



# Knowledge and Use of Drone Technology Among Television Stations in Nigeria

Terwanger Daniel Aliough, Kaior Samuel Akpede, Josiah Sabo Kente



**Abstract:** *The 21<sup>st</sup> century has ushered in technological advancements, with drones used for news gathering by television stations worldwide. This study was conducted to assess the knowledge and use of drone technology for news gathering among television stations in Abuja, Nigeria. The study used an interview method, in which 10 journalists from NTA NEWS24 and AIT stations were interviewed to obtain results. The study was anchored in the Technology Acceptance Model, which showed the usefulness of gathering information from dangerous scenes using drones and the ease of remotely piloting the aircraft from a safe location to cover certain events without being harmed. Findings from the interview revealed that the camera operators at both television stations were the most knowledgeable among newsroom journalists in using drones, as they were adequately trained. Findings also showed that newsworthy events that used drones for coverage included natural disasters such as floods, sporting events, and protests. The study concluded that NTA NEWS24 and AIT stations have fully incorporated drones into their news gathering. Therefore, it was recommended that television stations should go beyond training only camera operators to utilise drones and also train reporters, in line with television stations worldwide.*

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Drone, Technology, Television, Journalists.

## Nomenclature:

AFP: Agence France-Presse  
AIT: Africa Independent Television  
BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation  
CNN: Cable News Network  
NTA: Nigerian Television Authority  
UAVs: Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

## I. INTRODUCTION

In today's 21st-century broadcast media landscape, technological innovation is inevitable. These technological advancements have brought about the invention of drones for news coverage by television stations across the globe (Tilak, 2020) [18].

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\* Correspondence Author(s)

**Terwanger Daniel Aliough\***, Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria. Email ID: [danielterwanger@gmail.com](mailto:danielterwanger@gmail.com), ORCID ID: [0009-0000-6393-6322](https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6393-6322)

**Kaior Samuel Akpede**, Professor, Department of Broadcasting, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria. Email ID: [kaiorakpede621@gmail.com](mailto:kaiorakpede621@gmail.com)

**Josiah Sabo Kente**, Associate Professor, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria. Email ID: [kentemails@yahoo.com](mailto:kentemails@yahoo.com)

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The drone technology tool is vital to television stations in that it enables the coverage of dangerous scenes from safer locations without being at risk (Ejiga, 2019) [6]. Scholars identified the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as the first TV station to fly drones officially in 2013 to get overhead shots for news reportage, which enhanced audience viewership (Okocha et al. 2022) [14]. This technological advancement is rushing because drones were invented from inception as military weapon for warfare until recently in the last decade between 2010-2020, drone became a tool for use in several spheres such as the media industry, agriculture for spraying herbicides and health care whereby drones were used to save lives via transporting relief materials from one location to another where the environment was not friendly to access distant and remote areas (Ola-Akuma & Okocha, 2023) [15].

Before the introduction of drones all over the world, television stations used helicopters to capture visual footage to show how newsworthy events unfolded (Odeba et al. 2022) [12]. However, the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) today has reduced threats to journalists' lives when gathering visual information at events such as earthquakes, floods, or wildlife. The CNN station also used a drone to cover the 2016 Nepal earthquake, during which the drone identified villages. Furthermore, the February 2025 California wildfire incident was also captured by TV stations in the U.S using a drone technology tool (Aliough et al. 2025) [2]. The importance that comes with this technological innovation also has some challenges, like restricting drones from being flown at some locations by government authorities, a lack of adequate knowledge and concerns about privacy invasion where drones are deployed without prior consent sought from individuals (Duncan & Culver, 2020) [4]. Therefore, since drone technologies are used across the world in TV stations such as BBC, CNN and FOX NEWS, as previous research has shown, this study found an existing gap and was set to ascertain the knowledge and use of drone technology for news gathering among NTA NEWS24 and AIT located in Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Drone use at TV stations around the world has increased in recent years, as the technology has been developed for journalistic purposes. In 2013, the BBC spearheaded the adoption of drone technology for news gathering (Ejiga, 2019) [6]. One key element in another study was the extent to which drone journalism was diffusing among TV stations in the US, as more than half (n=94) of the news managers interviewed reported having implemented drone technology for news gathering in their stations (Ferguson & Greer, 2019) [8]. Also, the adoption of drones by news organisations in



Finland had developed spontaneously over the years (Uskali et al. 2020) [19]. The foregoing studies created a gap in the literature on knowledge and use of drone technology in Nigeria. Therefore, since no prior research on the knowledge and use of drone technology among NTA NEWS24 and AIT stations had been conducted, the current study sought to fill this gap in the literature.

## A. Research Objectives

- i. To examine how knowledgeable journalists in NTA NEWS24 and AIT Abuja are in utilising drones for news coverage in
- ii. To find out the type of newsworthy events which drones are used to cover by NTA NEWS24 and AIT journalists.

## III. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

### A. Drone Technology in Perspective

A drone is a flying vehicle that is remotely piloted or programmed to perform autonomous actions [7] (Gynnild & Uskali, 2018) [9].” In journalism, drones are referred to as flying robots or camera drones, the authors added. Drones are also known as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), Unmanned Aerial Systems (UASs) or Remotely Piloted Aircraft (Odeba et al. 2022) [12]. Drone technology was initially manufactured to serve as weapons of mass destruction in the military until recently, over a decade ago, but innovations in technology brought about the diversification of drones to be used in several fields such as health, agriculture, transportation and the media (Ntalakas et al, 2017) [11]. In the media sphere, drone technology is replacing helicopters, which were the only means of gathering aerial visuals. The drone camera is also cheaper in cost and easier to utilise compared to a helicopter that must have a pilot and the media crew with their cameras on board (Gynnild & Uskali, 2018) [9]. The experiments using drone cameras for news gathering began in 2010, when the BBC presented a documentary titled ‘Earth Flight’ in 2011. The documentary filmed a flock of about 2 million (2,000,000) flamingos using a drone. However, the breakthrough was in 2013 when a hexacopter, also known as a flying camera with six propellers for reporting, was unveiled by the BBC for news gathering (Adelabu & Wilson, 2022) [1].

The concept of drone technology is also described as a robot eyewitness or an eye in the sky (Ejiga, 2019) [6]. A drone is an autonomous or remotely piloted powered aircraft capable of flying without an on-board operator or passengers (Postema, 2015) [16]. Drone technology is further said to be a pilotless aircraft that uses a variety of technologies to function, such as computer vision, artificial intelligence, obstacle avoidance technology, and others (Ola-Akuma & Okocha, 2023) [15]. The unmanned aircraft offer a video-rich audience experience, as well as giving TV news operations a much less expensive alternative to helicopters to gather news footage, along with the ability to cover news in diverse locations (Gynnild & Uskali, 2018) [9]. Drones were deployed to provide coverage of the scene and subsequent progress of the bridge repairs for several weeks, replacing the formerly used helicopters from the initial day that the events happened (Careless, 2017) [3].

Drones are viewed as a piece of technology that takes a graphical record of events as they unfold or happen (Odeba

et al. 2022) [12], however, some authors pointed to the fact that “deploying Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for reporting illustrates how the diffusion of communication technologies has dramatically changed the way journalists gather news (Ferguson & Greer, 2019) [8].” Drone technology that is today used in the field of communication did not just emerge, but for the development of technological innovations, it became possible for humans to start thinking about the possibilities of endowing machines and automations (Salazar, 2020) [17]. Therefore, in this research, drone technology can be interchangeably called Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), advanced technological tools that a journalist can remotely control to perform functions such as capturing overhead video footage and still images from locations difficult to access with handheld camcorders.

## IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Knowledge of Drone Technology Use in Nigerian TV Stations

The knowledge of utilising drone technology across the world has shown that so many media houses and agencies across the globe (BBC and CNN, Reuters, AFP, among others) have realised the need to incorporate Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) in their establishments for aiding news gathering processes [6]. The declaration that drone journalism has come to stay and the onus is on the media organisations to embrace it is apt (Nsude, 2020) [10]. However, the situation in Nigeria was captured as follows:

News media agencies are still grappling with digital technologies, such as transitioning from DV Cams to HD Cams, and the use of drones for news coverage in the country has not been fully explored. Currently, private media outfits and filmmakers rent drones to media practitioners for a shoot. An online marketplace for vetted video professionals, with more than Twenty Thousand (20,000) videographers across 192 countries, including Africa. Clients who require drone operators can also quickly get responses from qualified freelancers and video production companies by visiting their site (Ola-Akuma & Okocha, 2023) [15].

The foregoing shows that, in Nigeria, although television stations were aware of the use of drones in news coverage, adoption at the time the above research was conducted was not as spontaneous as it should have been compared to other stations worldwide. Furthermore, the availability of skilled reporters equipped with drone cameras to cover newsworthy events was limited. It was also stated that many journalists in television stations in Nigeria have yet to acquire the technical know-how of utilising drones for news coverage when faced with assignments from dangerous locations that can only be accessible using robotic equipment (Ogunboyowa & Arikenbi, 2022) [13].

More so, “as an emerging technological innovation in the media industry, most media practitioners were not familiar with the operation of the technology (Okocha et al, 2021) [14]. This is quite challenging because a lack of operational know-how is a significant hindrance to the use of this technology by some media organisations. These authors' assertion reveals how important adequate knowledge of drone





technology in news gathering can go a long way toward benefiting TV stations that own drones during coverage of life-threatening events. This implies that the absence of knowledgeable reporters who can utilise drone technology for news gathering can result in a significant setback for the station when the need arises.

### B. Nature of Events Covered using Drone Technology

Four core areas that drone technology can be categorised in television news gathering are “breaking news, daily news and sports; investigative journalism; conflict, disaster and war and photo journalism [2]. As a result of the foregoing, the journalistic use of drones aligns with the media's surveillance function, in which the media is responsible for monitoring the environment and reporting to the public about events to keep them abreast (Ogunboyowa & Arikenbi, 2022) [13]. Thus, “media revolution can be attributed to the fact that drones are relatively inexpensive and can be deployed to humanly inaccessible areas with minimal risk and exposure to danger—new site construction, forest survey and war zone (Aliough et al, 2025) [1].” Furthermore, according to the authors, reporters can access visuals without being caught in unpredictable situations that could have cost them their lives when they utilise drone technology to cover risky assignments.

Drones are used to capture visuals from disaster-prone areas such as flood zones and wildfire areas, where journalists are at risk. There are several benefits of a drone camera. One of such is that “drone is very safe in difficult situations like floods, earthquakes and fires, it is a very safe option in such situations” (Tilak, 2020) [18]. Without the direct presence of a person in the affected area, footage of the disaster situation can be captured and analysed from a remote location. An example that can be cited is when drone technology was used to cover Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in November 2013, and it was used to report the volcanic eruption in Iceland in 2014 (Aliough et al, 2025) [1]. Another essential advantage of a drone camera is that drone technology can be utilised for live streaming programmes. Drones are critical for coverage of events such as environmental journalism, aerial surveillance, nature monitoring, wildlife, and sports. A station can livestream to give audiences real-time reports (Ntalakas et al, 2017) [11]. For example, in 2023, Channels TV showcased Gurara Waterfalls to attract tourists to the site. During soccer matches too, drone cameras can be used to provide a livestream for viewers' delight, showing the entire stadium from a sky view and spectators' reactions among other scintillating shots (Aliough et al, 2025) [1].

### C. Review of Empirical Literature

A study by Ejiga (2019) [6] titled the prospects and challenges of drone journalism in Nigeria news media industry, the author sought to ascertain the pros and cons of drone journalism in Nigerian news media. The study relied on the extant literature to gather facts. The research found that “drone technology provides journalists with a new tool that can increase their safety when going about their work” (p. 59). Furthermore, the study revealed how the use of drone journalism is in tandem with Lasswell's (1948) postulation that the media is expected to monitor the environment and report to the public about happenings, particularly on important topics that impact society” (p. 59). The study

concluded that despite the utilisation of drone journalism in other parts of the world across the globe, its presence is slowly felt in the Nigerian media landscape, therefore, there is need to review the stringent rules of drone use in Nigeria to allow for boost in its use and that media houses and journalists should acquaint with both local and international aviation laws to fly drone safely during news coverage.

In another study titled An Evaluation of the use of drone technology in news gathering and reporting: Prospects and challenges, Ogunboyowa & Arikenbi (2022) [13] evaluated the impact of drone technology in news reportage in Nigeria; explained opportunities and found out the security dangers of using drones for news gathering in television broadcasting. The study used a literature review to examine how drone technology impacts television broadcasting. Findings from the survey showed that drone journalism has aided investigative journalism, enabled immediate coverage of unforeseen and unscheduled events, and enabled the collection of footage or photographs from dangerous scenes. Therefore, the authors concluded that drone use can protect television reporters from hazardous assignments. However, they recommended that safety, legal, and privacy concerns that have led to strict regulations in Nigeria, requiring permits, should not deter journalists from recognising the benefits of using drones for news-gathering purposes.

Similarly, a study on Assessing the diffusion of drones in local television news was carried out by Ferguson & Greer (2019) [8] to determine the extent to which local TV stations across the United States were adopting drone technology as part of their news operations. The authors used a survey of 495 news managers to arrive at findings. They found that of the 495 managers invited, 94 completed surveys, revealing that more than half of the stations used drones for news. Still, around 49% were not using the technology due to Federal Aviation Administration regulations. The study also found that the use of drones for news coverage was associated with increased viewership and enhanced news programmes. They concluded that an examination of the relationship between motivations to use drones and the importance of drones in news stories yielded no significant results, in that getting the story told was more important than how the stations told the story.

In the research Drone and television broadcasting in Nigeria: The pathway to improve professionalism, the authors (Adelabu et al, 2022) [1] examined the opportunities and challenges in the use of drones for television broadcast and how they can improve professionalism. The researchers adopted a secondary method of data gathering via conceptual and empirical reviews, which revealed that drone technology, even though it was invented for use on the war front, can be used for quick information gathering and transmitted live on TV in Nigeria or online for the world to view. Further, their findings showed that the technology has some challenges, such as privacy invasions, and can cause air collisions when not properly operated. The study concluded that drone technology, though seemingly disruptive to the media industry, can be adopted by media organisations owing to the avalanche of benefits it offers when there are sufficient numbers of skilled journalists.



## D. Theoretical Framework

This research is hinged on the Technological Acceptance Model was propounded by Fred Davis in 1989 and is premised on the submission that individual's intent to use a technology is usually influenced on two key factors- Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEoU); these factors are constant whenever Technological Acceptance Model is applied (Egbulefu & Nwaoboli, 2023) [5]. The authors further stated that before individuals decide to use a particular technology, they first consider how useful it is and how easy it will be to accomplish a task. Thus, when the two factors are considered, a technology is adopted if it meets the user's demand.

The Technological Acceptance Model is anchored in four constructs: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude towards use, and intention to use. This submission clearly shows that with the innovation of drone technology, television stations that have thought of the usefulness, as it keeps reporters safe from being harmed when covering dangerous locations where news must be obtained from and disseminated using overhead pictures, will have the desire to adopt it in covering violent protests, yet remain safe away from the scene. The drone is therefore essential because the pilot who takes the video shots is usually positioned in a safe place before flying the drone to capture them. In other words, the drone has replaced helicopters as hitherto the only options for getting moving video shots from above the ground, following the fact that cranes, as another alternative, are mounted and fixed at a particular location (Adelabu & Wilson, 2022) [1]. In relation to the study, AIT and NTA News24 stations can use drones to provide more exhaustive coverage and gather visuals of floods, wildfires, or conflict-affected societies, effectively showing the public the devastation caused by such disasters from a bird's-eye view. This means that, except for the stations that hired a helicopter, it would be challenging to capture wider shots from above with a handheld camcorder.

## V. RESEARCH METHODS

This research relied on in-depth interviews (IDIs), which are a qualitative research design. The choice of this research design was primarily to improve on previous research by gathering data from the selected TV stations to ascertain empirical results. Therefore, purposive sampling was used to select 5 participants each from the newsrooms of both AIT and NTA NEWS24, making ten (10) participants in total. The interview lasted 25 to 30 minutes from 10th June 2025 to 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025. The demographic distribution of participants here revealed that those selected across the TV stations had the requisite knowledge of the station's operations to which they belonged, owing to their status. The participants were also coded, beginning with NTA NEWS24, was the Assistant Manager News - D1, Assistant Director News - D2, General Manager News - D3, Senior Reporters - D4 and Head of Camera Unit - D5 respectively, At AIT station, participants were the Chief Executive Officer AIT News - D6, Head of Sports - ND7, Senior Reporter - D8, Head of News Operations - D9 and Head of Camera Department - D10. Thus, the data gathered from participants were presented as themes aligned with the study's objectives.

## A. Thematic Data Analysis

*i. Research Objective 1:* How knowledgeable journalists are in utilising drones for news coverage in NTA NEWS24 and AIT Abuja

The participants emphasised that no one was unaware that drones were available at both stations; however, cameramen were the most knowledgeable in the newsroom, as training sessions had been organised for them since the TV stations' inception, when they began utilising drone technology for news gathering. Some participants' responses were captured. According to D4 from NTA, "Reporters do not really operate a drone by themselves; they only work with the personnel that will operate it and give the operator directives on the kind of shots the reporter wants." Similarly, D2 reiterated the previous submission that:

A good number of video journalists in NTA NEWS24 can operate drone cameras. Training a video journalist is relatively easy because the shots he needs from the drone are already in his mind. For reporters, only those who do specialised reports can handle their camera and write the story themselves; only those who can learn how to use drones can do so. Day-to-day reporters may not need to learn to fly drones; instead, there should be a division of labour, with the day-to-day reporter paired with a camera operator and a drone operator when needed.

Another participant from AIT posited that "in the camera unit where I belong, more than half of us are drone pilots because we use drones to capture aerial views, and that is the beauty of most events (D10). The C.E.O. News from AIT confirmed the foregoing when he stated that "reporters do not really use drones. It is our cameramen that use them. Most of our cameramen have been trained on how to use drones." (D6). More so, the Assistant Manager News (D1) added that, "it is the job of a cameraman to get visuals for a reporter. Even if a reporter wants to do everything himself, he still has to undergo drone-piloting training. Otherwise, they will go for the expert to do that for them."

*ii. Research Objective 2:* The kind of newsworthy events which drones are used to cover by AIT and NTA NEWS24 stations

Drones are utilised for different types of events. Six (6) participants identified the events as specialised areas that are often life-threatening to reporters and cameramen alike. They stressed that man-made and natural disasters are at the top of the list. Other participants responded based on the types of events their stations gathered visuals from for news reportage. One of the NTA NEWS24 participants, D1, said that "the kind of reports in which drones are deployed are 'factory documentaries, flooding, protests and coverage of large farm lands.'" Another participant mentioned the need to cover the thick forest to expose ungoverned areas to government military forces. In her words:

The use of drones is very effective, I must say, because it now gives a deeper, more detailed look into what your report is saying. It is not just the everyday kind of clips one is used to when standing behind the camera and just getting your clips; now you have an overhead view. What you cannot see (from your position), this drone camera can capture, so it is very





effective. In terms of the military operations, recently we were in the North-West and some of the clips that I got were from the military drone which went into the thick forest where I could not approach and it helped my report because I could talk about the wilderness, the vast land, the ungoverned space in the North-West and all the clips were used to buttress further the point that the military is over stretched and cannot be everywhere to secure Nigerians adequately because of the vast land that is left ungoverned (D8).

Following the above were sporting events and political rallies or campaigns, for which drones are used to gather visuals for news reporting. D7 asserted that:

I have not used it for my personal report. But in our coverage, especially live sports coverage, it has come to play a role. I recall the last time we were in (Auchi), Edo State, at the Okpekpe International 10 K race; it came in handfuls, and we used it. The beauty of the drone is that it provides a broader view of the environment from above. It defines a city: you can be in one place while the drone covers a lot of ground, highlighting the environment's aesthetics. Some other journalists have used it to illustrate their stories. Those who have covered political party rallies have had cause to use drones to get an aerial view of the crowd. Where sports events are ongoing, and you want to give the beauty of how the environment looks, the drone comes in handy

## B. Discussion of Findings

The first research objective sought to ascertain how knowledgeable journalists at both stations are in the utilisation of drones for news coverage. Findings from participants showed that Africa Independent Television (AIT) and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA NEWS24) camera operators were the most knowledgeable among other journalists in the newsroom because they had been adequately trained to use drones for news gathering. These findings, therefore, revealed that Nigerian television stations are advancing beyond the previous submissions by scholars that many Nigerian media journalists lacked technical know-how on the utilisation of drones for news (Okocha et al, 2023) [14]. Furthermore, this advancement in technical skills showed the relevance of the Technology Acceptance Model, whereby the stations understood how useful drones are for getting video of natural disasters such as floods and the ease of piloting a drone from a safe location to gather visuals and or take pictures, which can be used to show the magnitude of devastation caused by the occurrence to the audience.

The second objective was to determine the types of events journalists use drones to cover. The findings revealed that participants cited natural disasters such as floods, sporting events such as marathons, and protests as instances in which drones are used to cover. Thus, the findings align with the submission that drone technology was used to cover the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013, the Nepal earthquake in 2016 and the devastation caused by the California wildfire incident in February 2025 (Aliough et al. 2025) [2].

## VI. CONCLUSION

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought technological advancement across all spheres, and the media is no exception: drones,

which were hitherto used only in the military for spying and as weapons of mass destruction, are today being incorporated into the media landscape. This study has revealed that video journalists at both the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA NEWS24) and Africa Independent Television stations utilise drones effectively to gather visuals from various locations, such as flooded areas, to show the level of devastation to the audience. The study further revealed that journalists in Nigeria were safer when drones were used during life-threatening events, as they could be piloted from safer locations to capture visuals that better tell the story.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are raised in this study:

- i. Nigerian Television Authority (NTA NEWS24) and Africa Independent Television (AIT) stations should ensure that all journalists in the newsroom are adequately trained on how to use drones in gathering information from life-threatening assignments and for documentary purposes, also to keep up with the advanced media operations across the globe.
- ii. TV stations across Nigeria that are yet to incorporate drones for news gathering from natural disasters such as floods, which are prevalent in Nigeria, should buy drones to avoid journalist casualties where handheld camcorders are utilised instead of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for covering life-threatening assignments.

## DECLARATION STATEMENT

As the article's author, I must verify the accuracy of the following information after aggregating input from all authors.

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- **Funding Support:** This article has not been funded by any organizations or agencies. This independence ensures that the research is conducted objectively and without external influence.
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- **Data Access Statement and Material Availability:** The adequate resources of this article are publicly accessible.
- **Author's Contributions:** The authorship of this article is contributed equally to all participating individuals.

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## AUTHOR'S PROFILE



**Terwanger Daniel Aliough** is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria. His research interests include broadcast journalism, Information and Communication Technology and Health Communication.



**Kaior Samuel Akpede**, PhD, is a Professor of Broadcasting and the Head of the Department of Broadcasting, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria. His research interests include Broadcast journalism and Political Communication.



**Josiah Sabo Kente**, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria. His academic interests include Media and Society, New Media, Political Communication, and Development Journalism. He also has a political role as a Special Adviser on Political Matters in Taraba State, Nigeria.

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