a qualitative study of data by identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns and themes in citizen journalists' information. The description was presented in word and sentence styles. The content analysis technique is a practical study approach for delineating communication messages and quantifying message properties. These attributes include correctness, objectivity, credibility, and dependability. As a qualitative research data collection instrument, it conveys the significance of the topic or material of interest to the researcher (Maggio et al., 2012). The research's compliance with all aspects is crucial to ensure scientifically credible findings.

Findings and Discussion:-

Does Citizen Journalism Content Consider News Values According to Professional Journalism Standards?

The findings indicate that all blogs present news with accuracy. There are no misspellings, and the words are composed with competence and fluency, considering journalistic skills. The results suggested that most news on different blogs prioritises appropriate sources or spokespersons. However, certain news items are reproduced from other sources without proper attribution. Most blogs pasted copies of mainstream newspapers. Although the pasting of newspapers seems to indicate a lack of credibility in new media, most comments on blogs appreciated the bloggers' efforts to provide news from various sources. Regarding objectivity, research indicates that many blogs have considered objectivity. The findings indicated that the street-to-street new site mtaakwamtaa.co.tz and the Bukoba Stockholders Blog bukoba-wadau.com are well organised. All the stories are well cited and balanced. The bloggers provide links to YouTube to enable readers to watch and listen to audio (Sources Voices). The style enhanced the reliability and objectivity. The rest of the blogs have few brief stories which lack fairness and follow up which result in lack of objectivity. The findings revealed that lack of second part of story caused followers to discuss the story in detail, whereby some reader's information cannot be considered as official information from the second side of the story. The results align with the study by Cristol (2002) and Kurtz (2002), demonstrating that bloggers and traditional journalists discuss the degree of trust that should be attributed to information shared via blogs. The findings corroborate Banning and Trammell's (2006) and Johnson and Kaye's (2004) research, which indicates that although bloggers frequently articulate strong opinions and critique prominent figures with whom they disagree, blog users persist in trusting and depending on the information provided in blogs. Credibility empowers blogs to unite followers and facilitate social change.

The findings on reliability demonstrate that the information sources used in blogs are frequently reliable. The majority of stories published to all examined blogs have trustworthy sources. However, some stories published in Harakati Blog—harakati360.blogspot.com, Malunde Blog—malunde.com/2025/01/blog-post_945.html, and thehabari.com/ missed some transparent sources and dates of the information released as they missed when and where, hence reducing the credibility of the particular stories. The findings are similar to the study of professional journalists who have to adhere to these media ethics: truth, accuracy, fairness, independence, moral integrity, privacy, avoiding harassment, and avoiding publishing sexual photos and videos (Brown et al., 2005).

Does Citizen Journalism's Content Obey the Professional Journalism Code of Ethics?

The findings revealed that all of the blogs examined indicate that blogs conform to journalistic ethics. Most narratives are constructed according to the 5W+H framework in value-based ethics. In instances where shocking news, such as accidents or distressing events, is expected, there is instead a focus on caution regarding images and videos, reassuring the audience about the responsible reporting in blogs. They emphasise equality by avoiding gender discrimination and marginalising vulnerable groups. Additionally, they disseminate information on marginalising developments and oversee news coverage by accommodating both perspectives. The findings implied contrasts with the notion that blogs deliver news without applying journalistic skills and ethical standards. In contrast to the study conducted by Barnes (2012), which found that only professionally trained journalists can comprehend the ethics required of reporters (2011), it posits that the history of citizen journalism is, in fact, the history of journalism itself.

The findings suggest that although blogs adhere to the principles and ethics of journalism, the researchers have identified shortcomings that do not amount to breaches of journalistic standards. In contrast to mainstream media, which provides daily or weekly updates, blogs lack consistent news delivery. Bloggers frequently disseminate news based on personal judgement; a notable limitation is their inadequate provision of follow-up information, leading to superficial coverage. Despite compliance with the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations, 2022, as overseen by TCRA-CC, there remains a persistent issue of utilising the works of other authors without appropriate acknowledgement, resulting in violations of intellectual property rights. Replicating news from mainstream media in blogs leads to uniform information distribution across various

platforms. In 2011, Michuzi Issa's blog (<https://www.michuzi.co.tz/2011/09/barua-ya-wazi-kwa-bloggers-wa-tanzania.html?m=0>) published an open letter to bloggers concerning violations of journalistic standards and intellectual property rights, urging them to refrain from replicating the works of others, as this practice is viewed as exploitation. The letter stresses the exploitative nature of this practice, as it takes advantage of the hard work of news gatherers and undermines their efforts. Michuzi, an experienced professional journalist and one of the early bloggers in Tanzania, identified two primary factors contributing to the similarities in blogs. First, bloggers often pay a minimal fee to use news from other blogs. Second, a single professional journalist is frequently employed by multiple bloggers, leading to uniform content, including similar news and photographs. He urged bloggers to diversify their content to make Tanzanian blogs more resourceful in promoting development. Despite its publication in 2011, bloggers continue to reproduce the mainstream media content. This practice undermines the credibility of blogs. However, this practice improves information access, particularly for individuals unable to purchase newspapers; therefore, the duplication of news is not considered unethical or unlawful. Kaale & Mjema (2025) added that While social media has provided flexibility in accessing news, it has also led to a decline in the quality of news.

The Tanzania Country Commercial Guide (2022) indicates that intellectual property rights aim to promote and safeguard intellectual creativity, discoveries, and advancements in the artistic and scientific fields <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/tanzania-protecting-intellectual-property>. Mwakaje (2020) noted that Tanzania does not possess a unified policy, legal, and regulatory framework regarding intellectual property rights (IPR). The paper advised that Tanzania should promptly coordinate matters related to intellectual property rights to enhance the capabilities of bloggers. This empowerment is essential for generating original news and enhancing information coverage, especially in areas overlooked by mainstream media, such as rural regions and vulnerable groups, including individuals with disabilities, the elderly, women, and children's rights. This study aligns with Traczykowski's research (2024), which underscores the urgent need to enhance ethical and legal knowledge among youth to ensure the responsible use of social media in fostering development.

Do Citizen Journalists Adhere to Professional Language in Their Media Outlets?

The findings indicated that regarding language, all blogs focus on journalists' skills in news stories, especially those produced by government officials. However, in advertisements, bloggers used two different languages in one sentence: Swahili and English in one sentence. For example, in Harakati Blog—harakati360.blogspot.com, the leading information blogs were written in English; many news stories are written well using the Swahili language; in the narrative fiction stories, almost all blogs use Swahili spoken language. It's worth noting that Ku, Liang, and Chen (2006) share the same views about citizen journalists' language, emphasising the consensus in the field. They agree that news articles have a more extensive vocabulary than blog articles, meaning they use professional language and professionally convey their messages to respective audiences.

On the other hand, blog sports articles, due to their lack of a professional vocabulary, often find themselves in a struggle to communicate with the audience effectively. Using two languages (English and Kiswahili) can lead to a sense of unprofessionalism in journalism, highlighting the challenges these blogs face. The researcher interviewed four bloggers and a key informant from TCRA to obtain information on bloggers' adherence to journalistic standards and ethics. A member of the Content Committee of the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA-CC) said the committee noticed that numerous bloggers missed registering or had their permits revoked for violating journalistic standards, which led them to pursue a journalism course. He added:

TCRA aims to promote effective governance by ensuring that individuals can access information freely and that bloggers can gather and disseminate information. However, such material must follow journalism's standards and moral principles. As our country is still in its early stages of socioeconomic development, we do not allow the creation of platforms that could mislead the public.

He states that TCRA diligently monitors blogs and other electronic media platforms to guarantee that the material disseminated is accurate, unbiased, and conforms to journalistic standards and Tanzanian cultural principles. He added:

TCRA aims to promote effective governance by ensuring that individuals can access information freely and that bloggers can gather and disseminate information. However, such material must be presented according to journalism standards and moral principles. As our country is still in its

early stages of socio-economic development, we do not allow the creation of platforms that could mislead the public.

He states that TCRA diligently monitors blogs and other electronic media platforms to guarantee that the material disseminated is accurate, unbiased, and conforms to journalistic standards and Tanzanian cultural principles. Participant #1 stated that following the block of his blog, he enrolled in a journalism course after his blogging experience profoundly impacted his reporting style. This positive transformation, guided by the strong influence of ethical guidelines and legal procedures, allowed him to deliver reports on local occurrences with a sense of integrity and precision. His journey is a testament to the potential growth and improvement that journalism education can bring, instilling optimism and hope in aspiring journalists.

She stated:

In the modern media landscape, bloggers have evolved from citizen journalists to fully fledged professional journalists. Our publication provides reliable reporting, and its coverage is broader than that of conventional media, which lack the same freedom to use multiple platforms as social media writers.

Participants # 3 and #4 said they had advanced journalism education, so they decided to start their businesses and hire their colleagues, who also had the opportunity to practice journalism by writing investigative news and stories about rural development.

Participant # 3 added that blogs have become the primary news source in rural areas due to the old media's focus on urban centres, prioritising coverage of negative topics, including mismanagement of funds, criminal activity, and accidents, primarily to boost sales. Consequently, bloggers adhere to journalistic ethics because blogs satisfy the informational needs of Tanzanians residing in rural regions. Rural dwellers have been marginalised in development due to the absence of media that chronicles rural progress and offers citizens educational information that fosters growth.

Participant #4 noted that blogs function professionally by following journalistic ethics to fulfil legal obligations while offering a space for individuals to share their views and engage in discussions that news editors do not govern. Consequently, the functioning of blogs differs from that of radio and newspapers, as the latter does not offer a platform for citizens to engage in discussions about the news they disseminate.

Tanzanian bloggers have formed their own associations to seek funds and sponsors for training, exchange experiences, and make blogs a mighty pillar in the news sector. This study is similar to the research done by Brown (2005), who noted accurately that the work of professional journalists is only published after it goes through the checks and balances process, where the ordinary citizen journalists receive no training and editorial advice and have no such expertise to safeguard such accuracy. This indicates that citizen journalism neglects professional journalists' principles and ethics. However, the study is consistent with the studies of Fernando and Sham (2008) and Johnson (2008). Mutsvairo and Columbus (2012) suggested that blogs and social media have emerged as alternatives to traditional media. This study supports the gatekeeping theory, which helps journalists maintain ethical standards. This study substantiates the computer-mediated theory, indicating that technological advancements have facilitated information access for rural residents via blogs as alternative media. This study supports Onyango (2013); technology has increased the accessibility of citizen journalism worldwide and has made online content a vital component of social, economic, and cultural life in many societies.

Conclusion:-

Studies have concluded that Tanzanian blogs adhere to the same journalistic principles and ethical standards as traditional media outlets. The findings indicate that most news bloggers work as mainstream because they are monitored by the TCRA, which bans any blog that violates the law. In response to the ban, bloggers have undertaken journalism courses and operated their blogs professionally, effectively serving as alternative, reliable media for Tanzanians. Blogs operate distinctly by utilising information from various media or other blogs, a practice not permitted in mainstream media. This unique approach, which allows for a diverse range of sources, significantly enhances the reliability of blogs compared to traditional media and keeps the audience informed and enlightened. Blogs also frequently connect to other social media platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, allowing readers to discuss and comment on related topics. Although bloggers generally adhere to journalistic ethics, a challenge remains in the uniformity of news content across blogs. This often results from dependence on identical

sources or the same individuals disseminating news across various platforms. To address this challenge and pave the way for a more uniform and ethical blog journalism, it is crucial for the government to urgently prioritize the enforcement of copyright law and increase the number of educators in legal ethics.

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