



FUW CENTRE FOR RESEARCH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT & SOCIAL SCIENCES (FUWCRJMSS)



The Challenges of Obtaining Information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act by Plateau State Correspondents' Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ)

¹Jilang, Leritshimwa Tunkat & ²Sarah Lwahas

^{1&2}Department of Mass Communication, University of Jos, Plateau State
Corresponding Email: jilanglerit@gmail.com

Abstract

The study assessed the challenges of obtaining information under the Freedom of Information Act by the Plateau State Correspondents' Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) from 2021–2023. The Hierarchy of Influence Model was adopted as a theoretical framework. Through the quantitative method, 60 members of the Plateau State Correspondents' Chapel of the NUJ were sampled, with the questionnaire used as the instrument of data collection. The findings revealed that 60.4% of the respondents rarely used the FOI Act due to ignorance and non-compliance with FOI requests by government agencies, while 17% used it daily, weekly (11.3), or monthly (11.3), which highlights the challenges faced. Additional findings show that lack of cooperation from government agencies, lengthy response times, and excessive redaction are the persistent challenges. These challenges were seen to impede the depth, accuracy, and timeliness of reporting, hampering their ability to fulfil the watchdog role effectively. The study recommended that the NUJ Council implement measures aimed at improving the responsiveness and efficiency of government agencies in processing FOI requests; implement measures aimed at fostering greater collaboration and transparency between government agencies and journalists; and prioritise efforts to raise awareness about FOI procedures and rights among government officials and journalists.

Keywords: Challenges, Information, FOI, NUJ, Plateau State Correspondents' Chapel

Introduction

The ability of a nation's citizens to have largely unrestricted access to information made possible by legislation is referred to as freedom of information (International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2021). Concerns about journalists' inability to effectively use the Freedom of Information Act (FOI ACT) years after it was enacted and signed into law on May 28, 2011, by the Goodluck Jonathan administration have been expressed by stakeholders in the media, suggesting that there are issues leading to practical problems. The Act was intended to give journalists access to public records and information, as long as it was in the public interest. According to professional standards, journalists should be able to

conduct investigations and gather facts and opinions without any challenge. This freedom includes communicating ideas and information through any medium without worrying about retaliation or resistance. However, since the act was first enacted in Nigeria, journalists have struggled to obtain the necessary information to carry out their societal responsibilities honourably (Ijeoma, 2020).

When pursuing information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, journalists run into convoluted processes, imprecise instructions, and a purposeful lack of openness about the progress of their requests (Okereke, 2019). This time-consuming and often annoying bureaucratic red tape frequently results in

the complete abandonment of FOI Act inquiries. Organisations use delaying strategies that take weeks and months, going beyond the FOI Act's specified limit (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Investigative journalism is often severely hampered by these delays since, by the time the crucial material is made public, and it may become irrelevant, making the whole process useless. Journalists had to pursue information to produce thorough, factual, and impartial reporting, putting themselves in a dangerous situation that could result in them being attacked, tortured, or even killed. Okon (2023) asserts that Nigerian journalists have long agitated for establishing a society in which they are free to practice their profession without interference from governmental laws or policies.

The atmosphere sustained by the Official Secret Act, according to Pate (2022), poses a challenge to obtaining information under the Act. Government officials' worry that increased public access to information made available by the FOI Act will expose them to political opposition. They fear that granting access to information under the laws may reveal the shortcomings of government initiatives and strategies (Civil Society Organisation, 2023). What constitutes information was interpreted by Section 30(3) of the Freedom of Information Act, 2011 to mean all accounts, documents, and information stored in whatsoever shape, including in print, electronic, visual image, sound, audio recording, etc.

The Long Title to the FOI Act, 2011 states that it is an act to, among others, make public records and information more freely available. Section 22 of the Nigerian Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, as amended (CFRN), directs the press, radio, television, and other

agencies of the mass media to, at all times, be free to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people. The available evidence indicates that global FOI laws have not been able to meet the expectations of the news media. Okon (2023) admits that the most notable criticism of the FOI Act lies in its inability to meet the information needs of the news media due to challenges.

In Nigeria, some laws that intend to limit the free flow of information, like the Official Secrets Act, the Evidence Act, the Public Complaints Commission Act, the Statistics Act, and the Criminal Code, are fully functional, making it challenging to get information from any government agency because of the level of secrecy. Several laws, most notably the Official Secrets Act, prohibit civil servants from disclosing government information (World Bank, 2023). These acts also make it unlawful to obtain or reproduce such information. Some corrupt public officials may take advantage of these features to hoard information. The cumulative effect of these tactics is a chilling one. Journalists in Plateau State, particularly those investigating potential wrongdoing or holding powerful institutions accountable, are left discouraged and frustrated. The lack of access to information stifles investigative efforts and creates an environment where government actions remain shrouded in secrecy (Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development, 2020). When information is withheld, journalists are left with incomplete narratives and limited evidence, hindering their ability to expose the truth. Furthermore, the fear of encountering bureaucratic hurdles or retaliation can lead to self-censorship by journalists. This stifles critical reporting and creates an environment where government actions in

Plateau State remain unchecked (Osaghae, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

The FOI Act was mainly fashioned with the specific intention that citizens and journalists would utilise access to government information in order to provide knowledge for the citizenry, which will, by extension, facilitate citizens' effective participation in the democratic process (Barnard, 2018). Bureaucratic hurdles, delays, redaction of sensitive information, and sometimes outright denial of requests impede journalists' ability to gather crucial information for investigative reporting, hindering transparency and accountability in governance. As a result, journalists struggle to uncover important stories, hold authorities accountable, and fulfil their role as watchdogs in society, undermining the act's fundamental goal of promoting transparency and accountability in governance.

There is a culture of secrecy that undermines the very purpose of the FOI Act. Journalists are left without access to crucial information for holding powerful institutions accountable and exposing potential wrongdoing. This lack of transparency breeds public pessimism and erodes trust in governance.

Naanlong (2023) asserted that ignorance of the FOI Act fuels absurd responses to FOI requests in Plateau State, hence the necessity for the study. James, Olubunmi, Fidelis, Victoria Anum, Mohammed, and Comfort (2023) conducted a study on the uses and challenges of the FOI Act among journalists, focusing on those in Kogi State. However, there exists a geographical gap, necessitating a study on the challenges of obtaining information under the

Freedom of Information Act among members of the Correspondents Chapel of the NUJ. Previous studies conducted in and outside Plateau State have revealed challenges in implementing and utilising the FOI Act among journalists. However, none have focused on the Plateau State Correspondents Chapel, indicating a sectional gap and thereby warranting further investigation.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study is to assess the use of the FOI Act among the correspondents' chapel of the NUJ in Plateau State. This is supported by the following objectives, which are to:

1. Assess the processes of obtaining information under the Freedom of Information Act by members of the Plateau State Correspondents Chapel of the NUJ.
2. Assess the challenges encountered by members of the Plateau State correspondent chapel of the NUJ in obtaining information under the FIO Act.
3. Assess the effect of the challenges of obtaining information under the FOI Act on the roles and duties of members of the Plateau State correspondent's chapel of the NUJ.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been developed to guide the study:

1. How has the process of obtaining information under the Freedom of Information Act been for members of the Plateau State Correspondents' Chapel of the NUJ?
- 2: What challenges do members of the Plateau State Correspondents' Chapel of

the NUJ encounter in obtaining information under the FOI Act?

3. In what ways do the challenges faced in obtaining information under the FOI Act affect the roles and responsibilities of members of the Plateau State Correspondents' Chapel of the NUJ?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review of literature

Concept of Journalism

Journalism is a multifaceted field encompassing the gathering, analysis, and dissemination of news and information to the public. At its core, journalism serves as a vital bridge between events, issues, and individuals, providing citizens with the knowledge and context they need to make informed decisions, participate in civic life, and hold those in power accountable (Salas, 2018). At the heart of journalism lies the fundamental principle of truth-seeking. Journalists strive to uncover and report the truth, presenting accurate, balanced, and objective information to their audience. This commitment to truth forms the foundation of journalistic integrity and credibility, distinguishing journalism from other forms of communication or storytelling (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014).

Central to the practice of journalism is the concept of news value. Journalists identify and priorities news stories based on criteria such as timeliness, relevance, proximity, impact, prominence, and human interest. These factors guide journalists in selecting which events or issues to cover and how to frame them for maximum audience engagement and understanding (Owen Spencer-Thomas, 2024). Journalism encompasses various forms and genres, including investigative journalism, which involves in-depth research and reporting to expose

wrongdoing, corruption, or injustice; feature writing, which delves into human interest stories, profiles, and analysis pieces; and breaking news reporting, which focuses on delivering timely updates on unfolding events and emergencies (Mast, Coesemans, & Temmerman, 2016). In addition to traditional print and broadcast media, journalism has evolved in the digital age to encompass online platforms, social media, podcasts, and multimedia storytelling formats. Digital journalism offers new opportunities for immediacy, interactivity, and audience engagement, but it also presents challenges such as information overload, misinformation, and the erosion of traditional business models (Mitchelstein & Bockzkowski (cited in Siapera & Veglis, 2012). Chadwick & Belsey (1992) noted that ethical considerations play a crucial role in journalism, guiding reporters and news organisations in their decision-making processes. Journalistic ethics encompass principles such as accuracy, fairness, impartiality, independence, and accountability. Adhering to these principles helps journalists maintain public trust and credibility, safeguarding the integrity of the profession. Eksterowicz, Roberts, & Rosen (2000) posited that journalism operates within a broader socio-political context, often intersecting with issues of power, democracy, and freedom of expression. Journalists play a critical role as watchdogs, monitoring government actions, exposing abuses of power, and amplifying the voices of marginalised communities. Press freedom is essential for a functioning democracy, allowing journalists to hold institutions and individuals accountable without fear of censorship or reprisal. However, journalism also faces numerous challenges and threats, including political pressure, censorship, attacks on journalists,

economic instability, and the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation. These challenges underscore the importance of supporting independent, ethical journalism and defending press freedom as a cornerstone of democratic societies (Molina Acosta, 2024).

Journalism serves as a vital pillar of democracy, providing citizens with the information they need to make informed decisions and participate in public life. Grounded in principles of truth-seeking, news value, and ethical conduct, journalism plays a crucial role in holding power to account, fostering transparency and accountability, and amplifying diverse voices and perspectives. Despite facing challenges, journalism remains essential for informing, educating, and empowering individuals and communities in an increasingly complex and interconnected world (UNESCO, 2022). In Nigeria, the practice of journalism intersects with the concept of freedom of information, particularly through the implementation of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. Journalists play a critical role in utilising the FOI Act to access government-held information, investigate wrongdoing, and hold public officials accountable (Mohammed et al., 2023). However, challenges such as lack of cooperation from government agencies, threats, harassment, and bureaucratic obstacles hinder journalists' ability to effectively exercise their right to access information. Despite these challenges, journalists in Nigeria continue to advocate for transparency, accountability, and press freedom. Strengthening awareness about FOI Act procedures, providing legal support for journalists, and fostering collaboration between government agencies and media organisations are essential steps towards ensuring journalists' unfettered access to information and

upholding the principles of transparency and accountability in governance (Ituma, Ani, & Chiah, 2019).

Concept of Information Access by Journalists

Access to information is a fundamental human right that is crucial for journalists to effectively carry out their role in a democratic society. As outlined in the search results, the right of access to information is recognised globally and enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right "to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." (Hins & Voorhoof, 2007). For journalists, access to information is vital for gathering facts, data, and evidence to inform the public, contribute to public discourse, and hold those in power accountable. It enables journalists to uncover important stories, expose wrongdoing, and provide citizens with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions. Without access to information, journalists' ability to fulfil their watchdog role is severely hindered ("Media Defence," n.d.). Governments around the world are increasingly restricting journalists' access to information through various means, such as internet shutdowns, social media restrictions, denying accreditations, and passing "secrecy acts." This deliberate obstruction of information access is a grave breach of press freedom and the public's right to know (International Federation of Journalists, 2023).

Access to information laws, when properly implemented, can be a vital mechanism to support journalists in gathering facts and data. These laws establish the principle of maximum

publicity, meaning that information held by public entities should be accessible to all, with limited exceptions subject to harm the public interest test. Unfortunately, the search results note that even in countries with access to information laws, the lack of political will and deficient implementation can still restrict journalists' ability to access relevant information (Mohammed et al., 2023). Horsley (2020) noted that beyond legal frameworks, the importance of journalists' safety in ensuring access to information. Attacks, threats, and violence against journalists not only violate their individual rights but also obstruct the public's access to information and undermine the functioning of democratic societies. Governments must take concrete steps to protect journalists and create an environment where they can work freely and safely.

The concept of information access for journalists is fundamental to their role in a democratic society. It enables them to gather facts, expose wrongdoing, and inform the public, which is essential for holding those in power accountable. However, the growing challenges journalists face in accessing information are due to government restrictions and attacks on press freedom. Addressing these challenges through robust legal frameworks, political will, and the protection of journalists' safety is crucial for ensuring the public's right to know and the effective functioning of democracy.

The Global Evolution of FOI Act

The evolution of Freedom of Information (FoI) principles spans historical milestones and global initiatives. It commenced with Sweden's 1766 access to information laws, emphasising press freedom and government transparency,

followed by France's 1789 recognition of a public "right to know" concerning tax expenditures. The UN General Assembly Resolution 59(1) of 1946 further solidified FoI as a fundamental right crucial for global peace and progress (UN General Assembly Resolution 59(1), 1946). These foundational steps paved the way for the United States' seminal adoption of the Freedom of Information Act (FoI ACT) in 1966, which established citizens' rights to access government records and promote transparency and accountability ("FoI Act United States", n.d.). The United States' FOI Act, enacted in 1966, remains pivotal in advancing transparency and accountability in governance. It grants "any person" the right to request information from federal government agencies, fostering an informed citizenry vital for democracy (Snow, 2009). The Act's amendments, such as the Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments of 1996 and the Intelligence Authorization Act of 2003, have further shaped its scope and application ("FOI Act of the United States," n.d.). Internationally, milestones like the Council of Europe's 1981 Recommendation emphasised access to information held by public authorities, reflecting a growing recognition of the right to access administrative information ("Access Info Europe," n.d.). These developments underscore the continuous evolution of FoI principles globally, emphasising access to information as a cornerstone of democracy, accountability, and good governance (Oliver, 2013). However, amidst the global adoption of FOI laws, concerns for trends in press freedom have emerged. Press freedom levels have declined globally, with challenges including restrictions on freedom of expression online and the proliferation of misinformation (Banisar, 2004) While the

adoption of FOI Acts reflects a positive trend, the decline in press freedom underscores the need for urgent action to safeguard information as a public good (UNESCO, 2022). In Nigeria, the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act was enacted in 2011 to enhance access to public records and ensure transparency in governance (Marzullo, 2012). Despite its enactment, challenges such as a culture of secrecy, poor record-keeping practices, and a lack of awareness persist (Omotayo, 2015). Overcoming these hurdles requires efforts from both government agencies and citizens to ensure effective implementation and promote transparency and accountability in governance (Marzullo, 2012). While the evolution of FOI principles marks significant progress towards transparency and accountability globally, addressing challenges to press freedom and ensuring effective implementation of FOI laws remain imperative for fostering democratic governance and combating misinformation and corruption (Stein & Camaj, 2018).

According to Banisar (2006), FOI has become widely recognised in international law. Numerous treaties, agreements, and statements by international and regional bodies have made it possible for governments to adopt AWs; likewise, cases have also emerged in international forums. Nearly 120 countries around the world have now adopted comprehensive Freedom of Information Acts to facilitate access to records held by government bodies, and some other countries have pending efforts. A few countries have issued decrees or used constitutional provisions. Many countries have adopted other laws that can provide limited access, including data protection laws that allow individuals to access their own records held by government agencies and private organisations and specific

statutes that give rights of access in certain areas such as health, environment, government procurement, and consumer protection. Although FOI has been around for over 200 years, it is still evolving. Over half of the FOI laws have been adopted just over the last two decades. The growth in transparency is in response to demands by civil society organisations, the media, and international lenders. Many of these laws adopted innovative processes to improve access. However, there is much work to be done to reach a truly transparent government. The culture of secrecy remains strong in many countries. Many of the laws are not adequate and promote access by name only. In some countries, the laws lie dormant due to a failure to implement them properly or a lack of demand. In others, the exemptions and fees are abused by governments. Older laws need updating to reflect developments in society and technology. New laws promoting secrecy in the global war on terror have undercut access. International organisations have taken over the functions of national governments but have not subjected themselves to the same rules.

Banisar (2006) affirms that there is a growing body of treaties, agreements, work plans, and other statements to require or encourage nations to adopt freedom of information laws. The growth is especially strong in the area of anti-corruption, where most new treaties now require that signatories adopt laws to facilitate public access to information. Most treaties on environmental protection and participation also include public access rights and have been particularly important in encouraging many countries to adopt national laws on access to environmental information and general FOI laws. Furthermore, Article 19 of both the Universal Declaration on Human Rights

and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides that every person shall have the right to free expression and to seek and impart information. There is growing recognition that the right to seek information includes a right to freedom of information. The African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption was adopted in June 2003. Article 9 on "Access to Information" states: "Each State Party shall adopt such legislative and other measures to give effect to the right of access to any information that is required to assist in the fight against corruption and related offenses." It went into effect in July 2006. Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights states that "every individual shall have the right to receive information." As of 2020, the treaty has been signed by 49 members of the AU and ratified by 44 of its 55 members (African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, 2003). The Convention created the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. It should also be noted that earlier In October 2002, the Commission adopted the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa. The Declaration calls on member states to recognise freedom of expression rights. According to Banisar (2004) many nations across the world have implemented some kind of Freedom of Information Act/Legislation (FOI Act/FOI L) to provide access to public records. In several other nations, people are trying to introduce legislation like this, and localities that have their own legislation may regulate access to state and local government public data, records, and papers. This is in addition to the country's Freedom of Information Act, which regulates the keeping of records and the management of materials in the hands of

the government, public figures, private people, and public office holders entrusted with public responsibilities. Most freedom of information laws are based on the idea that it is up to the individual to prove that they should be granted access to the requested information. If the information is not provided, a good justification has to be provided (David, Oluaseyi, & Sijuade, 2021).

Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act, 2011

The journey to enact the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act in Nigeria was arduous, starting in 1993 with the initiation of a campaign by the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), and the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ). Despite initial hurdles, President Goodluck Jonathan finally signed the FOI bill into law on May 28, 2011, almost twelve years after its proposal to the legislature (Omotayo, 2015). This made Nigeria the ninety-seventh country globally, the ninth in Africa, and the sixteenth in the Commonwealth to implement such legislation. Remarkably, the FOI Act was enacted a century after the introduction of the Official Secrets Act (OSA) of 1911 during Nigeria's colonial era (Omotayo, 2015).

For Nigeria, where press freedom was suppressed under decades of military rule, the enactment of the FOI bill was a significant relief (Omotayo, 2015). A culture of government secrecy had pervaded Nigerian governance, with nearly all government information classified as top secret. This culture was perpetuated by various laws, including the Official Secrets Act, Criminal Code, Public Complaints Commission Act, and Penal Code, creating a barrier to accessing vital information

(Omotayo, 2015). Public servants were bound by oath to maintain secrecy, further entrenching this culture within government institutions.

Despite claims that these laws were meant to safeguard vital government information, they often resulted in absurd levels of secrecy, with mundane information like newspaper clippings being classified (Adeleke, as cited in Omotayo, 2015). This excessive secrecy hindered journalists from accurate reporting and impeded students' access to essential research materials (Omotayo, 2015). Overall, the implementation of the FOI Act represented a crucial step towards transparency and accountability in Nigeria's governance system. By granting citizens the legal right to access government information, the FOI Act aimed to dismantle the entrenched culture of secrecy and promote transparency. Journalists could now seek out critical information necessary for investigative reporting, while students gained access to valuable resources for academic research. This shift towards openness also fostered accountability within government institutions, as citizens could now hold officials accountable for their actions and decisions.

However, despite the enactment of the FOI Act, challenges persisted in its implementation. Some government departments continued to withhold information from each other, citing official secret legislation. Additionally, there were instances where individuals faced obstacles in accessing information, either due to bureaucratic hurdles or resistance from government officials still clinging to the old culture of secrecy (Omotayo, 2015). Nevertheless, the passage of the FOI Act marked a significant milestone in Nigeria's journey towards good governance and

transparency. It signified a departure from the era of authoritarianism and opacity towards a more accountable and responsive government where citizens could actively participate in the democratic process, armed with information and knowledge.

The Nigerian Freedom of Information (FOI) law, encompassing 32 sections, amalgamates elements from similar laws in other countries. According to the explanatory memorandum, the Act aims to enhance public access to records and information, safeguard personal privacy, shield disclosing public officers from repercussions, and establish relevant procedures (FOI Act, 2011). Key provisions include unrestricted access to public records for any Nigerian citizen, the ability to litigate against agencies withholding information, and requirements for public institutions to disclose detailed profiles and records (Section 2). Additionally, the Act addresses the information needs of illiterate and disabled individuals (Section 3, Subsection 3). Despite the exemptions outlined in Sections 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 26, information requests cannot be denied if the public interest in disclosure outweighs potential harm (Section 11 subsection 2). Notably, the Act safeguards public officers from repercussions for unauthorised disclosures and supersedes the Official Secrets Act (Sections 27 and 28) (Omotayo, 2015).

Enonche (as cited in Omotayo, 2015) observes that the Act provides Nigerians with a crucial mechanism for holding public institutions accountable. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights facilitated this endeavour by introducing a new "model law" on access to information in Africa in April 2013. This model law, endorsed by the African Union, serves as a blueprint for

countries to develop their own legislation on access to information, thereby streamlining the process and eliminating the need to start from scratch each time. Consequently, countries such as Malawi, Mozambique, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Namibia have expedited their efforts to adopt access to information laws (Omotayo, 2015).

Right of Access to Government Information by Journalists

In reference to freedom of information, Ogbondah (cited in Apuke, 2016) emphasised the necessity of legislation. He argued that the absence of such laws in Nigeria's 1999 Constitution deprives the press and the public of access to government-held information, fostering secrecy in public affairs. Highlighting President Lyndon B. Johnson's remarks upon signing the Freedom of Information Act in 1966, Amadi (cited in Apuke, 2016) emphasised the importance of transparency in democracy. Yalaju (cited in Apuke, 2016) echoed this sentiment, stating that without access to information, governance becomes farcical or tragic. Furthermore, Yalaju suggested that the drafters of legislation aimed to provide citizens with information to enable them to assess government performance, underscoring the importance of an informed citizenry (Apuke, 2016).

The beaming lacuna in our constitution is the absence of a specific provision for a free press. Like the United States Constitution, there was no original openness in the constitution with regard to a citizen's "right to know." To affirm this right, the American Congress passed the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act in 1965, which has been amended several times. The FOI Act is intended to achieve

the same purpose, which is transparency in government activities (Apuke, 2016). It is crucial to emphasise the significance of the right to access government information, as highlighted in the text. Government records and documents belong to the public, and transparency is essential for accountable governance. The media, in particular, plays a vital role in advocating for this access. Without it, citizens cannot properly evaluate government performance.

However, obstacles to implementing legislation such as the Freedom of Information Act persist due to political interests. As stated by Amadi (cited in Apuke, 2016), this legislation could serve as a powerful tool against corruption. Nonetheless, some governments prefer to keep their activities secret, hindering media reporting and undermining democracy. Justice P. B. Sawant underscores the scarcity of legislation ensuring access to government-held information globally. In a democratic context like Nigeria, passing such an act would facilitate citizens' access to information, promoting transparency and accountability.

Empirical Reviews

Several studies have explored the understanding and engagement of journalists with the FOI Act, shedding light on their perspectives, challenges, and benefits when utilising the act in their reporting. These studies have provided valuable insights into the relationship between journalists and the FOI Act, enabling a comprehensive understanding of its impact on journalism practice.

Abone and Kur (2014) studied the *Impact of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI ACT) on media practice in Nigeria*. The

study's main goals were to identify the extent to which journalists in Anambra State, Nigeria were aware of the Act's provisions, as well as their perceptions of its strengths and flaws regarding their daily work as journalists and how the Act affected their practices (whether negative or positive). The study used a survey approach. Information was gathered via a questionnaire. Using the proportionate stratified random sampling method, a sample of 165 journalists in Anambra State was chosen from a population of 289 registered journalists. The study's conclusions showed that the journalists were very knowledgeable about the FOI Act's provisions. Also, the Act was seen by journalists as having a more favourable impact on the practice of journalism. It was concluded that the Act, when fully implemented, would portend well for Nigerian journalism. It was recommended that journalists utilise the Act to its fullest. The similarity between the reviewed work and this study is that both studies attempt to determine the degree of awareness of the Freedom of Information Act among Nigerian journalists.

The difference is that while the reviewed study had a strong foundation in libertarian theory, this study considers libertarian theory not relevant enough to well explain the focus of the study; rather, it considers media dependency theory to be more relevant. The scopes and methodologies of both studies also differ. The central goal of this study, which is to examine the use and implementation of the FOI Act among Nigerian journalists, was not captured in the reviewed work.

In a study by Ezema (2023) on *Availability and Access to Government Research Data and Freedom of Information in Nigeria: An Evaluation of Selected Government Websites*,. The study sought to understand how government research data (GRD) are

required for the growth of democratic culture in line with freedom of information (FOI) law in Nigeria. This paper investigated the availability and access to government research data in Nigeria to determine the implications for the implementation of FOI law in the country. This study adopted a webometric analysis approach to examine the websites of 34 selected websites of key government agencies. Findings reveal that only 26.5% of the 34 agencies have GRD on their websites, while two of the agencies have no official and functional websites. Also, only 10 (29.4%) of the 34 agencies have evidence of using their websites to address FOI requests, and only 1 (2.9%) has a FOI department, while only 3 (8.8%) have a FOI portal on their websites. The paper concludes that the agencies have not shown enough commitment to the implementation of FOI law using their websites.

Another study by Apuke (2016) examined the *impact of Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act on journalists working in the city of Jalingo*. The study's main goals were to ascertain the extent to which the FOI Act can support media practices that promote fair, balanced, accurate, and objective reporting, as well as to examine the level of awareness of the FOI Act among Nigerian journalists. It also sought to identify any apparent obstacles to the FOI Act's full potential in Nigeria. The study used survey research. Approximately 293 journalists live in Jalingo Metropolis. To sample out 75 journalists who made up the sample frame, the researchers used Taro Yamane's formula. The instrument for gathering data was a questionnaire. The collected data was displayed thematically. Results showed that journalists in the metropolis of Jalingo are fully aware of the Freedom of Information Act. The study also showed that even though FOI Act

can support journalism practices towards balanced, accurate, and objective reporting, it has not given journalists in Taraba State access to information held by the government. The latter finding prompted this study because, despite the potency of the Act, it still does not guarantee free access to information, and there seem to be some challenges affecting its full implementation.

Dunu and Ugbo (2014) conducted a study to assess the knowledge, perception, and use of *the FOI Law by the Nigerian journalists*. With respondents from four Nigerian union of journalist (nuj) chapter and utilizing a survey research methodology, the study finds that while all respondents are aware of the FOI Law and some acknowledge an improvement in access to information, a majority have never actually utilized the law in their journalistic duties. This discrepancy suggests that mere awareness of the law is insufficient for effective implementation. The research attributes this under-utilization to several factors, including bureaucratic hurdles and lack of supportive frameworks for journalist

In the study by Oko-Epelle, Oloyede, Kazeem and Kuyoro (2023) on *Freedom of information act: issues and challenges in Nigerian journalism practice*. This study examines the concept of information freedom and the issues and challenges associated with FOI Act. It also examines the nature of Nigerian journalism practice. Some of the challenges mentioned in this paper include information access denial, legal loopholes, and public servants needing to be aware of the Freedom of Information Act. The paper finds that the current Freedom of Information Act 2011 offers no relief. The Act does not provide the media with any additional protection; rather, it merely imposes duties and

obligations on the media without explicitly granting rights or privileges beyond the general right to free expression enjoined by all citizens.

Theoretical Framework

The Hierarchy of Influences Model

The Hierarchy of Influences, formally known as the Hierarchical Influences Model, is an organised theoretical framework introduced by Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese. It comprises five levels of influence on media content from the macro to micro levels: social systems, social institutions, media organisations, routine practices, and individuals. This framework was introduced in their book, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content*.

Individual Level

The individual level relates to the biological, psychological, and sociological characteristics of an individual social actor. Here, the attitudes, training, and background of the journalist (or media worker more generally) are seen as influential (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

Routine Level

The routine level involves the patterned, recurring practices and guidelines that journalists apply in the performance of their work. Reese and Shoemaker (2016, p. 399) elucidate that "the routine level is concerned with those patterns of behaviour that form the immediate structures of media work, including unstated rules and ritualised enactments that are not always made explicit." Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011) argue that policies, conventions, and customs wield strong influence on

journalistic practices globally. However, in some cases, journalists become used to problematic behaviour.

Organizational Level

The organisational level refers to the policies, rules, and economic considerations within media organisations that affect media content. Here, the profit orientation shared by private media companies, combined with their hierarchical structure in general, shapes the content in line with the ownership's interests (Hackett & Uzelman 2003). Editorial policy, as Shoemaker and Reese (1996) explain, allows the organisation to determine which stories are deemed newsworthy, how they are prioritised, and how they are represented.

Extra-Media Level (social systems)

The extra-media level relates to the norms, individuals, and organisations that function outside a given media outlet. This represents the meso-level environment for the media, that is, the interrelationships of economic, political, and cultural factors lying between the organisation and society in general. At the extra-media level, consideration is given to those influences emanating principally from outside the media organisation. This perspective recognises that the power to shape content is not entirely that of the media, but it is shared with a variety of institutions in society, including the government, advertisers, public relations, influential news sources, interest groups, and even other media organisations (Shoemaker and Reese 1996).

Social Institution Level

The social institutional level refers to the symbolic frameworks, customs,

ideals, and theories that exist at the societal level. Ideology not only shapes the news; it is extended, renewed, and reproduced through the agency of media content. In this context, we are interested in how the media's symbolic content is related to larger social interests and how meaning is mobilised in the service of power. This necessarily leads us to consider how each of the previous levels operates in order to add up to a coherent ideological result (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Although the model was developed to account for patterns of media coverage, it has been adapted to the study of journalists' attitudes and perceptions (Berkowitz & Limor 2003; Weaver & Wilhoit 1996). The hierarchy of influences model is relevant to this research, as it provides a useful analytical framework through which journalists' knowledge and use of the FOI Act in journalism practice can be interrogated. This is so because the model moves from the individual to the social institution level, which recognises both the agency (individual) and the structure (organisational and extra-media) in the use of the FOI Act. For instance, at the individual level, the point of interest is in understanding how journalists' knowledge of the Act affect their use of the legislation. In terms of routine, the type of job a journalist performs can influence their knowledge and use of the FOI Act. For instance, investigative journalists may use the Act to greater effect than non-investigative journalists. There is also an interest in understanding how the news routine of reporting events as quickly as possible affects the use of the FOI Act by journalists. In terms of the organisational level, variations in the editorial policy concerning the FOI Act in a media house can have a far-reaching effect on how journalists use the Act in their work. For

example, a supportive media organisation may inspire increased use of the Act, and vice versa.

At the extra-media level, journalists who meet bureaucrats who are resistant or uncooperative while trying to access government-held information may not be willing to use the Act in the future, or if the culture of secrecy is pervasive, this can result in discontinuation of the use of the Act or exploration of other means of accessing government-held information, e.g., tipping government officials for such documents. At the social institution level, the prevailing belief can impact how journalists use the Act in their work. For instance, if the influence of the transparency movement leading to the enactment of the FOI Act within a society was borne out of a desire to launder a regime's image, the state may not provide all the tools that enable smooth implementation of the FOI Act. This can affect the way the Act is used by journalists in a particular locale. Some studies have shown that the adoption of the FOI Act in some countries was carried out as a ploy to bolster their democratic credentials (Paterson 2008).

Methodology

The research method adopted for this study was the quantitative research method. Through this method, a survey was adopted for the study, which measures variables using self-reports. In essence, survey researchers ask their participants (who are often called respondents in survey research) to report directly on their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Second, considerable attention is paid to the issue of sampling. In particular, survey researchers have a strong preference for large random samples because they provide the most accurate estimates of

what is true in the population (Price, 2017).

The area of study is Jos metropolis. Jos is the administrative capital and largest city of Plateau State, located on the Jos Plateau in north-central Nigeria. The city is popularly known as "J-Town" and has an elevation of around 1,220 metres (4,000 feet) above sea level, giving it a near-temperate climate. Jos developed rapidly after the British discovered vast tin deposits in the vicinity in the early 1900s. The metal was initially transported by headload and later by the Bauchi Light Railway. In addition to tin mining, other local industries in Jos include food processing, beer brewing, cosmetics, soap, and furniture manufacturing.

The population of this study are the journalists of the correspondent's chapel of the NUJ in Plateau State, which are 60 in number based on records from the secretariat of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Plateau Council. Because there is rarely enough time or money to gather information from everyone or everything in a population, the goal becomes finding a representative sample (or subset) of that population (Lance & Hattori, 2016).

The study adopted the total population, which is 60, and therefore the sample size was 60 members of the plateau state correspondents' chapel, NUJ. The total population represents the entire collection of individuals or units within a defined group, regardless of size or specific characteristics, and serves as the foundation for research and statistical analysis in various fields (Treadwell, 2014).

The sampling technique adopted for this study was census sampling. Babbie (2016, p. 215) states that census sampling is "a sampling technique that involves collecting data from the entire population

rather than from a sample." Census sampling, also known as a complete enumeration, refers to a sampling technique in which data is collected from the entire population or target group of interest rather than selecting a subset or sample. It involves gathering information from every individual or element within the defined population, leaving no room for sampling error. Census sampling provides a comprehensive and accurate representation of the population, ensuring that every member has an equal chance of being included in the study. Census sampling is typically employed in situations where the population size is small, manageable, or easily accessible.

The quantitative method of data collection was a survey through the administration of a questionnaire. They involve asking questions to collect information on attitudes, behaviours, opinions, or preferences. Surveys can be conducted through questionnaires, interviews, or online platforms, and the data collected is analysed to identify patterns and trends. While surveys offer efficient data collection and can study a wide range of topics, they may face challenges such as nonresponse bias and questionnaire design complexities.

The instrument of data collection was the questionnaire. The questionnaire that was used in this study was divided into two parts: the demographic and

thematic data. Section A consists of four questions that seek to find out the demographic characteristics of respondents. This is useful for analysis because the study purposely left out demanding respondents names in order to further buttress confidentiality and honesty of purpose. Section B consists of 14 questions, whose responses are discussed and analysed in view of the research problem. This study mainly made use of close-ended questions. Close-ended questions are structured with exhaustive options from which respondents are required to choose. This allows easier collection and analysis of the obtained data.

In this research, the instrument used was validated in terms of content validity. The content-related technique measures the degree to which the question items reflect the specific areas to be covered. The research instruments were validated by the research supervisor, who ensured that the instrument was brief, concise, and straight to the point.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data obtained from the respondents is presented and analysed in this chapter. 60 participants were administered the questionnaire, out of which 53 filled it out and submitted it. The analysis, therefore, was based on the response rate of 53 at 88.3%.

Presentation and Analysis of Data**Section A: Demographic Data****Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents**

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
25 – 30	2	3.8
31 – 36	10	18.9
37 – 45	22	41.5
46 – 55	13	24.5
56 – 60	6	11.3
Total	53	100

In table 1, above, 2 representing 3.8% were between the age ranges of 25 and 30 years, 10 representing 18.9% were between the age ranges of 31 and 36 years, and 22 representing 41.5% were between the age ranges of 37 and 45 years. 13 representing 24.5% were

between 46 and 55 years old, and 6 representing 11.3% were between the age ranges of 56 and 60 years old. The finding showed that there were more respondents between ages 37 and 45, with 41.5%.

Table 2: Sex distribution of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	45	84.9
Female	8	15.1
Total	53	100

Table 2 showed sex distribution of respondents. The results indicated that 45 of the respondents representing 84.9% were males while 8 of the respondents

representing 15.1% were females. This implies that there were more males than females in the study.

Table: 3 Years' Experience of Respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
5-10 years	14	26.4
11-20 years	23	43.4
21-30 years	15	28.3
Blank	1	1.9
Total	53	100

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents across years of experience. The table revealed that 14 (26.4%) of the respondents had 5–10 years of work experience as journalists, 23 (43.4%) of the respondents had 11–20 years of work experience as journalist, 15 (28.3%) of the respondents had 21–30 years of work experience as journalists, and 1 respondent, representing 1.9%, did not select any option. The findings showed

that the majority of the respondents had 11–20 years of work experience as journalists.

Section B: Psychographic Data

Research Question 1: How has the process of obtaining information under the Freedom of Information Act been for the Plateau State Correspondents Chapel of the NUJ from 2021 to 2023?

Table 4: Respondents on frequency of use of the FOI Act to obtain information

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	9	17
Weekly	6	11.3
Monthly	6	11.3
Rarely	32	60.4
Total	53	100

The table revealed that 9 (17%) of the respondents said they used the FOI Act on a daily basis. 6 (11.3%) of the respondents said they used the FOI Act on a weekly basis. 6 (11.3%) of the respondents said they frequently used the

FOI Act on a monthly basis. 32 (60.4%) of the respondents said they rarely use the FOI Act. Findings showed that the majority of the respondents (60.4%) rarely used the FOI Act to obtain information.

Table 5: Respondents on process of obtaining information under the FOI

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Submitting a formal request to the relevant government agency or department.	38	71.7
Providing specific details about the information requested, including time frame subject matter, and any relevant context.	4	7.5
Waiting for acknowledgment of the request and confirmation of receipt.	5	9.4
Allowing the agency a designated time frame to respond to the request.	3	5.7
Blank	3	5.7
Total	53	100

Table 5 reveals that 38 (71.7%) of the respondents said submitting a formal request to the relevant government agency or department was a process of obtaining

information under the FOI Act. 4 (7.5%) of the respondents said providing specific details about the information requested, including the time frame subject matter,

was a process of obtaining information under the FOI Act. 5 (9.4%) of the respondents said waiting for acknowledgement of the request and confirmation of receipt was a process of obtaining information under the FOI Act. 3 (5.7%) of the respondents said allowing the agency a designated time frame to

respond to the request was a process of obtaining information under the FOI Act. 3 (5.7%) did not pick any options. 38 (71.7%) of the respondents, which is the highest percentage, said submitting a formal request to the relevant government agency or department was a process of obtaining information under the FOI Act.

Table 6: Respondents on the improvement of information accessibility under FOI Act from 2021-2023

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, I have observed significant improvements in information accessibility under the FOI Act from 2021 to 2023.	26	49.1
No, I have not observed any improvements in information accessibility under the FOI Act from 2021 to 2023.	27	50.9
Total	53	100

Table 6 revealed that 26 of the respondents, representing 49.1%, said they had observed improvements in information accessibility under the FOI Act from 2021 to 2023. 27 of the respondents, representing 50.9%, said they had not observed improvements in

information accessibility under the FOI Act from 2021 to 2023. This means that the majority, 50.9%, have not observed significant improvements in information accessibility under the FOI Act from 2021 to 2023.

Table 7: Respondents on response rate of government agencies to FOI Act requests.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Prompt, meeting expectations	6	11.3
Delayed, requiring follow-up	25	47.2
No response to FOI request at all	13	24.5
Consistently slow and inadequate	7	13.2
Blank	2	3.8
Total	53	100

In Table 7, the result indicated that 6, representing 11.3%, said prompt, meeting expectations, was the response of government agencies to FOI Act requests. 25 representatives (47.2%) said delayed, requiring follow-up, was the response of government agencies to FOI Act requests. 13 representing (24.5%) said there was no response to FOI requests at all by the

government agencies; 7 representing (13.2%) said the response of government agencies to FOI Act requests is consistently slow and inadequate; and 2 representing (3.8%) did not pick any option at all. The result revealed that a larger percentage (47.2%) said government agencies responses to FOI Act requests are often delayed, requiring follow-up.

Research question 2: What challenges do the Plateau State Correspondents' Chapel

of the NUJ encounter in obtaining information under the FOI Act?

Table 8: Respondents on challenges encountered as a member of the Plateau State Correspondents chapel when obtaining information under the FOI Act

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of cooperation from government agencies	26	49.1
Lengthy response times to FOI requests	12	22.6
Excessive redaction or withholding of information	10	18.9
Difficulty in navigating the FOI request process	5	9.4
Total	53	100

Table 8 shows that 26 respondents, representing 49.1% of the respondents, said they lack cooperation from government agencies. 12 respondents, representing 22.6%, said lengthy response times to FOI requests. 10 people, representing 18.9%, said excessive redaction or withholding of information. 5 respondents, representing 9.4%, said

difficulty in navigating the FOI request process is one of the challenges encountered in obtaining information under the FOI Act by the plateau State Correspondents Chapel. From the data above, a greater percentage (49.1%) of the respondents said a lack of cooperation from government agencies is a challenge to obtaining information under the FOI Act.

Table 9: Respondents on how challenges affect the ability to access information necessary for journalistic work

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Limits the depth and accuracy of reporting	19	35.8
Delays publication timelines	16	30.2
Hinders investigation into important issues	8	15.1
Blank	10	18.9
Total	53	100

In Table 9, 19 respondents, representing 35.8%, said these challenges limit the depth and accuracy of reporting as they affect the ability to access information necessary for journalistic work. 16 respondents, representing 30.2%, said it delays publication timelines. 8 respondents, representing 15.1%, said it

hinders investigation into important issues; 10 respondents, representing 18.9%, did not pick any option. From the data above, a higher percentage (35.8%) said the challenges affect their ability to access information necessary for journalistic work as it limits the depth and accuracy of reporting.

Table 10: Respondents on how redaction or heavily edited information limit the usefulness of the obtained data

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, it hampers my ability to utilize the information effectively for reporting purposes	41	77.3
Yes, it has minimal impact, as I can still extract valuable insights from the available data	7	13.2
No not applicable, as I haven't been issued redacted or heavily edited information	3	5.7
Blank	2	3.8
Total	53	100

In Table 10 above, the result indicated that 41 of the respondents (77.3%) said yes, redaction and heavily edited information hamper their ability to utilize the information effectively for reporting purposes. 7 respondents (13.2%) said yes, it has minimal impact, as they can still extract valuable insights from the available data. 3 representatives (5.7%) said

no, not applicable, as they haven't been issued redacted or heavily edited information, while 2 representing 3.8% did not pick an option. The results revealed that a greater percentage (77.3%) said yes. It hampers their ability to utilize the information effectively for reporting purposes.

Table 11: Respondents on repercussions or intimidation encountered for seeking information under the FOI Act

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, faced threats and harassment	21	39.6
No, have not faced any negative consequences	16	30.2
Prefer not to answer	9	17
No I have not been in any situation that warrants this	4	7.5
Blank	3	5.7
Total	53	100

From the data in Table 11, 21 representing 39.6% said yes, they faced threats and harassment; 16 representing 30.2% said no, they have not faced any negative consequences. 9 respondents, representing 17%, would prefer not to answer; 4 respondents, representing 7.5%, said no; they have not been in a situation

that warrants this; and 3 respondents, representing 5.7 percent, did not pick any option. This means that a greater number of respondents (39.6%) indicated that yes, they faced threats, harassment, or intimidation for seeking information under the FOI Act.

Table 12: Respondents perception on challenges encountered in obtaining information under the FOI Act within 2021–2023 compared to challenges prior to the act

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Challenges are similar, but the FOI Act provides a legal framework for addressing them	26	49
Challenges have decreased with the enactment of the FOI Act	11	20.8
Challenges have increased due to loopholes or non-compliance with the FOI Act	8	15.1
Not sure	8	15.1
Total	53	100

Table 12 revealed that the majority of respondents, with 26 representing 49%, said challenges are similar, but the FOI Act provides a legal framework for addressing them. 11 (20.8%) said challenges have decreased with the enactment of the FOI Act. 8 respondents, representing 15.1%, said challenges have increased due to loopholes or non-compliance with the FOI Act. 8

representing (15.1%) said not sure. Findings showed that a higher population of 49% said challenges are similar, but the FOI Act provides a legal framework for addressing them.

Research Question 3: In what ways do the challenges faced in obtaining information under the FOI Act affect the roles and responsibilities of the Plateau State Correspondents Chapel of the NUJ?

Table 13: Respondents assessment of the effect the challenges of obtaining information under the FOI Act has on reporting of government activities in Plateau State

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Decreased transparency	12	22.6
Limits investigative reporting	27	50.9
Hindered anti-corruption efforts	5	9.4
No significant impact	8	15.1
Blank	1	2
Total	53	100

The data in table 13 stated that 12 respondents, representing 22.6%, said decreased transparency is an effect of the challenges of obtaining information under the FOI Act in reporting of government activities in Plateau State; 27 respondents, representing 50.9%, said the challenges of obtaining information under the FOI Act limit investigative reporting of government activities in Plateau State. 5, representing 9.4%, said the challenges of obtaining

information under the FOI Act hinder anti-corruption efforts in reporting government activities on the plateau. 8, representing 15.1%, said there was no significant impact, while one, representing 2%, did not pick any option. This means that a greater number of the respondents, 50.9%, said the challenge of obtaining information under the FOI Act limits investigative reporting of government activities in Plateau State.

Table 14: Respondents on impact of the challenges of obtaining information under the FOI Act on the quality of work.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Delays in accessing information affect the timeliness of news reporting	27	50.9
Incomplete or withheld information hinders the depth and accuracy of reporting	9	17
Increased difficulty in verifying facts and sources due to lack of transparency	6	11.3
Government delays, denials of FOI requests hinders investigative journalism	5	9.5
All of the above	6	11.3
Total	53	100

Table 14 above showed that 27 respondents, representing 50.9%, said delays in accessing information affect the timeliness of news reporting. 9 respondents, representing 17%, said incomplete or withheld information hinders the depth and accuracy of reporting. Six of the respondents, representing 11.3%, said they had increased difficulty verifying facts and sources due to a lack of transparency. 5 of

the respondents, representing 9.5%, said government delays and denials of FOI requests hinder investigative journalism. 6 of the respondents, representing 11.3%, said all of the above were the impacts of the challenges of obtaining information under the FOI Act on the quality of their work. From the statistical 50.9%, the majority said delays in accessing information affect the timeliness of news reporting.

Table 15: Respondents on aspect of the challenges of the FOI Act process poses the most challenge

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of awareness about FOI procedures and rights among government officials	28	52.8
Lengthy delays in receiving responses to FOI requests	10	18.9
Intimidation or harassment from government agencies when pursuing information	4	7.5
Inadequate enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with the FOI Act	3	5.7
Bureaucratic hurdles	7	13.2
Blank	1	1.9
Total	53	100

Table 15 revealed that 28 (52.8%) of the respondents said lack of awareness about FOI procedures and rights among government officials poses the most

challenge. 10 (18.9%) said lengthy delays in receiving responses to FOI requests pose the most challenge. 4 (7.5%) said intimidation or harassment from government agencies when pursuing

information poses the most challenge. 3 (5.7%) said there were inadequate enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with the FOI Act. 7 (13.2%) said bureaucratic hurdles, while 1 (1.9%) did not pick an option. Findings showed

that the majority of the respondents, 28 (52.8%), said a lack of awareness about FOI procedures and rights among government officials poses the most challenge.

Table 16: Respondents on ways challenges of accessing information under the FOI Act could be overcome

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strengthening advocacy efforts to improve the implementation and enforcement of the FOI Act	24	45.2
Providing journalists with legal support and resources to navigate bureaucratic hurdles	11	20.8
Providing specialized training programs for FOI officers to improve efficiency and effectiveness	3	5.7
Establishing a centralized online portal for submitting and tracking FOI request.	1	1.9
All of the above	13	24.5
Blank	1	1.9
Total	53	100

From the data presented, 24 respondents, accounting for 45.2%, posited that strengthening advocacy efforts to improve the implementation and enforcement of the FOI Act can help overcome these challenges. 11 journalists, accounting for 20.8%, said providing journalists with legal support and resources to navigate bureaucratic hurdles. 3 respondents, accounting for 5.7%, said providing specialised training programmes for FOI officers to improve efficiency and effectiveness is a strategy for overcoming challenges. 1 accounting for 1.9 said establishing a centralised online portal for submitting and tracking FOI requests; 13 accounting for 24.5% said all the options given are strategies to mitigate the challenges. From the data, 45.2% percent, which is the highest percentage, said strengthening advocacy efforts to improve the implementation and enforcement of the FOI Act will help in overcoming the

constraints of obtaining information under the FOI Act.

Discussion of Findings

From the data gathered, analysed, and interpreted, the researcher's findings are hereby discussed in line with the research's specific objectives earlier identified in Chapter 1. The study has succeeded in answering the first research question, which is, "How has the process of obtaining information under the Freedom of Information Act been for the Plateau State Correspondents Chapel of the NUJ from 2021 to 2023?" Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 offer those answers. The findings showed that the majority of the respondents (60.4%) rarely used the FOI Act to obtain information. Additionally, 71.7% of the respondents said submitting a formal request to the relevant government agency or department was a process for obtaining information under the FOI Act. However, 50.9% said they

have not observed improvements in information accessibility under the FOI Act from 2021 to 2023, and 47.2% reported that government agencies' responses to FOI Act requests were often delayed, requiring follow-up.

When pursuing information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, journalists run into convoluted processes, imprecise instructions, and a purposeful lack of openness about the progress of their requests (Okereke, 2019). This time-consuming and often annoying bureaucratic red tape frequently results in the complete abandonment of FOI Act inquiries. Organisations use delaying strategies that take weeks and months, going beyond the FOI Act's specified limit (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Investigative journalism is often severely hampered by these delays since, by the time the crucial material is made public, it may become irrelevant, making the whole process useless. Journalists had to pursue information to produce thorough, factual, and impartial reporting, putting themselves in a dangerous situation that could result in them being attacked, tortured, or even killed.

The challenges faced by journalists include slow government responses and the risks they encounter when pursuing FOI inquiries, as highlighted in the findings. The Hierarchy of Influences, under the extra-media level, posits that journalists who encounter uncooperative bureaucrats while seeking government-held information may be less likely to use the Act in the future, which can lead to the exploration of alternative methods for accessing government information.

The second research question, which is "What challenges do the Plateau

State Correspondents Chapel of the NUJ encounter in obtaining information under the FOI Act? Tables 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 answer the question above. 49.1% of the respondents said lack of cooperation from government agencies is one of the challenges of obtaining information under the FOI Act, and 35.8% said this limits the depth and accuracy of reporting activities necessary for journalistic work. 39.6% said they faced threats, harassment, or intimidation for seeking information under the FOI Act, which in turn, according to 77.3% of respondents, hampers their ability to utilise the information effectively for reporting purposes. 49% of the respondents said the FOI Act provides a legal framework for addressing the challenges encountered in obtaining information under the FOI Act, but yet in 2021–2023, some laws that intend to limit the free flow of information, like the Official Secrets Act, the Evidence Act, the Public Complaints Commission Act, the Statistics Act, and the Criminal Code, are fully functional, making it challenging to get information from any government agency because of the level of secrecy. Several laws, most notably the Official Secrets Act, prohibit civil servants from disclosing government information (World Bank, 2023). These acts also make it unlawful to obtain or reproduce such information. Some corrupt public officials may take advantage of these features to hoard information. The cumulative effect of these tactics is a chilling one. Journalists in Plateau State, particularly those investigating potential wrongdoing or holding powerful institutions accountable, are left discouraged and frustrated. The lack of access to information stifles investigative efforts and creates an environment where government actions remain shrouded in secrecy (Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development

(CJID), 2020). When information is withheld, journalists are left with incomplete narratives and limited evidence, hindering their ability to expose the truth. Furthermore, the fear of encountering bureaucratic hurdles or retaliation can lead to self-censorship by journalists. This stifles critical reporting and creates an environment where government actions in Plateau State remain unchecked (Osaghae, 2010).

The findings regarding challenges faced by the Plateau State Correspondents Chapel of the NUJ in obtaining information under the FOI Act illustrate the multifaceted influences of bureaucratic obstacles, legal constraints, threats, and intimidation on journalists' ability to access and utilise information effectively, as outlined in The Hierarchy of Influences Model.

For the third research question, which is "In what ways do the challenges faced in obtaining information under the FOI Act affect the roles and responsibilities of the Plateau State Correspondents Chapel of the NUJ? Tables 13, 14, 15, and 16 offer answers: 50.9% said the challenge of obtaining information under the FOI Act limits investigative reporting of government activities in Plateau State, and 50.9% said delays in accessing information affect the timeliness of news reporting. 52.8% of the respondents said there was a lack of awareness about FOI procedures and rights among government officials. 45.2% posited that strengthening advocacy efforts would improve the implementation and enforcement of the FOI Act. Okon (2023) asserts that Nigerian journalists have long agitated for establishing a society in which they are free to practice their profession without interference from governmental laws or policies, as evidence

supporting this claim. The atmosphere sustained by the Official Secret Act, according to Pate (2022), poses a challenge to obtaining information under the act. Government officials' worry that increased public access to information made available by the FOI Act will expose them to political opposition. They fear that granting access to information under the laws may reveal the shortcomings of government initiatives and strategies. (Civil Society Organisation, 2023). What constitutes information was interpreted by Section 30(3) of the Freedom of Information Act, 2011 to mean all accounts, documents, and information stored in whatsoever shape, including in print, electronic, visual image, sound, audio recording, etc.

The findings regarding the impact of challenges in obtaining information under the FOI Act on the roles and responsibilities of the Plateau State Correspondents Chapel of the NUJ highlight the complex interplay of factors outlined in the Hierarchy of Influences Model, including decreased transparency, limitations on investigative reporting, a lack of awareness among government officials, and advocacy efforts aimed at improving FOI implementation and enforcement.

Conclusion

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act is a crucial tool for journalists in Nigeria to access information vital for transparent and accountable governance. Overcoming the challenges of the Freedom of Information Act is essential for journalists in Nigeria to fulfil their role as watchdogs of society and hold government officials accountable. The FOI Act serves as a powerful tool for journalists to hold government officials

and institutions accountable by enabling access to information on public policies, decisions, and actions. Through the FOI Act, journalists can scrutinise government activities, uncover wrongdoing, and expose corruption, thereby fostering transparency and accountability in governance. By promoting transparency, fostering investigative journalism, and enhancing public discourse, access to information under the FOI Act is vital for democratic governance and the protection of press freedom in Nigeria.

By accessing information through the FOI Act, journalists play a vital role in facilitating informed public discourse. They provide citizens with accurate and timely information on government policies, programmes, and expenditures, enabling them to make informed decisions and participate effectively in democratic processes. The FOI Act thus strengthens democracy by empowering citizens with the knowledge needed to hold government accountable and advocate for change. Through concerted efforts to raise awareness, address bureaucratic obstacles, and advocate for legal and institutional reforms, journalists can effectively utilise the FOI Act to serve the public interest and advance democracy.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Based on the finding that 47.2% of respondents reported government response to FOI Act requests is often delayed, requiring follow-up, this study recommends that the NUJ Council implement measures aimed at improving the responsiveness and efficiency of government agencies in processing FOI requests. This could include establishing clear timelines and

procedures for handling FOI requests, providing training to government officials responsible for responding to requests, and implementing monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with FOI Act requirements.

2. Based on the finding that 49.1% of respondents cited lack of cooperation from government agencies as a challenge in obtaining information under the FOI Act, this study recommends that the NUJ Council implement measures aimed at fostering greater collaboration and transparency between government agencies and journalists. This could include establishing communication channels and protocols for facilitating information requests, providing training to government officials on their obligations under the FOI Act, and creating incentives for agencies to comply with requests in a timely and efficient manner.
3. Based on the finding that 50.9% of respondents highlighted that the challenges of obtaining information under the FOI Act limit investigative reporting of government activities, this study recommends that the NUJ Council prioritise efforts to raise awareness about FOI procedures and rights among government officials and journalists. This could involve conducting training programmes to enhance understanding of the FOI Act's provisions and requirements, as well as advocacy efforts aimed at promoting the importance of transparency and accountability in governance.

References

- Abone, E., Genevieve, O., & Jude, T. K. (2014). Perceptual influence of freedom of information act on journalism practice in Nigeria. *Arabian Journal of*

- Business and Management Review* (OMAN Chapter) 3: 23–35.
- Abone, G. O. & Kur, J. (2014). Perceptual influence of freedom of information act on journalism practice in Nigeria. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 3 (7).
- Abramowitz, M. J. (2017). Freedom of the press: Press freedom's dark horizon. *Freedom House*. Retrieved March 12, 2024 from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/press-freedom-dark-horizon>
- Access Info. Europe. (n.d) *History of right of access to information*. Retrieved from <https://www.access-info.org/2009-07-25/history-of-right-of-access-to-information/>
- African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption. (2003). *Adopted by the 2nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union. Maputo, Mozambique*: African Union.
- Agba, J., Eric, U. Ogri, M. & Kwita, O. (2018). The Nigerian freedom of information (FOI) act and the right to know: Bridging the gap between principle and practice. *New Media and Mass Communication* 7(3): 224–36.
- Agba, J.U., Ogri, E. I., & Adomi, K. O. (2018). The Nigerian freedom of information (FOI) Act and the Right to know: Bridging the gap between principle and practice. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 7(3), 2224-3275.
- Ahmad, G., & Nasir, J. (2022). Investigative journalism practice: A case of Abuja journalists and media organizations. *Aksu Journal of Communication Research* (AJCR), 8(2), 23-32
- Ahmad, J., Gever, C. V., Savaşan, A., & Tukur, N. A. (2022). *Knowledge and utilization of freedom of information law among journalists in Nigeria*. Information Development.
- Ajet, F. (2019). *The influence of new media in media relations practice in public and private organizations in Nigeria*. An unpublished thesis submitted to Igbinedion University Okada: Department of Mass Communication.
- Aliede, J. (2003). Mass media and politics in Nigeria: A historical and contemporary overview. In I. E. Nwosu (Ed.), *Polimedia: Media and politics in Nigeria* (pp. 12–16). ACCE, Nigerian Chapter and Prime Targets
- Antai, S., & Umoren, P. E. (2023). Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) and the Challenges of Investigative Journalism in Nigeria. *Akwa Ibom State University Journal of Media and Society*, 8(1&2), 117-128. Retrieved June 19, 2024 from <https://doi.org/10.61090/aksujomas.2023.009>
- Apuke, D. O (2016). An evaluative study of the freedom of information act on journalism practice in Nigeria. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 5(3). 2224-3275.
- Apuke, O. D (2017). An appraisal of the freedom of information act (FOI Act) in Nigeria. *Canadian Social Science*, 13(1), 40-42.
- Asema, E. S, Nwammuo, A. N. & Nkwam-Uwaoma, A. O. A. (2017). *Theories and Models of Communication*. Jos University press.
- Asogwa, F. N., Nkechinyere M., Awo I, & Obiageri, O. (2021). Freedom of information act and journalism in Nigeria 2011–2021: A review of a decade of utilisation and practice. *The Melting Pot*, 6: 34–50.
- Asogwa, F. N., Ibe, N. M. A., & Orji-Egwu, A. O. (2021). Freedom of Information Act and journalism in Nigeria 2011–2021: A review of a decade of utilisation and practice. *The Melting Pot*, 6, 34-50
- Babbie, E. R. (2016). *The practice of social research*. Cengage Learning.
- Banisar, D. (2004, May). *The Freedominfo.org global survey: Freedom of information and access to government record laws around the world (Amended version)*. Freedominfo.org. Retrieved June 19, 2023. from <http://www.privacyinternational.org/>
- Banisar, D. (2006). *Freedom of information around the world 2006: A global survey of access to government information laws*. Privacy International.

- Banisar, D. (2006). Freedom of information around the World 2006: A global survey of access to government information laws. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. Published. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1707336>
- Barnard, A. (2018). Secrecy and socialism: Historical perspectives. *Socialist Studies Journal*, 25(2), 78-91.
- Berkowitz, D. & Yehiel, L. (2003). Professional confidence and situational ethics: Assessing the social-professional dialectic in journalistic ethics decisions. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 80: 783–801.
- Camaj, L. (2015). Governments' uses and misuses of freedom of information laws in emerging European democracies: FOI laws' impact on news agenda-building in Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 93, 923.
- Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID). (2020, September 28). Public awareness on Freedom of Information Act (FOI ACT) in Nigeria. *Premium Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/category/opinion>.
- Chadwick, R., & Belsey, A. (1992). *Ethical issues in journalism and the media (Professional ethics)*. Routledge. ISBN-13: 978-0415069274
- Chukwu, O. J. (2019). The Freedom of Information Act, and journalists' access to information in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 17-21. Retrieved June 19, 2024 from <http://gajrc.com/gajhss>
- Civil Society Organization. (2023). Advocating for FOI ACT compliance: Strategies and impact assessment. *Social Activism Quarterly*, 27(2), 145-158.
- Cuillier, D. (2010). Honey v. vinegar: Testing compliance-gaining theories in the context of freedom of information laws. *Communication Law and Policy*, 15, 203-229.
- David, P., Sanyaolu, O. & Sijuade, E. (2021). 10 years of freedom of information act in Nigeria: the journey so far, prospects and challenges among media practitioners. *ijournals: International Journal of Social Relevance and Concern*, 9(8), 150-159
- Dawodu, M.O. (n.d). An overview of the freedom of information act (an appraisal from a lawyer's perspective). SPA Ajibade & Co. Retrieved March 12, 2024 from <https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=2f3432be-c8ff-4ff1-b396-3cd25682fdee>
- Denis, M. (2003). *Media Accountability and Freedom of Publication*, London. Oxford University Press
- Eze, O. U. (2024). Knowledge and use of the 2011 Freedom of Information Act among journalists in Nigeria. *Journal. Media*, 5(1), 255-270. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia5010017>
- Deuze, M. (2005). What is journalism? Professional identity and ideology of journalists reconsidered. *Journalism*, 6, 442-464.
- Dunu, I., & Gregory, O. U. (2014). The Nigerian journalists' knowledge, perception and use of the freedom of information (FOI) law in journalism practices. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies* 6: 1–10.
- Dunu, I., & Ugbo, G. O. (2014). The Nigerian journalists' knowledge, perception and use of the freedom of information (FOI) law in journalism practices. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 6(1), 1–10. Retrieved June 19, 2024 from <https://doi.org/10.5897/JMCS2013.0377>
- Eksterowicz, A. J., Roberts, R. N., & Rosen, J. (2000). *Public Journalism and political knowledge*. Rowman & Littlefield. ISBN-13: 978-0847695409
- Epelle, O. & Alade, K. (2023). Freedom of information act: Issues and challenges in Nigerian journalism practice. Retrieved March 12, 2024 from, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370779832>

- Ezeh, N. C. & Duro, C.W. (2019). Nigeria's freedom of information act: Opportunities and challenges. Retrieved March 12, 2024, from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337797682>
- Ezema, I. J. (2023). Availability and access to government research data and freedom of information in Nigeria: An evaluation of selected government websites. Enugu State University of Science and Technology. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses>
- Fajans, A. (1984). Media use of the Freedom of Information Act. *Government Information Quarterly*, 1, 351-364.
- Fajans, K. (1984). Superconductivity and Fajans' rule. *Journal of Materials Science Letters*, 3, 807-809. Retrieved June 19, 2024 from <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00727980>
- Freedom of Information Act (United States), 3 March 2024. Retrieved on march 12,2024 from <https://www.foia.gov/about.html>
- Freedom Of Information and Access (n.d). Retrieved March 13, 2024, from <https://www.ap.org/about/our-causes/freedom-of-information-and-access>.
- Gamji, Musa Barau, & Aisha Ibrahim Abdul. (2019). Influence of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2011 on Journalism Profession in Nigeria. *International Journal of Information Processing and Communication (IJIPC)*, 7, 141-149.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2016). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.
- Hackett, R. A., & Uzelman, S. (2003) 'Tracing corporate influences on press content: A summary of recent NewsWatch Canada research. *Journalism Studies* 4: 331-46.
- Hanitzsch, .G., Thomas, H., Maria, A., Rosa, B., Incilay, . C., Mihai, . C., Basyouni, .H., & Folker, .H. (2010). Modelling perceived influences on journalism: Evidence from a cross-national survey of journalists. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 87: 5-22.
- Hanitzsch, .T., & Claudia, .M,. (2011). What shapes the news around the world? How journalists in eighteen countries perceive influences on their work. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 16: 404-26.
- Hayes. H., Kathryn. & Henry, .S (2019). Narrowing the discourse? Growing precarity in freelance journalism and its effect on the construction of news discourse. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 16: 363-79.
- Hins, W., & Voorhoof, D. (2007). Access to state-held information as a fundamental right under the European Convention on Human Rights. *European Constitutional Law Review*, 3, 114-126. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1574019607001149>
- Horsley, W. (2020). *Safety of journalists* (3rd ed.). Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Retrieved June 19, 2024.
- Human Rights Watch. (2019, April 10). World press freedom day: Nigeria – Time to fully implement the FOI Act. Retrieved June 19,2024 form hrw.org <https://www.hrw.org/>.
- International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR). (2021, May 3). 10 years of FOI Act: Stakeholders seek review, lament poor implementation. . Retrieved form: <https://www.icirigeria.org/>.
- International Federation of Journalists. (2023, September 28). *Access to information: Governments must respect the right to know, says IFJ*. Retrieved from <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/access-to-information-governments-must-respect-the-right-to-know-says-ifj>
- Ituma, E., Ani, M. C., & Chiah, C. (2019). *Journalists' access to and constraints in applying the FOI Act in Rivers State*. RUJMASS, 5(1)
- Kreimer, S. F. (2008). The freedom of information act and the ecology of transparency. *University of Pennsylvania*

- Journal of Constitutional Law*, 10, 1011-1080.
- Kreimer, F. & Seth F. (2008). The freedom of information act and the ecology of transparency. *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law* 10: 1011–80.
- Kwoka, M. B. (2013). Deferring to secrecy. *Boston College Law Review*, 54(1), 185-242.
- Kwoka, K., & Margaret B. (2013). Deferring to Secrecy. *Boston College Law Review* 54: 185–242
- Lamble, S. (2004). Media use of FoI surveyed: New Zealand puts Australia and Canada to shame. *Freedom of Information Review*, 7, 5-9.
- Lance, P. & Hattori, A. (2016). *Sampling and evaluation* Web: MEASURE Evaluation. pp. 6–8, 62–64.
- Lidberg, J. (2002). For your information—The impact of freedom of information legislation on journalism practice and content in Western Australia and Sweden (Doctoral thesis). Murdoch University, Perth, Australia.
- Madubuike-Ekwe, N., & Mbadugha, J. (2018). Obstacles to the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act, 2011 in Nigeria. *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence*, 9(2), 96-109.
- Marzullo, K. (2012, August 16). *Six challenges consuming federal agencies and how to overcome them*. GovLoop. Retrieved June 19, 2024. From <https://www.govloop.com/community/blog/six-challenges-consuming-federal-agencies-and-how-to-overcome-them/>
- Mast, J., Coesemans, R., & Temmerman, M. (Eds.). (2017). *Constructive journalism: Concepts, practices, and discourses*. Routledge,1(1).
- Media Defence. (n.d.). *Module 1: Key principles of international law and freedom of expression: The changing role of journalists*. Retrieved June 19, 2024, from <https://www.mediadefence.org>
- Michener, G. (2011). FOI laws around the world. *Journal of Democracy*, 22(2), 145-159. Retrieved June 19, 2024, from <https://www.journalofdemocracy.com/articles/foi-laws-around-the-world/>
- Mohammed, J. D., Agbana, O. F., Otebe, F., Anum, V., Onakpa, M. S., & Ogwo, C. A. (2023). Uses and challenges of Freedom of Information Act among journalists in Kogi State, Nigeria. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2224598>
- Molina Acosta, C. (2024, May 3). *Press freedom under fire as political pressure on journalists intensifies worldwide, rankings reveal*. International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. Retrieved June 19, 2024, from <https://www.icij.org/inside-7icij/2024/05/press-freedom-under-fire-as-political-pressure-on-journalists-intensifies-worldwide-rankings-reveal>
- Naanlong, M. T. (2023, December 6). Ignorance of FOI act fueling ridiculous responses in Plateau. *Vanguard*. Retrieved March 13, 2024, from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/12/ignorance-of-FOI-act-fueling-ridiculous-responses-in-plateau/>
- Nnadi, E. C., & Obot, C. (2014). Akwa-ibom State journalist-reaction to the freedom of information Act. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 4, 544-561.
- Okereke, C. (2019). Why journalists struggle to get information from government despite FOI ACT law. *Journalism Practice*, 13(8), 1089-110.
- Okereke, I. (2020, April 5). How state officials violate Nigeria's freedom of information act. *Premium Times*. Retrieved March 13, 2024, from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/386053-how-state-officials-violate-nigerias-freedom-of-information-act.html?tztc=1>
- Okon, E. (2023). Judicial interpretation of FOI ACT exceptions: A case law analysis. *Legal Studies Quarterly*, 28(1), 45-60.
- Oliver, D. (2013). *Accountability and the foundations of British democracy—the public interest and public service principles*. In N. Bamforth & P. Leyland (Eds.), *Accountability in the contemporary*

- constitution (online edn). Oxford Academic.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199670024.003.0012>
- Oloyede IB (2005). Press Freedom: A Conceptual Analysis. *J. Soc. Sci.* 11(2):101-109
- Omoera, O. (2014). The quest for more effective media and the freedom of information act in Nigeria. Retrieved from
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/52003693>
- Omotayo, F. O. (2015). The Nigeria freedom of information law: Progress, implementation challenges and prospects"(2015). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*,1219. Retrieved March 12, 2024 from
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1219>
- Osaghae, E. E. (2010). Transparency and accountability in Nigerian democracy. *Africa Today*, 57(2), 77-95.
- Pate, J. (2022). Deepening democracy through freedom of information: A Nigerian perspective. *Journal of Governance and Transparency*, 15(4), 112-125.
- Paterson, M. (2008). The media and access to government—held information in a democracy. *Oxford University Commonwealth Law Journal* 8: 3–23.
- Paterson, M. R.-P. (2008). The media and access to government-held information in a democracy. *Oxford University Commonwealth Law Journal*, 8, 3-23.
- Price, C.P. (2017). *Overview of survey research*. Retrived from
<https://opentextbc.ca/researchmethods/chapter/overview-of-survey-research/>
- Relly, J E., Margaret, Z., & Shahira, F., (2015). News media landscape in a fragile state: Professional ethics perceptions in a post-Ba'athist Iraq. *Mass Communication & Society* 18: 471–97.
- Rydell, M. (2011). Transparency in the balance: An examination of the implementation of the open meetings law in the state of South Dakota. Master's thesis, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA, USA
- Salas, B. (2018). *Basic concept of journalism*. ED-Tech Press.
- Shoemaker, P.D. & Reese, S. D. (2016). A media sociology for the networked public sphere: The hierarchy of influences model. *Mass Communication and Society* 19: 389–410.
- Siapera, E., & Veglis, A. (2012). Introduction: The evolution of online journalism. In E. Siapera & A. Veglis (Eds.), *The handbook of global online journalism* (pp. 1-10). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Silver, D. (2016). The news media and the FOI ACT. *Communication Law and Policy* 21: 493–514
- Snell, R. (1998). In search of the freedom of information constituency: Case 1: The media. *Freedom of Information Review*, 14, 81-84.
- Snow, B. M. (2009, January 1). Freedom of Information Act of 1966 (1966). *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*. Retrieved June 19, 2024, from
<https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu>
- Society of Professional Journalists. (2014). *SPJ code of ethics*. Retrieved from
<https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>
- Spencer-Thomas, O. (2024). *News values*. Retrieved from <https://owenspencer-thomas.com/journalism/newsvalues/>.
- Stein, L. L., & Camaj, L. (2018). Freedom of information. In J. R. Vile & D. L. Hudson (Eds.), *The Oxford encyclopedia of the U.S. Constitution*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved June 19, 2024 from
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.97>
- Treadwell, D. (2014). *Introduction to communication research: Paths of inquiry* (2nd edition). London and New York: Sage Publications.
- Tufekci, Z., & Wilson, C. (2012). Social media and the decision to participate in political protest: Observations from tahrir square. *Journal of Communication*, 62(2), 363–379.
- Udombana, N. (2019). Addressing the implementation challenges of institutional obligations and reporting requirements under the Nigerian Freedom of Information Act 2011. *Beijing Law Review*, 10, 1305-1330.
- Udombana, N. J. (2019). Addressing the implementation challenges of institutional obligations and reporting requirements under the Nigerian Freedom of Information Act 2011.

Beijing Law Review, 10(5), 1305-1330.

Retrieved June 19, 2024 from
<https://doi.org/10.4236/blr.2019.105070>

UN General Assembly. (1946, December 14).
General assembly, Calling of an
international conference on freedom of
information, A/RES/59. Retrieved
March 12, 2024, from
<https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1946/en/7854>

UNESCO. (2022). *Journalism is a public good*.
UNESCO Publishing.

Weaver, D. H., & Wilhoit, G. C. (1996). *The
American journalist in the 1990s: U.S.
news people at the end of an era*.
Routledge.

7

World Bank. (2023). *Strengthening freedom of
information for good governance:
Lessons from global experiences*.
Washington, DC: Author.